Professional Networking in Art Education

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Abstract

The social scientist provides three levels of analysis whereby the sociology of art educators can be examined: (1) statistical information, (2) formal organizational structures, and (3) informal, life-world experiences. Although the first two levels provide valuable information, it is proposed that it is within informal, life-world experiences that professional networking occurs and where the character of much of the field of art education is shaped. In this descriptive and analytical study, the sociology of art educators is examined as a function of networks of power and influence. The discussion is limited to art educators with PhD or EdD degrees who are employed at colleges and universities or who are in arts management positions.

Professional Networking in Art Education

Art educators comprise a social, professional class that, within a certain latitude, shares common educational characteristics, professional interests, operating assumptions, procedures, and goals. Art educators also share a depressed job market and limited professional opportunities. Using three frameworks of analysis from the social sciences, in this paper the sociology of art educators is examined as a function of networks of power and influence. These networks are constructed, maintained, and, at times, reformulated so that art educators can perpetuate their ideas and have access to incomes.

Within a field wherein all members cannot equally benefit from their educational background, having or needing the power to control professional access routes of power becomes a strong motivating force. In this paper it will be proposed that many of the behaviors, actions, and values within art education can be seen as being predicated on a system of professional networking. Whom one knows and where personal credits can be accumulated become a form of capital that can be bartered for professional opportunities. Professional networks can be constructed for purposes of mutual benefit and to further the development of the field.
When there is a limited and unequal distribution of opportunities, professional networks can also be avenues for obtaining advantages by those with access to power brokerages. In this paper it will be primarily this latter manifestation of professional networking that will be discussed.

Art Educators' Class Membership

Art educators comprise one group within the New Class which consists of the intellectual and technological elite of modern society (Galbraith, 1969; Gouldner, 1979). Unlike the Old Class power elite of the nineteenth century that relied upon the accumulation of tangible commodities for their capital, the New Class' capital consists of the possession of educational credentials based on abstract knowledge skills and an ability to manipulate ideas, theories, and information. Essentially, the New Class forms the foundation of our Information Society. According to Gouldner (1979), the New Class encompasses a number of professional speech communities that have in common an ability to examine the premises of their operating procedures.

Art educators have been characterized as members of the culture of aesthetic discourse in that they possess an elaborated knowledge base in art and an ability to articulate such knowledge for educational purposes (Hamblen, 1984). Aesthetic cultural capital is the commodity of art educators, and the value it can bring defines their relationship to society-at-large. And, "herein lies the problem and the primary source of the art educator's sense of alienation from society. Capital is socially defined. A skill, a commodity, or even a tangible good is only as valuable as society says it is." (Hamblen, 1985, p. 2) In a society in which nonverbal knowledge modalities, affective responses, and aesthetic qualities are given lesser value than that which is verbal and quantifiable, art educators possess a form of capital with limited social legitimacy.

Art educators share a more-or-less common fund of knowledge. Pennsylvania State graduates of the 1970s may have an elaborated speech code within phenomenology, and a graduate of the University of Oregon may place a sociocultural screen of interpretation upon art classroom
phenomena. Particular interpretations and emphases within art educators' knowledge base are not inconsequential and do play a role in professional networking. These are, however, academic dialects. Within the scope of this paper, it is not the knowledge itself that is of significance, but rather the professional network to which such knowledge is related. Art educators' relationships to society are predicated on the possession of a particular type of knowledge capital, and, as a group, art educators' actions are interpreted according to the social value placed on such knowledge. In contrast, within the social unit of art education itself, capital becomes personal. It consists of actions that form a professional network of personal relationships. When one's focus of study is the field of art education itself, capital is based not so much upon what art educators know as whom they know.

Levels of Analysis

The social scientist provides three levels of analysis whereby the sociology of art educators can be examined: (1) statistical information, (2) formal organizational structures, and (3) informal, life-world experiences. These levels have a hierarchial relationship to each other inasmuch as they proceed from what is ostensibly objective to what increasingly requires personal interpretations, from that which is quantifiable to that which is qualitative, from a linear presentation of information to the ongoing flux of life experiences. Although each level provides valuable information, it will be proposed that the grass roots level of the informal life-world best captures the flavor of art education. Professional networking is not codified nor are procedures stable for gaining access. Professional networking occurs within the flux of relationships and ever-changing configurations of power.

Statistical Information

According to collected figures, there were 40 doctorates awarded in art education in 1977-78 (Pepin & Wells, 1977-78), 55 in 1980-81 (Grant & Synder, 1983-84), and 42 in 1982 (Stein, 1984). In a survey of 87 art education departments at universities, 64% of the faculty was male, 36% female, with 34% of the males and 16% of the females at the rank of full professor (Glenn & Sherman, 1983).
The tools of the empirical social scientist are demographic distributions that tell us who art educators are, where they are, and other objective information. Such distributions can be analyzed for their social and professional implications. The Chronicle of Higher Education, the College Art Association Bulletin, and NAEA’s Placement Service together listed 16 openings in 1984. During the same period of time 105 art education related dissertations were cited in Dissertation Abstracts International (Hamblen, 1985). Obviously, job opportunities are scarce for art educators. However, the statistics only hint at the actual behaviors, values, and attitudes fomented by the reality of unemployment in one’s field of professional preparation or by the frustration of not being promoted or granted tenure due to sexism. Hence, the statistics provide valuable information that substantiates certain actions, but do not deal with how individuals actually cope within the field and how they make adjustments in their professional lives because of those facts.

Formal Organizational Structures

Formal social units specific to art education consist of local, state, national, and international professional organizations and their particular organizational structures. Museum, private foundations, and federal, state, and local art councils also employ art educators and provide them with professional opportunities and prestige.

Certainly universities and colleges are the most dominant and visible institutions in which art educators exercise their cultural capital. Professional identities are often based upon place of education or employment, and power can be accrued commensurate with the contacts and image afforded by particular universities.

It is through formal organizations that aesthetic cultural capital is exercised. Formal social units are the source of employment and professional activities. Moreover, the collective image of art education is given expression in journals, newsletters, grants, research studies, consultancies, and conferences sponsored by these social units. Access to and placement within such units are most often the goals and rewards of skillful professional networking.
Formal professional units are formed for mutual professional benefit, to further the spectrum of influence of aesthetic cultural capital, and to provide avenues for exercising particular viewpoints within art education. Inequities arise in that the number of applicants wishing access to these units of professional opportunity far exceeds the means by which aesthetic cultural capital is exercised. Limited journal space, decreasing higher education enrollments, cutbacks in departmental positions, and the hierarchial structure inherent to most professional organizations ensures that there will be a lack of free access.

Such inequities are not the sole province of art education; they are endemic to any social organization based on hierarchial principles. These inequities are, however, exacerbated by the fact that art education has questionable social legitimacy. If aesthetic cultural capital were a highly valued commodity in modern society, there would be a greater sense of professional potential, if not an actual growth in the number and size of professional units. This takes us to the social scientist's third level of study wherein values are constructed and actions occur and are given meaning.

Informal Life World Experiences

Statistics reveal patterns of emphasis. Formal social units indicate access routes and the goals of professional networking. Informal relationships are the means by which access is gained. On the third level of resolution, the statistic that there were 42 doctoral graduates in 1982 (Stein, 1984) or a flow chart indicating the organizational structure of NAEA are translated into lived, shared experiences that constitute the intricate networks of the art education profession. Networking is not statistical, although it is revealed in statistics; it has no formal social configurations, although access to formal units is its objective. Networking is the profession as it is experienced, gossiped, manipulated, and shaped. Beyond the job description of professional duties is the luncheon during which policies are actually formulated. Beyond the formal listing of jobs provided by NAEA's Placement Service is the conversation in the hotel lobby during a conference that recommends one candidate and discredits another. The
informal life-world of art educators reveals the differences between the statistic that there are approximately 21.5 articles published in *Studies in Art Education* per year (1982-1983) and experiences scholars have had with particular editorial readers. In this paper it is proposed that it is within these informal, life-world experiences that professional networking occurs and that it is here that the character of much of the field of art education is shaped.

**Networking in Art Education**

On the basis of educational affiliations, professional memberships, and university employment, art educators build a repertoire of professional networks. A generation of Lowenfeld-trained researchers gained not only a particular educational perspective but also the prestige of having worked with an internationally known educator. For a time in the 1970s, the University of Oregon was informally known as Ohio West and Ohio State University was called Oregon East due to the symbiotic relationships maintained through visiting professorships and organizational contacts. Graduates from a university acquire connections that may or may not afford entry into organizational or employment positions depending upon their university's status. There is the Pennsylvania State Connection, The Teachers College Connection, and so on, as well as a series of changing connections due to retirements, deaths, or a refocusing of emphasis that might signal a department's decline. As one enters the profession, a tacit knowledge is built up of who is who, whose person someone is, who is his/her own person, who is somebody, and who is a nobody. In a mosaic of shifting cliques and alliances, the texture of art education is continually created and recreated.

It might provide an amusing pastime to observe this panorama of power shifts and of positions that are filled and refilled in a game of musical chairs as academic gypsies make their treks from campus to campus. This, however, is a serious matter. On a personal level, career opportunities hang in the balance; for the field of art education itself, perhaps there are even more important consequences.
The Myths of Academia

It is ventured that few people in the field have not had some experience, either personal or observed, of professional networking operating to grant or deny opportunities. Professional networking has its own protocol which, when properly followed, translates into positions of power and influence. The initiate must master the nuances of breaking bread with the right people, of selecting an "in" graduate school, of attending the right conferences, of presenting topical papers that are insightful without being iconoclastic, of being careful not to make laudatory remarks about a researcher who has fallen out of vogue, and so on. Properly done, professional networking can take on the outward grace, elegance, and understated sophistication of relationships in a Henry James novel.

Aesthetic cultural capital is exercised within the field on the basis of who one knows, how well one can manipulate the formal system, and how skillfully one can position one's self. This is not to imply that ability is not rewarded or that professional opportunities are given only to those who have cultivated an influential network. Rather, mastering professional networking can provide the cutting edge in a highly competitive field.

In an article titled "Debunking the Myth of Academe," Shaw (1985) questions the academic image of communal congeniality.

The myth of academic life is certainly a seductive one: a productive, creative life supported by plentiful institutional resources, with rewards based solely on individual merit and performance ... In the changing context of higher education, however, the reality of 1985 does not conform to the myth.

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In a discussion of sex inequities among faculty, Rush (1985) emphasizes the need for women to understand the social dynamics of discriminatory practices. For a woman, departmental approval is not necessarily predicated on publications and expertise in research, which may actually elicit criticism, but rather on how well she personally relates to fellow faculty members. Only an exceptionally high degree of off-campus recognition will protect her from possible discriminatory practices.
Bowker and Lynch (1985) observe two levels of professional networking, one at the home institution, the other through the national forum of one's discipline.

Research professors use publications, presentations at national meetings, research grants, and positions in national professional organizations to gain prestige that ties them more closely to their disciplines than to their home institutions. (p. 52)

An ability to move to another institution, to participate on editorial boards, to be elected to national professional offices, and to be hired for consultancies require that one engage in some form of national networking. As noted by Bowker and Lynch (1985) and Rush (1985), national networking creates options and may serve as an antidote to inaccessible departmental political power. "On the surface, universities live by principles like academic freedom. Underneath, they live by political and social expediency, what women call the old boy network." (Rush, 1985, p. 17) Both on the national and departmental level there are networks of both old boy and old girl varieties that need to be understood and cultivated. An abridgment of the etiquette involved "can result in a combination of economic hardship, social ostracism, and psychological isolation." (Miller, 1976, p. 10) Punishments are swift, often sure, and, for all practical purposes, public for the art educator. The field is small enough to know who has been this year's Peck's Bad Boy (or Girl) and who has offended the powers that be. Art educators disappear and reappear on the scene according to their level of professional network involvement.

Ideological differences coupled with a conscious or subconscious ignoring of networking dynamics can result in a professional ostracism that may be geographical as well as psychological. Art educators are often few in number at any one university and hence may not have contact with influential colleagues. They may find themselves isolated within their home departments and removed from the national forum. If any type of security is to be had, art educators need to delicately establish state and national networks without offending fellow departmental faculty.
Networking Inconsistencies with New Class Assumptions

According to Gouldner (1979), members of the New Class believe that their particular type of cultural capital represents the highest achievements of humankind and that those possessing such capital should provide moral, intellectual, political, and social leadership. This is especially true of professional groups on the humanities end of the humanity-technology New Class continuum. Correspondingly, with their moral manifest destiny and with their deep sense of commitment, the New Class believes that they should receive the highest rewards and greatest respect.

No differently than other professional groups within the New Class, art educators have not been reticent in extolling the benefits of art study. From much of the literature in art education, it would appear that art educators are not just teaching art; they are also dispensing benevolence, an understanding of all groups in society, a sensitivity to individual differences, and a compassion for the disadvantaged. If one formed an image of art education from the literature, one would have to conclude that there is not a mean bone in art education's collective body. It is against this backdrop of goodness and mercy that the stark realities of professional networking occur. While the democratic principles of opportunity for all and respect for the development of the individual are loudly touted in theory, if not classroom practice, art education professionals themselves experience treatment that is often based on how well they have mastered the intricacies of political game playing and administrative machinations. While students are told that there are no losers in the art room and while all art work is conscientiously displayed irrespective of value or merit, the art educator must grapple with a highly competitive network of limited and disproportionately distributed rewards. The disparity between the lofty, idealistic rhetoric expressed through the formal social units of art education and the lived experience of limited opportunities can be expected to cause confusion, alienation, and professional disenchantment.

Art educators are not only party to the myth of academia that "faculty in America lead lives devoted to the selfless pursuit of knowledge in institutions carefully organized to support that pursuit"
(Shaw, 1985, p. 5); they are also in a discipline that has limited social credibility. They have bought into the myth that they are above the exigencies of profit motivations in their exercise of aesthetic cultural capital, that they have a social and moral obligation to aesthetically improve society, that democratic principles infuse their practices. Yet, these same qualities are not always experienced in their professional careers.

Outcomes

Disparities and inconsistencies between the proclamations of formal social units, such as professional organizations and journals, and informal lived experiences puts the name to the lie that permeates the New Class in general and academia in particular. Behind the benign serenity of professionalism's mask are jealousies, dislikes, and downright hatreds that would rival the intense fanaticism of a fascist. Although personal losses and gains can be tallied from professional networking, the impact on the field of art education is less apparent. When etiquette requirements of professional networking are not clearly stated, yet any abridgment can portend dire consequences, a certain amount of conservatism will result.

It is ironic that a field that has emphasized creativity is often characterized by surprisingly timid and cautious professional behaviors. Major programs supported by influential art educators may receive no critical input. A twenty year time lag is common between a proposal and its tentative implementation. Teaching art for creativity, self-expression, and technical skill development are still major rationales for many art programs. Using a scatological analogy, Chalmers (1985) suggests that many art educators have developed a tremendous capacity for holding onto ideas long after they are still useful. A backup of ideas slows down the system's ability to implement innovative programs.

Gouldner (1979) states that intellectuals thrive on rules and that they believe that those who "know the rule, who know the theory by which they act, are superior because they lead an 'examined' life. . . . They value doctrinal conformity for its own sake." (p. 84) An emphasis on methodology and a lesser concern for what that methodology is
accomplishing has been the hallmark of researchers who have been overly concerned with the outward appearances of propriety.

Anderson (1985) notes that a certain amount of rule-following is necessary if a social unit is to maintain and promulgate its identity. Institutionalized conservatism, however, can stifle needed changes. Anderson imputes the existence of docile educational behaviors to socialization processes that are on the hidden agenda of most elementary and secondary schools. Each level of the educational ladder requires an increase in obsequiousness.

Doctorates are not necessarily given to the most creative people, but more often to those who have learned to conduct themselves in such a way as to successfully make it through all the required rites of passage. A certain kind of acceptance of the status quo is required of those who would advance through the educational system--either acceptance or phenomenal cunning and patience. (Anderson, 1985, p. 24)

As one progresses through the educational system and becomes socialized in its taken-for-granted attitudes and behaviors, "one becomes increasingly reticent to tamper with that system in any significant way." (Anderson, 1985, p. 22) Rewards come from maintaining the status quo. Thus, those most central to the system are not dissenters. Those peripheral to the system can be dissenters, but, unless craftily done, they risk being barred entry to that system. The goal is to be able to exercise one's aesthetic cultural capital in a meaningful and significant manner that provides incomes and psychological rewards. Professional networking provides entry to the system through the well-worn paths of influential mentors, but the costs to personal integrity and dignity are not negligible.

An oversupply of doctoral graduates in general, and in art education in particular, limits the opportunities of new faculty and curtails "the infusion of creative young minds into higher education." (Shaw, 1985, p. 11) The academic system has become dangerously top heavy, with supply far-exceeding demand. The recession resulted in program cut-backs, and the future portends even greater declines in enrollments. In terms of cost and efficiency--the sacred criteria of university administrators--marginal programs such as art education face an uneasy future.
Conclusions

Research for this paper was initiated by one of those chance, informal experiences that tends to verify this author's thesis that the character of art education often may be clearly revealed through personal networks. At a recent NAEA Conference, a relatively young art educator discussed her plans for an early retirement that she had begun to formulate shortly after entering higher education employment. Over the years, she had invested wisely and was now nearly financially independent. In the coming years, she envisioned even more viscousness and lack of opportunities than she had experienced in her university employment. According to her, the level of professional abuse is dramatically escalating, and she wishes to avoid the upcoming fray.

In other conversations, other art educators have also discussed their escape plans from a profession in which they have dearly invested time, effort, and money to obtain the necessary educational credentials. Art education is embattled from without by an unresponsive public. It is battling within on an informal, personal level where the stakes are jobs, consultancies, organizational positions, editorships, and so on. It bears repeating that this situation is not particular to the field of art education. It occurs in any system in which supply exceeds demand, where there is an unequal distribution of capital, and where such distribution is not always made upon need or merit.

It is doubtful that the life-worlds of art educators will ever coincide with the lofty rhetoric found in the literature. This fact calls for some realignment in the thinking and actions of art educators. Moscotti, a psychiatrist, suggests that there needs to be an acknowledgement in family and educational training that goodness is not always found in life experiences (Sifford, 1985). Moscotti believes that much of the population is raised to be obedient Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. They are not emotionally or conceptually trained to deal with social realities. Everyone who is encountered in life is not a good scout, and the rules of professional life do not always follow those in the game book. Moscotti believes that citizens need to be equipped with a healthy modicum of distrust and even a little paranoia.
Professional networking is an uncodified, unwritten, but highly visible reality of art education. Women are beginning to realize that forces on the informal levels of experience have dramatically affected their careers, often in an adverse manner. Consciousness raising in regard to sex equity is but one aspect of the powerful shaping forces of professional networking. Business persons have always known that more deals are made in the 21 Club during martini lunches than are made on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. Tax deductions for professionally related activities have, in fact, given seminars and conferences the status of legitimate avenues in which to shape the professional field as well as one's career. In addition to the usual foundation courses required of graduate students, perhaps there should be classes offered in group dynamics. Just as sex education does not foster promiscuity, an open recognition of professional networking would merely enable the individual to deal better with what already exists.


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accomplishing has been the hallmark of researchers who have been overly concerned with the outward appearances of propriety.

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Research for this paper was initiated by one of those chance, informal experiences that tends to verify this author's thesis that the character of art education often may be clearly revealed through personal networks. At a recent NAEA Conference, a relatively young art educator discussed her plans for an early retirement that she had begun to formulate shortly after entering higher education employment. Over the years, she had invested wisely and was now nearly financially independent. In the coming years, she envisioned even more viscousness and lack of opportunities than she had experienced in her university employment. According to her, the level of professional abuse is dramatically escalating, and she wishes to avoid the upcoming fray.

In other conversations, other art educators have also discussed their escape plans from a profession in which they have dearly invested time, effort, and money to obtain the necessary educational credentials. Art education is embattled from without by an unresponsive public. It is battling within on an informal, personal level where the stakes are jobs, consultancies, organizational positions, editorships, and so on. It bears repeating that this situation is not particular to the field of art education. It occurs in any system in which supply exceeds demand, where there is an unequal distribution of capital, and where such distribution is not always made upon need or merit.

It is doubtful that the life-worlds of art educators will ever coincide with the lofty rhetoric found in the literature. This fact calls for some realignment in the thinking and actions of art educators. Moscotti, a psychiatrist, suggests that there needs to be an acknowledgement in family and educational training that goodness is not always found in life experiences (Sifford, 1985). Moscotti believes that much of the population is raised to be obedient Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. They are not emotionally or conceptually trained to deal with social realities. Everyone who is encountered in life is not a good scout, and the rules of professional life do not always follow those in the game book. Moscotti believes that citizens need to be equipped with a healthy modicum of distrust and even a little paranoia.

105.
Professional networking is an uncodified, unwritten, but highly visible reality of art education. Women are beginning to realize that forces on the informal levels of experience have dramatically affected their careers, often in an adverse manner. Consciousness raising in regard to sex equity is but one aspect of the powerful shaping forces of professional networking. Business persons have always known that more deals are made in the 21 Club during martini lunches than are made on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. Tax deductions for professionally related activities have, in fact, given seminars and conferences the status of legitimate avenues in which to shape the professional field as well as one's career. In addition to the usual foundation courses required of graduate students, perhaps there should be classes offered in group dynamics. Just as sex education does not foster promiscuity, an open recognition of professional networking would merely enable the individual to deal better with what already exists.
References


