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## Classroom Community: Questions of Apathy and Autonomy in a High School Jewelry Class

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Classroom Community: Questions of Apathy and Autonomy  
in a High School Jewelry Class

Samuel E Steadman

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

Dr. Daniel T. Barney, Chair  
Dr. Mark A. Graham  
Dr. Sharon Gray

Department of Visual Arts  
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December 2011

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## ABSTRACT

### Classroom Community: Questions of Apathy and Autonomy in a High School Jewelry Class

Samuel E Steadman  
Department of Visual Arts  
Master of Arts

Student motivation is investigated in this study as a means of abrogating apathy within a public high school Jewelry course. The study is an attempt to answer a personal question of whether students could be internally motivated to a level of excitement that they would take ownership for their personal learning and the learning of their classmates. The study also addresses four main points that cause apathy, or are caused by apathy, they are: zero sum competition, compassion and support for classmates, ownership of the physical facilities, and the development of a conscientious public. Through a desire to test data on autonomy, high school students in a Jewelry 2 course were given freedom to choose what projects they made, what materials and processes they used, and what grade they received at the end of the semester. The study was a classroom action research project. Narrative analysis was used as a reflective tool to organize the data into thematic events that tracked the strengths and weaknesses of the study. Key teaching strategies were introduced in this study, including the following: personal goal setting by students to formulate an individualized curriculum; self-grading; and process diaries that the students wrote in daily to track their progress on their goals, and for use as a tool of accountability. The teaching strategies were designed to increase students' intrinsic motivation, creativity, sense of ownership for their personal learning and the learning of their fellow students, to develop a caring environment, and to develop ownership of the physical facilities of the school.

Keywords: art education, classroom action, autonomy, apathy, jewelry

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

### The Asymptote of Teaching

An asymptote is a line that approaches any given curve, but never reaches it. Teaching is for me an asymptote. I am always reaching and searching in a line to mastery, but I will never reach mastery because situations change, knowledge grows, and people are unique. This study is a classroom action research project where a problem is defined and the line towards mastery continues at this point by deciding on a solution, implementing that solution, reviewing the results of the solutions implementation and defining the new problems. The data collected in this study is a series of narratives. Narratives drive the classroom. I am the teacher in the Jewelry 2 class where this study took place. It is my personal narrative that defined the problem. I, as the teacher, became the researcher. I entered into a discourse with the problem, through the students, and with the students. I cannot be separated out from the study, I was part of the problem and the solution, my work is an asymptote. I write this study in first person because it is through my eyes as both the researcher and teacher that this work is presented. An attempt to distance myself from the study, pretending to be a completely objective third-party observer, would detract from the study. Using a first person perspective in qualitative writing is justified by many scholars (see Alley, 1996; Nash, 2004; Raymond, 1993). I use the first person because I care about my practice as a researcher and a teacher, and I am an asymptote deeply involved in the Jewelry 2 classroom community.

### Apathy

The word *apathy* is defined by thefreedictionary.com (2011) as “a state of indifference, or the suppression of emotions such as concern, excitement, motivation, or passion”. The word *apathy*, according to My Etymology (2008) is derived from the Greek word *apatheia*, which has virtually the

same meaning as apathy (thefreedictionary.com, 2011). However, apatheia originally comes from the Greek word *pathos* (My etymology, 2008), which can be defined as a quality of an experience or a work of art, that arouses feelings of pity, sympathy, tenderness, or sorrow (dictionary.com, 2011). The change of meaning from tenderness to indifference, or the arousal of feelings to the suppression of emotions is a significant change in meaning from pathos to apathy. This study was set up to see if apathy in students could be changed back towards pathos, or to the portion of pathos as a quality of experience that arouses feelings of sympathy and tenderness, but the study sought to go further than that. Its design was to have apathy replaced by a feeling of excitement and desire to learn and perform.

During my eleven years as a Jewelry teacher I noticed a great deal of student apathy. The apathy was basically a lack of caring that students had for their own learning as well as the learning of classmates. The apathy towards learning became further evident in students' lack of respect for the classroom they work in, and the tools and supplies they use to create their projects. It also reared its ugly head as it killed creativity by shifting the students' desires from mastery of subject to the achievement of a grade. In response to this apathy, I began searching for pedagogical strategies that would motivate students to push themselves towards mastery, and in so doing develop greater creativity and a desire to take care of their physical surroundings, tools, and supplies. This study is about how I employed student autonomy as a method of teaching to dispel the apathy of learning in high school Jewelry students. I wanted to help students cultivate their own intrinsic motivation so they would raise their personal level of excitement about what they were doing so they would want to work harder and help their classmates to do the same.

### **Disinterest in School Learning**

*The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1925) is to many a captivating book full of beautiful imagery that brings out nuances so delicate that they are difficult to analyze or describe. Many of those Great Gatsby lovers have likely picked the book up on their own to read it. The very fact that many people would want to join in a crazy summer with Nick Carraway and get wrapped up in Fitzgerald's lyrical imagery explains why the novel has become a classic, making the number one spot in Radcliffe's Rival 100 Best Novels List (2011). This ranking seems to indicate that the novel is a widely read and enjoyed book. This is interesting to me because the reaction from my high school students seemed to be a little different.

I teach Jewelry at Mountain View High School, in Orem, Utah. Talking with Mountain View's financial secretary, C. Hanson (personal communication, March 15, 2011) I learned that twenty-five percent of the student body has fee waivers, which suggest a middle to lower middle class school. G. Young, a guidance counselor at Mountain View, reported to me that we had 1343 students, of which there are 73.5% Caucasian, 20.4% Hispanic, 2.4% Pacific Islander, 1.4% Asian, 1.3% Native American and 1% African American (personal communication, March 16, 2011).

I asked my students to raise their hands if they had or were currently reading *The Great Gatsby*. I then asked those who had their hands raised to keep their hands up if they liked the novel. Throughout my classes, seventy-eight students raised their hands in response to the first question, and out of those seventy-eight, twenty-one kept their hands raised to say that they liked the novel. This is not indisputable data, but I did take the sampling from six different classes that were made up of students from all grades and ethnicities represented at the school. There seemed to me to be a discrepancy between the student's opinion of the *The Great Gatsby*, and Radcliffe's ranking it as number one novel

in the One-hundred best novels list (2011). The question then, was why so many high school students that I had talked with about *The Great Gatsby*, disliked it? I hear from many of my colleagues in secondary public education that the problem of dislike for subject matter is spread rather equally from language arts through math and into physical education. This is not to say all students hate all subjects, because that is simply not true. Many of my colleagues attribute the problem of dislike to one or more of the following symptoms: student apathy, student laziness, and lack of intelligence. Many of the educators I have interacted with seemed to think that if the students paid greater attention, or tried more vigorously to understand material that they would then like it. My colleagues apply the epithets mentioned earlier to at least some students in all the different disciplines in which they teach. I have had the same thoughts towards students who seemed to be totally apathetic towards their education in my classroom. I wondered, though, if it was not the student apathy towards learning, or even the subject matter, but the oppressive practices of teachers on students that created this dislike for subject matter. When teachers are the bearers of all knowledge, the creators and enforcers of curriculum, then students may feel that many things are not worth learning, or liking because they have no say in what the learning goals are. One strong example of this is a student in one of my classes who explained why he did not like *The Great Gatsby*. He said, "It doesn't matter what it is, if they assign me to read it, I will hate it." The problem with students not liking *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 1925), seemed to be a problem of intrinsic motivation being absent due to a lack of autonomy. In this study, student autonomy was used as a catalyst to build classroom community. One more example that could support the importance of personal choice versus dictated assignments in reading might be the Modern Libraries Reader's Top 100 List, where *The Great Gatsby* did not show up at all (2011). When people have the choice of what they will read there seems to be a difference of what books get chosen. I believed the sentiment of my student

who would hate anything he was assigned to read applied to assigned projects in the art classroom as well.

### **Apathy in the Art Classroom, a Personal Narrative**

I have been teaching grades 10 through 12 at Mountain View for 11 years now, and in those years I have thought that many of my students are lazy or apathetic regardless of race, family economic level, or age. I had students who asked on a regular basis, “What should I make?” They seemed to have had no desire to explore the world of possibilities. Then after a project had been selected they would come to me wanting every step described exactly, or done for them, because they did not have the desire or, perhaps, ability to solve the problems. Very often choices needed to be made that were questions of personal aesthetic and they would ask me, “Should I do this, or that?” They seemed to want even their own sense of taste given to them without making an effort on their own. There was also my least favorite question, “What would be easiest?” These questions lead me to believe that the students did not care about their learning. Another problem that related to, “What would be easiest?” belonged to the students who were primarily concerned with grades and not learning or developing creative processes. Those grade-conscientious students came to me regularly during projects and asked, “What grade will this get me?” The grade-driven students seldom put effort into creativity, craft, or processes. Lack of concern for themselves tended to spill over to lack of concern for their classmates as well. The student’s apathy seemed to cause problems that exhibited themselves in various ways within the art classroom.

One way student apathy was expressed in my classroom, was the lack of respect for the tools and equipment. Many students, it seemed, rarely took care of anything, of their own initiative. This of course ranged from project to project, and student to student, but regularly they did not concern themselves with the condition of the tools they would need, or the fact that other students would need to use those

same tools. I did not believe that many, or perhaps any, students maliciously broke tools, but they did carelessly break tools. Often this occurred because they had not listened to the demonstrations on how to use them. Students also put tools away in their personal lockers, which was basically stealing their classmates' potential for greater success. The lack of concern students had for their own education led many of them to goof off, sleep, text, or talk disruptively during demonstrations and then further distract classmates during work time, thus showing a lack of concern for those around them.

I found myself constantly looking for a solution to the problems I saw in my classroom, including the apathy students had towards their own education, the education of their classmates and the condition of the supplies and tools. I believed there was a solution in education. I felt that giving the students autonomy over their projects and grades would be an effective way to overcome the problem of apathy, one that was worth investigation.

### **A Response to Apathy: Autonomy**

In this study I explored a combination of teaching strategies that attempted to increase students' motivations to take ownership of their own education, and build what I will call a classroom community. A *classroom community* in this thesis is a classroom of students that are concerned with their individual learning, for the success of classmates, and the condition of tools and supplies. Personal stewardship is a key, and this study aimed to see if that kind of stewardship might grow out of autonomy. *Autonomy*, as used in this study is the freedom of choice. Students would be given the freedom to choose what types of projects they made, as well as what material they made them out of, whether it was metals, fibers, found-objects, or whatever. This included autonomy over grades, and curriculum. I expected this autonomy to create a sense of ownership over the classroom and curriculum for the students, and I felt that ownership would help to resolve the concerns that this study was designed to address, namely:

student apathy, *zero sum competition*, which is competition that cannot have a winner or loser, compassion and support, ownership of facilities, and the development of a conscientious public.

### **Weed Patch: A Successful Example of a School Founded on Ownership**

During the great depression of the 1930-40s there was a school started in Kern County, California called *Weedpatch*. This school was an answer to the hatred of locals towards migrants from the dustbowl. This school was not only built for, but by, the migrant worker's children and it gave them a sense of ownership that created a safe and trustworthy community. Consider the following passage from Jerry Stanley (1992) where Leo Hart, the founding superintendent of *Weedpatch* recalled, that as the students built the school together and worked for the benefit of the whole, "There was no partiality, ... no embarrassment or ridicule. Instead, there was friendship, understanding, guidance, and love" (p. 51). Because the students had such a vested interest in the school and each other, "The school also became known for its lack of disciplinary problems. 'We left everything laying around,' Leo recalled, 'and no one ever stole a thing.'" The school at *Weedpatch* had so few disciplinary problems because the students felt proud of the school, "they felt that it was theirs, they owned it" (Stanley, 1992, p.71). In this light, I asserted that if students were allowed to decide what they were going to learn and what they were going to make, a similar type of ownership would develop in the Jewelry classroom. Students would also develop a vested interest in their personal education as well as the education of their classmates, rather than feelings of apathy.

### **Classroom Strategies**

The study had four main strategies to develop the students' intrinsic motivation; student derived learning goals, students keeping a daily process diary to provide accountability to themselves and to the teacher, students grading themselves, and tool and classroom accountability. The students' personal



diaries helped me look back at the workings of the class to analyze it from the students' points of view using the lens of hindsight. To further aid in my data collection and analysis, I kept a reflective journal to see how my actions as a teacher affected the development of a classroom community. My reflective journal also allowed me to look at the students' actions from a distance. When added to their process diaries this created a more holistic view of the classroom as a community.

### **Learning Goals**

Before the students began their process diaries they had to come up with learning and production goals for the semester. I knew from experience that many students sit around for weeks doing next to nothing because they, "cannot think of what to make." In an attempt to address this issue, I therefore created a presentation video of 231 slides. The slides included a video of how I made a turquoise and silver pendant. The video showed that it takes a multitude of processes to create any piece of jewelry. The presentation also had a video about collaboration and found-object jewelry creation processes, as well as images of genres, themes, and processes. Throughout the presentation I explained processes or methods like setting cabochons, faceted gem stones, enameling, soldering, cultural jewelry, wire wrapping, alternative media, Steampunk and clockwork jewelry, lost wax casting and more. The students made comments and asked questions as I introduced things that interested them. The students were then given a brainstorming and goal setting sheet to help them set their goals (see Appendix A for goal setting prompt). After the goal setting was completed the class started production on projects. On the day of production the students began documenting their progress in their process diaries.

I read the process diaries everyday and wrote back to the students. This opened a dialogue between the students and myself, which is where the bulk of the results came from in Chapter Five. During the last ten minutes of class the students wrote anything they wanted in the diaries, but I gave

them questions to answer and ideas to discuss the first week so that they would have a reference point from which to start. The questions that I suggested included: what did you do today, what do you need to do, learn or get to accomplish your goals, who did you help today and how, who helped you, and do you have any questions for me? The students were allowed to select which questions they wanted to answer and largely settled in to a bit of a routine. There was much variation in the diaries, which included simple documentation of processes and tasks, sharing of understandings and life experiences, to an instigation of dialogue that would occasionally go on for several days, including topics from jewelry processes to soccer, La Crosse, and even the occasional joke. Diaries ranged from reporting simple one sentence recaps, to page long retrospectives full of ideas and questions. One student even did a knock-knock joke over the course of several days. I also gave the students occasional prompts to find out their feelings on things and to get them to think a little differently about what they were writing in their process diaries.

The diaries became the system of accountability for the grading. Grading was do-it-yourself, DIY. The students used the information about their learning and production progress from their diaries as evidence for what they felt their grades should be. As a teacher, I committed to them to let them choose the grade they deserved and made sure they understood that I would record their grade choice as the grade for the class. This negated the problem with students who were more concerned with grades than in the depth of their leaning, because they did not have to worry about whether they were doing what the teacher wanted them to do for a specific grade. As a result, I anticipated that these students would be more creative and passionate about their projects because they would know that they would be grading their own work.

The fourth teaching strategy had nothing to do with autonomy for the first half of the study. I assigned the students tools and stations that they would be responsible for cleaning up and organizing. I told them that the only thing that I would grade them on would be cleaning. The goal of this strategy was to get them thinking about the physical facilities from the beginning. As the study progressed, the grading for cleaning continued to loosen until half way through the semester, at which time, I quit grading them completely. To gauge the students feelings on tool and supply care, they answered four questions as a prompt in their diaries. The questions were: what is your favorite jewelry creation process, what tools do you need to complete that process, what would you do if you did not have those tools, and how worthwhile is it to you to take care of the tools? The students unanimously felt that tool care was essential and from that time forward I stepped back from policing the tools. I also made a conscious effort to refer to the tools as “your” tools and “our” tools instead of “my” tools, thus giving them more ownership of the classroom.

### **Conclusion**

I conducted this study for one semester, to explore the effects of classroom strategies designed to increase student autonomy in the development of intrinsic motivation and the building of classroom community. I did this by setting up a situation in the classroom where the students developed their own projects and the materials they would use to create those projects. I used images and videos to give the students ideas of some of the possibilities available to them, and make them aware of processes that they may not have previously known existed. The students were then put in charge of their own accountability. The tool to track that accountability was the daily process diary which was intended to help them realize what they did each day, and what it would take to reach the production goals that they set for themselves. Finally I gave the students control of their grades by my stepping away from the

grading process and allowing the students to choose the grades they felt they deserved. My observations created a rich narrative of classroom practice in the art room and the possibilities that autonomy might engender.

The narrative began to take form right as the study got underway. From the beginning, interesting things began to happen. However, before the study could take place, I had to design it. Chapter Two is the review of the literature where I based my ideas, building them from a conglomerate source of scholars. I looked at lawyers, educational activists, writers of fiction and nonfiction, economists, song writers, psychologists, museum curators, and more. Chapter Three discusses my theoretical lens as well as the method of data analysis I chose to use. I used narrative data analysis based in a Classroom Action research methodology. Following Chapter Three, I explain the set up of the procedure, the how and why of my research study. Chapter Five is a series of short thematic data arranged in narrative (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Herman and Vervaeck; Nygren & Blom, 2001) form to show the results of the study. Chapter Six is the culmination, the “what now” section, in which I use the Classroom Action research methodology (Cameron-Jones, 1983; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2008; Stenhouse, 1981) to discuss the results, and their practical application in the classroom on a regular basis. I looked at what went really well, what I could do differently, and how feasible it is to continue using this pedagogical technique.

## Chapter 2 Review of Literature

I have been teaching art classes at Mountain View High School in Orem, Utah for about 10 and a half years. In that time, I have, in my mind, progressed significantly as a teacher. I made a shift from being a loud and somewhat crass teacher, whose maturity was on a similar level to that of the average teenage male, to a more conscientious and caring teacher. One example of this transformation can be seen in my approachability as a teacher. It used to be that very few girls would come and talk to me when they had questions. There were a couple girls, on different occasions, who were outgoing and they told me that I was scary because I yelled a lot and made people feel stupid by using sarcasm. I then started to poll the students and ask them if they thought I was scary, mean, or rude. The years went by, and the comments about me being scary decreased as I tried to be more caring and self reflective. I am continually trying to refine my teaching skills and improve my personality as a teacher. Through this self reflection I became aware of prejudices that I had and some I still have though all are not negative and need overcoming, some are and do.

In my process of becoming a more aware and caring teacher, I started to see many of the prejudices that my students have. I also started to become aware and frustrated with many students because of their lack of respect towards their peers. Also, as described in Chapter One, some students show a lack of care or awareness towards the classroom, its tools and supplies. One example of this is that some students create grooves and notches into the classroom tables with jewelry files. Most often this is not a malicious thing, the student just happens to have a file and while talking to a classmate, they use it on the table. I believe that the table filing wouldn't happen as often if students had a greater sense of ownership in the school. My main worry was a prejudice where I perceived almost total apathy towards learning that the majority of students seemed to exhibit. About the only thing in education for

which many of my pupils seemed to care, was a grade. That relatively new awareness of my actions and my students actions led me to pursue new pedagogical methods. One of the largest shifts in my pedagogy was the attempt to create what I introduced as a classroom community in Chapter One. The need for a classroom community should be considered in the context of student apathy, testing, grading, and emerging ideas about motivation.

### **Definition of a Classroom Community**

A classroom community is defined, by me, in this study, as a group of students who are aware of each others' needs and share a common goal to learn, teach and succeed. A classroom community is a place where respect is felt and shown, for self, others and property. Another defining feature of the classroom community is a value system that seeks the betterment and wellbeing, not only of the class but for all of society. John Dewey (1916) a philosopher, psychologist and educational reformer made this important distinction, that cliques, gangs, and dens of thieves can be aware of others needs and work towards common goals as well but they do not necessarily work to improve the world and society.

There are many types of communities in education. One example is the *learning community* (Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, & Smith, 1990) which is a system used in higher education where many students register for the same group of classes and take them at the same times; this is also known as a cohort group. One benefit of the learning community is shared by a Seattle Central Community College student "Perhaps the most important thing I am learning about learning is that it is easier and more logical, not to suffer through it by myself. Asking teachers and other students for their ideas or criticism is *so* beneficial" (Gabelnick, et al., p. 68). The student enrollment retention rates at colleges in learning community settings is between 90 to 100%, whereas in traditional college settings 41% of

students leave without getting a degree (Gabelnick et al., 1990). However, the learning community as described by Gabelnick et al. is beyond the possibilities of a single semester Jewelry course.

Another form of community is based in the educational philosophy of *service-learning*. Service-learning uses the needs of the community outside of the classroom to derive service projects that students can do to become a cognizant participant of the society outside of the school (Furco, 1996, 2002; Rocheleau, 2004 & Taylor, 2002). The big difference between service-learning and community service seems to be how it is explained. Undoubtedly learning is taking place either way. Service-learning is part of the author and theorist Neil Postman's narrative *Space Ship Earth* (1995) that describes a story of a society that is falling apart. Schools in the narrative were broken and decrepit, streets were vandalized, and strewn with garbage and the political leaders ultimately declared a state of emergency. In the narrative, the high school students were taught how to work and go out to clean up the city. Then, as the work the students were doing grew, the college students got involved. Before long almost everybody in society pitched in to cleanup, repair, manage, and police. The active, purposeful engagement of the people in the community helped the individuals in that community and their physical environment to thrive. This active community creates a conscientious people who work continuously for the betterment of those around them. There is true societal learning and change that takes place in the narrative of *Space Ship Earth* to, essentially, "save the world". I loved the ideology behind the service-learning that Postman (1995) set up and think it was a great way to build and strengthen communities both inside and outside the classroom. However, the limited time and the technical nature of the Jewelry class does not allow for large-scale community service projects. I felt that there is true merit in teaching the students to form communities at a close and intimate level. I also felt that the community could be formed in the classroom, even if the world is not ending, as it was in *Space Ship Earth*. Furco (2002)

pointed out that many service-learning engagements “typically address a social issue [for example], recycling, homelessness, AIDS, the environment”(p. 25). I know that those social issues are important, but if all people rush off to save the rainforest and never meet their next door neighbors, then close-knit communities where people care about those around them and help each other out could become increasingly less common. I thought that if caring and positive action were implemented on a local level, then the same attitudes would develop in increasingly larger populations, and that may be a major way to address social issues like recycling, sustainability, substance abuse, violence, and homelessness.

Community is a strong theme in the arts. Pamela Lawton (2010), assistant professor of Art Education at the Corcoran College of Art and Design, was aware of the community theme in art. One example of Lawton’s promotions of Community-based Art Education was an art project she and her students collaborated on with The Urban Ministry Center, *UMC*, which was an interfaith organization in the Charlotte, North Carolina area dedicated to alleviating poverty and homelessness. Lawton’s project was a quilt that was made from life stories of the homeless people who went to the UMC. Lawton set up tables across from the UMC and invited people to come and share orally, in writing, and visually their stories. The quilt was then put together from the squares of fabric that the participants decorated. The quilt hung in a prominent place in the UMC sharing the lives of homeless people with other homeless people and the volunteers who work at the UMC.

Flavia Bastos (2002) said, “Art Educators are often at the forefront of community-based art activities, whether the community involved is that of the school or beyond” (as cited in Lawton, 2002). If Community-based Art Education were taught, then students would study the community to develop art that would best mesh with the students’ perception of what comprises his/her community. Villeneuve stated in an Art&Design for Social Justice Symposium in 2009, “Community inspired study helps



participants realize they do not exist in a vacuum, but as a part of a larger social world” (p. 6). The community-based art education approach was only used in the development of the classroom community, to the extent, that the art produced in the classroom was a product of students working together with other students and sharing ideas that furthered each others learning.

Community-based Art Education is too broad a topic to address all of its nuances and possibilities, however Ulbricht (2005) condensed the enormity of it very succinctly when he wrote,

With regard to definitions of Community-based Art Education, several concepts come to mind.

One might initially envision organized community art programs to improve art skills, or alternatively, outreach programs to empower special groups of people. With more thought, we might consider programs that promote contextual learning about local art and culture.

Community service projects are another form of Community-based Art Education. Some may see public art itself as a form of Community-based education. This range of possibilities can be confusing for those who contemplate the possibilities and implications of new and existing Community-based Art Education programs. (p. 6)

In the classroom community there was a focus on art and community, but I did not assign the term Community-based Art Education to any part of this study, because the scope of the classroom community’s goals were going to focus on student’s personal learning in class and the success of their classmates. The definition of classroom community in this study was more about the students in the Jewelry 2 class caring for each other and less about the broader issues of the world like homelessness, disease, environment and so on. Some issues like homelessness and disease may very well have been affecting students in the classroom, and one hope was that the compassion shown by classmates would help alleviate, if just in a small way, the suffering students may have been experiencing. Another hope

for the classroom community study was that students would want to expand the experiences they would have to the larger issues of the world.

### **Student Apathy, Motivation and the Need for Classroom Communities**

A conceptualization of the classroom community entailed the following foci: student apathy, zero sum competition, compassion and support, ownership of facilities, and the development of a conscientious public.

#### **Student apathy towards learning**

In jewelry design, very often, choices need to be made that are questions of a personal aesthetic. Students would ask me, ‘Should I do *this* or *that*?’ Students seemed to want a sense of taste given to them without making any personal effort to evaluate their own choices, experiences, and aesthetics. I discussed this topic of apathy and laziness with Daniel Barney, assistant professor of Art Education at Brigham Young University. He suggested that it might not be an issue of apathy, but a desire to get the institutional *right* answer, or make the canonized *right* choice because, perhaps, they have been conditioned by standardized tests and/or are trying to please the teacher by seeking a notion of *correct* that the students feel they do not possess (D. Barney, personal communication, February 26, 2010).

My communication with Dr. Barney, became a catalyst for me to investigate my understandings about students’ apathetic appearances. I felt that I did not have the *right* answer, and my views possibly needed to be corrected, because it was hard for me to understand how so many students could be so apathetic. I pondered about correcting my thoughts and what *correct* meant. Correct comes from the Latin verb *corrigere*, from *cor-* together + *regere-* guide. The idea that students just wanted their choices to be correct, that they wanted to be guided so that they could *comme il faut*, a French phrase that means conform to the accepted standards, did not occur to me. I never realized that the *comme il faut* the

students aspired to follow might have been standardized tests. My label of apathy could still have been genuine, but as I reflected and worked with my students, I thought the years of test taking had influenced their performance in school work.

The students' educations were heavily focused on testing. A very problematic aspect of student learning was that there were many teachers teaching to tests, including vocational tests, state tests, and national tests. To be correct, the students needed to get the correct answers and the correct answers were often preached at them so that they could pass the tests with the correct scores. One problem with strict guidelines on what one can do and how one can do it, as Daniel Pink (2009), a lawyer with a background in economics, argued in his book *Drive*, is that creativity and intrinsic motivation will be sacrificed. Alfie Kohn (2000) states, "Standardized tests cannot measure initiative, creativity, imagination, conceptual thinking, curiosity, effort, irony, judgment..." (p. 17). Therefore, many students are left standing alone with only the training of how to pass a test as their guide and no inner-desire to do more than that. This lack of creativity and desire leaves students, largely, without the skills necessary for making personal decisions, even about their own personal aesthetic.

A seeming bedfellow of standardized testing is the *letter grade*. The grading system, which is the extrinsic motivating dictator of public education in America, solicits the other question that seems to denote apathy towards learning. "Is this good enough to get me an A?" This all powerful letter, A, can be a huge deterrent to classroom community because students may not be willing to work with classmates, since the classmate might not have the *right* answer.

One goal of the classroom community is to promote a new standard of correct thinking. Use the Latin verb *corrigere*, so students can bring their own thoughts *together* to *guide* their questions and answers of, "Should I do this, or should I do that?" However, when the students learn what correct

means for them there can still be a dangerous tangle of apathy that needs to be safely navigated to overcome the question, “Is this good enough to get me an A?” Education so often trains students to think that the only correct answer is the one that the teachers has decided is correct. So it is that students often have trouble working out their confusion and finding their own answers when they are required to come *together* with the dictated answer of the American educational system’s *guide*.

### **Zero sum competition**

Zero sum is a term based in mathematics. In economics, games, etc... when gains are added up and losses are subtracted off, you are left with zero. Zero sum competition is a situation where one party feels that they are gaining more then the other parties in the competition, but when you add up the losses of the other parties they negate the gains and things add up to zero. Zero sum competition in the classroom happens when the students are pitted against each other. The competition can be set up by the teacher or by classmates as they are strive in a zero sum environment. Yet the students who see themselves as successful are not really better off, because their success was created only at the expense of their classmates. Students within a classroom might see each other as external obstacles that stand in the way of personal success instead of viewing their peers as participants that might help to construct a scaffold which could build each other up. “Children must be helped by an adult and/or other children to function intellectually at a level beyond that at which they might otherwise be expected to perform” (Hagaman, 1990, p. 153). The former head of the American Psychological Association (APA), Jerome Bruner wrote the article *Culture, communication, and cognition: Vygotskian perspectives* (1985), which explained scaffolding in this way, “the tutor in effect performs the critical function of *scaffolding*, the learning task to make it possible for the child, in Vygotsky’s word, to internalize external knowledge and convert it into a tool for conscious control” (p. 25).

Until this scaffolding can be built, many students will continue to use tactics like slander, belittling comments, teasing and manipulation to get ahead of their classmates, or as excuses for falling behind, according to Bishop (1989). When zero sum competition is done away with, to allow a classroom community based on shared goals and successes, then the core of the issue of apathy can start to be addressed. Getting rid of zero sum competition can change the direction from students bringing classmates down to students bringing classmates up. Bringing classmates up can in turn open the door to a close association with peers and creativity that can guide students to a correct and possibly ever changing answer of what a student's personal values and achievements, might be.

### **Compassion and support**

Elliot Aronson (2002) paints this picture, "For a great many youngsters, the high school atmosphere is extremely unpleasant. For some, it is a living hell" (p. 211). This is because students are not always kind to one another. There are, of course, other reasons as well and many of those reasons are the personal issues that students are dealing with outside of class. Aronson continued, saying, "Given this kind of social atmosphere, and given the fact that teenagers spend almost half their waking hours embedded in that atmosphere, it should not be surprising that occasionally, some of these students... do damage to themselves or others" (p. 211). All people have personal issues that they need to deal with. I will give an example from my life:

I have *BP*, bipolar depression, and it is something that I am continually aware of. For 10 years my life I was hugely influenced by it, because I did not know that something was physically imbalanced in my head. The last nine years though I have been aware of the illness and have been largely stabilized by medication. Still the monster, *BP*, is always watching and ready to take control.

The depression cycle is what effected me most significantly. The manic spells were relatively mild, but the depression was deep. I hate and fear the depression cycle. I also feared to tell anyone about it. I felt that people would judge me harshly, be disappointed in me and I would hurt the ones I loved by bringing them fear because of my romancing the ideas of suicide. Finally my hand was forced and I told my family. There was a great feeling of relief to have others know and give me support. That support is what led me to define the problem and get medication to stabilize my moods. More recently I was listening to music by Kimya Dawson and her song *Competition* really struck me with a powerful remembrance of my depression. Her words resonated with me, they are as follows:

...I'd wake up and I'd hear them say, "You're fat, ugly and stupid you should really be ashamed. No one will ever like you you're not good at anything." And, sometimes I'd rise to the challenge, but other times I'd feel so bad that I could not get out of bed. And on the days I stayed in bed I sang and sang and sang about how crappy I felt, not realizing how many other people would relate. Now people send me emails that say thanks for saying the things they did not know how to say. And the people in my head still visit me some times and they bring all of their friends but I do not mind. I play my guitar like lightning. When I sing, I like it when you sing too loud and clear, different voices different tones saying, 'yeah we're not alone.' ... (Dawson, 2006)

I realized that I wanted to make an art piece for both the manic and depression cycles and a third work that would tie the other two works into a cycle. The reason for this was to help other people who may be struggling with BP to know that someone relates to them, that they are not isolated in their struggles. I looked at these works and they helped me remember how bad things were without medication and what depression could feel like in the minds of others. This reminder brought awareness which in turn brought empathy that allowed me to better relate with family, friends and students.

Every student has some package they are carrying with them. I have a student whose mom died less than a month ago. I have a student who has no mom, but who has a dad who is an alcoholic and is abusive. I had a past student who was always in pain from never-ending migraines, he ended up killing himself last year and now his brother is in my class. I had a student who loved softball and was very good at it, but her knees went bad and she couldn't play anymore, and to top it off she had to have both knees replaced. There are problems of some kind in everybody's life. Students need support and kindness.

One major component of the classroom community was students working with students, building them up and working together. Alfie Kohn in his article *Caring Kids* (1991) said that, "A dozen years of schooling often do nothing to promote generosity or a commitment to the welfare of others. To the contrary, students are graduated who think that being smart means looking out for number one" (p. 498). Students working together and developing compassion is an important part of developing a classroom community. One concern with the development of caring is the shortage of time. Nel Noddings is an educational scholar and former public school teacher who focuses a great deal on caring education. Noddings (2005) discusses a need for continuity of teachers and students where the teacher and students are together for three or more years. The Jewelry 2 class is a one semester class, which is a relatively short time to spend together as a class. This lack of time could reduce the amount of measurable change of caring in the class.

### **Ownership of the physical facilities**

In a community where people really share responsibility and ownership you can find things like *The Neighborhood Watch*, which is a neighborhood where the citizens have come together and decided they will share the common goal of watching for suspicious persons who might be vandals, thieves, or

worse. This is a voluntary collaborative effort to protect the members of the community and their property. Many of the students in my classes do not see the classroom and the tools as part of their stewardship, or their community responsibility. Perhaps they have been taught to be *idiots* as described by Parker (2005). Parker looks at the root of the word idiot and the context from which it was derived. Idiot stems from the root *idios*, which means private, separate, self-centered. Parker goes on to describe how the Greeks used it as a term of reproach, because anyone who was only looking-out-for-number-one, was a threat to themselves as well as the society around them. “In fact, those whose mantra is ‘look out or number one’ are actually at a greater disadvantage in any sort of society than those who are skilled at working with others and inclined to do so” according to Kohn (1991, p. 499). I will illustrate an example in the following paragraph that shows how this selfishness, or idiocy hurts the ability to construct a classroom community.

In a Jewelry class, there are a number of specialized tools, as well as a number of around-the-garage type tools. Because tools can be expensive and because there is limited space in the classroom, there is not a set of tools for every person in all of my classes, or even for everyone in a single class to have one. The tool that we had the most of, was the jewelry-saw. It is like a small coping-saw that is used to cut intricate patterns out of metal. There was a classroom set of thirty-five saws. The saws hung in a cabinet to allow everyone access to them. There were enough saws for every person in a class to use one during a period. There were some students who were selfish enough that they chose not put their saw back into the cabinet, generally because they already had a saw blade loaded in, and they did not want to unload and then reload the saw again when they came back the next day. So, the students put the jewelry-saw into their personal box for use during their next period. This is different from *The Tragedy of the Commons* by Garrett Hardin (1968). Hardin describes an idea of *commons*, which is a finite thing



that is available to all. Hardin gives an example of a herder who will acquire extra cattle because there is a direct benefit to that particular herder. The herder is, in Hardin's words, "a rational man" and knows that even though the addition of cattle to the field will lead to overgrazing, the benefit to that particular herder outweighs the overgrazing. However, most of the herders who use the common ground think the same way. All the herders acquire more cattle, and the massive overgrazing ruins everything for everyone. The difference between the saw hoarding and the *Tragedy of the Commons* is that no matter how many students use the tools, the tools are not used up, they are not finite in the same way that natural resources are. The hoarding of the saws was a problem, because throughout the day more and more saws disappeared, and by the last periods, there were not enough jewelry-saws for the students to use. The same thing happened with all different kinds of tools, and it can be very problematic when there is only one or two of the tools in the entire classroom. If the students learned to see that the tools were there for them every time if they did not hoard, then selflessness would occur in tool use and that would be a step towards building a classroom community. Some may disagree and say that the tool situation is exactly like the *Tragedy of the Commons*, but Hardin himself said, "Education can counteract the natural tendency to do the wrong thing, but the inexorable succession of generations requires that the basis for this knowledge be constantly refreshed" (p. 3). Since education can counteract the tragedy of the commons, the classroom community would not be in danger there, because its purpose was that of educating the students to become conscientious of the equipment and supplies of the class for the use of all.

Another variation of students looking-out-for-number-one, was when students would not put tools away. There were often jewelry-saws and other tools, strewn all around the classroom. At the end of each class I would go around and ask students to put tools away and some gladly helped out. Some

students grabbed handfuls of tools off of tables and threw them all into a single bin, often the wrong bin, and many tools were not found when they were needed and many got broken from heavier tools landing on top of them. Finally, there were the students who said, “That’s not my mess” and refuse to cleanup. The two latter types of attitudes inhibited all the students, including themselves, from creating great works because they did not have the resources to make things. They “fail to grasp the interdependence of liberty and community” (Parker, 2005, p. 345). The classroom and the tools provide a system of learning. One goal of the classroom community was to help students to help themselves and others gain access to that system. I needed to help to build a scaffolding of community in order to help the students realize the importance of tools and supplies to all of their classmates as well as themselves. However, I could not do this until the students began to see the importance of the tools they were using and how their classmates would need them too. “We need to get away from the image of the child operating entirely on his or her own. I want to look at the development of the child in the context of human interaction” (Bruner, 1982, p. 63). In a sense the idiot was an enemy to the productivity of the class and an oppressor of sorts, because without the tools to create the jewelry, the jewelry could not be made. The development of ownership, of the physical facilities, “cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity therefore it cannot unfold in the antagonistic relations between oppressors and oppressed” (Freire, 1970, p. 73).

### **Development of a conscientious public**

Philosophers of education have repeatedly agreed that a central goal of education, and higher education in particular, is the production of citizens prepared to serve the community (Rocheleau, 2004, p. 6). Rocheleau, a professor of philosophy at Michigan State University, cites philosophers throughout history such as Plato, Aristotle, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill, Jean-Jacques Rousseau,

Thomas Jefferson, and John Dewey as promoting one of the major purposes of education, which is the development of a caring and responsible society.

Paulo Freire (1970) describes the lack of caring and interdependence in education, as a system that will lead to the development of a social class, which forms an egotistical pursuit of possessions. This social class will feel a privilege above those who have less. This higher social class will then dehumanize themselves and others as they become oppressors of those whom they perceive as incompetent and lazy, often doing so to retain their own status and position. This social class of oppressors then begins to justify their “privileges” and further dehumanize the less fortunate by providing, what they feel are, generous gestures. When the oppressors see the oppressed’s desire for independence as ingratitude, the oppressed become a potential enemy who needs to be watched. But, in a system of education where people work together to become a community by choice, a healthy society can flourish, like Weed Patch School discussed in the introduction of this thesis. Weed Patch was a school developed in cooperation with migrant workers from the dust bowl and run and cared for by the migrant workers who had been oppressed by the California agricultural communities. Weed Patch School began to flourish to the point where many of the former oppressors began seeking enrollment in the school (Stanley, 1992).

John Dewey (1916) addresses the oppressed in another way. Dewey looked at the problem of ownership in one’s education or work when the learner, or worker, is not given any say in how or why things are done. When the attitude and practice is that of giving and taking orders, then no true social group can be formed, regardless of how closely the people’s individual work relates to others. However, “Making the individual a sharer or partner in the associated activity so that he feels its success as his success, its failure as his failure, is the completing step” (p. 14) and the key to a classroom community

education. The inclusion of all is what will help to form a greater more positively functioning society. Hence, education needs to be a socially democratic system, where *democratic* is defined as including all the people working together as a whole. There may be people who refuse to work together in a community, but this democratic system should be a work in progress that fosters decency, civility, justice, freedom, and caring (Goodlad, J.; Goodlad, S.; Mantle-Bromley, C.). That fostering will hopefully change the non-participants into people who want to help build community in the classroom. The purposes of the classroom community are to develop a caring and responsible society that eliminates student apathy, does away with zero sum competition, teaches compassion and provides support for the well being of others, promotes a sense of ownership over the classroom and its facilities and finally prepares students to contribute in building up a conscientious public.

### **The Creation of an Environment Where a Classroom Community Can Emerge**

True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the “rejects of life,” from extending their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands—whether of individuals or entire peoples—need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world. (Freire, 1970, p. 29)

Community cannot be forced, that is a system of oppression. Community is something that requires work to be successful. To develop an environment where the classroom community could emerge I used several methods of teaching and hoped that the students would become more and more free to form a community of their own volition. The methods were: do-it-yourself or DIY grades, process diary, and personal motivation.

## DIY grades

In *Drive* (Pink, 2009) there was a possible solution to abrogate my negative view of grades. In the last section of his book Pink has his *tool box*, which is where he gives suggestions for the application of his theories. One of the tools is the *DIY* grading system. Pink writes,

Good grades become a reward for compliance—but do not have much to do with learning... So try experimenting with the DYI... At the beginning of a semester, ask students to list their top learning goals, then, at the end of the semester, ask them to create their own report card along with a one-or two-paragraph review of their progress (p. 176-177).

There were possible problems with having students grade themselves, such as students learning to manipulate and to justify without putting in effort, or polarizing weak and strong students. Polarizing of weak versus strong students is looked at in a study by Boud and Falchikov (1989), in Australia, it explained that, "'good' students tended to underrate themselves compared to staff marks, whereas 'weak' students tended to overrate themselves." I had come across these problems in my teaching, mainly when I taught ceramics. In ceramics, students worked at vastly different paces, and some students lost projects in the kiln, and often glazing, in the student's mind, ruins projects. Therefore, at the end of the semester I would often have students just choose their own grades. Largely, students seemed to do fairly well on choosing the same grade that I would have chosen, but there was always some manipulation and justification by "weak" students and grading below performance level by "good" students.

Yet there are also possible problems when teachers grade students as well. I very much dislike grading, and the more I do it, the more lackadaisical I become. There are also times at the end terms or semesters when students, or parents have come in begging for, or demanding me to make a grade

change. I usually do change the grade, I say to my self, “What will it matter in 100 years if I give this student a ....?” Then there are times when I am sitting at my computer and instead of just giving the student what they are begging for I play the song *No* by They Might Be Giants (2002) which goes, “No is no. No is always no. If they say no, it means a thousand times no. No plus no equals no...” and so on. The problem is that I am not consistent. Paul Dressel (as cited in Kohn, 1993) states, “a grade can be regarded only as an inadequate report of an inaccurate judgment by a biased and variable judge of the extent to which a student has attained an undefined level of mastery of an unknown proportion on an indefinite amount of material” ( p. 201-202). Keeping in mind that problems with accuracy can happen whether students are grading or teachers are grading, one study showed that even students in elementary school can accurately assess themselves if the emphasis of the assessment is on mastery rather than performance (Butler, 1990).

I felt that more was needed than a beginning goal and an end assessment to help students to accurately implement DYI grades. Pink (2009) also talks about giving one’s self a *performance review*, which is the evaluation of one’s big goals and the setting and evaluating of smaller goals. I thought that a regular five to ten minute reflective performance review would be very effective for keeping the students goals in mind and documenting learning. Since my students are on an A-day/B-day schedule and only have my class a maximum of three times per week, that documenting individual progress each class period would be adequate but not excessive. I felt I needed to regularly read the student reviews to find out which students needed help achieving their goals. The time it took to regularly read all the reviews and the time it took to brainstorm with the students as they came up with their original learning goals was significant. In hindsight, I can see that I should have spent more time working with the students to make sure that they set more specific goals and logged their process as opposed to just writing what they

did each day. Even though the work ethic was higher and more sustained this semester as opposed to past semesters, students still had a lot of down time. I can see the allure of giving multiple choice tests, then just tacking a grade on the students' report card at the end of the semester, because it would have been faster and significantly easier than reading and responding to students every class. However, Anna Steadman, my wife, who has an MS in Instructional Psychology and Technology, told me, "When you save time in assessment, you sacrifice accuracy" (A. Steadman, personal communication, November 6, 2010).

Pink (2009) makes a powerful argument for autonomy and learning goals in education that resonated with me as a teacher who was interested in promoting self-motivation and responsibility. Alfie Kohn (1993) however, a psychologist and author, notes that grades are a reward for some and a punishment for others. Regardless of which, for many students, grades are not just ineffective, but actually can do harm in the learning process, because students who have traditionally done poorly might see the grade as another affirmation of their inability to perform correctly in school. On the other hand, students who consistently get perfect grades are continually recognized as good students who are capable of winning the respect and admiration of those in power, namely teachers and parents. Kohn suggests to do away with grades completely. Kohn also says however, that if only one teacher in a school gets rid of grades then that teacher's class will very likely be on the student's I-do-not-have-to-worry-about-that-class-because-it-does-not-really-count list and student learning will again be sacrificed. I felt that the DYI grading system was an excellent option for turning my negative attitude toward grades around and the grade's negative effects on students educational progress into a valuable assessment tool that would lead to learning goals and not performance goals. I felt that if a student was not trying to shape metal into a grade, then the pressure of performance will go away, and the student

can work on shaping the metal into creative jewelry instead. I used the DIY grades to give the students the peace of mind that they could grade themselves, since they knew what they had done and how hard it was for them to do it. Monroe, a Jewelry 2 student, can be looked at as a quick example. It seemed to me that he was doing very little in class, and I had allowed him to sign up for two sections of the course. However Monroe was working, and helping others. When it came time for the term grade he gave himself an A and justified it by drawing pictures and explaining what he had done. It turned out that Monroe had more work completed, with greater levels of creativity, than I would have ever guessed. I talked to some of his other teachers, and he was referred to as a student who did nothing. I now wonder if he really did nothing in their classes, or if they only saw him do nothing. Monroe did have regular diary entries that, though short, could be pieced together to verify his grade. The daily performance reviews that allowed all the students a way to track their progress and aid them in making a more accurate decision in the DIY grading process, were their process diaries.

### **Process Diary**

The process diary was an ongoing log where students wrote regarding their progress, such as things they do not understand, or processes they needed to work on. This record of details about the students' methods of studying, their beliefs about their competencies and their progress was a great benefit to them as they continued on their paths to understand and master the production of jewelry (Zimmerman, 2008).

Students were required to set goals for themselves at the beginning of each term. As noted by Pink (2009), I was aware that rigid goal-setting could stifle autonomy, which plays an integral part in the development of intrinsic motivation and which in turn plays an integral part in the abolishment of apathy. However, when the students set their own goals, the autonomy is not sacrificed. The goals



themselves were needed as a form of accountability for individuals in relation to the classroom community, as well as to begin self-direction for the student. I have let students decide what they wanted to make in the past, and they initially got very excited about planning their own project. However, as the days went by, many students often lost direction or momentum and ended up sitting around talking instead of learning and achieving their goals. The reason the process diary was employed was because “By using a Process Diary a record of reflections can be built up representing evidence of the journey taken by a pupil. This informs the assessment of a pupil's performance” (Rogers & Clare, 1994, p.23). The process diary has proven effective in reaching the study goals that students set for themselves (Zimmerman, 2008). I found this to be true. In all of my 105 students all but two said that the process diaries helped them, whether in keeping motivated, keeping on track, improving creativity, or for use as a learning tool, but in all cases, it allowed them to track what they were, or needed to be doing.

The overall assessment of the students' learning came largely from their process diaries. The reason that student self-assessment was more effective for student learning had to do with the sense of self. “The self is defined as an abstract representation of past experience with personal data. Phenomenologically, it is a kind of vague idea about who the person thinks he/she is” (Rogers; Kuiper & Kirker, 1977, p. 677). The process diary supplied the personal data in concrete form for the students to reference and because the students know more about who they are, they had a more accurate reference point of where their level of competency was at the beginning of the course in relation to the end of the course. The diary helped the students to visualize what they had done each day and looking back through it should have provided them with a fairly accurate assessment of their own abilities because as Rogers et al. (1977) stated, “In the realm of human information processing it is difficult to conceive of

an encoding device that carries more potential for the rich embellishment of stimulus input than does self-reference” (p. 678).

### **Intrinsic Motivation**

It has been my experience that when someone is very excited about something, he/she wants to share it with others, whether it is a new joke, something he/she made, or some newly acquired toy. Two of the major goals of the classroom community were for students to share the work load and to teach each other the skills required to use equipment and other resources. I thought it was very important for the students to be intrinsically motivated to participate in the class. I wanted to see the intrinsic motivation in each student bring them enough excitement about what they were doing that they would want to help their classmates, not compete with them.

There were some strategies for developing intrinsic motivation that were tried in this study. Many of these strategies have been adapted from Daniel Pink’s book *Drive* (2009). Some strategies have already been mentioned, including DIY grades, personal process diaries, and personal goals based on mastery rather than performance. Pink defines three major concepts that help to jump-start and cultivate intrinsic motivation, they are: autonomy, mastery, and purpose. I will briefly describe these concepts and explain how they influenced this study.

#### **Autonomy**

Autonomy is different from looking-out-for-number-one. Autonomy is a motivator that has to do with acting and behaving by choice, not by a perceived force. In the classroom community the students were given the freedom to decide what they wanted to focus on. One student might want to work on making earrings out of plate metal and play with textures and piercing. Others may not want to do anything at all with plate metal, but instead want to focus on the lost wax process. Each student had the

choice of what type of projects they wanted to make and what processes they chose to employ. The students also had freedom from grades, in that they graded themselves, so they had the choice to try difficult things and possibly fail because they did not have to cater to my opinions of what needs to be done to get any particular letter grade.

### **Mastery**

Mastery is a move from compliance to engagement. Mastery is a mind set, a pain and an asymptote (Pink, 2009) One must change the way one thinks and realize that failure is a good source of learning that can be painful, but without the pain of failure, it is difficult to improve. Since there could always be room for improvement, you may never reach actual mastery. Hence, it takes hard work and self discipline, as one works towards mastery. One must know that one may never achieve it because there will always be room for improvement. The students may not all have been jewelry masters upon completion of their Jewelry 2 course, however, this was not the goal of this study or this course. I wanted the students to be on the road to mastery through a sense of intrinsic motivation, with a goal to improve their skills as they themselves sought to fulfill their own needs in responding to the broad discourse of the jewelry arts.

### **Purpose**

Purpose is having a significant reason for doing something. Having a sense of purpose is about making meaning and valuing one's contributions. If we know why we are doing something and how the accomplishment of the task or acquisition of the skill will apply to our lives or the betterment of others, then we will be more motivated to do that task, or acquire a particular skill. I attempted to help the students develop purpose by helping them see the potentials of jewelry creation skills in other aspects of

life. I also attempted to help the students to develop purpose by letting them choose what most applied to their lives as their projects.

## **Conclusion**

As I reviewed the literature, there was no reference to a classroom community specifically as I defined it: a group of students who are aware of each others' needs and share a common goal to learn, teach and succeed. A classroom community is a space where respect is felt and shown, by the instructor and the students, for self, others and property. It encourages the development of a value system, which seeks the betterment and wellbeing, not only of the class but, for all of society.

The desire to establish classroom community, arose from several issues: student apathy, zero sum competition, compassion and support, ownership of facilities, and development of a conscientious public. The pedagogical strategies used to address these issues were: students setting their own learning objectives, tracking their own progress towards meeting their leaning objectives, and DIY grading.

### Chapter 3 Methodology

The data gathered in this qualitative study was drawn primarily from process diaries that the students wrote in daily, art works they made, video recordings of selected classes, and a reflective journal that I kept. This data is a series of short vignettes, any where from a personal recap of what a student did on a given day to the tale of what the students looked like and how they acted as they ambled into the classroom to begin another session of class. This data contained knowledge that needs to be shared, but cannot be simply charted in a quantitative manner to effectively represent meaningful responses about autonomy and mastery. Therefore, I chose an inquiry methodology to gather, analyze and interpret the data. In particular, I draw from Connelly & Clandinin, (1990), Herman & Vervaeck (2001) and Nygren & Blom, (2001) to attend to the complexities of this study. Along with this methodology, I utilize Classroom Action research (Cameron-Jones, 1983; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2008; Stenhouse, 1981) because two objectives of the research were to make a social change and to be a reflective process for the researcher to improve student learning and engagement.

#### **Narrative Inquiry**

Stories surround us. Our lives seem to be founded on them. For an example, Mark Twain in his novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) has Tom and his friend, Joe Harper, acting out the story of Robin Hood. The story is so strong to the boys that they follow it without question. At one point when Robin (Tom) and Guy of Gisborne (Joe Harper) are fighting, Robin is not winning, and he should be:

So they "went it lively," panting and perspiring with the work. By and by Tom shouted: "Fall! fall! Why don't you fall?" "I shan't! Why don't you fall yourself? You're getting the worst of it." "Why, that ain't anything. I can't fall; that ain't the way it is in the book. The book says, 'Then with one back-handed stroke he slew poor Guy of Gisborne.' You're to turn around and let me hit

you in the back." There was no getting around the authorities, so Joe turned, received the whack and fell (p.86)

Twain's story then intertwines in others' lives, shaping them, and this perpetuates as the story moves on, like my older brother, pretending to be Tom Sawyer, acting out Robin Hood. My life was partially shaped by my brother's life, which was partially shaped by Tom Sawyer. I can certainly see how stories intertwine into the lives of the living. Speaking about narrative inquiry Connelly & Clandinin (1990, p. 2) said, "it has a long intellectual history both in and out of education. The main claim for the use of narrative in educational research is that humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives." The students process diaries reflected this need to tell stories, and the value of narratives as research data.

The jewelry that is created by my students tells me stories about them. Coder loved aviation and made a plane ring. Set was obsessed with basketball and his Michael Jordan medallion gave it away. Keaton loved the females, he made very nice jewelry and gave them away as tokens of his affection. Topher loved soccer. He made a medallion of a man doing a bicycle kick. These examples go on and on, and when I saw each jewelry piece, I asked the student-maker about the materials selected, the symbols, shapes, and textures chosen and the stories grew. Sometimes this happens orally and sometimes students elaborated this all in their diaries. Topher later wrote about his making the varsity soccer team. He invited me to one particular game. I could not go, but that led to a discussion about the muddy public field that led the city to ban the soccer players from it. This bit of information let me know that our stadium is not big enough for soccer and it is *crowned*, higher in the center and sloped on the sides to help water drain which would alter the balls course. So, when the soccer players were moved, the Lacrosse team was bumped into the stadium. This was a lot of information that was spinning around me

and allowed me to get insights into the undercurrents of the classroom. Stories share information that ties the classroom community tighter together through a vast web of connection that expands understandings outside of K-12 disciplinary content knowledge.

### **Classroom Action Research**

According to Kemmis & McTaggart (2008),

Primacy is given to teachers' self-understandings and judgements. The emphasis is "practical," that is, on the interpretations that teachers and students are making and acting on in the situation. In other words, classroom action research is not just practical idealistically, in a utopian way, or just about how interpretations might be different "in theory"; it is also practical in Aristotle's sense of practical reasoning about how to act rightly and properly in a situation with which one is confronted. (p. 24)

Classroom Action research was chosen because of the need for the teacher and the students to develop a classroom community. Community was based on emancipation from oppression of students by teacher as bearer of all knowledge, oppression of students by students because of zero sum competition and oppression by educational procedures which used tests and grades to teach students to not think (Freire, 1970). Classroom Action research also addressed the need to teach affective community skills to improve the collaborative and caring working environment of the classroom. Another reason I chose Classroom Action as my lens is because, as Kemmis & McTaggart (2008) explain, it focuses on changing the learning process in several ways. First in what people do, second in how people interact with others, third what people mean and what they value, and finally the discourses in which people understand and interpret their world (p. 279).

The three things that Kemmis & McTaggart say describe Classroom Action research also describe the questions I wanted to explore in this classroom community study. I wanted my students to investigate the answers to these questions as well. The questions were huge. I cannot possibly know everything people do, but I wanted to know some of what they did with the lessons they learned from my class. I wanted to know how my students' interactions with their classmates changed their lives and how they could take that out into the world. I wanted to understand what the students in my class value. It is hard to support and assist students when one does not really know them or what they think is important in their lives. I really wanted to get into a discourse with my students about their understandings and interpretations of my class and how those interpretations were affected by me and my values as they perceive them through my actions, and the world outside of the classroom. I am sure I will never know even a fraction of the answers to those questions. I chose to use Classroom Action research along with narrative inquiry to help provide a trajectory and to frame my inquiry.

### **Method of inquiry**

As I described in the background section of this chapter, I have personally changed a great deal over the last ten years as a teacher. Those changes began after I was diagnosed with BP. There is an average of 10 years that people live with BP before it is diagnosed. I was right at the center of that average. I started exhibiting symptoms of BP at the age of 17. At the age of 27 I was diagnosed. Now, at the age of 37, I am creating this study. For 10 years I developed coping mechanisms to keep away the paranoia, to fight the desire to kill myself, and to keep from feeling trapped like a caged animal. I avoided things. I mocked things. I ran from things. I laughed at things that could cause serious contemplation. I tried to distance myself from caring and trusting emotions, because when I opened up my heart to let in real emotions, darkness and fear climbed in with them. Even now as I write this I have



to stop and remind myself that I am safe from myself and I wipe away tears I do not think should be there.

I have never been cruel. Now as I understand my feelings better and some of what I have gone through I realize that I did not want anyone to have to live in pain and fear. No, I have never been cruel, I just did not have much compassion or empathy. When I started taking medication and my BP stabilized I began to heal and develop again. I also began to perceive certain problems in my classroom. These are the issues of apathy as well as student suffering, as I described previously, and that was the motivation for this study. I think that I started to see these apathy and suffering problems in my students because I finally began to see them in myself, and correct them. Now, 10 years later, I have finally started to study the literature about education and realized that much of what I read, I had already begun to work out on my own. I had, however, come across much in my studies that could bring my own trial and error conclusions much further to the realization of the construction of a classroom community. The process was similar to when I started teaching. I had never made jewelry, but I acted like I knew what I was doing, and through trial and error I improved by small laborious increments. When I incorporated study, I made huge improvements. I was always amazed that I could take a month to figure out or devise a process or skill and then teach it in only ten minutes. After years of trying to figure out how to develop a classroom community, I have, with the help from the literature and research of others, developed a plan that, I hoped, would bring it to fruition.

### **Data Collection**

I collected data to figure out if a classroom community was forming. I documented what I did and how I did it, so I could try to replicate it if it worked and change and improve whether my strategies worked or not, as is consistent with action research. This was a qualitative study, and the methods I used

were deeply reflective. The use of reflection comes from my habit of constantly analyzing my feelings, to understand if I would be safe that day, or that hour. I collected the data from my students' personal process diaries, from a reflective journal of my own. I also used video recordings to document group work, demonstrations, and other peer and teacher interactions that I felt might provide insights regarding the development of a classroom community. I chose not to tell the students when I was recording, so that I could get a more accurate sense of what was going on. I did not want the students acting for the camera. I also placed the camera in different locations around the room to allow for a more holistic observation of classroom community development.

### **Data Analysis**

I gathered and organized the data around the great narrative of Mountain View High School's Jewelry classroom. I was in the classroom and I had a vested interest in the study, I played a part in the narrative. The information I gathered from the students process diaries gave me insights into how and why they worked the way they did and what type of role I played in that process. I did not ask for any personal information that would infringe upon the students' right to privacy. I did, however, work with the students in a fashion that allowed the emergence of an environment where a pupil could share details about their life that would allow classmates to make connections that would assist those classmates in the development of compassion and empathy.

According to Herman and Vervaeck (2001), a narrative is the semiotic representation of a series of events. This definition allows the unrestricted interaction between reader and text. Any text, or narrative is removed from the actual event. "Investigators do not have direct access to another's experience. We deal with ambiguous representations of it[:] talk, text, interaction, and

interpretation” (Riessman, 1993, p. 9). If I have an experience and I write it down in great detail the text will still not cover everything that I have experienced.

As the narrator of my thesis, I was a *reflective narrator*. A reflective narrator can tell the reader in first or third person what happened in a narrative, i.e. where the narrator changed mode from telling the story into evaluating it (Nygren & Blom, 2001). This reflective narrator has seen almost everything and is now looking back, and dictating how things really were, according to their personal point of view with a lens of hindsight. The reflective narrator withholds information from the reader, because he/she does not know everything that everybody else was thinking or doing, and because there is more to any experience than can be told in a narrative. There is also too much information to be relayed, so the narrator must choose what he/she feels is the most pertinent information.

I began to analyze the data in my student’s personal process diaries and my reflective journal, and looked for common themes that built the most accurate narrative. As a very subjective researcher using the personal “I” as a reflective narrator, I could lead the reader to think of the narrator as a separate person from the author. This is dangerous because the reader may think the narrative “is meant to underscore the ways in which the researcher is filtering and constructing the narrative, recognizing the tacit personal and political lenses through which we perceive the world...” (Freitas, 2007, p. 338). However, I could not separate myself from the narrative as being just an objective narrator since I was deeply involved in all aspects of the research as both a teacher and the primary research participant. The reader should realize that I, as the researcher, author and narrator, used a triangulation of tools to analyze the collected data to point to an interpretation that represented more than simply my sole understandings and ideas.

To analyze the data that generates an appropriate interpretation of the classroom community experiment, I utilized several tools. One of the tools I used to visualize written and transcribed data was a TagCloud (see <http://tagcrowd.com/>). A TagCloud is a visual representation of the frequency in which words appear in a text. The TagCloud was used to see what the main themes that the writing focused on throughout the study. Because, as a researcher who was looking for information regarding community development, and student interaction with classmates, and myself, I might not have realized what the students or I wrote most about. It could have been that in the end I found that I focused more on something like teaching the students to solder than on my original focus goal of building a classroom community. The TagCloud assisted in identifying major themes, by showing what words most often appeared in my reflective journal, and in the student's process diaries. The frequency of words then allowed me to refer to contexts in which specific words were used. To locate the contexts of words from the TagCloud, I used my second tool.

Figure 1: The find function window in iworks' Pages

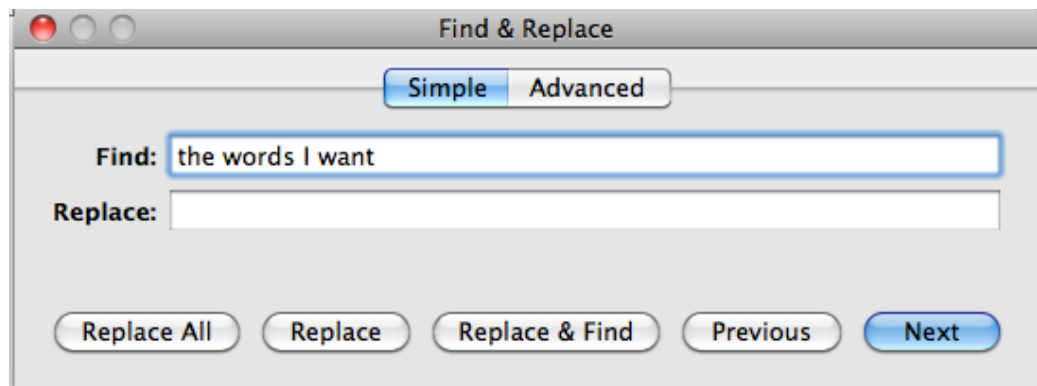


Figure X. When the word or series of words are typed on the Find window then the next button is clicked, the functions searches the document for exactly what is typed without variation.

The second tool I used is the *find* function in iWorks *Pages*, a word processing program. The find function allows a word or series of words to be located in a document by typing the desired word or series of words into a find box and hitting enter (see Figure 1). As I found the words that the TagCloud marked by frequency, I then proceeded to read the context of the words. This reading in context allowed me to see if the word *soldering*, for example, appears so often because students were helping each other with the process, thus pointing towards community development, or if it was suggesting a means of attachment that had little to do with the study at all, but appeared with great frequency because most projects required soldering at some stage. When the words read in context had significance to the study, whether they supported the desired finding or not, I would then begin to code them using my third tool, which is the *comment function* in iWork's *Pages* (see Figure 2).

The comment function was used by highlighting a section of text, and then writing the significance of that specific text in a comment box off to the side of the document . This

Figure 2: Example of the comment function in iworks® Pages

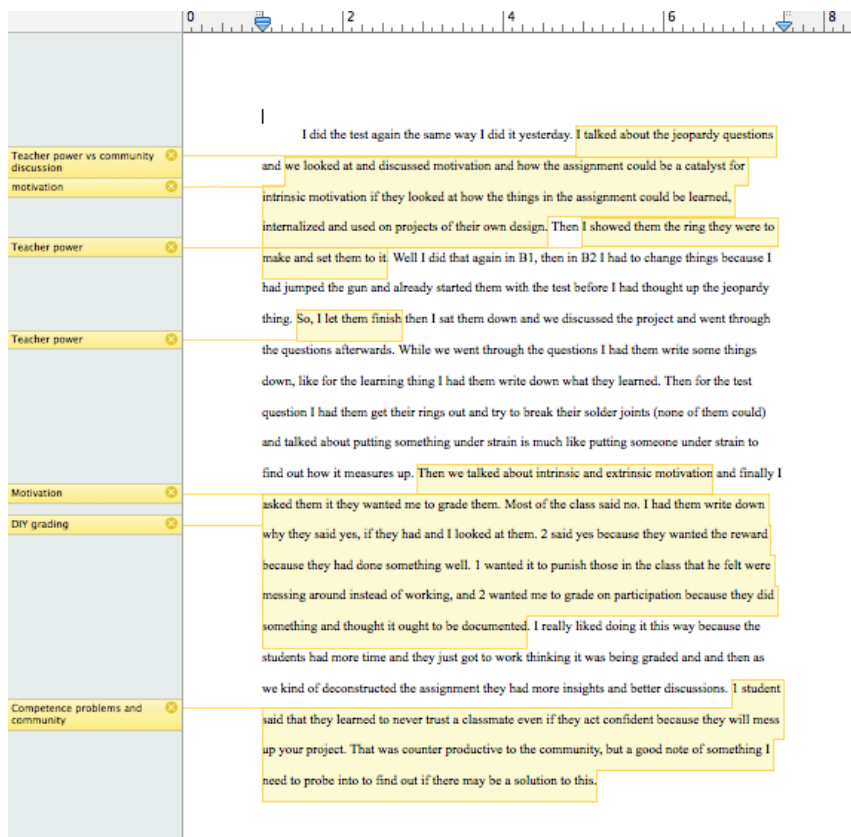


Figure X. Themes have been coded and marked by highlighting sections and then clicking on the comment icon.

comment created a memo that allowed me to separate my data into themes. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that transform the world into a series of themes, including memos to the self (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The themes then became the focus of my narrative. I used this tool as a method of coding the texts that I amassed. The three tools worked together. The words that appeared with more frequency in the TagCloud were searched with the find function and coded with the comment function to find themes. Finding themes is an important part of narrative analysis. “According to Dan McAdams (1997), these themes cluster around recurrent content in stories. The identification of

repeated subject matter thus provides a useful means of identifying key themes” (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008, p. 67). The significance of the key themes was the ability to unlock many of the subtle nuances of a classroom, and the complex interactions of people, to see how the teaching strategies used in this study created a classroom community which entailed the following foci: student apathy, zero sum competition, increasing compassion and support, while developing an ownership of the classroom facilities, and expanding the class as a conscientious public.

### **Conclusion**

This was a qualitative study using classroom action which is a research strategy with a political agenda that strives to make a change, or reform, that affects the lives of the individuals in the study, and the classroom where they, and the researcher, work (Creswell, 2009). I saw a problem and outlined it in this thesis. Then I involved the students in my Classroom Action research study to see if through their cooperation we could affect a change on the student’s learning, motivations, levels of compassion, sense of ownership, and social interactions. The findings of the study were derived from the students process diaries, video transcriptions of classroom behavior, my reflective journal, memos, and discussions with students. These findings have been thematically separated into narrative information by way of coding.

## Chapter 4 Procedure

### Overview

My procedure was to give students more autonomy within the constraints of the craft of jewelry making and the limitations of the classroom. I did this with daily process diaries, individual student goal setting, and assessment through self evaluation. I also had to get the students oriented to what was possible within the craft of jewelry making and the tools and materials available to us.

### The Jewelry Classroom: Jewelry 1 versus Jewelry 2

Learning to create jewelry is a rather technical process. When students first come into my class in Jewelry 1 they rarely have any idea what they are getting into. Most of the students know what all the different types of jewelry are, like rings, earrings, belt buckles and so on, but some do not have any idea what a pendant is or a barrette or many other types of jewelry. There are students who have, before this course, soldered using soldering irons and low temperature solder to build circuits or in stained-glass projects. However, these students soon find out that high temperature silver soldering with a torch is quite a bit different. Some students come into the class knowing how to weld, and think they will be fine at joining metals into delicate pieces of jewelry, and like the soldering iron group, they find out how wrong they are. I get students who do not speak English as a first language and some of them say that they do not know what the words mean that I am teaching them, and I have to explain that the native English speakers do not understand the words either. Generally these are words that describe processes like: dapping, repoussé, enameling, cloisonne, plique-a-jour, basse-taille, anti-clastic raising, and so on. There are also many tools that Jewelry 1 students do not know the names of, much less what they look like, or how to use them.



### **Issues of safety**

With this lack of knowledge comes issues of safety. As I stated in the previous paragraph, many of the tools are new to the students and have dangers that need to be addressed. Therefore proper usage needs to be taught not solely to be successful with technique and form, but also so that fingers are not lost and hair remains on heads. One example of tool safety can be illustrated by a student using a buffing wheel to shine his ring. This particular student, I will call him Oscar, did not always listen to important instructions and procedures during class. The buffing wheel is a cloth wheel mounted on a spindle that extends out of a motor. The motor spins at 3600 revolutions per minute, which is very fast. The wheel spins towards the operator, so, when a ring or something is being polished the operator needs to work in the bottom quarter of the wheel. This is a safety requirement because if the buffing wheel catches the item being polished when they are working on the bottom quarter it will throw the item down onto the floor, or behind the machine, which is away from the operator. All the spinning tools in the classroom work the same way, the grinders, belt sander, lap felt buffer, and so on. Oscar, as before mentioned, did not put great import in listening during demonstrations about various procedural processes or to safety instructions. I try to emphasize safety because even though I teach in a large classroom space, these classes are full and students are still young. There are signs on the walls around all the tools to remind students of procedures and I give demonstrations with stories that describe potential dangers. One day, Oscar made it into the stories, and his is the favorite of all safety stories told in my class.

There was a demonstration going on about a creation process. The entire class was supposed to be watching. Oscar however was not. The buffing wheels are in the front of my classroom, just to the right of the white board. Oscar was shining his ring on the buffer while I was teaching the new process. Oscar was not paying attention to me, but was being quiet and allowing the remainder of the class to pay

attention. Rather than fight him about it, I continued to teach. Unfortunately for Oscar, he had not paid attention on the buffing wheel demonstration earlier in the term because he was polishing his ring on the top, front quarter of the buffing wheel, which I did not notice. As the whole class watched me, just a few feet to the left of Oscar, Oscar's ring got torn from his grasp and hurtled at an incredible speed directly into his groin. Oscar dropped like a rock, and only seconds afterwards the class figured out what had happened. Oscar learned his lesson about where to polish on the buffing wheel. Now years later students are learning from Oscar's mistake, and we have not had the incident repeated.

The point of the last few paragraphs is, that if a class full of students are brought into a Jewelry classroom and told that they can make whatever they want, using whatever tools and processes they please, then there will be a class full of confused students who are in danger of injuring themselves and the school room with its equipment and supplies. When I am present, I can help to monitor safety issues, but not one hundred percent of the time since the tools are spaced all around the large classroom. So it is that the use of almost complete autonomy in a beginning level Jewelry class would not work well, at least if autonomy is defined as doing whatever one wants without knowledge of potential risks involved in action, as well as potentials gained in action. The students need a base of knowledge before they can take off and do their own thing. This is not the type of autonomy my study addressed. Such a classroom would be like bringing a person who could not read into a library and telling him or her to choose any novel she/he wants to read, and expecting him/her to be able to read and enjoy it. I am interested in addressing questions about pedagogy, autonomy, and community building in a Jewelry class where students have had some introduction with some of the tools and processes but are able to extend their own interests about broader dialogues within art and jewelry arts. It is for that very reason that I chose to do this study with my Jewelry 2 class.

## **Time Considerations**

In Mountain View High School, there are four class periods each day. The classes are on an A-day B-day schedule which means that students have four classes on one day, then on the next they have four different classes, alternating back and forth every other day. There are 68 Days of class in a semester, so 34 days for each class. Mondays are short days in order for teachers to meet and collaborate. There are several assemblies, and several more pep-rallies throughout the year. Several minutes are spent taking roll at the beginning of each class period, and there is a ten-minute cleanup time at the end of each class period. With those time constraints, the students are only in class working for about 65 minutes each time they meet. That means that in a whole semester the students only have about 36 hours of time to learn everything they need to learn and produce all of their projects. That is about four and a half days on a regular 8-hour-a-day job. Imagine getting a technical job doing work that you have never done before, or never even knew existed, getting training for 4 and a half days, then being turned loose and expected to do everything from there on out. That would be a difficult job to do perfectly, or even well. Then remember that the students are teenagers and they spend 2124 hours in the semester outside of class. I think that most students have jewelry on their minds for a very small amount of time in those 2124 hours. With the limited amount of time spent in Jewelry, it seems almost ludicrous to tell the students who have only had 36 hours of training that they are responsible to come up with their own learning and production goals for an entire semester. However, that is exactly what I did in this study, to see if with the limited time and knowledge the students would step up, put away any apathy they had and work harder creating and researching jewelry not only inside of class, but outside as well. I was pleased to see this happen. After the second week of the study I had more students coming in during outside of class time than I usually have. I also had students going of their own volition, outside

of school time, to find bugs and animal parts to cast, to get old fashion silverware to make jewelry out of, to get leather, hemp, beads, stone, adhesives and other things that they would need to work inside of class.

### **Personal Goal Setting and Intrinsic Motivation**

The very first day of class I handed out a goal setting sheet (see Appendix A) and I handed each student a spiral bound note book. Then after I took roll in front of the class, welcoming back the students, some of whom I had not seen in my class for more than a year, I began to introduce the autonomy part of the study. I talked to the students about how much control they generally have over what they are taught and what they are expected to learn in any given class. The students and I then moved on to have a conversation about grades and what they meant in general. I asked the class what a grade meant and how important they thought grades were. One of my students, who I will call Hercules, said that they were not very good because you cannot define how much is learned by a single letter. I thought that was a good insight. A student who, I will call Jen, said that grades were necessary because some people did not do anything in classes and they needed to fail. I found it interesting that Jen would see grades, for the most part, as a punitive device. I explained to the class that grades inhibited creativity, and reduced productivity according to Alfie Kohn (2000). I also addressed the topic of internal versus external motivation, and how using grades as a system of rewards and punishments reduced intrinsic motivation in studies cited by Daniel Pink (2009). Then I turned to the topic of goals. I asked the students if anyone other than themselves had ever set a goal for them and required them to achieve it. Many said that this had happened. Two examples were the food drive in the school where the student body government sets a goal for the students to bring in X amount of cans by such-and-such a date, or when parents require boys to get their Eagle Scout rank in the Boy Scouts of America before they can

get their drivers license. I then drew the parallel to class learning objectives. Teachers decide what students are going to learn, and on what time table they are to learn it. It was at this point that I told the students that I was not going to assign them any projects or homework that would be graded. However, I immediately followed up the statement with the requirements that they would have during the class as far as expectations. I told the students that they would need to set their own goals for what they wanted to learn and what they wanted to make. I explained that they could change or alter those goals, but that they needed to make them up by themselves, for themselves. I also had to explain that even with the freedom of choice over their curriculum that all freedom had some constraints attached.

### **Constraints in Autonomy**

I needed to explain something to the students about restrictions. Having autonomy does not mean one can do anything one wants to do. There are constraints in place that vary from student to student. I explained to them that one constraint was money. Not all the materials provided in class are free. There are some students who have jobs, or parents who are able and willing to pay for projects. Other students may not be so lucky. There are ways of making jewelry projects everyday for free, but the materials list is more limited. Another constraint I discussed with the students was tools. The classroom only has so many tools. Without having an infinite budget, we do not have all the jewelry tools to make every project. The supplies we have in class are limited as well. One student wanted to make a stain glass bracelet, but we do not have stained glass supplies. The final constraint I had for them was my own lack of knowledge. I told the students that I did not know how to do everything they could come up with, and I did not have time to research every topic. I did put that ball in their court however, by telling them that they could research out any process, and I would do my best to help them.

## **Grades and Accountability**

Following the constraints discussion I moved the class on to the topic of grading. I told the students that they would be grading themselves on everything but cleaning. I explained that I would assign all of them things to take care of and I would grade whether they were doing that, but every other grade in the class would be their choice. This was when I really needed to discuss accountability.

It has been my experience that students need a certain amount of direction to get started working, and they need some amount of accountability to keep working. I told the students that they needed accountability to themselves. I explained that the notebooks I handed out at the beginning of class were going to be the tool of accountability. I told the students that they would clean up a little early each class period and write about what they had done and how they were coming on their goals. I then committed to them that I would read their diaries everyday and answer any questions they had but were unable to ask during class. I told them that I would also give them feedback and ideas on their projects and goals. I could also write instructions for certain processes that they might need to know for the next step of a project, sometimes a step they might not even know existed.

## **The Introductory Presentation**

Finally it was time to help the students come up with goals. Throughout the 11 years I have been teaching art, I believe more time has been wasted by students not knowing what to make, than any other distraction. To help students overcome this loss of time, I prepared a presentation for the students. The presentation took two days and had slides and videos that illustrated processes, examples of jewelry, genres and a variety of possible media. The presentation took the students through the following processes: repoussé, wax work, soldering, riveting, piercing, casting, enameling, wood working, forging metal, wire fabrication, engraving, setting cabochons and faceted stones, shaping stones, lathe work,

patinas and colorization, acid etching, beading, leather work, and metal plating. These processes were discussed as we looked at images of jewelry made from multiple approaches, like: Steampunk, clockwork, found object, and cultural influences. The different approaches and processes, initially, made distinct differences in the students decisions and goals. The presentation acted as an introduction to vocabulary, forms, processes, ideas and materials so students could start entering into jewelry making discourses quickly. As time went on in the semester though, the students' work and goals changed as they saw what their fellow students were making. Hence, students began participating in jewelry discourse as active participants rather than solely passive receivers. This might seem like a small insight at first, but I believe it was significant. I did not direct assignments as some teachers do where everyone makes the same project, but rather I encouraged students to start to learn how to take responsibility for their own creations and how to be inspired by other jewelry makers in the field and in their studio space.

## Chapter 5 Results and Discussion

### Results Through Stories

Many things happen over the course of a semester in every class, but during this study I saw things that I have never seen happen in my previous eleven years of teaching. I will illustrate a few of these shifts and changes in seven narratives. The first demonstrates how a sense of community was developed in the classroom at a table level. The second illustrates how the freedom to choose one's assignments can influence the creativity and drive of a student. The third story illustrates how collaboration is influenced by the socially relaxed and creatively charged classmates, and what positive effects can come from that collaboration. The fourth story illustrates how autonomy in the classroom is not the answer to every student's problems. The fifth story looks at the students' ownership of the physical facilities, in particular the treatment of tools. The sixth story illustrates that there are deeper undercurrents in people's behaviors that can be influenced by a classroom community environment, but not solved. The final story discusses the success of the course as assessed by student success in art shows.

#### **Trouble solved at table 6**

The concepts of classroom community and autonomy as I have addressed them in this study did not really develop quickly towards the beginning of the study, particularly, at table 6. All the tables in the classroom are numbered and table 6 had seven students who chose to sit there. The students sat in the same places around the table every day. The order that they sat in, in a clockwise direction, starting at the northeast corner was: Timmy, Dawson, Hoff, Devo, Houston, Toga, and Duck. Table 6's students, in the first few weeks, had some problems. Everybody who sat at that table, save, Devo and Hoff, had been loud and unproductive during Jewelry 1. They all claimed that they loved to make jewelry, but I was still



nervous to have then sit together. Shortly after the goal-setting presentation the students got to work. I was impressed with how hard they seemed to work. Upon reviewing the video recording of these students' interactions and production, I noticed a few revealing things about this particular table though. The following paragraph is a summary of what I saw.

I started the video recorder as the students began coming into class during first period. The position of the camera was on the soldering hood vent, angled down to catch half of tables 5 and 6 and all of tables 1, 2, and 3. As the students entered the class they began taking stools down. Devo went and got his process diary right after he set his stuff down, as he returned to his desk, he put the stools randomly on the floor. Dawson picked a stool up and was about to sit in it, right as Huff walked up. Huff said that Dawson was in his spot, but since Dawson was standing in Huff's spot and holding the stool he was about to sit on, Huff could not take the spot. Then Dawson pushed the stool where he usually sat away from Huff and it fell over clattering to the floor so that there was nowhere for Huff to sit, not even in Dawson's spot. Dawson looked over at me to see if I noticed, I had not. Dawson then blamed Huff for the incident. Huff seemed to have ignored Dawson's accusations and confrontation. Having had Dawson in previous classes I have seen how he interacts with his peers and Huff may have ignored this particular happening as typical Dawson behavior.

I started calling roll, and students were still walking in. Houston walked in and came to sit at the table. Dawson lifted his hand and said hello. Houston came up from behind Dawson to get to his seat, and grabbed Dawson's sides, tickling him a little as he went past, with what appeared to be a definite sign of friendship. Dawson immediately went back to talking to Huff.

What I got from this interaction was that Dawson was a little bit annoying, but he was liked by his table mates as well. When Dawson shoved Huff's seat, Huff seemed to take it for granted that

Dawson acted that way, as if that was par for Dawson. Huff did, however, still sit next to Dawson, and talked to him in what appeared to be a friendly manner. Houston greeted Dawson in a very friendly way. Both interactions suggest that Dawson was an accepted friend. However, as I read the process diaries of the students at table 6, there seemed to be increasing social frustrations from all present at table 6. It started with Dawson writing a comment about Huff teasing him, but in several of the other students' diaries the feeling was that Dawson was teasing Huff. I wrote back inquiring about this event for clarification, but not all the students would dialogue with me in their diaries. I did get a couple of responses to the effect that Dawson was just being Dawson. Then one day I missed school, and the students had a substitute. When I had returned the students at table 6 had finally had it with Dawson and his antics. The day I returned, Dawson was absent and several of his table mates approached me and said that Dawson was distracting and keeping them from getting their work done. He had even taken Timmy's process diary and cut it all up around the edge. That act had made Toga very angry, he wrote that he wanted to physically beat Dawson.

I wrote to each of them in their process diaries that day, and asked if they wanted me to talk to Dawson about his behavior, perhaps having Dawson sit at another table. They said that they would appreciate that, so they could get some work done. I talked to several of them after school when they came in to get some extra work time in. They said that it was not quite as bad as it seemed, and felt that the separation was probably unnecessary. They seemed a little less willing to talk to me about it in person, but I told them I would be separating Dawson from them. The next day I did so.

I took Dawson aside and told him what his table mates had relayed to me about his being distracting and disrespectful. Dawson was almost in tears, but I made him come and sit by me. That alone was a good thing, because I got to really talk with him about what he wanted to make, and gave

him a little one-on-one teaching time that got him started on an enameling project he wanted to do. By the time the class period was out, the students and table 6 had accepted Dawson back to their table, and from then on Dawson worked like a diligent and legitimately interested student. There was not another negative comment about anyone at the table. In fact, as the semester wore on, whoever was in class first would get the process diaries for the table. At the end of class they would do a *nose-goes*, where, when someone yells “nose-goes” the last person to touch his own nose would lose and be required to put the diaries away. However, if anyone was busy cleaning something, or finishing a project, and it was that person who lost the nose-goes, then someone else would return the process diaries without ribbing the nose-goes loser at all. They really began to work, and to work together like a community. They took initiative to solve working conditions among themselves, and established the nose-goes system as a way to fairly share the community workload of the table. They also collaborated on projects and taught one another processes, as occasion required. One example of this was when Dawson, who learned how to enamel on the day he sat with me, taught Hoff how to enamel. Then another day Toga taught the them to do macramé and Hoff taught half of the table how to make the Corian® rings. I was pleased.

The entire class never escalated to the same level of community as table 6 with established norms like the nose-goes. In the end the students at table 6 interacted well with each other as well as with all the other students in the class, talking, sharing and showing interest in all their classmates and the projects being made around the room.

### **Willy and the advanced placement test**

There was group of students who really like Jewelry and took it very seriously. Two students, Devy and Keaton were even planning to become jewelers. Devy’s mom was planning on paying for him to go to Italy after his graduation to study jewelry, and Keaton and his brother were planning to buy their

uncle's jewelry business in Sacramento California. These were two boys out of about six students who were regulars in my class. The regulars came in during study hall, which is a 25-minute time frame at the end of second period, which is designed to allow students extra time to improve their grades and to do homework as needed. The regulars came to my class during lunch, after school and during other classes all day long. I had to continually remind them to go to the classes they were registered for so that they would not get F's and fail to graduate from high school. Willy was not one of these.

Willy had Jewelry 1 over a year ago, and I remember that she made what I would classify as sloppy, poorly crafted jewelry. I had a series of assignments for my students at that time. Willy completed these assignments, but she did not do much more than meet the basic requirements. Right from the start of this semester, Willy began drawing up ideas and filling pages of her diary. She really seemed to exhibit a passionate focus with her design processes. I saw this in her diary during the first couple of days in class, but did not notice what she was working on, because she took her diary home and I did not see it when I was reading the classes diaries. She was not very diligent at filling out her diary at the end of each class as I had requested, but I did not notice that either, because I was just getting started on the diary readings and did not realize that some were missing. She did much of her designing at home.

After all of her designing she began a wax ring. It was a very delicate ring that was going to have a filigree band and cabochon stone on the top. The ring was looking very professional, and I pointed that out to her during one class when I walked by and saw it. Shortly afterwards, she broke it. When a wax ring is broken, it can be melted back together, but then the joint needs to be reshaped and students often do not have the delicate touch needed after a ring has been broken to return it to its original state. This proved to be the case with Willy. She broke it, then broke it again, and again until finally it was a mess

of melted wax that was all but impossible to salvage. She asked me to help her fix it a couple of days after my initial comment to her, and I saw that it was a lost cause. She was getting frustrated, and losing interest fast. I talked with her and we discussed a few options. After our discussion, she decided to make the ring out of wire and plate metal. She wanted to make it out of silver, but I suggested that she use some copper scrap metal first because she had not soldered in over a year. She thought that was sound advice and went to work. When she finished, the wire work was decent, but there were plier marks all over it. The top plate was a somewhat sloppy oval with a misshapen peace sign stamped into it and she had abandoned the stone setting design altogether. The piece was not polished at all. I held my tongue because she was so pleased with it, and was committed to allow the students their autonomy.

She really liked the scrap bin metal. It turned out that the top of her ring was a piece of scrap that someone else had abandoned. I saw her working with scraps more often. Every day in class she had a pile of arranged scraps, and piles of old jewelry and what appeared to be junk she had brought from home. I thought that she was just assembling junk mainly, but she seemed happy, so I let her be. She started coming in during study hall and working on her projects. Then she began working into second period and I had to shoo her along so she could get to her next class. Before long she was working on jewelry almost everyday after school and then started to come in during other class periods.

About mid term I had a critique, of sorts. I typically have not done critiques because students generally work at such different speeds that there are only two or three finished projects and a lot that are extremely underdeveloped, so critiques, from my point of view, have been a waste of time. Furthermore, the critiques I have seen in other teachers' classes and in my college classes have heavily emphasized concept and the defense of ones work. For this critique however, I just collected all the things that the students had made or were making and showed them to the class. I simply told the class

how each item was made, concentrating entirely on fabrication techniques and processes. We did not talk about any other things like artistic intent, inspiration, things to improve on or things that were good. We did not even discuss who did each piece. After this critique some really interesting things happened. The most important thing for me, in relation to Willy, is that I saw all of her work, all together. She had a very strong style and the pieces were very cohesive when looked at as a body of work. By this time she had become one of the Jewelry class regulars, and in that time she made a couple of fish designs. One day, I read in her diary, "I made another fish!" and I commented, "I like the fish, maybe you should start a series?"

The next morning in class before she had read her diary she came up to me and told me that she wanted to make a series of ten fish. Of course I thought that was great. Then at lunch that day she came and told me she wanted to take the Three-dimensional Advanced Placement test. I was taken aback, because I do not teach an Advanced Placement class, and no one has ever even asked about Three-dimensional Advanced Placement test before, much less asked to take it. I told her that she needed to talk to Mr. Francis, the Advanced Placement art teacher, to figure out the logistics, but, that I was good with it. In conclusion, Willy went from one of the students who did not do much more than what it took to pass in Jewelry 1 to someone who worked feverishly in class, as well as any other time of the school day that she could get there. She also decided to make a huge commitment and follow through with it, and everything she made came out of the scrap bin, a practice that I may not have praised in the past. I firmly believe that this was largely because she was given complete control over what she was allowed to make and what materials she could use to make it. I believe that another major influence was my lack of comment in the beginning when I wanted to require her to clean up her solder, and work more on the craft, but I let her do what she was doing even though it was difficult for me. With the freedom she had,

Willy's work took on a whole new meaning for her and me. I was so impressed that I photographed much of it for future students to see (see Appendix B for images of Willy's work).

### **Carly and Larkin begin to collaborate**

Carly was a quiet student who worked very hard. She took Jewelry 1 just last semester and she did her own thing, within the parameters of the assignments I gave (see Appendix C for an example a typical Jewelry 1 assignment). Many students were very impressed by Carly's work though she rarely would let them see it. She seemed a little self conscience about her work and never really interacted much with the other students. This guarded attitude continued throughout the semester until one day Larkin, a classmate who sits at a different table than Carly, wrote in her process diary that she and Carly were going to collaborate on a locket project. This surprised me because Carly seemed so reserved. I was very happy to hear about the collaboration, and I expressed this to Larkin in her process diary. Likewise, I mentioned in Carly's process diary that I thought it was a neat idea that she was collaborating with Larkin. Carly wrote back the following week that she did not know what I was talking about, and she was not planning any collaborative work. I was a little confused by this, but thought that perhaps it was just Larkin's mistake. Larkin is a very talkative girl, and she may have instigated a conversation with Carly, and then thought that she and Carly had decided to do something, when it was really a one-sided thing. I let the matter pass.

Later I saw them working together, and then sitting together, and talking and laughing together. I was surprised again. It turned out that Carly had not known Larkin's name, and when I had written about the collaboration, Carly did not know who I was talking about. Also, the collaboration that Larkin wrote about was a locket, but they were making Victorian style keys together, not lockets. Larkin must have written "locket" on accident and when I commented on the collaboration I said locket, further confusing

Carly. Larkin had been making keys on her own and it turned out that Carly was taken with the key idea, and had approached Larkin. They designed keys together, and then Carly made a fantastic key (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Carly's Key



Figure X. the key that Carly and Larkin collaborated on. Actual size 1.5"x5", 6 gauge copper.

Carly, in her process diary, on the day of the final, had this to say about the key making experience:

“[Larkin] inspired me to make the key and we worked on finding a design. Then she helped me a little to make it, but mainly she encouraged me a ton.”

Carly and Larkin sat together again upon the key's completion, and joked and cut out paper fish and made paper airplanes. It was a pleasure to see Carly openly interacting and goofing off with a peer. The next day Larkin took some of the ideas that Carly had come up with and then started making a sister key. It seems that a friendship began to form in class, and it was brought on because the structure of the class allowed them to come up with their own projects and did not require anything specific, like a ring or bracelet. This was due of course to a shift in the curriculum brought on as a response to the theories regarding autonomy and classroom community presented earlier in this thesis. Carly would probably never have seen Larkin's keys in my previous curriculum, because I have never given a key making assignment, the idea had never crossed my mind. Here, the students are learning to create their own



assignments and learning to respond to ideas that they come across to make them have purpose. This new curriculum model seemed to allow Carly and Larkin to develop an idea together and then encouraged them to respond in concert as they saw fit rather than following a prescribed path with a defined end that I, as the teacher, had created. However, while this narrative illustrates some unintended beneficial consequences of such an approach, not all narratives were positive.

### **Autonomy did not solve Moe's problem**

When Moe took Jewelry 1, the first thing she did was make a well-formed and delicate wax ring, which she cast and finished. Then later in the semester, she decided to make two bezels on a very thin sheet of copper, after which she set epoxy and crushed abalone shell into them. The project was going to be a pair of earrings, but the project was harder than she thought it would be. It took her over a month to make them, and they did not turn out well, in her opinion. I think this discouraged her. In Jewelry 2, I expected great things out of her, because she was very creative in Jewelry 1, she had taken Honors Art, Advanced Placement Art, and was currently enrolled in Ceramics. In all these art courses, she really worked hard to finish things. Consequently, I was not surprised that before the first few class periods had ended she had come up with some good notes and creative ideas. The following is a list of ideas that she wanted to explore from the beginning of the term notes.

Moe's 1/21: I would like to try wire wrapping, casting, turquoise, jade, stamp to put designs on metal, I like the running wax look of that gold ring [from the opening demonstration]. Ring ideas - find out how to wrap wire in an attractive way - look up ideas, if I can use pink stone from home, necklace ideas - glass, chain, metal different shapes - stone.

She did not really get going on any of the ideas for several days. Then she decided to make a medallion. Here are some of the entries from her process diary, her notes, and my comments.

Moe: Today I will continue sawing my project.

Me: Ok.

Moe: still cutting cutting cutting...

Me: But, getting closer all of the time.

Moe: Today I learned how to cast. I drilled some holes in my project. (Correction I drilled one hole in my project, you did the rest) and I continued sawing. Breaking multiple saw blades.

Me: But you did not break the drill bit on your one hole and you actually cast. Lots of people are too afraid to cast. Mr. Glahn the assistant principal almost was.

Moe: I finished cutting out the design.

Me: Finally, huh? Let me know if you have any other questions. By the way you seem a little bummed in class, is anything wrong?

Moe: Ha ha. Jewelry just is not my thing. I will survive.”

She did not survive. She quit coming to class, and when I saw her in the ceramics room several weeks later, I asked her about why she had not been coming and I expressed my concern. She said that she did not like using tools. She made sure I knew that it was not just my class, but she had given up on wood shop also. It made me a little sad because she could have easily done it. There are people in my classes who break considerably more saw blade than she ever did and they have not quit. She had ideas, and wanted to make things, but the freedom of choice was not enough to keep her coming to class. I have no idea what extenuating circumstances might have affected her decision to drop out of my class, but she did, and regardless of why, the approaches in this study were not sufficient to retain and excite every student.

### **Lovcheski and the shiv**

Lovcheski is a fascinating student, he loves weapons, and professes to love violence. However, Lovcheski shows more compassion to those around him more regularly than most of my students seem to do. For example, Willy was frustrated because she could not get the wax injector to work. She had paid money to make a rubber mold so that she could reproduce a ring. The wax injector was then used to force wax into the rubber mold to make a replica model that could be cast. The wax injector was not cooperating, and she was working within a tight deadline. Lovcheski, who had never, to my knowledge, talked with her in class, came over and calmed her down by way of his carefree banter then worked with her until he found an effective way to make the wax models.

Lovcheski takes learning seriously, and studies what he wants. He has learned about many cultures, and focuses on their use of, and creation of, weapons. He is also interested in how they make utilitarian items, like clothing, cooking and eating utensils, and tools. In my class, he has made a bowl that he intends to eat out of. He created the bowl by lighting a fire in the center of a block of wood that he found in the mountains. Then using a hardened stick he scrubbed the charred wood out making the bowl increasingly deeper. Lovcheski also makes the majority of the clothing he wears, including his sandals and the book bags that he weaves.

I walked by and saw Lovcheski making a shiv. It was one of the classroom needle files that he had sharpened on the grinder, then wrapped with a piece of leather, to act as a handle (see figure 4).

Figure 4: Lovcheski's Shiv



Figure X. the, allegedly, worn-out file that Lovcheski sharpened and made into a shiv.

I was disappointed. Lovcheski generally seems to be more considerate of the classroom and its equipment than most students. I was surprised by this destructive behavior. I held out my hand and looked at him, and he handed it over. I raised my eyebrow and looked at him and then asked him what he thought he was doing. He told me the obvious, he said he was making a shiv. I asked him why he was destroying school property, and he had an answer for that as well. Lovcheski said that he had been using the needle file and it was worthless, completely worn out, so he made it into a shiv. I gave him a long drawn out and skeptical “Right?” He looked at me and said, “Come on Steadman, you know I love files, I would never destroy this one, but it was worthless, not really even a file anymore.”

The fact is that I believed him. I could also see him considering the idea of asking for permission to make the shiv, but he knew I would say no because the school is a no weapon zone. He has been asking me to allow him to bring in knives and swords to fix or sharpen for a couple of years now, and he knows I will not allow it. I was really disappointed that he of all people would destroy a tool, but as I reflected on the situation, I still believed him. I do not think that it was malicious destruction of tools. I do not think that he was being an idiot, as described by Parker (2005). I simply think he consciously

used a worn out file as the scrap metal it probably was. I also assume that he felt that he was doing the other students a favor, because he knows that many are not as attentive as they should be, or as adept with the tools, and some other student might try to use that file for an entire period with no real progress.

This was the only tool that I found this semester that was broken. I feel that the ownership of tools was taken more seriously by the students, as mentioned in Chapter One, because they realized that they needed the tools to work, and most of the students wanted them in good working condition. This realization was confirmed in the students process diaries when they were answering the question for their final: What grade do you deserve? Why? List three reasons for every grade level you chose. Here are some of their responses concerning the tools:

Curly: Took care of your tools.

Gardener: I used all tools properly and respectfully, and learned how to use different tools/machines and showed others how to use them.

Shelly: I did not hurt any tools I was using.

Devo: I respected the tools.

Lexicon: I always put my tools away.

Minnie: I never ruined tools.

Collar: I respect the tools by putting them away.

Short-Round: I respected your tools.

Devy: I keep the tools (that I use) in order.

Gus: Did not ruin any tools.

Monroe: Did not break tools that others needed.

Nakayama: I did not break my tools all year.

Ray Ray: I took care of your tools in the classroom.

Dimitri: I put tools away after class.

Myra: Put away tools that I use.

George: Put tools away.

I am a little disheartened that nobody referred to the tools as “ours”, but I visually noted that the classroom was more well cared for. I had fewer missing or broken tools, and that showed a big step in the right direction towards community and ownership. Also after school when it came time for me to go home and I had to ask students to leave for the day, they were always sure to have me keep the cabinets unlocked until they could put the tools away. Lovcheski may have willfully destroyed a tool, but according to him, and I believe him, it was not really a tool anymore. There was only one really willfully destructive incident, and oddly enough it was perpetrated by a student named Nakayama who said he did not break any tools all year. That statement was true, but the following narrative shows that all the physical facilities were not equally cared for, and even more sadly that the lack of care students showed towards one of their classmates.

#### **A4 on an investment day**

The Jewelry classroom at Mountain View High School is large, and it has several connected rooms. Out of necessity I have set up different stations in different rooms. The majority of the working space is in a large room, but in a smaller room that is somewhat disconnected from the main classroom is the casting and investing station. The ventilation system for the casting is set up in this smaller room, and it is more removed from a sink. This is where the investment is mixed up into a mold material. Investment is much like plaster, when it combines with water it hardens. Therefore, keeping it away from sinks is a good way to keep the plumbing in working order.

On this particular day, during A4 class, which is right after lunch, I needed to invest the molds for Jewelry 1, and there were a few students in A4 that needed to invest their projects as well. So, after I had gotten the class started, I took my students, Keaton and Semisi, into the investment room to invest the molds. Keaton was registered in my A3 class as a jewelry student, but in A4 he was registered as my teacher's assistant. During A3 that day he had been using the wax injector to cast wax models in a rubber mold that he had made from a ring he had previously created. He intended to make more models during A4, so the wax injector was still plugged in, and the wax was a hot liquid.

The class was really going wild that day. As I imagine any teacher will know, there are some days that students are much more exuberant, unexplainably so. This was one of those days. In A4, there was a group of very loud students, Welton, Stokes, Court, Nakayama, and Johnson. I could hear them yelling, but that was not very different from usual, so I was not too concerned. Semisi who was helping me, was also going back and forth from investment room to classroom while he worked on his project and invested. I asked him to keep an eye on events in the classroom, and make sure nobody was being destructive.

About 10 minutes before the end of class someone came in to tell me that Vic, one of my A4 students, had left class. I came out to see what was going on, and people were either laughing, or uncharacteristically quiet. The loud group was yelling about how Vic had left the class about 10 minutes before I had been told about it. I went into the hall, and there was Vic talking to a girl, I asked him to come back to class. He took a couple minutes to wrap up his conversation and get back to class, so he was not there when I discovered why the rest of the class was either uncomfortably quiet, or laughing. The wax injector is a pot of wax that has a built in plunger which forces wax out of a spout and into a rubber mold. Somebody had slammed the plunger, shooting wax all over. I spotted it on the table and got

upset. I asked who had done it, and someone told me I should look up as well, and I saw that the plunger had really been hit hard because blue wax was splattered all over the 12 foot high ceiling. At this point I went from upset to very angry. I asked who did it, and nobody would tell me, so I let them know clearly that until I found out who the perpetrator was, the entire class would be cleaning during class for the rest of the semester, and no jewelry would be made. Before anybody confessed, or any accusations were made, I told them to start cleaning up the mess, so they were in the process of cleaning when Vic came into the room. It was at this point that the loud group started blaming Vic. Their tones and jovial attitude made me feel like I was not getting the truth, but there were at least five people verifying that Vic was the one who had done it. Johnson was particularly loud, and accusing, but he kept saying that he was a nice guy and would clean it up even though Vic had done it. Johnson was also trying very hard to get his best friend Nakayama to help him. I was very suspicious, but my anger was subsiding as things were being cleaned so I quietly contemplated on who it might have been. The loud group had scraped the wax off of the table, and Johnson had taken down the ceiling tile, and they were cleaning it off. It was during this point that the bell rang and the students started to leave. I told Vic to finish cleaning. He told me he did not do it, that he had been in the hall, but he would clean. I was not sure who to believe, and was contemplating having the class clean next time anyway until I was more satisfied.

As the first students began filing out two students, Collar and Ricardo, motioned me over. They said, "Do you know that Vic did not do it? He was not even in the classroom at the time." I thanked them and told them that I had suspected as much. Then Keaton came back into class and told me that one of his friends in class had seen Nakayama do it. I thanked him for his help. I sat down to adjust the attendance for the period by changing absent students to tardy, if they had shown up. I was doing that and checking my emails, when a student named Gus came up to me and quietly asked me if I knew who



had done it. I told him that I had a suspect. Gus told me that it was not Vic but the large kid in the red shirt, which happened to be Nakayama. On my way out of the school that day I saw Nakayama sitting on a bench by the exit with a couple of his friends. I greeted him, and then told him I was excited to have him come after school and clean for an hour to make up his grade. I have used a classroom management strategy for years to stop the throwing of things in class, students who throw things clean for an hour after school, or lose 200 points from their grade. I decided that classroom control was important to keep and I would still use this strategy despite the DIY grading system. Nakayama asked what I meant. I told him it was for spraying the wax onto the ceiling. He tried to deny it and blame Vic. I told him that I was very disappointed that he would blame an innocent person, and let him know that several people had indicated him as the perpetrator. He asked who, and why they did not say anything in class, and told him they were probably people who did not want to get beat up. Nakayama chuckled at that. He did confess at that point by agreeing to come in and do the cleaning, and by not blaming Vic any further.

I found out that the group of extraordinarily loud students, Johnson and Nakayama in particular, have made Vic the brunt of their jokes, and been mean to him for years. I was very upset about it. I talked to them about the cruelty and the lying, and they said that they loved Vic, and would apologize to him. I asked them to be more respectful and quieter, and to look as though they had really been punished, so the class would realize that this type of behavior was unacceptable, and they complied to my requests. They also said they would write apologies to Vic. Later I wrote to Vic in his diary, "Sorry those guys blamed you, I am glad you were in the hall. Do they always treat you like that?" and Vic replied, several days later, because he did not come back to class for a few days, "Yeah basically, but I just do not care, it is how those kids are to everyone, well, not everyone, but a lot of people. So it is not a

big deal to me. I do not let it bother me. Ha Ha. Just sometimes I get tired of it. Not like angry or sad, just bored and annoyed. So yeah.”

So Vic said he was used to it, but despite the classroom community I tried to set up, and the autonomy and excitement that I hoped would bring students closer together, it was not nearly enough to put down old habits of cruelty and bullying. The autonomy was a useful tool in creating excitement and sharing though, as I will describe in Corian® rings, but it did not solve all the problems I would have liked. Perhaps my direct intervention had some value here but a further study, beyond the scope of this study, would need to be done that investigates consequences, management, violence, goodwill and citizenship to be more certain.

### **The Corian® ring**

The infectious nature of enthusiasm between students was best seen in the production of Corian® rings. Corian® is a DuPont™ product used to make counter tops in kitchens and bathrooms, it is a cultured marble made out of acrylic-polymer and alumina-trihydrate, in short, it is like fake stone. The students love to make rings out of it.

It all started with Zeus. Zeus is a student in the B3 class and he decided to make a stone ring. He got a slice of Brazilian Geode and began using small diamond-coated burs to drill and shape the ring. It took him a little while, but he liked it well enough to make another out of marble. Court, a classmate, saw him and wanted to make rock rings as well. Court brought in a pink stone that had been carved into an egg shape. He cut it into slices and began making rings, all of which broke. Mick, another classmate, saw the rings in process, and asked me how to make one, I told him to talk to Zeus or Court, but I also suggested that he use Corian® because it was easier to cut and shape. Mick looked through the Corian® and chose a piece to use, then he began making a ring under Court’s tutelage.

Court was impressed with the Corian® and made a ring of his own. I saw him working on it just like he had on the stone, and the first rings were not perfectly round, so I showed him how to use the lathe. Then the Corian® ring epidemic started (see Appendix D for images of Corian® rings). It was passed on from one excited student to another. One such story was related in Kim's process diary on the day of the final. He wrote,

At the beginning of the semester I did not have this class. One day I walked in because [Court] told me to come in after school that day and I saw him making a ring. I hadn't ever seen this kind of ring before and I wanted to know what it was and I also wanted to make one. He told me it was a fake stone called Corian®, he showed me how to make one and so I started my first one. I made it out of a blue Corian® piece. I love this ring and I have worn it everyday since then.

Corian® ring production became so big, that the following people wrote about making the rings, either by material name or by the lathe, which is the tool that was used to make them.

Slim: I finished six Corian® rings.

Sock: I learned how to make stuff out of Corian®.

Collar: I learned how to make stuff out of Corian®.

Kim: I made a cool Corian® project.

Bill: I made a blue Corian® ring.

Nakayama: I made a bunch of Corian® rings.

Mouse: Worked with Corian® and skill.

Dimitri: I made seven hard plastic ring projects.

Ellsworth: I can make those plastic rings really well, and fast.

Liza: I know how to use the lathe.

Panda: Because, I learned to use the lathe.

The above students are the only ones who mentioned making Corian® rings specifically almost every Jewelry 2 student made at least one. It spilled over into Jewelry 1 to the point where I had to redirect students to the wire fabrication assignment they were supposed to be working on. There were past students who were not currently registered in Jewelry making them during study hall, lunch and after school. The weirdest thing was that students who had never taken any Jewelry, and were not registered, were coming in and asking for permission to make Corian® rings.

The enthusiasm was not held only to Corian®, but that was definitely the most apparent. Students got excited and showed a friend or two what they had made, and then many students began

Figure 5: Hemp Necklace and Bracelet



Figure X. The first of the hemp jewelry made in Jewelry2. Created by Toga.

doing similar projects, or using similar materials. There was Toga and his hemp necklace (see Figure 5). He made one and shortly thereafter we went through four spools of hemp in a week or two. Stokes made a leather bracelet, and within a day or two my entire stock of leather that I had been using with students for over 11 years was gone, and there was plenty left when Stokes made his first. The same thing happened repeatedly. I had a bucket of wooden beads that had not been touched in years until one person

Figure 6: Key Rings



Figure X. keys made into rings by Stokes and Welton

started stringing them, Then, half my bucket was gone in a day or two. A student brought in a box of old keys and made one into a ring by bending it around a mandrel and shortly after there were hundreds of key-rings (see Figure 6).

This enthusiasm was a great affirmation of the assumption in Chapter One where I wanted to see if apathy, replaced by a feeling of excitement, would lead to a desire to learn and perform. It also supported the query in Chapter Two where I wanted to see if intrinsic motivation in each student would bring them enough excitement about what they were doing that they would want to help their classmates, not compete with them. I was really pleased with how this excitement did help the students to work together and teach each other. I only showed one person how to use the lathe, one person how to shape a key into a ring, I only showed one person the beads. Stokes found the leather on his own and taught everybody about it. I did not show anybody the hemp, or teach them how to macramé, Toga just asked if I had any, and he knew how to do it already. They all had access to similar materials and equipment but each student explored until they found something that resonated with them. Now instead

of having to just follow all of my assignments, students could choose to follow one of their classmate's line of inquiry. They and their classmates became the teachers.

### **Success of creativity as seen through art shows**

In February of each year, there is an Utah High School Fine Art Show at the Springville Museum of Art. It is a big show for the high schools. It is usually difficult to come up with quality pieces of jewelry to enter. Only a small percentage of students from each Utah school is allowed to enter pieces to be juried by the museum. I am usually allowed five spots for our school, and the other art teachers fill the remaining spots. In years past, I have struggled to get enough quality work to find the five I am allotted. This year, it was easy to find five pieces (see Appendix E for four of the Springville Utah State High School Art Show entries). Then after the accepted list came back, four of the five entries were accepted, and to brag, those were the only entries of Mountain View's students that were accepted this year.

In early March, Weber State College had a Northern Utah High School Art Show. I have never had enough quality works to bother entering this art show, especially because there is a \$5.00 entry fee. As a teacher, I am only allowed five entries, but I had an easy time filling that quota. I was told by the art teachers at the other schools in Orem, Utah that competition at the Weber State show is much more competitive than the Springville show. Three of the five works entered into the Weber State show were accepted (see Appendix F for the Weber State entries). Keaton took first place in the Jewelry category and won \$75.00.

I also received a call for entries for a show in late March at a gallery in Salt Lake City called Local Colors. Again the entry fee was \$5.00 per entry, and it was easy to come up with six projects to enter in the Local Colors Show (see Appendix G for Local Colors entries). Then to top it off, all six

entries were accepted, and to put the icing on the cake for my students and me, we took Best of Show, First, Second, Third, and two honorable mentions.

I truly believe that the freedom of choice that students were given, over what they would make and what they would use to make it, had a huge effect in quality of work. Additionally, the DIY grading took the stress off of the students enough to allow for much greater creativity and enabled them to concentrate on their own ideas and mastery within their classroom community.

## Chapter 6 Conclusion

There was a great deal of success associated with this study. However, the study brought to my attention issues for improvement as well. Kemmis and McTaggart (2008) describe the key steps of action research as follows: “Planning a change, acting and observing the process and consequences of the change, reflecting on these processes and consequences, re-planning, acting and observing again, reflecting again, and so on...” (p. 276). Therefore, this chapter is the point in the *Study of Classroom Community: Questions of Apathy and Autonomy* where I reflect on the process and consequences, then re-plan for next semester.

### Effects of Autonomy on Performance and Attitude as Perceived by the Students

On the day of the final, I asked the students to answer four questions in their process diaries. These were: 1. What grade do you deserve? Why? List three reasons for every grade level, for example, for a C you would write nine reasons, or for an A you need to list 15 reasons. 2. Write a true story about a memorable interaction you had with a classmate or the teacher in this class. 3. Explain how having complete freedom over projects and your grade affected you, positively or negatively, this semester, in this class. 4. Write a couple of paragraphs about how writing in the process diary, and knowing that I would read and respond, affected your performance in this class.

I will share some of the students responses to question three, regarding freedom of choice. I will discuss DIY grades in a later section of this chapter. I was both delighted and discouraged by the effects that the curricular changes relating to autonomy had on the students. I will start off with the most negative responses, and what I feel could be an effective revision or plan to help rectify these problems.



**Devo**

Once upon a time there was a class which gave you total freedom to work on your projects. This freedom gave students the ability to make or work on whatever. This severely handicapped any learning of anything new. Some people who follow the teacher around like ducklings and very creative people did learn things, but people like Devo never learned one thing new. He went into this class wanting to learn something new, left class very disappointed. In the first class there were demonstrations and helpful visuals in this class, though, later there were none of those, no new demonstrations. Devo wanted to learn a lot, like setting stones and working with metals. He has now lost all and any interest in Jewelry. Also he would not recommend Jewelry to anyone.

The end.

This was heart breaking to me, and the most extreme example. Devo worked the entire semester on projects, and though he stated that he had no creativity of his own, he came up with all of his own projects. I also do not think he realizes that improvement is learning. I can see his point though. If I did not have the courage or initiative to talk to the teacher and ask for help, whether to develop or investigate project ideas, or to engage in and then master new processes, then I too might have had a terrible experience in the class.

The solution for learning new processes was already on my mind before I read Devo's entry. I wanted to help the students become more adept at mastering techniques. As people came up with ideas, I would work with them individually on how to create the project they were making. Therefore, techniques, tools, and processes would be selected based on the student's own ideas. I think it would have been much more effective if I had announced all demonstrations and invited interested students to join in. I did this once with enameling. One student wanted to learn how, so I announced to the class that

I was teaching enameling. I was delightfully surprised when one student in particular, who was just talking with his friends, said, “Oh, I need to learn this.” Then jumped up, came over and took notes. I would never have expected such a reaction from that student. Making personal demonstrations open to all was very effective, but I did not realize it until I read Devo’s comment. This notion of teaching workshops as the desire emerges and time allows relates to the previous narrative about Court, Toga, and Stokes who all learned a technique and shared their processes with their fellow classmates as they became interested. Devo apparently desired to learn specific techniques in this course, but did not feel that he could approach me and ask me to teach these to him.

I had also been considering doing random demonstrations each class period or every few days. Every semester I have students following me around like, as Devo noted, ducklings, trying to get help. Strangely enough, during this semester when people were doing such a wide variety of things, I found myself with almost no hovering ducklings. This provided time to relax more while the students worked. I was strangely bored during these lulls, and could have used those times to give a demonstration on anything, to anyone who was interested. I felt like the demonstrations would have been helpful, and now Devo had affirmed my suspicions.

### **Frank**

There was this one time that I had Jewelry class and [the teacher] gave us complete freedom over what we did and it was good for everyone except me. [T]his is because I do not have the best imagination and I am not very creative and so it made me less productive. I can follow directions really well though.

Frank only made two Corian® rings the entire semester, and those only took about one class period, leaving him with about 40 classes of work unaccounted for. I did not realize that it might have

largely been due to a lack of ideas. Frank did say that he learned some things in class, and gave himself a B for his grade. I feel that this was a good solid grade choice on his part, because unlike Devo, Frank worked to learn new processes. Frank may not have done much in the way of creating his own jewelry, but he was constantly helping his fellow students with their projects. The lack of creativity that Frank, and Devo felt may be that current popular educational techniques had too strong of a hold on them. Daniel Pink, in *Drive* (2009), related a story about a company called Meddius run by a man named Gunther. Meddius went to a *ROWE*, results-only work environment, which is a work strategy where employees can come to work anytime they want, and sometimes just work at home, as long as they are completing their work satisfactorily. The following describes what happened to the employees.

‘In the beginning, people did not take to it,’ Gunther says. The office filled up around nine A.M. And emptied out in the early evening, just as before. A few staffers had come out of extremely controlling environments and were not accustomed to this kind of leeway. (at one employee’s previous company, staff had to arrive each day by eight A.M. If someone was late, even by a few minutes, the employee had to write an explanation for everyone else to read.) After a few weeks, most people found their groove... although two employees struggled with the freedom and left, by the end of test period, Gunther decided to go with ROWE permanently. (p.86-87)

It seems to me that Devo and Frank were like the two employees from Meddius who left.

### **Creativity and project development**

The lack of project ideas was a common theme that students said slowed their production down. Anna said, “Having complete freedom over what [I] wanted to do was hard for [me] sometimes because [I] could not think of ideas...” “ Anna was a Two-dimensional Advanced Placement art student and she made amazingly creative work in that class. She was also the one who took first place in the Local

Colors show with a ring she made. I think that coming up with creative ideas is often difficult, even for me, so I can see how it would slow people down in their production process. I have been thinking a lot on the lost production time due to lack of ideas. I think that more time should be spent on the student's personal goals. I feel I should have had one day every few weeks that I could meet with students and see how they are doing on their personal goals, and brainstorm with them to help them come up with more project ideas that they might want to do. I believe that I should have revisited the goals they set at the beginning of the semester. I never did this. I feel that not revisiting the goals was an oversight on my part, and had I done so, people who only made one or two projects all semester may have been more motivated. Additionally, the process of coming up with ideas is a worthy goal that I want to foster in future classes. Of course students might be able to produce more objects when they are following a teacher's prescribed assignment but they do so at a cost. The cost is not a loss of time but a loss of learning how to conceptualize ideas and then to choose materials, processes, and techniques to render those ideas. When will students learn what it means to be an artist if they never have the opportunity to practice idea construction themselves?

The negative experiences out of the way, I will look at some of the positive ones, starting from the end of Anna's quote from the previous paragraph, "... but [I] liked it because [I] made projects [I] actually liked and wear all the time." Anna's sentiments are the same as her classmate Gardner when he said, "Having more freedom this year with projects was awesome, but bittersweet. I struggled coming up with ideas...But it allowed me to do cool things..." Anna and Gardner's sentiments were likely echos of others' thoughts. I can think of many other students who expressed to me orally or in their diaries that they were spending time coming up with ideas, and that developing the ideas was difficult. The amount and quality of work that the students made as a whole this semester shows that the time spent coming up

with ideas was well spent. I believe that sharing some more quotes from students will illustrate the effectiveness of autonomy in developing creativity.

Slim wrote, “I really liked having the freedom to make whatever project we wanted because I felt that it helped me be more creative.”

JoAnne wrote, “I liked having freedom to make whatever we wanted this year. I felt like it contributed to my creative development.”

Kami wrote, “It allowed creative juices to flow.”

Maddy wrote, “Having freedom gave me the opportunity to be more creative instead of the teacher being creative for me.”

Lindorf wrote, “Once upon a time there is a Jewelry class and they had freedom to work on whatever they wanted. This made the class so much better because the students did not have to wait for the teacher to tell them what they needed to do although I think Jewelry 1 was good too because we had something to do without having creative juices but this class was great.”

These are some of the quotes about creativity. I particularly like Lindorf’s because she recognized that getting a specific assignment can be easy and nice, but autonomy is “great.” In summary, I think that attending to autonomy, described as encouraging students to take responsibility over what they will make and what they will use to make it out of, is a very effective pedagogical strategy. I do not believe this means the teacher should resist teaching techniques and processes. On the contrary, I think that emphasis should still be put on the teaching of techniques to those who are interested. However, I am coming to realize that this can be accomplished when students are motivated and interested to learn for a specific purpose. Additionally, revisiting and reworking students’ personal

goals throughout a course could be very beneficial in increasing creative idea generation for those students who might find the process of artistic inquiry to be difficult, frustrating or paralyzing.

### **Successes and Failures of DIY Grades**

As a teacher, grades have been a part of my entire career. I claim that I hate them, but there is a part of me where the need for grades is deeply ingrained. There were some students who I really wanted to fail, because it seemed to me that they did almost nothing in class. I repeatedly encouraged these students to work on their projects. I tried to generate ideas with them if they did not have any ideas. I also tried to find alternative materials they could use to accomplish their designs if they did not have the money to make what they wanted. Occasionally I would see students sleeping or lounging around talking and not working, and I would ask them when they planned to make up the wasted time. Several of those students did come in outside of class time and make up the time, but the students I felt were really slacking off never came to make up the lost work time. It tore at my heart to let some of them give themselves A's and B's. It is a personal paradigm shift to allow the students to have the complete control over their grades. There is the need for accountability within the public school system. There are state and national standards. The administration has set standards for teachers and students. Parents have expectations and students think about their futures and how grades will affect their college and career choices. No matter how effective DIY grades may be for many students, some students still did not do much in the classroom. Out of 105 students in Jewelry 2, four received failing grades because they quit coming to class entirely, this is fairly similar to previous Jewelry 2 semesters, but in other semesters there were considerably more C's and D's. After I posted the 105 grades, and went back over the reasons why the students chose the grades they chose, I was considerably pacified of my initial disappointment concerning a few of the students.

After analyzing the student responses in relation to the course curriculum as it played out, there seem to be two major benefits of the DIY grades, one for the students and one for me, the teacher. The first was the shift from grades to jewelry creation which allowed them to focus on quality and creativity. The second benefit was that I was afforded a glimpse from the students' perspectives, what they did in their minds, and not just by traditional classroom observations, which can sometimes be quick and superficial.

### **The positive effects of DIY grading**

I think the best way to show the positive effectiveness of choosing one's own grade is, is by looking at it through the words of the students.

Larkin wrote,

“I really like the freedom of this class I love how we were free to make whatever we wanted and did not have to be suffocated with the stress of deadlines of assignments. Also, I think that being able to have freedom let creativity flow more easily because if I would have been pressured with anything, I would not have thought of anything cool.”

Toad wrote,

“Having complete freedom of what we got to make and when to finish had both the positive and the negative effect. Some positives—less stressful, could take my time to make a well worth project.”

Short-Round wrote,

“To me having complete freedom to do whatever the heck I wanted was really nice. I did not feel so stressed out about meeting deadlines. I actually did stuff because I could finish them whenever I wanted. I liked it a lot.”

Lisa wrote, “I felt less stress put on me. I was able to have fun making what I wanted.”

Donny wrote,

“It is hard for me to just start and finish a project. It was nice to start a few projects and finish them when I wanted to. Also it put less stress on me for having to finish it ‘on time.’”

This lack of stress seemed to help the students make what they wanted and follow their own time table, from Donny who worked on several projects simultaneously, to Lisa who is very methodical and could not start something new until she has finished her current project. However, like Toad wrote, there were some negatives.

#### **The negative effects of DIY grading**

Toad finished his quote by saying, “Negatives—at times we would do nothing because we really did not have anything to work for.” Toad had a natural aptitude for jewelry creation, but really ended up following this “nothing to work for idea”. Devy was Toad’s friend, and Devy spoke very highly of Toad’s ability and creativity at the beginning of the semester. The significance of this is that Devy took Jewelry 1 twice, Jewelry 2 three times, was my teacher’s assistant for Jewelry 1 twice and Jewelry 2 once. Then five days after school got out, he bought over a thousand dollars worth of jewelry tools so he could continue his work. Then Devy bought two months of booth space at a midnight concert series to sell his jewelry. Needless to say, Devy was pretty into Jewelry, and he told me that Toad would be his successor at the beginning of the study. At the end of the study Devy said that Toad was lazy, and Devy said he was disowning him as his successor. So it appears that the lack of stress from grades effected Toad’s performance poorly towards the end of the semester, yet he gave himself an A grade.



There were others who were very lackadaisical in their jewelry creation, like Kami, who made one project all semester, but knew that she would be grading herself, so it did not matter. She wrote in her final entry, “I feel that I did not take advantage of this class to benefit myself. I love making jewelry and I wish I would’ve done more.” She did feel okay about giving herself a B. That was hard for me, I would have failed her based on production. Kami came late most of the time, and then spent a lot of time talking, and not much time working, which was evidenced by her completing only one reasonably simple project the entire semester.

Another student, Lexicon, who was not stressed out by grades gave herself an A. The following statements were what she based her grade on, and the italics are my thoughts on her reasons.

I got more done this term than I did last—*from zero projects to two.*

I worked harder on all my projects—*not hard when you did nothing before.*

I learned how to make something new—*true, she learned how to make a Corian® ring, a one day project.*

Picked up after myself—*this is wonderful, and one of the aims of the study.*

Wore safety glasses—*this was very nice too, but has never had any basis on grades in all my 11 years of teaching here.*

Put away tools that I use—*also wonderful, except that she rarely used tools*

Listened to you—*I gave three days of formal instruction all semester, but she did not listen when I asked her to get to work.*

I participated in class—*interesting, I am not sure what her definition of participate is.*

Stayed quiet while you are talking—*again, I talked very little.*

Always had a great attitude in class—*this is pleasant, but it had little correlation to*

*her participation.*

Always ask permission to use hall pass—*I do not understand why this is important.*

Did not burn the school down—*excellent, but many people have failed and they also did not burn the school down, and one student got an A and she was instrumental in lighting her classmate on fire.*

Lexicon was not the only person whose reasons for deserving an A did not align with my notions of what merits a good grade. Here are some upbeat sentiments that students used to legitimize the grades they chose, which in my estimation have no basis on student performance. Five people thought a good reason to get a good grade was because they loved me. Fifteen people felt a good reason for a good grade would be that they loved the class, two people loved the music, Four people love jewelry, one person loved the art work in the classroom, and two people fell in love with classmates. All of these reasons sound very pleasant, and if there is no stress about getting a grade, then I suppose any reason is as good as another in the relaxed method of DIY grading.

### **A mistake I made using DIY grading**

I failed to focus on the accountability in DIY grading, I did not use the learning goals effectively. The students set up their own goals, but as previously mentioned, the goals were not readdressed periodically throughout the semester. Many students seemed to have forgotten that they made goals to, which they were holding themselves responsible.

There are two major reasons I failed to readdress the goals the students set. Many students changed their focus entirely, as they learned about Corian®, found object jewelry, macramé and other forms of construction. As they began to experiment with the new materials and methods of construction that they saw their classmates using, I just allowed them to play with creation instead of stepping in and

requiring a new set of goals be made. Then there was the major time commitment that the process diaries required of me. I had to read and respond to the students every single day. I got to the point where every preparation period was spent working in the students' diaries. I have a very hard time with heavily regimented work. I found myself slipping into depression cycles which needed my attention to stay safe and sane. To maintain my mental stability I began making a lot of jewelry myself. Between the diaries and my own jewelry creation, my reflection and readdressing of the goals slipped by without me seeing it until the study was over.

Had I gone back with each student individually and looked at their goals, I feel that they would have had more focus and drive to finish what they had set out for themselves to accomplish. They could have chosen to establish new goals based on the work they were doing at the time, which could have also kept them working more diligently. If the students and I had revisited their goals periodically I feel the accountability at the time of grades would have been more focused on the students learning and production and less on things like loving the music that played during class.

### **Feasibility of using the process diaries in the future**

The diaries were hugely successful in my estimation. When in the final exit entries the students wrote their feelings about them, it was almost unanimous that the diaries were helpful. For some they were helpful because it kept them on track. This group of students came back the next day and read what it was that they had done the period before, and were able to get started immediately, this was particularly helpful after weekends or holidays. The next group felt that they worked harder because they knew that they would have to fill out the diaries at the end of the class, and wanted to have something to write. Yet another group found them useful because they could ask me questions and I

would always answer them. The consensus, by far, was that my reading and responding in their diaries everyday was the real key to diary success as a quality learning tool.

The problem arises from the frustration and anxiety that developed in me as the semester went on. I knew that I had to read the diaries every day and that I had committed to the students that I would, and they expected it. For example, I take the diaries out of the classes tubs, and as I read them I turn them names up in neat stacks. This allowed me to see if I had read the diaries because the students always just threw them into the tub pellmell. One day a student came in during lunch to get his diary out, and being the neat and organized person that he is, he arranged them all in neat stacks with the names up. I got them out to read them during my preparation period, and saw them stacked upright and assumed that I had already done it. I was very excited. Then as the next class started, the students were outraged that I had not read the diaries, and responded to them. Thus I felt that I had to read the diaries daily. It was different from when I taught English where students turned in their papers, and I read them as time allowed then returned them within a few days to a week. These diaries were like a demon on my back, that made me constantly aware of the need to read them. I would read them everyday during my preparation period, during lunch, before and after school, and even had to take them home to read them on occasion. As I mentioned in the previous section I was battling depression cycles because of the regimented diary reading.

I am torn inside by knowing that it was such a successful pedagogical tool, and yet not knowing if I will be able to use it again without getting burnt out as a teacher. I have thought about alternatives, like reading them only once a week, or perhaps reading the first half of the alphabets one day, and the second half the next day. I am not sure, but reading and responding daily was a major part of the diaries

successfulness because the students were able to get that near immediate feedback, and make appointments for personal instruction during the next class.

I do not know the answer to the feasibility question, but it would be different for every person who tried to use the personal process diaries, and their individual personalities.

### **Summary**

I am very pleased with the overall results of this study, though it did not accomplish all the aims for which it was intended, it was a valuable step in the Classroom Action research process. One major point that this study addressed was student apathy. The hypothesis being, that if students have autonomy in the classroom, where autonomy is that the students have freedom to choose the projects they make, while using the processes they choose and the materials they want to use, student apathy towards learning would dissipate, and students would take charge of their own learning and the learning of their neighbors. These goals to dissipate student apathy and increase ownership of personal learning were reached to a high degree, this is supported by the frequency and context of words found in the students' process diaries, (see Appendix H). The Word "learned" showed up 191 times almost exclusively used in "I learned..." sentences. Then there was the word "work" which appeared 284 times where, by a majority, students referred to themselves working. There was little support from the students' process diaries that the students developed a sense of responsibility for their fellow students' learning. However, as the researcher, I observed students teaching students, on a regular basis, and not just classmates, but students from different periods of Jewelry 2 classes.

Zero-sum competition, as far as my observations and the writings in the students' process diaries show, was not an issue in the class. As mentioned in the previous paragraph students taught their fellow students processes as they learned them. Students exhibited a sense of excitement as they learned and

tried new projects and processes. Then the students would show off what they were doing and they gladly helped their fellow classmates to learn the processes. This is exactly the opposite of zero-sum competition, where students perceive that learning is a competition, and the only way they can succeed is to be the best in the class, which requires them to guard the knowledge that they develop and receive and to not share with anyone.

The ownership of the physical facilities was not as successful as I would have liked, but was an improvement from past semesters. The data for this was primarily personal observation. I had fewer tools broken. More tools were put back in the cabinet for others to use, which suggests an increase in sharing and decrease in hoarding. Also, the classroom was kept cleaner, where tools were not left out, rubbish was thrown away, and messes were swept, or wiped up. The disappointing aspect was that the students predominately referred to the tools and class as belonging to the teacher.

Finally there is the development of students caring for their classmates. I failed to see any significant data that supported the achievement of this goal. I feel that giving students autonomy over their curriculum and grades may have abrogated zero-sum competition, but I could not see where students became noticeably kinder to their classmates even though they were sharing information. It seemed that the students who were inclined to kindness were kind to others, and the students who were rude or oblivious to people out of their cliques, continued to do so. I feel that to develop a more caring environment there would be a need for more time as Noddings (2005) suggested, and specific focus on the development of caring in the classroom. I did however notice in the TagCloud the word “love” appearing 59 times. I looked through the contexts, and three referred to people loving the people in it, five were students who felt I loved them, twelve were students that loved me, and seventeen were

students who said they loved the class. So, 37 “love”s suggest that a feeling of safety, if not caring, was taking place.

## Appendix A

### Jewelry II Goal Setting Work sheet

1. Check the methods of jewelry creation you want to learn and refine towards mastery.

- Reppouse'
- Carving wax
- Soldering
- Riveting
- Sawing
- Casting, wax and organic materials
- Cloisonne' enameling
- Sgraffito enameling
- Basse-taille enameling
- Champleve' enameling
- Plique-a-jour enameling
- Stenciling enameling
- Painted enameling
- Working wood
- Forging metals
- Wire fabrication
- Engraving
- Setting gemstones
- Setting cabochon stones
- Cutting and shaping stones
- Lathe work
- Patinas and coloring
- Acid etching
- Bolting, tap and die work
- Weaving, macrame', crochet
- Bead work
- Leather work
- Metal plating

2. Check skills you would want to learn, or refine towards mastery.



- Chain making
- Hinges
- Clasps
- Catches
- Findings
- Bead setting
- Channel setting
- Table setting
- Prong or crown setting
- Bezels
- Tab/turtle sets
- Pinpoint settings
- Pave´ settings
- Wire setting
- Inlaying
- Binding
- Mokume´

3. Check the types of projects you are interested in making.

- Rings
- Earrings
- Bracelets
- Pendants
- Tiara/crowns
- Small sculpture
- Belt buckles
- Berets
- Locketts
- Others? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Check the subject matters you are interested in pursuing.

- Steampunk
- Cultural: Which cultures? \_\_\_\_\_
- Personal hobbies/interests
- Wedding rings
- Costume jewelry
- Organic (like plants and growing things)
- Geometric (like shapes with calculable edges and angles)
- Animals (amphibians, reptiles, birds, bugs, underwater creatures, mammals, etc...)

- Architecture
- Activities (competitive, leisure)
- Genre (categories of stories and music, science fiction/fantasy, mystery, classical, rock and roll)

5. List all the things that interest you (like surfing, shopping, eating Mexican food, shoes, tennis, jewelry, cars, and on and on and on) think of anything that holds your interest.

6. Make several rough designs of projects you might like to make

7. Write between 3 and 5 jewelry making goals that you want to attain this semester.

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
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2 \_\_\_\_\_  
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3 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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4 \_\_\_\_\_  
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5

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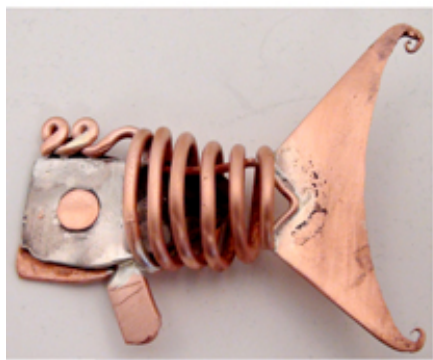
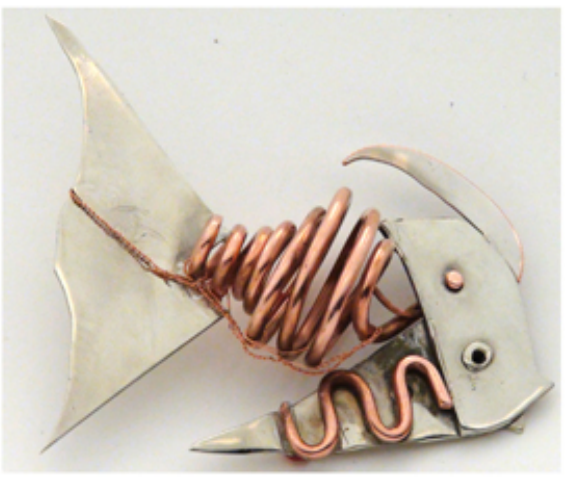
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Appendix B

Images of Willy's jewelry:









## Appendix C

A typical assignment for Jewelry 1, more structured and directive, allows for little autonomy.

### Mirror Mirror and Coin Medallions

#### Objective

Students will examine contemporary works of art from BYU's exhibition, Mirror Mirror Contemporary Portraits and the fugitive Self, and use those images as a catalyst to examine how they could mirror a part of themselves to the world through the medium of jewelry.

1. Students will design medallions using ideas that they feel express their Real Self (state standard 3.1)
2. Students will learn and exhibit proficiency in transferring designs from paper to metal.
3. Students will learn and exhibit proficiency in piercing and cutting techniques for jewelry fabrication.
4. Students will learn and exhibit proficiency in forging and polishing techniques for jewelry fabrication.
5. Students will learn and exhibit proficiency in high-temperature silver soldering.

#### Materials

- Power Point presentation, Coin Medallions
- Protective eye wear
- Nonferrous coins the size of a quarter or larger
- Jewelers' saw frame with 4/0 blades, or finer and lubrication (bees' wax)
- Bench pins and c-clamps
- Drill and #55 drill bits, or smaller and center punch
- Hammers and anvils
- Sand paper (150, 220, 320, 400 and 600 grits), bastard and needle files, Tripoli and rouge polishing wheels, ultra-sonic-jewelry-cleaner and steam-cleaner
- Paper, pen, scissors and rubber cement
- Jump-rings, silver solder and soldering torches, small can of wet sand, third-hands, boric-acid-denatured-alcohol-solution and flux, soldering block and soldering pick

## Procedures

- 6.** Preliminary homework: Before day 1 assign students to bring a nonferrous metal coin the size of a U.S. Quarter or larger. Explain that they will be manipulating the coin and they should refrain from bringing anything of great sentimental or monetary value because it will be a completely different thing at the end.
- 7.** Day 1: Go through the Power Point presentation, Coin Medallions with the students. Lead discussions about the museums exhibit Mirror Mirror (which runs from October 23, 2009 through May 8, 2010) and how the artist Aram Bartholl has made and is wearing an item that could represent him. Then, have the students trace their coin 25 times and design images that they feel represent them, and could show a mirror reflection of who they are to the world. Draw attention to the fact that the medallions will be polished until they are literally mirrors.
- 8.** Homework: Have students choose the design that they intend to make and write a one page paper on how and why the image they chose represents them. Also assign them to refine their design so that it will be perfect for the following class period.
- 9.** Day 2: Begin by collecting the papers.
  - 1.** Discuss the difference between ferrous and nonferrous metal then explain that when you smash nonferrous metal between two ferrous metals, like a hammer and an anvil, the nonferrous metal will conform to the shapes and textures on the ferrous metals.
  - 2.** Talk about polishing metal, and the benefits of using a polished hammer.
  - 3.** Show students how to polish a hammer on the buffing wheels.
  - 4.** Demonstrate smashing the coin using the hammer and anvil until all the coins existing markings are gone. Be sure to emphasize that if they hit the coin at any bit of an angle then the hammer will make deep half-moon shape dents that will be more difficult to remove than coins original markings.
  - 5.** When coin is flat, smooth and the original markings are gone then discuss the proper use of rubber cement. Show the students that the paper image can then be cut out with scissors and glued directly on the metal. Then a file can be used to cut the edges of the paper on the coin making the paper the exact size.
  - 6.** Explain how the center punch works and why it is needed. Demonstrate on your example coin.
  - 7.** Teach the students how to use the drill (a flexible shaft tool, like a Foredom® is the optimal type drill), how to change the bit and to use lubrication each time they drill.
  - 8.** Demonstrate the proper way to load the blade into the saw frame (taught and with the teeth facing down towards the handle and out from the back of the saw frame) and don't forget to put the coin on the saw blade before you tighten both ends.
  - 9.** Explain the most efficient sawing technique (keep the blade perpendicular to the coin, only turn the blade when the saw is going up and down, use lubrication, especially on turns, and do long purposeful strokes and most of all relax when cutting).

- 10.** Let the students begin flattening the coins.
- 10.** Day 3: Allow the students the entire class period to work, while you monitor their techniques.
- 11.** Day 4: Allow the students the entire class period to work, while you monitor their techniques.
- 12.** Day 5: Time to teach polishing.
  - 1.** Explain how files work (pushing from tip to handle) and the order of aggressiveness (bastard files then needle files).
  - 2.** Show them how to file the outside edges to make them round (by filing down to the line of the tracing on their design).
  - 3.** Explain that the inside edges of the negative space need to be filed with needle files (make them aware that there are different shapes of files, round, square, birds eye, half-round, flat, triangle, knife and crossing, to be used in different shaped gaps). Also teach them that they can cut sand paper into strips and floss the edges where files do not fit.
  - 4.** Teach them about the different grits of sand paper and that they need to start with the appropriate grit for the damage on their coin, and that they need to remove all the metal down to the bottom of the deepest dent to make the project scratch free.
  - 5.** Demonstrate sanding by putting the coin on a folded piece of paper (to avoid scratching the back of the coin on the table when you sand the other side) and changing direction with each consecutive sand paper being sure to remove all the previous sand paper marks before moving on to the smoother paper (according to damage 150 grit - 600 grit).
  - 6.** Talk about the safety information on the buffing wheels (always wear protective eye wear, work on the middle to bottom quarter of the wheel, put up all long hair and tuck in all loose clothing or jewelry).
  - 7.** Explain the that the tripoli is more aggressive than the red rouge and it is very important that Tripoli never get on the rouge wheel.
  - 8.** Demonstrate polishing on the buffer with your coin and that they need to use the ultra-sonic-cleaner and steam cleaner in between tripoli and rouge, then again after the rouge. Show them the polished coin, which should be shining like a mirror and listen to their amazed gasps.
  - 9.** Have them finish cutting and polishing their medallions.
- 13.** Day 6: Teach them how to high temperature silver solder.
  - 1.** Start by explaining what high temperature silver soldering is and why it works (because as the metal approaches melting point the crystals in the metal separate and the molten solder flows into those gaps and creates a bond when the metals cool) because they need to know the difference between that and low temperature solder (which just surrounds the metal like a bandaid and makes a very weak joint).
  - 2.** Show them the proper way to open the jump rings (by bending the ring apart sideways leaving it a circle, and not bending it out like a C because then when bent back to touching the ring becomes oval).

- 3.** Make sure they understand the importance of having a tight fit with no gaps (because high temperature solder does not bridge gaps) and be sure to emphasize the importance of cleaning the item to be soldered of everything, even finger grease.
- 4.** Instruct the students to dip their entire project into the boric-acid-denatured-alcohol-solution (to reduce the oxygen around the project, thus reducing the formation of cupric oxides).
- 5.** Make sure that you show them the flux and emphasize the importance of using it right on the joint to keep the metal clean and help the solder flow.
- 6.** Demonstrate how to set up the medallion for soldering by explaining what the third hands are and how they are to hold each side of the jump ring so that as it reaches soldering temperature it won't sag open causing gaps.
- 7.** Teach them about heat sinks and explain that the wet sand is a massive heat sink because the water never gets over 212° Fahrenheit. Teach them that they need to bury the medallion in the wet sand while the third hands hold the jump ring out of the sand to allow it get up to the required 1350° Fahrenheit.
- 8.** Explain torch safety (wear protective eye wear, never point the torch at anyone, always be aware of where the flame is pointing, never point the torch at gas hoses or tanks and don't pick up metal that is hot) and show them where the fire extinguisher is and how to use it (pull the pin out, aim at the base of the fire and squeeze the trigger).
- 9.** Demonstrate soldering by placing the solder chip on a soldering block and heating it up then lifting it off with the tip of a soldering pick, then heat the project to a slightly dull red glow and touch the solder to the joint (tell them that the color indicates temperature and if it gets to orange then it is beginning to melt and they need to pull back on the torch).
- 10.** For further emphasis on safety pick up the medallion with the tweezers and place it in a water bucket to cool (many students will grab the medallion immediately and burn themselves).
- 11.** Allow the students to work the remainder of class on cutting, polishing and soldering.
- 14.** Day 7: Allow the students the entire class period to work, while you monitor their techniques.
- 15.** Day 8: All the students should be finished (slow workers should have been required to come before or after school to keep up) and the medallions can be turned in for a formal class critique (state standard 2.2).

### Appendix D

Examples of Corian® rings:



### Appendix E

Four of the five entries from the Springville Museum of Art State High School Art Show.



### Appendix F

The five entries from the Weber State College High School Art Show.



### Appendix G

The six entries from the Local Colors High School Art Show.





## Appendix H

The TagCloud derived from student entries in their personal process diaries.

able (32) almost (37) anything (41) around (37) austin (32) badge (34) best (36) better (59) cast (92)  
**class** (303) clean (44) cool (34) cut (79) deserve (104) design (40) different (32)  
 done (74) draw (34) finished (119) freedom (63) fun (35) going (91) grade (74)  
 hard (81) **help** (270) ideas (78) jewelry (145) learned (191)  
 liked (39) lot (128) love (59) making (71) metal (64) necklace (37) nice (42)  
 notebook (118) okay (43) others (32) people (59) piece (33) pretty (42)  
**projects** (288) really (127) ring (226) sanding (34) semester (34) seth (32)  
 shape (38) silver (42) soldering (103) something (60) started (74) stone (68)  
 students (74) stuff (36) term (35) things (80) think (116) thought (38) today (158)  
 together (44) took (41) tools (60) wanted (58) wax (86) wire (37) **work** (284) writing (40)  
 wrote (37) year (33)

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