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CHANGING RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES: A CRITICAL STUDY OF ELLIOT EISNER

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In the quest for alternative practices and intellectual freedom in research, naturalistic inquiry and critical theory are offering louder and louder challenges to the dominant experimental paradigm. Mazza, though unwilling six years ago to label this ferment in curriculum inquiry a paradigm shift, has discussed its origins. She traces the history of reconceptualist curriculum theory—a critical movement focusing on the comprehensive transformation of educational structures—and quotes Pinar's early encouragement of the shift in stance:

> I am suggesting that a field cannot seriously develop if we are unwilling, for part of our time, to take our eyes off empirically-oriented colleagues, and work earnestly and intensively among ourselves, building a systematic understanding of issues which make problematic the American educational enterprise. Work of an equivalent order to "basic research" must be conducted before we achieve understanding which allows us to potently and meaningfully assist others.[1]

Through collective dialogue among reconceptualist curriculum theorists, unanswered questions from the old paradigm and newly generated questions have begun to find answers. Does this movement constitute a paradigm shift? What has propelled this seeming shift? Is it substantive—is the new paradigm supplying the field with a framework for theorizing, categorizing, and developing alternative assumptions and styles of expression?

When educational researchers begin to generate questions for which their current research methodology seems inappropriate, do they turn to merely more appropriate methodology? This action would hardly indicate a substantive paradigm shift in the field. But if researchers have begun to question the assumptions and concepts of traditional research, then their movement into new methodology might be the surface manifestation of a real, fundamental shift.

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[1]Karen Mazza, "Reconceptual Theory as an Alternative Mode of Curriculum Theory and Practice A Critical Study," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 4 (Summer 1982) 5-19

Trying to look at a paradigm shift is like trying to see the earth turning. We need the perspective of distance. While we can intellectualize what it means to experience a paradigm shift, the experience of one curriculum theorist may offer insight into the questions fueling that supposed shift. In part, looking at the experience of one researcher helps us to develop the notion of paradigm shift from a nonscientific perspective.[2] We may also be able to determine whether the current shift is substantive enough to warrant the label of a major paradigm shift.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the evidence of a substantive paradigm shift in curriculum inquiry by examining the questions that have propelled the transformation and caused Elliot Eisner's radical shift in the course of his professional career—a personal, perhaps unwilling paradigm shift. Eisner is one of many who have journeyed from an empirical-analytical research model to a critical-theoretical one. I maintain that the world in which scientific work is done is, for Eisner, a paradox from the beginning. The worlds of his artistic imagination and his scientific imagination have proceeded through a dialectical transformation, propelled by questions arising from the tensions between those worlds. Through his artistic eye, the world is not knowable or discoverable in any absolute sense but rather is individually and personally constructed.

The artist perceives the world through a qualitative lens; the traditional scientist, a quantitative one. But what about the scientist who is an artist? The attempt to view the world through two different lenses simultaneously results in blurred vision, which can produce creative conflict as the striving for clear vision propels thought. In 1964, Eisner writes:

> Translating research studies into terms that are comprehensible to those unfamiliar with research methods is fraught with many dangers. . . . Technical terms such as those used in statistics and psychological theory obtain their power through their precision, and efforts to transform them into commonsense equivalents may rob them of the very precision that rendered them useful to the researcher . . If creativity is to be studied scientifically it has to be identified and measured.[3]

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[2]Thomas Kuhn wrote *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* in 1962 (Chicago University of Chicago Press) His notion of paradigm may be defined as the way a group of researchers conceptualizes its theoretical structure for generating questions in a field of study Kuhn tells us that paradigm shifts have tended to be attached to one man because of specific major breakthroughs in research He argues that this tendency is but convenient labeling of a slow, step-by step process Researchers do not take one giant leap into the unknown of a new paradigm It may be close to the situation to think of a paradigm shift as an accumulation of confronted anomalies that have resulted in theoretical movement. The process appears to be a dialectical transformation occurring through dialogue among researchers within and across fields Although Kuhn cautions against applying the term *paradigm shift* to fields other than the hard sciences, the notion is useful as a heuristic for examining changes in research within a field and the questions that propelled those changes over time

[3]Elliot Eisner, *Think With Me About Creativity* (Dansville, NY Owens, 1964), preface

In 1972, he writes:

Scientific inquiry is aimed at describing, explaining, predicting, and when possible, controlling empirical phenomena.[4]

By 1984, he can write:

I believe our propensity to change practice is a function of the attractiveness of set ideas, rather than of the rigor of a body of data-based conclusions. . . . If research is to inform practice, we need to do something quite different from what we have done in the past 80 years.[5]

These quotations represent Eisner's views on research at different periods of his career. I will discuss Eisner's writings over a 20-year period and argue that his role as an artist and art educator has conflicted with the empirical-analytic paradigm from the beginning of his career. Further, I will trace some of Eisner's beliefs about the artistic mode of knowing that have taken him on this journey and the probable questions he was asking. In a sense, questions have developed from a triadic transaction between art, research, and professional discourse, resulting in Eisner's theoretical shift.

The three periods of Eisner's work relate to three general paradigm perspectives in research. the empirical-analytic, the symbolic-interactional, and the critical-theoretical. Each paradigm questions experience differently. What is the nature of social research? What is the nature of social reality? What is the role of theory development in research? What is the role of ethics and values? These questions have propelled Eisner's theoretical shift.[6]

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF SOCIAL RESEARCH?

Early in his career as an educational researcher, less than a decade after the launching of Sputnik and the beginning of a tremendous national effort for excellence in the sciences, Eisner published a series of articles on creativity in *Instructor* magazine.[7] Throughout the articles, Eisner's positivist orientation toward identification and measurement is evident, and yet Eisner's perception of the uneasy union between educational (art) research and the empirical-

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[4]Elliot Eisner, *Educating Artistic Vision* (New York Macmillan, 1972), p. 239.

[5]Elliot Eisner, "Can Educational Research Inform Educational Practice?" *Phi Delta Kappan* 65 (March 1984): 447.

[6]George Homans, *The Nature of Social Science* (New York Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1967). Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York Doubleday, 1966); Hugh Mehan, "Structuring School Structure," *Harvard Educational Review* 48 (February 1978) 32–64, Thomas Popkewitz, "Qualitative Research Some Thoughts About the Relation of Methodology and Social History," in *The Study of Schooling*, ed. Thomas Popkewitz and B. Robert Tabachnick (New York: Praeger, 1981), pp. 155–178, Patti Lather, "Research as Praxis," *Harvard Educational Review* 56 (August 1986) 257–277.

[7]The collected articles appeared in Elliot Eisner, *Think With Me About Creativity* (Dansville, NY: Owens, 1964).

analytical paradigm comes through.[8] He laments that efforts to quantify for research purposes leave creativity out of the mainstream: "From all the hours spent preparing research designs, constructing tests, gathering and analyzing data, we have achieved only a modest understanding."[9] He believes that the purpose of educational research is to inform classroom instruction; therefore, he published this series of articles because much of the research carried out at universities does not reach the classroom teacher.

How can theory and research relate to practice more directly? Although he concludes that the most research can do is to provide generalizations to account for making decisions, this question begins to point to the already existing conflict between his artistic mode of knowing and the analytic mode of knowing. The felt gap between research and practice—laboratory and human life—comes through in such statements as "The most valid measure of creativity is how an individual performs in his daily life"—a measuring of the unmeasurable.[10]

One of Eisner's contemporaries writing at this period is Homans. In *The Nature of Social Science,* published in 1967, Homans presents a classic positivist view of social research: Knowledge is a formal set of law-like regularities, and the purpose of social science is to predict and control behavior by discovering and explaining these universal laws. Homans's book calls for recreating the social sciences in the image of the natural sciences.[11] Because of his own background in traditional social science research at the University of Chicago, Eisner would probably have agreed with Homans's basic premises, though he would have had problems with the idea that social life can be mathematically understood and reduced to correlations of interacting and predictable variables. Eisner's sense of artistic knowing precludes this view,

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[8]In private correspondence with me in the spring of 198-, Dr Eisner shed some light on his conflicts during this period "As you know, I started life as a painter and attended the Art Institute of Chicago As a result, my fundamental inclinations from the beginning were to think about humans, teaching and learning in a qualitative or artistic context When I went to the University of Chicago for graduate work in education, the major thrust of the faculty was in the area of social science research methods. The people with whom I worked were not narrow or particularly positivistic in their orientation. Nevertheless, there was an emphasis on quantification as well as theory and my dissertation research was in fact a factor analysis study of creativity There was hardly anything that could be, at that time, more quantitative as a method

"What you probably don't understand is that the problem that I faced as a person trying to improve the conduct of inquiry in education is that I was trying to move one group in one direction and another in another direction. What I mean is that I did try to bring a scientific, and to some degree a quantitative perspective, to bear on problems in art education because people in the field at that time simply had no serious view of what the social sciences might do in that field.

At the same time, when I was writing and speaking to people in educational research, I would talk about the importance of the arts and emphasize more qualitative issues."

[9]Elliot Eisner, *Think With Me About Creativity* (Dansville, NY Owens, 1964), p. 42.

[10]Ibid , p 28.

[11]George Homans, *The Nature of Social Science* (New York Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1967)

though the research paradigm he is operating under accepted it. He does, however, try then to squeeze the unpredictable world of artistic knowing into the analytical box, as his early recommendation of developing a typology of creativity shows.[12]

When *Readings in Art Education* was published in 1966, Eisner's beliefs about the purposes of educational research had changed little:

> The use of concepts, methods, and theories from the fields of psychology, sociology, anthropology and aesthetics has not been common within the field of art education. ... Theory and scientific methodology have not been part of the teacher's stock in trade. ... Art, they have claimed, cannot be boiled down to science, much less to numbers . Claims such as these reveal a fundamental misconception of regarding the goals ... of the behavioral scientist.[13]

He goes on to say that the purpose of the book is to bring relevant research findings to the attention of those working in the field. All these studies are couched in the language of positivist research.

By 1972, with *Educating Artistic Vision,* Eisner began to move somewhat in his research stance.[14] Although he is still interested in finding "scientifically confident" answers to questions of practice and quotes several empirical studies, he now quotes Langer on the "two modes of knowing," the discursive-scientific and the intuitive-artistic.[15] The latent conflict between his accepted research mode and his artistic sense of knowing now assumes an overt expression. He questions the ability of the current theory to guide his work. He begins to see artistic ability as a mode of intelligence and believes that "the tendency to separate art from intellect and thought from feeling" has been a source of difficulty for the field of art education.[16] He has not yet articulated the parallel problem of separating theory from practice and intuition from research.

Eisner is still confident that descriptive studies in art education can "describe systematically and objectively the characteristics found in children's art" and that "experimental studies should attempt to find causal relationships between curriculum and teaching."[17] He also seems to lament the scarcity of tests available in the visual arts—believing tests would legitimate art education in a positivist paradigm. "To formulate scales, to construct tests, build inventories is to set standards of performance in a field where standards are anathema."[18] He bemoans the lack of "hard-headed empirical research" on teaching art and art educators' suspicions of statistics.

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[12]Elliot Eisner, *Think With Me About Creativity* (Dansville, NY Owens, 1964), p 27

[13]Elliot Eisner and David Echer, eds., *Readings in Art Education* (Waltham, MA: Blaisdell, 1966)

[14]Elliot Eisner, *Educating Artistic Vision* (New York. Macmillan, 1972)

[15]Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key,* 3rd ed (Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press, 1957)

[16]Elliot Eisner, *Educating Artistic Vision* (New York Macmillan, 1972), p 113.

[17]Ibid., p. 117.

[18]Ibid., p. 145

In the middle years of Eisner's career, he begins to move toward the symbolic interactionists, who believe that reality is socially constructed and that the purpose of conducting social research is to describe and understand reality as it emerges from social interactions. Eisner is beginning to question a fundamental assumption—if reality is emergent and constructed, then the traditional researcher's quest for objective reality is fruitless. His questions at this juncture undermine his previous stance.

In 1974, Eisner and Vallance wrote *Conflicting Conceptions of Curriculum,* providing the field with a view of five theoretical models of curriculum [19] He is beginning to come to terms with the macro question of purpose in social research by examining a micro question of purpose in the field of education. He realizes that "public educational discourse frequently does not bother to examine its conceptual underpinnings, . . the assumptions that one holds when one approaches this question [of curriculum]."[20] Conflicting modes of research and their differing assumptions are implied throughout this book.

By 1976, Eisner is saying that the purpose of educational research is to bring about changes in schools.[21] In discussing the nature of education (social reality), he says, "We teach what we teach because the subjects are passports through our system, not because we have reflected on the nature of education and judged them necessary."[22]

The most recent period in Eisner's career is marked by a more outright rejection of the empirical-analytic mode of research as appropriate for educational inquiry. His writings here are replete with references to the differences between the artistic and scientific modes of knowing and the consequences for educational inquiry. He draws parallels between the prevalent research paradigm and the current status of school curriculums, as evidenced in the foreword to *Cognition and Curriculum* (1982):

> The "Back to Basics" movement . . . is supported by the limited conception that intelligence only includes verbal and mathematical reasoning and that the arts are based on emotion and embodied in those that are talented. Such a limited notion of intelligence is strongly supported by an unduly restricted conception of science, upon which currently dominant methods of evaluation are based.[23]

Eisner's critical appraisal of current educational practice and evaluation emanates from his continuing dialogue with the conflict between the art and science of knowing.

The critical theorists' purpose in conducting social research is to understand a given situation within its historical context to free those researched

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[19]Elliot Eisner and Elizabeth Vallance, *Conflicting Conceptions of Curriculum* (Berkeley, CA. McCutchan, 1974).

[20]Ibid , p. 2

[21]Elliot Eisner, *The Arts, Human Development, and Education* (Berkeley, CA. McCutchan, 1976)

[22]Ibid , p 217

[23]Elliot Eisner, *Cognition and Curriculum* (New York: Longman, 1982), p ix.

from whatever claims to restrict understanding and progress. As some have said, "Everyone gets smarter." At the extreme end of the critical theorists' spectrum are those researchers—such as neo-Marxists Sharp, Lather, McClaren, and Giroux—who espouse emancipation through an openly advocacy-based program.[24]

Eisner, too, is concerned with emancipation. His recent writings reveal the nature and source of this emancipation In a 1984 article, Eisner seriously questions the ability of traditional research to inform practice and caustically remarks, "I assume that the conduct of educational research is intended to do more than to advance the careers of educational researchers."[25] He assures us that he is asking this question in good will and acknowledges that educational research is only 80 years old. But he goes on to suggest that the research reported in the *American Educational Research Journal* is not informing practice and says that we need to do something different in the way of research.

Like other critical theorists, Eisner has an agenda. He believes that the purpose of educational research is to change, or improve, classroom life: "Those engaged in educational research should have an intimate acquaintance with life in classrooms. . . . We need to construct our own unique conceptual apparatus and research methods."[26] The purpose of social research—to capture classroom life—cannot be fulfilled within the traditional scientific paradigm:

> Educational research is now a species of scientific inquiry using the language of propositions. . . . The realities of the classroom are an array of qualities for which meanings are construed and will always present more than propositional language can capture We need a language capable of conveying qualities.[27]

He then argues that the purpose of educational inquiry requires the language of criticism, the language of metaphor, that we need to draw on the humanities for frameworks of reference and language.

In a 1985 article, Eisner further outlines his rejection of the empirical-analytic mode of research for education:

> We study education through social science disciplines which were originally meant for rat maze learning. . . We have built a technology of educational practice . . [of]

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[24]Rachel Sharp, "Marxism, the Concept of Ideology, and Its Implications for Fieldwork, in *The Study of Schooling*, ed Thomas Popkewitz and B Robert Tabachnick (New York Praeger, 1981); Patti Lather, "Research as Praxis," *Harvard Educational Review* 56 (August 1986). 257–277; Peter McClaren, *Cries From the Corridor* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), Peter McClaren, *Schooling as a Ritual Performance* (London Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), Henry Giroux, "Beyond the Limits of Radical Educational Reform· Toward a Critical Theory of Education," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 2 (Winter 1980) 20–46, Henry Giroux, "Theories of Reproduction and Resistance in the New Sociology of Education A Critical Analysis," *Harvard Educational Review* 53 (August 1983) 257–295

[25]Elliot Eisner, "Can Educational Research Inform Educational Practice?" *Phi Delta Kappan* 65 (March 1984): 447.

[26]Ibid , p. 450

[27]Ibid., p 447

commando raids on the classroom. . . . So often what is educationally significant, but difficult to measure is replaced with that which is insignificant, but easy to measure [28]

Eisner sees now that the purposes of the scientific paradigm are fundamentally at odds with the purposes of educational research. While the scientific community has been concerned with purposes of management and control culminating in the "teacher-proof" curriculum, Eisner's growing concern has been the understanding and emancipation of classrooms and the development of an artistically fluid curriculum. He is beginning to see the reciprocal relationship between theory and practice—research as praxis.[29]

In his ever-kindly summaries of immensely complex conflicts, he writes that the desire for the sureties of the statistical paradigm are "understandable":

> One can obtain a real sense of intellectual security from doing work that appears to be scientifically grounded, that has all the features of a replicable quantitative, measurement-oriented system. . . That aim of developing a fool-proof method . . . thrills me not. . . I suspect the reason for my reaction is because I take great pleasure in the journey.[30]

This paragraph opened his 1985 book, *The Art of Educational Evaluation* Even the title conveys a sense of the journey Eisner has taken in his understanding of the purpose of social research.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF SOCIAL RESEARCH?

Early in his career, Eisner's views on the nature of social reality also conflict as he seeks to reconcile the unreconcilable. Eisner might have agreed with Homans that social life (education) can really be understood only by experts applying systematic rules and discovering law-like generalizations, but the questions emerging from his sense of artistic knowing are pulling him across paradigm barriers, revealing the ceaseless ebb and flow of human life as process.[31] In discussing a teacher's evaluation of art, he says, "The teacher tends to concern himself with the product and not with the process. . . . The process is actually of greatest importance because process develops the creative powers of the child."[32] The empirical-analytic mode of research rarely deals with the role of process in research, but rather with product, and Eisner is beginning to make this connection.

Also related to the nature of social reality is the question of objective truth versus multiple realities. Again, Eisner waffles between the scientific and

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[28]Elliot Eisner, Creative Education in American Schools Today, *Educational Horizons* 63 (special issue, 1985) 12

[29]For an excellent discussion of the reciprocal nature of research and practice, see Patti Lather, "Research as Praxis, *Harvard Educational Review* 56 (August 1986) 257–277.

[30]Elliot Eisner, *The Art of Educational Evaluation* (London Falmer Press, 1985), p 1

[31]George Homans, *The Nature of Social Science* (New York. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1967)

[32]Elliot Eisner and David Echer, eds , *Readings in Art Education* (Waltham, MA: Blaisdell, 1966), p. 349

artistic modes of knowing. His discussion of the mode of research appropriate to education is filled with references to the usefulness of generalizations, the importance of experimental grounding and systematic quantitative description, all aimed at uncovering some sense of objective truth. What today he would call "multiple realities" in 1972 he labeled merely "paradoxical."[33]

In mid-career, Eisner begins to see the nature of social reality as negotiated, subjective, constructed, and multiple; he questions traditional paradigm objectivity. The new vocabulary emerging in his writings reflects these ideas: "negotiation," "code and context," "social context." Comparing some of Eisner's ideas then with the symbolic-interactionist position represented by Berger and Luckmann is instructive.[34]

The individual construction of reality—multiple meanings arising from the same context—is the first point of similarity. Eisner edited *Reading, the Arts, and the Creation of Meaning* in 1978. In the introduction, he writes:

> What is needed is an approach to reading that conceptualizes reading as the generic process through which humans make meaning, that examines the psychological processes through which such meanings are made, and which takes into account in such inquiry the unique features of the symbol systems in which such meanings are couched.[35]

He states later in the introduction that his interest in the creation of meaning comes primarily from his work in the arts. Again, he acknowledges the pull of artistic knowing as he moves toward a critical-aesthetic view of inquiry. Berger and Luckmann would concur with his statement on meaning-making and speak similarly of the development of "finite provinces of meaning" that arise out of the context of everyday life.

A second point of parallel thought is the notion of shared social codes. Eisner is now talking of humans trying to "negotiate their environment" through knowledge of patterns or codes that create a type of regularity in experience.[36] Berger and Luckmann, in the same vein, discuss socially constructed reality that comes about through the sign system of language.[37] Language "stabilizes and crystalizes subjectivity," "integrates reality," and "actualizes the world."[38] Eisner's writings on the topic of constructed meaning through shared codes nicely parallels the macro-structure of his discourse with the field of scientific research:

> What it means to know within the various forms of social discourse in which we participate means knowing their parameters, intentions, and coding systems . Pub-

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[33]Elliot Eisner, *Educating Artistic Vision* (New York. Macmillan, 1972), p 142.

[34]Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York Doubleday, 1966)

[35]Elliot Eisner, ed , *Reading, the Arts, and the Creation of Meaning* (Reston, VA. National Art Education Association, 1978), p 9

[36]Ibid , p. 15.

[37]Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York Doubleday, 1966)

[38]Ibid , p 39

lished materials in the natural sciences participate in a set of codes defined by the discipline.[39]

The third parallel between Eisner's thinking and the work of Berger and Luckmann relates to the nature of social institutions as cultural carriers. In the introduction to a 1976 book, Eisner discusses the schools as social institutions that function in a social context and apprises his readers of the need to appreciate the social and political character of educational change He believes that most schools "operate with an organizational structure that makes it difficult to adapt to the organic and changing interests of children or allow for the development of aesthetic commitment."[40] Similarly, Berger and Luckmann see the understanding of this reification of culture as "recipe knowledge" that supplies institutionally appropriate rules of conduct[41] The relationship between institutions such as schools and the traditional research paradigm seems fairly obvious: define the conduct, control, and predict. Indeed, Eisner seems to be coming to this conclusion:

> The pervasive quality of schools today borders on the image of the industrial plant. . . They are organized bureaucratically with growing tendencies toward a form of simplistic accountability that has little or nothing to do with the educational process.[42]

Although Eisner does not state outright that the positivist paradigm has filtered down into the methods of understanding and evaluating schools, he has become more critical of the standardized testing machine that has taken over the schools. He has become increasingly radical through the years in his approach to evaluation. His longing for the recognition of artistic knowing in the schools is reflected in this statement. "The imaginative life will not measure well on state tests."[43] He mentions the rewards of research and the necessities of the professional marketplace, indicating that researchers, too, do what counts.

Recently, Eisner's work reflects a more critical stance on the nature of social research.[44] Critical theorists recognize the obdurate nature of social

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[39]Elliot Eisner, ed , *Reading, the Arts, and the Creation of Meaning* (Reston, VA. National Art Education Association, 1978), p. 15

[40]Ibid , p 215

[41]Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York Doubleday, 1966), p. 62

[42]Elliot Eisner, ed , *Reading, the Arts, and the Creation of Meaning* (Reston, VA. National Art Education Association, 1978), p 222

[43]Ibid , p 217

[44]Dr Eisner resisted attaching the label of critical theorist to himself In an interview with me in September 1986, when asked how he would categorize himself, he responded that my label of "critical aesthetician" was "not bad " He continued "My work is largely interpretive I'm concerned with critical processes and a lot of what I do has been influenced by the fact that first of all I was a painter and I have a very deep interest in the arts, in the field of art education, in the humanities and in the ways in which critics in those fields do their critical work which is qualitative "

Elaborating further in private correspondence with me in the spring of 1987, he wrote "It may well be that over the years the tenor of my writing has become more critical and social in

reality—that socially created constructs seem to take on a life of their own in the historical process—but they also recognize social life as negotiated and contextual. Neo-Marxists take this position a step further and use Marxism as their historical frame of reference.

Eisner's view of social reality has become ever more individually context based. In 1982, he expresses the conflict between the notions of objective reality and multiple meanings in his discussion of types of knowing.[45] He relates that feeling (artistic) and knowing (scientific) have a long history of separation in intellectual thought—the senses have been deemed untrustworthy and have kept us from knowing the truth. He believes that this separation is still played out in belief and in practice. "A view of cognition that restricts thinking and knowing to forms of mentation that are exclusively discursive or mathematical leaves out far more than it includes."[46] Allusions to the conflict between scientific and artistic knowing are seen in his earlier work, but now he is able to develop his argument based on his continuing discourse with the larger field of research. He looks beyond his own intuition to the field of cognitive psychology and quotes Neisser (1976) on perception, almost giving a metaphor for research, as he now sees it: "There is a transactional and reciprocal relationship between the qualities of the environment and the cognitive structures or anticipatory schemata an organism possesses. . . . Perception itself is constructive.[47]

Constructive is the key word for Eisner. He now believes that the scientific paradigm has focused on qualities of the stimulus and behavior rather than on the "frames of reference the organism is likely to use to construe its [the stimulus's] qualities."[48] He now states what he has seemed to know intuitively throughout his career, that "commitment to a particular view of knowledge has consequences for the conduct of research."[49]

Also related to Eisner's view of reality as constructed is the notion of research as a form of representation. Here, his views of art lift his understanding of the nature of inquiry into a multifaceted, negotiated process. Positivistic research, with its single-minded objective stance, engages in what Eisner calls a kind of "philosophic hygiene." He realizes that every form of representation neglects some aspect of the world. Even his metaphors reflect his movement into the world of research as an art form: from a paraphrase of Popper—"the

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character. I've never thought of myself as a critical theorist But I do believe that social issues should not be neglected "

I believe that Dr Eisner's current work warrants the label *critical,* and although the focus is aesthetic, rather than overtly political, his calls for curriculum and evaluation reform reflect a radical stance.

[45]Elliot Eisner, *Cognition and Curriculum* (New York. Longman, 1982)

[46]Ibid., p 29

[47]Ibid , p 33.

[48]Ibid., p 34.

[49]Ibid., p. 38

kinds of nets we know how to weave determine the kinds of nets we cast"—to a quotation from Gombrich—"artists do not paint what they can see, they see what they can paint."[50]

Besides a view of social reality as multiple and constructed, Eisner's view of the importance of history and context helps to define him as a critical theorist. Eisner's thoughts on the importance of historical context parallel some of his contemporaries in educational research who are critical theorists—Popkewitz, for example. Popkewitz believes that researchers must look at the historical, social context of schools and become aware of the role researchers play in developing that context if we are to get a more complete picture of the nature of schooling.[51] Some critical theorists insist that we must look at power relationships in schools and describe the reproductive role of schools as purveyors of the dominant culture. Further, they see schools as battlegrounds for ideology.[52]

As Eisner begins to develop his idea of educational criticism as a viable research mode, he explores the development of researchers using this method in an emergent way:

> Over time, descriptive language becomes less mechanical, more incisive and increasingly literary or poetic as students try to get at the essence of what is occurring [This] requires . . not only sensitivity to the emerging qualities of classroom life, but also a set of ideas, theories and models that enable one to distinguish the significant from the trivial.[53]

He speaks of "rendering" an event or situation. The artistic mode of knowing has now burst through and become, also, the mode of research Eisner espouses, like Popkewitz, however, he warns that "without historical perspective, our analyses are likely to be naive and misguided."[54] Further, Eisner suggests that educational inquiry requires "a sophisticated interpretive map" that proceeds from our historical and theoretical perspective."[55] This map is developed in the context of historically grounded, context-bound research.

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[50]Elliot Eisner, *The Art of Educational Evaluation* (London. Falmer Press, 1985), p. 150

[51]Thomas Popkewitz and B. Robert Tabachnick, eds., *The Study of Schooling* (New York Praeger, 1981)

[52]Henry Giroux, "Beyond the Limits of Radical Educational Reform: Toward a Critical Theory of Education," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 2 (Winter 1980) 20–46, Henry Giroux, "Theories of Reproduction and Resistance in the New Sociology of Education A Critical Analysis," *Harvard Educational Review* 53 (August 1983): 257–295, Patti Lather, "Research as Praxis," *Harvard Educational Review* 56 (August 1986). 257–277, Peter McClaren, *Cries From the Corridor* (London Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), Peter McClaren, *Schooling as a Ritual Performance* (London Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986); Rachel Sharp, "Marxism, the Concept of Ideology, and Its Implications for Fieldwork," in *The Study of Schooling*, ed Thomas Popkewitz and B Robert Tabachnick (New York: Praeger, 1981).

[53]Elliot Eisner, *The Educational Imagination*, 2nd ed (New York· Macmillan, 1985), p 221

[54]Ibid , p 2

[55]Ibid , p. 214.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THEORY DEVELOPMENT IN RESEARCH?

In classic scientific research, theory was developed a priori and, if sound, would predict the results of experimental research. Research had the function of proving theory and moving it toward the realm of fact. In 1972, Eisner writes that a colleague's work "was not experimentally grounded," that there were "no systematic quantitative descriptions of data."[56] Eisner here believes that theory must be developed a priori:

> Although Lowenfeld's work represents one of the most extensive efforts to classify and analyze children's art, it contains numerous assertions that lack documentation The states that are described are not the result of empirical studies using scientific controls to insure objectivity, but insightful . conclusions drawn from years of experience working with children. Such an approach in the hands of a sensitive observer has much to recommend it, but it tends not to be easily corrected. Observation and insight give way to beliefs that are difficult to alter because the ground rules for alteration were not employed in the initial development of the observations."[57]

Eisner has not yet reached a point where he could argue that theory emerges, explains, and interprets, though he acknowledges the problem: A priori theory, by definition, presupposes that researchers carry on their work in laboratories while "the field" waits for the results.

Eisner believes that this split between research and practice could cause researchers to miss the most significant problems in the field. However, his word of caution at this point shows that the traditional scientific paradigm still works for him: "Too strict a concern with the immediate problems of practice reduces research to a type of service function that can rob it of its imagination."[58] He also believes that "we need a precise way of characterizing the classroom."[59] He asks now, after discussing the many limitations of scientific research, whether we are justified in rejecting it. He answers no, but his defense is weak. He says simply that one field of inquiry cannot give us all the answers. He ends this discussion by saying that the major contribution of research is its ability to provide perspectives on educational phenomena. His implication here is a contradiction. Scientific research in its quest for objective reality provides multiple perspectives.

As early as 1972, Eisner is recognizing that traditional research has paid little attention to the environment the research was conducted in. In earlier writings, however, he is more inclined to see theory developed a priori: "If correct reasoning is to be identified with valid syllogistic argument," then we need to measure our theorizing against the criteria agreed on by those researchers and scholars of scientific or philosophic theory.[60] In his early

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[56]Elliot Eisner, *Educating Artistic Vision* (New York. Macmillan, 1972), p. 81
[57]Ibid., p. 81
[58]Ibid., p 248
[59]Ibid., p 249
[60]Ibid., p 20

writings, it seems as if his attitudes toward theory development in research are at two poles. He is actively sorting these ideas in his writing. He at once embraces and condemns the development of a priori theory. Reflecting his own internal conflict, he writes, "Perhaps the most misunderstood aspect of scientific research in art education is the meaning and function of theory within the research problem."[61] He goes on to say that the theories providing the basis for research have the greatest effect on practice.[62] He realizes, also, that the questions researchers choose to ask are profoundly affected by the theories they embrace [63] (He has here come upon the tip of the paradigm-shift iceberg!) He also views theory as "a template" through which the world is viewed.[64]

In the middle years of his career, Eisner moves toward the symbolic-interactionist view of the role of theory development in research, a view of theory as an a posteriori refinement of guesses, an effort toward explanation and interpretation. Mehan, Eisner's contemporary, published an article during this period that embodies this notion of emergent theory and characterizes Eisner's milieu of field discourse. Mehan calls for a new approach to studying schooling: "constitutive ethnography."[65] He contrasts this type of study with traditional correlational and field studies and notes how theory emerges:

> Since the organization of event is socially constructed, researchers attempt to locate this structuring in the words and gestures of the participants. . . Constitutive ethnographers seek to insure that the structure they see in events is the same as the structure that orients the participants in those events. . . If the group members' answers to the . . . questions confirm tentative analysis, then the ethnographers can have some confidence in the validity of their findings.[66]

For Mehan, theory illuminates and clarifies instead of proving a set of laws defined by the scientific paradigm. This view of theory invites us to contemplate foundations for change rather than to continue a reification of supposed absolutes.

In this middle period, Eisner, too, is concerned with relating to the meanings humans construe from their interactions. He is discussing a sense of multiple realities underlying incompatible views. In *Conflicting Concepts of Curriculum,* he writes:

> The debates and conflicts generated by each of these themes [five views of curriculum] derive necessarily from the degree of incompatibility between the values and goals

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[61]Ibid., p 242
[62]Ibid., p 251
[63]Ibid.
[64]Ibid
[65]Hugh Mehan, "Structuring School Structure," *Harvard Educational Review* 48 (February 1978) 32–64
[66]Ibid., p 38

underlying each side of the issue being debated Public educational discourse frequently does not bother to examine its conceptual underpinnings.[67]

Although he is not overtly advocating research that operates on the notion of emergent theory, he recognizes the diversity of theoretical viewpoints and recommends attention to that diversity.

Recently, Eisner has approached a critical-theoretical or critical aesthetic stance on theory development. For the critical theorist, theory is grounded and emergent, but beyond that it helps to explain and develop the historical context as grounded in both history and the present. To the critical theorist, there is no atheoretical history, nor is there ahistorical theory. For the neo Marxist at the far end of the critical-theoretical spectrum, a dialectical relationship exists between the emergent theory that refines hypothesis and the Marxism that guides and determines the questions.[68]

Eisner shows some common ground with critical theorists when he says, "Theory construction is more likely to be faithful when researchers are well acquainted with the life of schooling."[69] However, his movement toward the aesthetic mode of research is evident in his statement that "criticism can only be as rich as the critic's perceptions."[70] He is arguing now for educational connoisseurship, which he defines as "knowledgeable perception " These terms come from the critical analysis of literature, theater, film, music, and the visual arts. Eisner's interest in qualitative research moves from the ethnographic mode to the critical mode of the fine arts. Theory develops, then, from the critic's illumination of qualities. Eisner believes that if we want to do qualitative inquiry, we should look at those who use it most—the artists. He believes that the paradigmatic use of qualitative inquiry is found in the arts.

In his 1985 *The Art of Educational Evaluation,* Eisner speaks at length about his current concept of theory development as it relates to education and the arts. He believes that theory does not replace intelligence and perception but helps us to cultivate artistry in research. Researchers must become connoisseurs of the qualities that constitute classroom life, and as critics they must become skilled in the art of disclosure. The reporting of research must be by metaphor, analogy, suggestion, and implication. The aim of research is a heightened awareness among those researched and the researchers themselves of the qualities of school life.[71]

Eisner's present grasp of theory seems to be that it is created at a specific time, in a specific context, by a specific interacting social group with a specific history. It serves to illuminate and at the same time be illuminated through

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[67]Elliot Eisner and Elizabeth Vallance, *Conflicting Conceptions of Curriculum* (Berkeley, CA McCutchan, 1974), p 1

[68]Patti Lather, "Research as Praxis," *Harvard Educational Review* 56 (August 1986). 257–277

[69]Elliot Eisner, "Can Educational Research Inform Educational Practice?" *Phi Delta Kappan* 65 (March 1984). 450

[70]Elliot Eisner, *The Art of Educational Evaluation* (London Falmer Press, 1985), p. 222

[71]Ibid., p 92

the creative medium of multiple-signs systems that an educational connoisseur and critic moves across with ease.

Thus, Eisner has begun to see the purpose of conducting social research as a quest for describing and understanding reality as it springs from social interactions. His vocabulary reflects a view of the nature of social reality as constructed, multiple, negotiated, and limited by the symbols we can use. As evidenced in his book on multiple curriculum perspectives, he has begun to see theory as variant and emergent. Only in the area of ethics and values does Eisner seem to leap across several paradigms at the beginning of his career. This leap relates to his view of art and educational evaluation as unavoidably value-oriented. His movement toward a new paradigm has been propelled by the fundamental question of whether research can be value-free.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF ETHICS AND VALUES IN RESEARCH?

In classic positivist research, ethics and values have no role. Research and its findings are thought to be value-free because of the objective nature of the enterprise. Eisner's early attempt to operate in this mode is again fraught with conflict. Throughout Eisner's career, the issue of values tends to be most important to him. Even in the early years when his view of research was couched predominantly in the language of the empirical-analytic mode, he could not accept the notion of value-free research. As an educational evaluator, he has always had an agenda.

In 1972, Eisner questions whether the terms of science are neutral."[2] He believes that researchers' language reveals their orientation to a problem and that all terms are emotionally loaded. His example: A child is an organism to a behaviorist, a person to a humanist, and a subject to a scientific researcher. Eisner still is not viewing the positivist orientation as necessarily negative, but rather just a limitation that the eventual applier of the research findings must deal with:

> We cannot look to scientific research to determine what we ought to do because science cannot presently tell us what kind of an education children ought to have [It] cannot deal with normative problems. Science can help us attain the desired, but cannot help us determine the desirable... The theoretical models and empirical findings emerging from the work of the behavioral scientist are important and useful for the same reasons that any of the good scientific theories are .. new frames of reference for viewing human behavior Findings have no direct application in the classroom. . [They] need to be artfully translated by a sensitive and artistic teacher."[3]

At this stage, Eisner views ethics and values as "add-ons": The "artful translation" by a "sensitive teacher" apparently includes the artful insertion of ethics and values at the same time. In the concluding pages of *Readings in*

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[2]Elliot Eisner, *Educating Artistic Vision* (New York Macmillan, 1972), p. 253

[3]Elliot Eisner and David Echer, eds., *Readings in Art Education* (Waltham, MA. Blaisdell, 1966), p 16

Art Education, however, Eisner criticizes the great amount of research that is not value-oriented In true anti positivist fashion, he states that values should precede inquiry, that to tack onto a research report a section called "Implications for Art Education" is "to assume one can have value conclusions without first establishing value premises."[74] This see-sawing between paradigms is typical of Eisner's early writings and reveals his internal conflict.

In contrast to Eisner's view of ethics and values, then, the symbolic interactionists traditionally have acknowledged that ethics and values obviously play a role in collecting data and reporting research findings, although the trained ethnographer can suspend these values for the sake of reporting the context of the situation through the participants' eyes Because educational inquiry and evaluation is a value-bound enterprise—the investigator has some sense of what educational contexts should be—Eisner would say that sus pending the investigator's value system is not only impossible but undesirable Those with a strong sense of the qualities that make up creative, dynamic learning environments are, in a sense, morally bound to offer those values to the research enterprise. On this issue, Eisner has always been a critical theorist (or critical aesthetician, as I have called him).

A critical theorist believes that the values of research and participants are historically produced and that we must be aware of them. To the neo-Marxist, we are not only aware of values, but we need to be explicit about them. To the critical aesthetician, the nature of all expressive endeavor is value-bound.

Should the educational critic state his values in advance? Eisner has a somewhat mixed response to this question. One of his contemporaries in critical educational research is Lather. In a 1985 paper, she notes Eisner's questioning of the assumptions underlying scientific methods of educational research. As a neo-Marxist, her openly advocacy based research requires that she state her values and ideology at the outset. But Eisner is less forceful in his views and says that it might be good to know the critic's perspective—perhaps as a critical prologue. He skirts this issue by adding that "the writing one does is permeated with [the researcher's] values," and they become clear eventually anyway, whether they are stated at the outset or not.[75] Eisner is now recommending a type of connoisseurship in educational evaluation that uses film and videotape accompanied by critical narrative based on the values of the researcher and those researched.

This construction of values, Eisner believes, is a part of the intellectual activity of ordinary men and women—it is "the coherent articulation of a view and the grounds for holding it."[76] This broader notion of values reaches its most powerful articulation in 1982: "What we need to guide incremental change is a forceful idea, an attractive conception, an image of man and the

[74]Ibid , p 247.
[75]Elliot Eisner, *The Educational Imagination,* 2nd ed (New York. Macmillan, 1985), p 222
[76]Ibid., p 49.

conditions that foster his growth."[77] To make value judgments about these "forceful ideas" and "conditions that foster growth," the researcher must be both connoisseur and critic. Eisner realizes the wide variability in which educational values are important, but clearly for him teachers and researchers and evaluators have a mission—to improve life in schools.

During this third period, then, Eisner has moved from the symbolic-interactionist stance of his middle years to a critical-aesthetic one as his primary research mode. His current focus on qualitative inquiry relates directly to his sense of artistic knowing. His terms *educational criticism* and *educational connoisseurship* spring from the work of critics in the fine arts. He believes that we can fulfill the purpose of research, to improve life in classrooms through artistic research, a sensitive "rendering" of the rich, varied media that constitute school contexts. He now stresses the importance of historical framework in research and views theory construction as an emergent process. Values and ethics in research have always been most important to Eisner, and he realizes that research reports are permeated with a researcher's values, whether stated explicitly or not.

CONCLUSIONS

Although at one point Eisner could say, "I am not advocating a shift in allegience" from one paradigm to another, he believes that we are seeing the emergence of new paradigms.[78] He says openly that we do not need recipes to control and measure, but rather that we need to enhance the artistry of the teacher.[79] In *The Art of Educational Evaluation,* he poetically describes the pitfalls of the traditional paradigm:

> To cast a net into the sea that is unintentionally designed to let most of the fish get away and then to conclude from those that are caught of which the variety of fish in the sea consists, is a sampling error of the first order Then to describe the fish that are caught in terms of their length and weight is to reduce radically what we can know about the qualitative features of the ones that have been caught, not to mention the features of those that the net failed to catch in the first place.[80]

He even describes the differences between the artistic and scientific approaches to research as they relate to forms of representation employed, criteria for appraisal, and points of focus.[81] At the end of this discussion, his theme of artistic knowing surfaces again:

> In the artistic approach to research, the role that emotion plays in knowing is central. . . . Knowing is not simply a unidimensional phenomena. It is a variety of forms Form . . . affects what can be said. Thus, when the content to be conveyed requires that

[77]Elliot Eisner, *Cognition and Curriculum* (New York: Longman, 1982), p. 72.
[78]Elliot Eisner, *The Educational Imagination,* 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1985), p. 25
[79]Elliot Eisner, *The Art of Educational Evaluation* (London: Falmer Press, 1985), p. 91
[80]Ibid., p 152.
[81]Ibid., p. 189

the reader vicariously participate in a social situation context, the writer or filmmaker attempts to create a form that makes such participation possible This orientation to knowledge embraces an epistemology that rejects the positivist view which holds that only formal propositions can, in principle, provide knowledge.[82]

In this article, I give only a flavor of the tremendous amount of thought and toil that characterizes Eisner's career. In a sense, this paper is about scholarship, with Eisner as its focus. He acknowledges the influence of Dewey, Arnheim, and Langer; undoubtedly, he has had direct or indirect contact with the other scholars cited here.[83] These scholars represent paradigmatic views that make up a backdrop for illuminating Eisner's journey. I have shown here that the questions propelling the shifts identified in Eisner's work focus on the fundamental differences among research paradigms Eisner's quest for answers to these questions has not resulted in a mere methodological shift but in a radically new stance for conducting research His new set of assumptions has reoriented the nature of his inquiry.

Although a singular effort or lifework cannot fully describe an emerging field, Eisner's work represents a manageable microcosm of the general foundational paradigm shift among many curriculum theorists What new perspectives have come from this questioning of old paradigms? What substantive evidence has been offered for a radical shift in inquiry?

We have questioned the purpose of social research and moved from the notions of prediction, control, and generalizability to the idea of research as negotiated, fluid, and emancipatory. A belief in the necessary separation of theory and practice has moved toward the notion of reciprocal, context-bound praxis. We have questioned the nature of social reality Objective, law-like singular reality has moved into a stance of negotiated, constru ed meaning Also, we have questioned the role of theory development in research A belief in the usefulness of a priori theory has given way to a view of theory as emergent and transactive. We have questioned the notion of value-free or value-suspended research and moved toward the critical stance of values as guides for change.

In all these areas, Eisner's questioning of the dominant paradigm has resulted in radical, if gradual, movement. He has also questioned the role of researchers. We cannot honestly and logicaly separate ourselves from who we are and what we do in the world; we can no longer stand outside the research process and look in. The context of research has expanded beyond the isolated variable,

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[82]Ibid., p 198

[83]John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York Minton Balch, 1934), John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York. Macmillan, 1938), Rudolph Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception* (Berkeley. University of California Press, 1954), Rudolph Arnheim, *Visual Thinking* (Berkeley University of California Press, 1969), Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key,* 3rd ed (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957)

context has now wrapped around us as researchers and includes who we are, where we have been, and our relationship to the "researched."

Further, we need to live in the research context, to make some connections. The field of educational research is moving into classrooms to set up shop, to allow for a transactional process between the context, the participants, and the content of the communication. Current research efforts at several universities (e.g., the Language Education and the Curriculum and Instruction Departments at Indiana University) are aimed at exploring the nature of collaborative research between "researchers" and "the researched."[84] They are becoming partners in describing, exploring, and creating educational phenomena.

Although Eisner still believes there are plenty of useful things to count and to quantify, at some point he has removed his gaze from empirically oriented colleagues and has begun to build a systematic alternative research mode propelled by the fundamental questions that have heralded the larger shift in the field. He continues to separate himself from the dominant educational inquiry paradigm:

> To promulgate a view of method and knowledge whose justification depends upon unfamiliar criteria is to risk cognitive dissonance. Many deal with such dissonance by rejecting the legitimacy of the approach. However, the ideas that we have been developing are becoming more widely accepted and the emerging climate for educational research in America is increasingly recognizing the primacy of experience We are beginning to realize that experiments are being conducted each time a teacher plans a lesson, explains an idea, or encourages a child. Such experiments have more external validity than most of the schemes that are hatched within the halls of ivy. . . .
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> Our views of how we go about our work are beginning to change. . . . We will even learn how to see what we are not able to describe in words, much less measure.[85]

Eisner's development through the years as a critical aesthetician has moved him toward acknowledging the political and social nature of the research enterprise and the effect of that larger context—not only of the lessons available to us but the questions we are able to raise. In a February 1987 letter, he writes:

> What I've increasingly come to realize is that the methods that are promulgated in the professional socialization of young educators are themselves political in character. They do socialize people to think about the world in particular ways and therefore have a substantial impact on the kinds of questions that individuals are able to raise and the kinds of conclusions and data they think relevant to those questions.[86]

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[84]A number of collaborative doctoral dissertations dealing with the negotiated curriculum and the wider political and social sphere of schooling have been done at Indiana University in the last few years

[85]Elliot Eisner, "The Primacy of Experience and the Politics of Method," *Educational Researcher* 17 (June–July 1988): 19–20

[86]Private correspondence dated 5 February 1987