

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

**ScholarWorks@UARK**

---

Education Reform Faculty and Graduate  
Students Publications

Education Reform

---

5-3-2019

## Inside the Black Box: Stakeholder Perceptions on the Value of Arts Field Trips

Angela Watson

*University of Arkansas, Fayetteville*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/edrepub>



Part of the [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#), [Educational Leadership Commons](#), and the [Other Educational Administration and Supervision Commons](#)

---

### Citation

Watson, A. (2019). Inside the Black Box: Stakeholder Perceptions on the Value of Arts Field Trips. *Education Reform Faculty and Graduate Students Publications*. Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/edrepub/81>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Education Reform at ScholarWorks@UARK. It has been accepted for inclusion in Education Reform Faculty and Graduate Students Publications by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UARK. For more information, please contact [scholar@uark.edu](mailto:scholar@uark.edu).



UNIVERSITY OF  
ARKANSAS

College of Education & Health Professions  
*Education Reform*

## **WORKING PAPER SERIES**

### **Inside the Black Box: Stakeholder Perceptions on the Value of Arts Field Trips**

Angela R. Watson\*  
University of Arkansas  
[Arw007@uark.edu](mailto:Arw007@uark.edu)

Last Revised May 1, 2019

EDRE Working Paper 2019-14

\*corresponding author

The University of Arkansas, Department of Education Reform (EDRE) working paper series is intended to widely disseminate and make easily accessible the results of EDRE faculty and students' latest findings. The Working Papers in this series have not undergone peer review or been edited by the University of Arkansas. The working papers are widely available, to encourage discussion and input from the research community before publication in a formal, peer reviewed journal. Unless otherwise indicated, working papers can be cited without permission of the author so long as the source is clearly referred to as an EDRE working paper.

The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not represent the views of the National Endowment for the Arts Office of Research & Analysis or the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The NEA does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of the information included in this material and is not responsible for any consequences of its use. The University of Arkansas NEA Research Lab is supported in part by a grant award from the Research Labs program at the National Endowment for the Arts (Grant #: 17-3800-7016).

## **Abstract**

This descriptive, qualitative study, an extension of an experimental primary study, documents stakeholders' experiences and perceptions of attending multiple field trips where urban elementary students in fourth and fifth grades were randomly assigned to receive three arts field trips including an art museum, a live theater performance, and a symphony concert. Evidence of declining K-12 attendance to educational cultural or arts field trips has been mounting for decades. Further, minority students in struggling schools and their teachers report attending fewer field trip experiences, as well as limited access to arts experiences in their schools. The full impact of this declining and restricted access to arts and culture on social-emotional learning (SEL) as well as on other academic outcomes is unknown. However, rigorous empirical evidence supporting the educational benefits of culturally enriching field trips continues to amass. I find that adult as well as student stakeholders report the importance of experience and exposure as the main impacts of educational arts field trips. Additionally, I find that classroom teachers support and advocate for experiential field trips for their students and consider it an important part of the job of educating students in their schools and community. Further, students make meaning from these experiences and articulate that meaning in intricate detail months after the field trips occur. Students also recall field trips from years past, connecting new experiences to prior learning, thus indicating that these are important and memorable experiences for them. I also find evidence of student-to-student connection via common experience, and shared meaning and learning. Lastly, students advocate for these experiences for themselves and for their peers, and articulate the importance of these experiences with poignant and compelling detail.

**Keywords:** Educational equity, cultural capital, social mobility, school field trips, arts education

## **Introduction**

During the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) era of high-stakes K-12 education accountability, learning not directly tied to increased test scores was “thinned” from the curriculum (Ruppert, 2006; Gadsden, 2008; Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011; Student Youth & Travel Association, 2016). Among the educational activities in decline as a result of stringent accountability is the field trip (McCord & Ellerson, 2009; Greene, Kisida, & Bowen, 2014), particularly for economically disadvantaged minority students in struggling schools (Ruppert, 2006; Gadsden, 2008; Government Accountability Office, 2009; Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011). Teachers and students report a decline in school sponsored field trips (Government Accountability Office, 2009; Keiper, Sandene, Persky, & Kuang, 2009).

However, accumulating evidence indicates that culturally enriching field trips boost educational outcomes such as social-emotional learning (SEL) (Bowen, Greene, & Kisida, 2014; Greene, Kisida, & Bowen, 2014; Kisida, Greene, & Bowen, 2014; Greene, Hitt, Kraybill, & Bogulski, 2015; Greene, Erickson, Watson, & Beck, 2018; Randi Korn & Associates, 2018; Watson, Greene, Erickson, & Beck, 2019), school engagement, and test scores (Erickson, Greene, Watson, & Beck, 2019). While rigorous studies show significant benefits from attending field trips, there is little information on stakeholder perceptions of these experiences and benefits.

This study, an extension of a primary experimental study (Erickson et. al, 2019; Watson et. al, 2019), contextualizes the primary study while also documenting and exploring the experiences of arts field trip stakeholders, including arts venue administrators and volunteers, as well as attending school teachers and students, after multiple field trips to arts institutions in their

communities. In the primary study, randomly assigned fourth and fifth grade students from the Atlanta, Georgia metro area received three field trip experiences in a single academic year. Some students also received a second year of field trips, for a total of six arts field trips in two years. Students were surveyed prior to and after attending the field trips. Additional administrative data for each student was obtained from the participating school district and linked to student survey responses. While the experimental study provides causal estimates of the impact of field trips on student outcomes (Erickson et. al, 2019; Watson et. al, 2019), it does not provide desirable details regarding the content of the field trips, nor does it humanize stakeholder experience, or stakeholder perceptions of the experience.

To fill this gap, this qualitative study looks inside the “black box” of the experimental primary study. Both approaches have distinct advantages. While the experimental study provides us with causal estimates, it provides a limited knowledge of stakeholder experience, whereas this study allows for greater detail about field trip context and content, and gives stakeholders a voice. Data collection methods include site visits, field notes, field trip observations, semi-structured interviews and informal conversations with a variety of adult stakeholders, individual interviews and focus group conversations with students, and the collection of educational materials the Art Partners offered as supplementary materials to educators. These data collection methods provide a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of the context and value of arts field trips. I focus on treatment students’ field trip experiences to each of the three Art Partners at The Woodruff Arts Center in Atlanta, Georgia, as well as the experiences of a variety of adult stakeholders involved in the field trips including The Woodruff’s administrators and educators, classroom teachers, and public-school administrators. While my primary interest is student

experience, understanding the level of adult stakeholder buy-in is important to the overall understanding of field trips, since without these adult advocates, field trips are unlikely to occur.

Three research questions guide this study with regard to the context of the field trip experience, what the field trip experience was, and how stakeholders viewed their experiences. I add to the literature by documenting the context and details of the arts field trips in this study, as well as by providing evidence of stakeholder perceptions of the field trips. I find that adult as well as student stakeholders report the importance of experience and exposure as the main impacts of educational arts field trips. Additionally, I find that classroom teachers support and advocate for experiential field trips for their students and consider it an important part of the job of educating students in their schools and community. Further, students learn from these experiences and articulate that learning in intricate detail months after the field trips occur. Students also recall field trips from years past, connecting new experiences to prior learning, thus indicating that these are important and memorable experiences for them. I also find evidence of student-to-student connection via common experience, as well as shared meaning and learning. Lastly, students advocate for these experiences for themselves and for their peers, and articulate the importance of these experiences with poignant and compelling detail.

The paper proceeds as follows. To begin, I discuss the previous literature on the importance of arts field trips for positive student academic and social outcomes, as well as the decline in field trip and arts access, particularly for economically disadvantaged and minority students. Next, I describe the research design and research questions. I document the context of this study in detail, and then present the findings, and conclude with discussions of future work.

## **Previous Literature**

### **Academic Benefits**

Both common wisdom and historical practice support the belief that educational field trips benefit students. While the rigorous empirical literature is scarce regarding the value of field trips, there is growing evidence that arts field trips benefit students' academic and social development. In Erickson et al. (2019) researchers report experimental evidence of increased student engagement in school, as well as increased standardized test scores after attending multiple arts field trips.

There is also increasing evidence that there are measurable non-cognitive impacts of attending an arts field trip, as well as the generation of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) for students who may need it most (Adams, Foutz, Luke, & Stein, 2006; Goldstein & Winner, 2012; Bowen, Greene, & Kisida, 2014; Kisida, Bowen, & Greene, 2016; Greene et al., 2018). In Watson et al. (2019), I report evidence of increased social-emotional skills, as well as the first experimental evidence of compounding benefits from attending multiple arts field trips over time.

Similar results from exposure to both single visit and multi-visit field trips have been found by other researchers as well. When crowded schools needing classrooms turned to unused education space in California museums, students received more than the three Rs. With repeated exposure to cultural experiences over years, these students had higher test scores, better attendance, and lower rates of disciplinary action. When students returned to traditional classrooms at their schools, these positive effects decreased (Lacoe, Painter, & Williams, 2016).



While not focused explicitly on field trips as the delivery instrument, several studies examine the impact of cultural exposure on student outcomes. A recent meta-analysis on arts integration programs within schools finds a four percentage point increase in student achievement (Ludwig, Boyle, & Lindsay, 2017). In a study of identical twins, researchers found that increased cultural activity is correlated with higher grades and rates of high school graduation (Jægar & Møllegarrd, 2017). A study of a district wide arts enrichment program showed positive outcomes on student attendance, school engagement, and sense of civic obligation, as well as increased standardized test scores (Bowen & Kisida, 2018). A similar study found increased attitudes of academic resilience (Kanevsky, Corke, & Frangkiser, 2008). A recent meta-analysis of drama-based learning found positive academic and social-emotional outcomes for student participants (Lee, Patall, & Cawthon, 2015). Similarly, researchers found social and emotional benefits to students shortly after exposure to drama activities in a set of experiments (Goldstein & Winner, 2012).

### **Equity of Access**

Arts field trips provide students with access to important experiences. The experience of attending an arts institution and benefitting from what it has to offer, whether that is seeing a play, experiencing a concert, or discussing a work of art with peers connects students to the larger world outside that of their school or neighborhood. This connection exposes them to different people, places, and ideas. For students isolated geographically and socioeconomically, the school field trip is their chance to connect to their larger society in a way that may otherwise not be open to them.

Students, even students in large cities, and economically disadvantaged students in particular, travel in small circles from home to school and within their neighborhoods (Ruppert,

2006; Kornrich, 2016). Middle-class families with disposable resources are likely to take their children outside these daily confines to experience the larger world (Kornrich, 2016). However, for families with scarce resources, access to these expanding experiences is restricted. If access to this larger society is limited, through restricted access to school field trips, then an experiential gap by social class and even race is created. When arts access within schools is differentially restricted along economic and/or racial lines, it may exacerbate gaps to the degree that it becomes a civil rights issue, impairing some students' abilities to connect with and participate in society. Further, if cultural field trips build cultural or social capital, the very students who need them the most are likely the ones most likely to be denied them (Ruppert, 2006; Gadsden, 2008; Government Accountability Office, 2009).

Many children, particularly children from low socioeconomic backgrounds, lack this type of cultural exposure. Schools, which used to provide some arts exposure, now have a narrow, test-focused curriculum, such that any opportunity gaps students have in exposure to cultural institutions are replicated, rather than disrupted, by schools. As traditional public-school curriculum has thinned, middle class parents have supplemented their children's education with private lessons in art, music, sports, and dance, to name just a few. This discrepancy creates an experiential learning gap for students who are not receiving this supplementary education exposure.

While Watson et al. and Erickson et al. (2019) are the first to document the academic and social-emotional benefits of arts field trips in an experimental study for economically disadvantaged urban minority students, there is prior literature about the importance mission-driven charter schools such as KIPP and YES Prep place on field trips in the curriculum of schools of choice. Comprised of urban, African American students at risk, a population similar to

the population in this study, these charter schools view field trips as a fundamental part of education and preparation for a successful life in society (Matthews, 2009; Maranto, 2015).

A recent study, although not experimental, of the effects of single-visit art museum exposures found that students experienced increases in critical thinking, creative thinking, and human connection<sup>1</sup> (Randi Korn & Associates, 2018). This study, in addition to examining the effects of a single art museum visit, added a second treatment condition of a near identical art program exposure happening in a classroom instead of at the museum. The authors found that the in-gallery exposure appeared to be more impactful than simply seeing and discussing identical art content at school.

In experimental studies focused on field trips to live theater performances, researchers found statistically significant benefits to students on self-reported level of tolerance and social perspective taking, and evidence of increased desire to consume theater in the future (Greene, Hitt, Kraybill, & Bogulski, 2015; Greene et al., 2018). Again, in an attempt to parse out the mechanism of arts' impact, researchers in this study added a second treatment condition wherein some students received a field trip to a live theater performance of a play, some received a field trip to see a movie production of the same play, and the control group stayed at school and received neither the field trip nor the play or movie treatment. Students who received the live arts exposure experienced the largest impacts.

In a study by Bowen, Greene, and Kisida (2014), results show that students exposed to a few hours in a world class art museum in their community were able to recall details about the art many weeks later, were able to use critical thinking constructs to understand new art which

---

<sup>1</sup> Human Connection is defined as an awareness or sense of connection to others and the self, p10. (RK&A, 2018)

they had never seen before, and were able to display improved “historical” empathy, meaning that they were able to better understand their place in the world and in time. An important social-emotional finding of this study was that students exposed to the field trip scored higher on measures of tolerance, which include responses to statements such as “people can have different opinions about the same thing.” Further, results were strongest for disadvantaged students, whose prior exposure to art may have been limited and who, therefore, likely had the most room for growth.

### **Accountability Pressures**

In recent decades, cultural institutions, such as arts venues and history museums, have reported declining field trip attendance (Ellerson & McCord, 2009; Greene, Kisida, & Bowen, 2014). Teachers and students also report a decline in attending school sponsored field trips (Government Accountability Office, 2009; Keiper et al., 2009). Evidence suggests that the decline is due in part to increased high-stakes accountability pressures (Gadsden, 2008; Government Accountability, 2009; Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011). Under test-based accountability systems, schools focused on increasing math and reading test scores are under pressure to reconsider the costs and benefits of traditional educational field trips (Gadsden, 2008; Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011; Student Youth & Travel Association, 2016).

Are educational field trips worth the lost classroom time and spent funding? While many take a positive answer to this question for granted, schools stretching limited funding, do not. As schools are pressured for results on test score outcomes, they lean towards increased seat time and away from more difficult to measure learning experiences such as field trips to art and other cultural institutions (Gadsden, 2008; Government Accountability Office, 2009; Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011; Kisida, Bowen, & Greene, 2016; Student & Youth Travel Association, 2016).

In response to accountability pressures, schools allocate additional instructional time to math and reading test preparation while cutting back on non-tested subjects and other activities (Gadsden, 2008; Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011; Student Youth & Travel Association, 2016).

Academically low-performing schools that serve students from high-poverty areas are more likely to report a decline in school sponsored field trips, including arts-focused trips (Government Accountability Office, 2009; Keiper et al., 2009). These schools also face the greatest accountability pressures. A decline in field trips in high poverty areas is especially concerning as field trips can provide equitable access to cultural institutions for students across various economic and racial groups.

### **Research Design**

An interactive study design, detailed in Figure 1, guided this study (Maxwell, 2012, p. 77). The goal of this study is to further the understanding, knowledge, and literature about the value and importance of cultural field trips for young students, particularly at-risk students who may lack equitable access to social and cultural capital. Throughout modern American educational history, field trips have been a valued part of education. That historical importance is dwindling. By describing the field trip experience of youth from an urban setting, at risk for a host of negative outcomes, I hope to shed light upon and better understand the value of arts field trips for these students in a local context, as well as for similar students across the country.

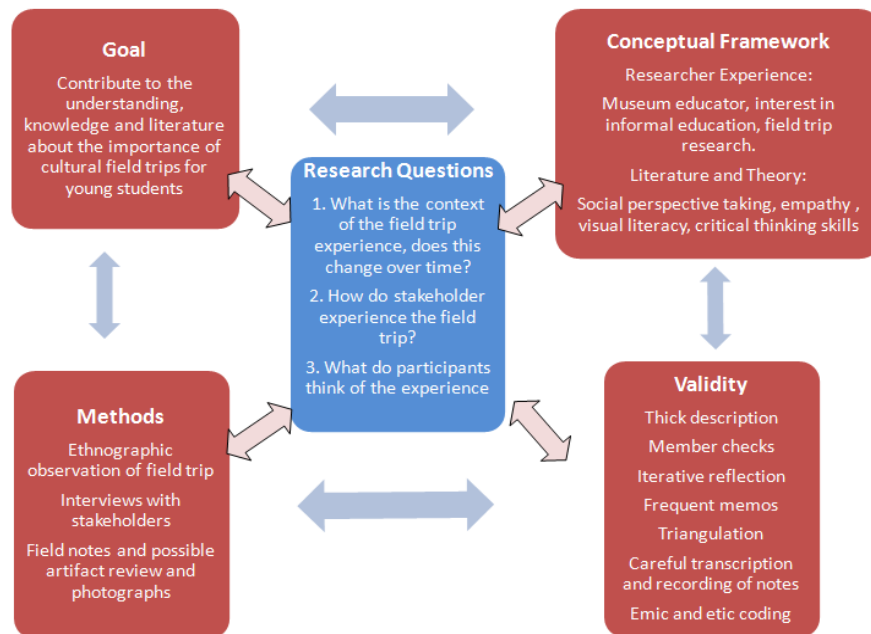


Figure 1. Interactive Research Design Model

The conceptual framework for this study was constructed from existing literature and theory, as well as emerging and pre-existing beliefs that deepened over the course of the study as my knowledge, experience, and understanding expanded. The broad, overarching question addressed here is whether or not field trips are a valuable experience for students.

## Research Questions

The research questions used to guide this study are as follows.

*1. What is the context of the field trip experience, and does it change over time? For instance, how long are students at the institution, who is with them, and what type of field trip experience is it, (e.g. is it self-guided, an audio tour, or a docent tour)?*

To answer this question, I recorded the details of the arts field trips through structured observation, including recording the number of students in attendance, the number of

chaperones, the format of field trip (guided, self-guided, audio tour), the demographics of the participants, the context of the experience, and the time of exposure.

## *2. How do stakeholders experience the field trip?*

This question includes students, teachers, museum educators, and caregivers who participated in the field trips and seeks to define the “how” and “what” of their lived experiences. To answer this question, I conducted observations of stakeholders during the field trip experiences in order to gather rich, in-depth, experiential accounts. I recorded participant responses and actions; if they were engaged and if they appeared to enjoy the field trip, by observing their level of engagement as evidenced by interaction with the docent or technology, and by reading information plates or other printed materials about what they were viewing. Similarly, additional information about student engagement was recorded by observing engagement between students, as well as between students and their teachers during the experience. Efforts were also made to collect data by taking notes on participant conversations.

## *3. What do participants think of the experience? What are their perceptions, and how do they make meaning from the field trips?*

This study examines participant perceptions as evidenced by their testimony, as well as the retention of information and quality of their recall. The information I need to answer this question is perceptual and possessed by the participants. For this reason, to best answer this question, I interviewed students and other stakeholders before, during, and after the field trips, using semi-structured interviews. Interviews are context-bound collaborations between two people in conversation, therefore, a predetermined interview protocol with open-ended questions was used to guide the conversation, but I allowed the discussion to unfold naturally and to take

different directions if needed. Allowing students to describe their experience is an important component to understanding the value of field trips. Similarly, interviewing teachers, museum educators, and other adults helps increase our understanding of field trips and the role of adult investment (see interview protocols in Appendix A).

In an effort to gather experiential descriptions and perceptual information from the students, I observed them immediately following the field trip experience. During field trips, students oftentimes have unstructured activities while still at the museum. This access provided me the opportunity, as a participant observer, to record student responses to the field trips.

## **Data**

### **Collection**

To answer the research questions posed in this study, I used a variety of data collection methods. I made eight site visits to Atlanta, which included two dozen visits to The Woodruff Arts Center's Art Partners, as well as visits to performances at three satellite venues, and twenty visits to participating schools over the two and a half years included in this study. During the site visits, I attended a variety of meetings, professional development sessions, dinners, and tours with stakeholders such as program funders, The Woodruff's executives, the school district superintendent, volunteers, teachers, and students. To further inform my research and to better understand the cultural field trip offerings, I visited multiple cultural and educational field trips sites in Atlanta, Georgia including the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, the Birth Home of Martin Luther King, Jr., the Georgia Aquarium, the Fernbank Museum of Natural History, the Atlanta Botanical Gardens, and The Wren's Nest.



I observed four field trips at The Woodruff; one for both the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and the High Museum of Art, and two productions by the Alliance Theatre, one at its home stage in the first year of the study, and one at a satellite stage in year two of the study, due to renovations.

Additionally, during site visits and field trip observations, I interviewed participating stakeholders, took field notes, and documented experiences with photos and voice recordings. I conducted thirty-three formal interviews with adult stakeholders including fifteen Woodruff administrators and program staff, eight Woodruff representatives such as volunteer docents and teaching staff, and ten school staff and classroom teachers. In general, interviews with adult stakeholders occurred by phone, or before, during, or after site visits or observations. In addition to formal interviews, I had a variety of informal conversations with additional stakeholders throughout my many visits. Caregiver consent to interview a convenience sample of students was obtained, and I interviewed eight students from one to six months after their last field trip. The following descriptions of gender are based on assumptions by me as the observer for the purposes of data collection and reporting, and do not necessarily reflect the actual gender identifications of the participants.

Two students, one male and one female, who I will refer to here as Trevon and Jada, were interviewed individually at their respective schools, and six students, three male and three female, who I will refer to as Demetrius, Darryl, Jamal, Shanice, Jasmine and Kiara, were interviewed at once in a focus group due to scheduling constraints. All students were in fifth grade when interviewed, but one student, Jada, attended the field trips when she was in fourth grade and was interviewed the following fall when she was in fifth grade.

## **Sample**

Students considered in this study are treatment students in the primary study. Treatment students average 10.5 years in age and are in fourth and fifth grades. They are Southern, urban, and 99% identify as African American or black (Watson et. al, 2019). Students attend schools in economically disadvantaged areas that are historically at high risk of the effects of generational poverty, chronic low expectations, racism, and deficits in mainstream social and cultural capital. The field trip exposures occurred throughout the fall, winter, and early spring of the academic years of 2016-17 and 2017-18.

## **Data Analysis and Methods**

Data analysis began at the time of initial contact with participants, during the site visits and field trip observations. During this time, descriptive as well as demographic data were collected, and running field notes were taken in order to record emerging themes as they developed. Similarly, I recorded my personal thoughts and ideas in real-time, or immediately following the observation, to record themes of potential importance, ideas I had regarding the data collected or other data that emerged, and description about context that might apply to these new ideas or findings. I also attended arts field trips at other institutions, and with other populations of students, to broaden my understanding of common practices at arts institutions across the country, and to create a construct from which to build my understanding of how best to collect and analyze data for this study.

During the field trip observations, I systematically collected data on participant numbers, grade, observed gender and race/ethnicity of all participants, including teachers, docents and any chaperones. During the visual arts field trip observations, I also cataloged the number, name, and style of all works visited, made notes as to questions students asked and who asked them. I

counted the number of students raising their hands in response to educator questions, the style of presentation and information provided by the educator, and the time spent at each “stop.” At each stop and approximately every 3-5 minutes during the tour and studio experiences, I scanned the group to count students engaged and on task. I also cataloged the instructional style of the tour or experience, the duration of the various sections of the experience, and any other important information that I could glean through observation including participant comments.

While themes and ideas that emerged during the observational data collection phase influenced the interview process, I created and used a pre-determined interview protocol for semi-structured interviews. However, influential ideas, or strong themes that emerged during observation were recursively integrated into the pre-existing interview protocol.

Before coding either of the above observational and interview datasets, I transcribed the interviews verbatim and reread my field notes. To preserve the authenticity of student communications, quotes are transcribed exactly as spoken. Participant’s names have been changed to protect their privacy. Similarly, quotes from classroom teachers are anonymous and approximate dates are given to restrict potential identification.

The two datasets were coded at different times. I coded the observational data and field notes first. After reading the field notes through completely to clarify meaning and refresh my memory, I pre-coded these data using counts for demographic details about students, such as total number of students, number of male and female students’ grade, observed race or ethnic makeup of group, number and gender of chaperones, teachers, museum educators, number of minutes spent on the field trip, and similar quantitative measures. Upon completion of this step, I made a pre-coding memo of my thoughts, ideas, and feelings after the initial reading of the observational data.

Next, I coded observed measures of student engagement during each field trip experience, and descriptions of the mood of their participation, i.e. did they seem bored or excited, as well as their apparent engagement before and after the field trip experience. I also coded field notes from before and after the field trip for more indicators of student experience, and evidence of student thoughts about the experience. Second and third iterations occurred after the initial coding, and after the interview coding.

After the transcription of the interviews, I read the transcribed notes to ensure accuracy and to engage more fully with the data. I then re-read the transcripts and pre-coded words or phrases of importance to themes taken directly from my research question or themes that emerged from the coding of the observational data and field notes. Next, I selected the primary emic themes that seemed most important or relevant to the study design. I formally coded and reduced the data in stage one, based on the selected themes. Next, I reflected on the themes that emerged, compared them to my initial research questions, and consulted my interactive design model to ensure alignment. Then, I engaged in a second-stage coding episode in response to changes made in my research design as a result of earlier coding and reflection. As a final phase of data analysis, I merged the findings from the two datasets to form final overarching themes upon which the findings and conclusions are based.

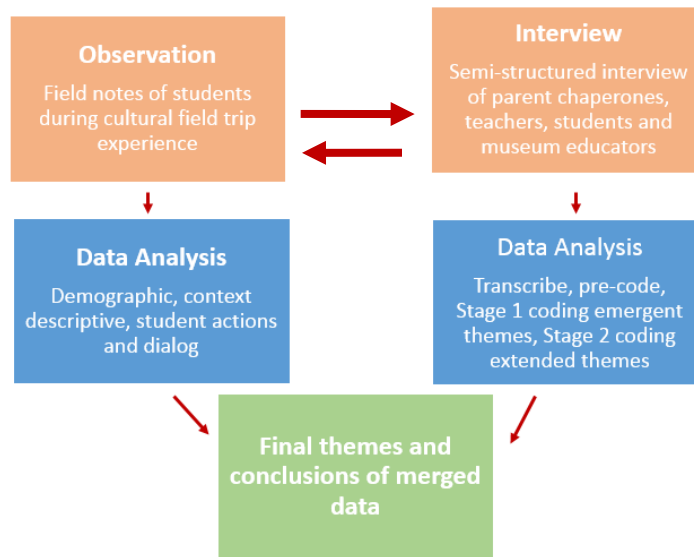


Figure 2. Data Analysis Plan

Several strategies to ensure validity were employed. These included reflexive consideration of the interactive model, extended time in the field, theoretical support, accurate and thick description, triangulation through various data collection methods, and multiple coding events. Using my extended time in the field to better facilitate understanding the context of the experience and of those experiencing it is an important component to the trustworthy depiction and interpretation of the data.

The ethical treatment of the participants was a significant concern, particularly because I was observing children. I obtained permission from The Woodruff Arts Center to observe the field trip, and stakeholders were informed of my presence during observations, site visits and interviews. Consent forms and interview protocols, as well as the research design, received Internal Review Board approval from the University of Arkansas.

## Site Visits and Study Context

This study summarizes information gathered from multiple methods of data collection. Data were gathered during multiple visits to the Art Partners and schools described over two and a half years. A detailed description of the arts field trip context and venue programming, as well as each of the educational field trips follows. The rich description of context answers the first and second research questions asked in this study: What is the context of the field trip experience, and does it change over time, and how do stakeholder experience the field trip?

### Georgia

In 2018, the Georgia Department of Education (DOE), with significant buy-in and support from teachers across the state, revised their fine arts standards, which had not been revised since 1993. Georgia, led by its capital, Atlanta, is an emerging arts industry locale, with burgeoning music and movie industries that currently import talent from across the country. Both businesses and schools in the region see the economic opportunity for the state to grow their own talent, and promoting arts education has become an economic concern. In the spring of 2018, in order to incentivize arts education across the state, the DOE changed the school rating structure. Schools failing to provide students with arts education could lose as much as six points, the equivalent of a letter grade, on the state's school rating system. To further incentivize the arts, *StART* grants of up to ten thousand dollars from the state go to help schools in rural districts set up fine arts programs. While these developments in Georgia's education policy are encouraging for arts advocates, they did not take effect until the fall of 2018 and did not directly impact the findings in this study, but do speak to the emerging importance of arts in the state at the time (personal communication with Georgia DOE Fine Art Director, February, 2019).

## **Atlanta**

Atlanta, is the capital city of Georgia. According to the 2010 US Census, Atlanta has almost half a million residents, over 50% of whom are African American making it the fourth largest black majority city in the United States. Further, the surrounding Atlanta metropolitan area houses more than 5.8 million residents (2010 US Census). Atlanta has a rich arts and cultural heritage, boasting an impressive list of resident music and film stars, as well as the birth-home of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Since 2005, the City of Atlanta's Office of Cultural Affairs has supported the *Cultural Experience Project*, which is aimed at exposing Atlanta's youth to the cultural heritage of the city through increased access to field trips. The stated goals of the program are to "further student understanding of art and culture," to "increase students "exposure and knowledge of art and cultural institutions," and to "enrich students' education beyond the walls of the classroom..." (City of Atlanta, 2018).

## **Participating School District**

A large, urban, majority minority school district from the Atlanta metropolitan area participated in the primary study, and it was from this sample that students for this study were drawn. Students and teachers from ten schools participated. Both the student body and the administrative staff of the schools were primarily African American. These schools ranged in total enrollment from a minimum of 250 students to a maximum of 700 students, with an average total enrollment of 440 students. The majority of students in the schools were classified as receiving free or reduced-price lunch (FRL). Both students and teachers in these schools were highly mobile. At a meeting with school officials, school principals said that they had student attrition rates of approximately 25% each year. Additionally, there were several instances of

teachers leaving a school mid-year and of students moving to other classrooms after a teacher left. Further, results from the primary study where student data were available showed that only 20% of fourth and fifth grade students at the schools in the study scored at or above proficient levels on combined math and reading state standardized test scores in the years of the study. Despite the prevalence of socioeconomic disadvantage in the schools, 80% of treatment students reported that they had visited at least one of The Woodruff Art Partners in the past (Erickson et. al, 2019).

Finally, in a meeting with the district superintendent and other district level administrators, I became aware that the schools in this district were organized as “local governance charters,” meaning that they had the flexibility to make decisions at the school level regarding curriculum and services provided to the students. The intention of this arrangement is that schools can be more nimble and innovative in meeting the needs of their students. However, it also became apparent that there was wide variance in arts programming access between the schools in this study.

Some schools had no visual arts programming, but might have music or theater courses instead. I make this point to illustrate that even within the schools in the district in this study, there was significant variance as to the level of arts exposure students were receiving, and it appeared that the arts access fluctuated from year to year. In interviews, teachers reported that in some schools students received music class once a week. In other schools there was no music program. In still other schools there was no visual arts program or students receive an arts class every other week for 45 minutes. A teacher at one of the schools described a recent experience at her school. The music teacher left and the next year “they came in and took every instrument in the school.” She said this was a problem because “kids can’t compete with students who have



had access to music” instruction for years. “Certainly, they can’t compete once they get to high school.” She indicated that this deficit effectively eliminated options for kids as early as elementary school. (anonymous personal communication, September, 2018).

Teachers in the schools did advocate for students to attend the arts field trips. In interviews with The Woodruff staff, several people said that they believed teachers wanted to come and that teachers, particularly the art and music teachers, were advocates in the schools. In interviews with teachers at five different schools, I was repeatedly told by every teacher whom I spoke with that the arts field trips were important “exposure” for students. Indeed, every teacher used the word “exposure” in their interview and many also used the word “experience.” As one teacher summed it up,

This is a good chance for them [the students] to come and get an experience and get some exposure. That is our job, to expose these kids to things because how can they even know if they like something or not if they have never even seen it before? Maybe this will be something they will like when they grow up.

The teacher also said that the field trips help prepare them for middle school when they can choose to take a music class. “They will at least know what the instruments are” (anonymous personal communication, February, 2018).

## **Findings**

### **Woodruff Arts Center**

Located in the center of Atlanta’s Midtown, The Woodruff Arts Center is one of the largest arts centers in the world and one of the only arts centers in the United States to offer visual and performing arts on one campus (The Woodruff Arts Center). Founded in 1968, it receives a total of 800,000 visits each year to its three Art Partners; the Alliance Theatre, a Tony Award winning theater that hosts the *Alliance Theatre for Youth and Families*, the Grammy

Award-winning Atlanta Symphony Orchestra offers a concert series entitled *Concerts for Young People*, and the High Museum of Art, the leading art museum in the Southeast.

With a robust education program, The Woodruff is the largest arts educator in the state, impacting 200,000 students each year with diverse programming (The Woodruff Arts Center). While the three Art Partners operate as separate entities under The Woodruff Arts Center umbrella, there is collaboration among the three Art Partners for education programming. Each Art Partner has dedicated education teams that design and administer programming. However, collaborations occur among teams composed of representatives from all partner institutions. The Woodruff provides support with shared facilities, events, development, and human resources.

Further, as the largest arts educator in Georgia, arts education is a major part of The Woodruff's mission and daily work. Not only does it host students, but it offers professional development opportunities for teachers and has outreach programs that partner with area schools to reach students and teachers in their classrooms. All three Art Partners also offer open access to online teaching materials, further extending their influence and impact in the larger Atlanta metro area and beyond.

### **Alliance Theatre**

The Alliance Theatre is a Tony Award-winning theater seated in Midtown Atlanta on the campus of The Woodruff. The 770 seat Alliance Stage was renovated in 2018; however, the field trips under study here occurred prior to and during the renovation. In the first year of the study, field trip students attended an hour-long, professionally staged performance of *Cinderella and Fella*, a witty and culturally relevant adaptation of the traditional *Cinderella* story. Many aspects of Georgia flora and fauna were incorporated into the set and dialogue. The sounds of frogs

chirping in the night and talk of the kudzu reminded students of their own backyards. Screams of excitement electrified the theater as the lights went down and the actors took the stage. Students clapped in unison and stomped their feet until the balcony shook. The students' intense engagement was apparent when they roared with laughter at subtle jokes and sat silently still during tense moments. During the hour that I sat with the students while observing the field trip, and despite the verve of the occasion, there was not one instance of disruption; not one child out of more than 700 had to be ushered out for misbehavior. All heads faced forward and all eyes were upon the stage.

In the second year of the study, the Alliance Theatre, despite being closed for a complete remodel, did not disappoint. Students were treated to a whimsical adaptation of *The Jungle Book*. Although the satellite theater was slightly smaller, holding 500 students instead of 700, the production was just as engaging. Students were so close to the stage that several students commented in interviews that the actors were "spitting" on them as they spoke their lines. Of particular interest was my chance to sit in on the early planning meetings for this production. While the planning and care taken to make these productions relevant and engaging comes through in the actual productions, being in the room where it happens elucidated the process. The entire production team, from the director conveying her vision for the production, to the set and costume team sharing their sketches, were concerned about making the environment an important part of the production, and making the animals seem animalistic without being full costumes. Students would have to imagine the animals, thus requiring more effort and participation in co-creating the vision and experience.



Figure 3. *The Jungle Book*, show art courtesy of The Alliance Theatre

On the day that I observed the play, hundreds of children were ushered class by class into the auditorium. Most were in upper elementary grades, but some were as young as preschool and required booster seats to see the stage. As students walked into the theater, the curtains were open and the stage was lit. You could see the scaffold of a jungle scene and hear the sounds of crickets and the songs of the jungle. Many students were so struck upon entering the theater that they stopped dead in their tracks and I heard more than one reverent “Woooooow.” When the lights went down and the play began, not a soul in the packed theater moved. No one made a sound. As I was observing the engagement of the students during the field trip, I watched for heads moving as a sign of disengagement. There were no wiggles to be seen. Students were quite literally sitting forward on the edges of their seats, their bright eyes wide, and their little round heads all perfectly still.

In interviews with teachers from five of the schools in the study, some indicated that teachers had carefully integrated *The Jungle Book* theme into their art and English language arts (ELA) curriculum. At the performance, the lobby was filled with easels displaying student corporate artwork depicting themes from *The Jungle Book*. One student, Darryl from the focus group interview, told me that in his class, he watched two *Jungle Book* movies before they saw the play. “We watched... both of them. Mr. \_ told us we were going to compare and contrast them. Mogli.” However, a student from the same school, Trevon, indicated that he did not know what play he was going to see until it began, and that his class had not integrated any of the material into their classwork.

There seemed to be variance in whether or not educational materials provided by the Art Partners were used by the classes who attended the field trips, but both the students who were in classrooms where lessons had included the performance themes, and students from classrooms that did not indicated that they liked the show and could recall details about the performance.

### **Atlanta Symphony Orchestra**

The Grammy-Award winning Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO) is located on The Woodruff campus in Atlanta Symphony Hall. In addition to the regular concerts, the symphony produces a special series of concerts developed specifically for students on field trips. The series, entitled *Concerts for Young People*, produces three concerts each season for a variety of age groups. One concert is recommended for pre-K-2<sup>nd</sup> grades, another for 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grades, and a third concert is developed for 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades, although the grades are recommendations and students of any age are welcome at any of the concerts. All concerts are aligned with state standards. Further, there are online education materials and resources available to teachers to help incorporate and extend the learning in the classroom. The short season runs from December

through March 1<sup>st</sup> and field trips cost between \$10.00 per student for general ticket admission, to \$6.50 per student for Title I schools. Thirty-four percent of the patrons for this concert series come from Title I schools (personal communication with Managing Producer of Education Concerts, February, 2018). The Managing Producer of Education Concerts at the ASO, Tiffany Jones, spoke candidly about relationships and breaking down the barriers that teachers must overcome in order to get their students through the door, whether that means helping the teachers with the logistics of planning their trip, or supplying them with the needed letters for administrators, the ASO is committed to removing barriers and bringing students to the symphony.

The concerts have considerable demand and serve more than 43,000 students each season (personal communication with Tiffany Jones, February, 2018). Ms. Jones credits the high demand to the relationships built over time between the symphony staff and the schools, as well as to the built-in advocacy of the schools' music teachers. In order to accommodate this number of students in such a short season, it is necessary to run two consecutive performances, with one performance beginning at 10:00 a.m. followed by a second performance at 11:45 a.m.

In the first year of the study, students attended a performance entitled *Nature's Symphony: How Nature Has Inspired Famous Works of Music*. I was unable to observe the field trip in year one. In year two of the study, students were scheduled to attend *The Colors of Music, Sounds We Can See*. However, winter storms closed schools several times over the winter. Consequently, some treatment group schools had to reschedule their field trip. Because of aforementioned demand and tight scheduling, some of the treatment schools were rescheduled to see an alternate show entitled *The Quilt of American Music* that was designed for 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. It was this performance and field trip that I observed.

When I arrived at Symphony Hall, my first time to visit, I quickly became aware that I was at the right place because the narrow city streets were lined with yellow school buses for blocks. Students loomed outside the entrance. After traversing the gauntlet of students in waiting, I made my way inside to an equally full lobby packed with a thousand people. As the first performance concluded and the doors opened, a thousand more students emptied into the already full lobby. Thousands of excited students tried to find their way outside and to pick out their yellow bus from among the mass of yellow buses that had now pulled into a large circle drive outside. The organized chaos of the event was staggering, and yet everyone seemed to find their way. Within minutes, the second group of more than 1,000 students were entering the performance hall and the lobby, brimming with students only moments before, was largely empty.

There were, however, three schools that had not checked in. The performance was scheduled to begin at 11:45 a.m., and yet three schools and approximately 300 students were missing. As symphony staff tried to contact the schools, they delayed the start of the performance. One school called organizers and informed them that the school bus never showed up. I overheard that the music teacher had been standing outside the school since 8:00 a.m. with a handful of money she had collected from her students waiting for a bus that never came. Ms. Jones explained that this type of thing was not uncommon and that busing was a logistical barrier. She said “they might not even show up, or might show up and not even know what they were here to see.”

Indeed, in later interviews with teachers and students, there was evidence that some teachers and schools had tried to incorporate the program theme into classes like music, art and ELA. Some teachers expressed frustration that they had prepared students to see a different show

than what they attended because of the snow storm substitution. On the other hand, the music teacher from one of the schools told me that she had not used any of the offered materials or prepared students for any particular show because she had been too busy preparing for the school “Christmas” performance. However, her students were familiar with the symphony and the instruments, and she did not feel that the lack of preparation for the concert would impair their experience, especially since the show was changed at the last minute.

The start of the concert was delayed for a total of almost twenty minutes. The last two schools finally arrived. Concert staff responded with the grace of people dedicated to meeting the needs of children along with the experience to understand the challenges these schools face in getting a bus-load of students across Atlanta. The 81 late students and four teacher-chaperones, who were on a bus that had gone to the wrong location, were now ushered straight from the bus, without a bathroom break, up into the darkened balcony. I followed them because these late students also happened to be from the primary study treatment group.

While their late arrival was less than ideal, it did make for a dramatic entry. The house lights were already down, and just as students made it to their seats, the lights came up and the music began, Morton Gould’s *American Salute*. Students were awestruck. However, that magic soon began to fade. Within fifteen minutes of the show beginning, student engagement began to wane. About half of the students were still on the edges of their seats, eyes wide. The role of the conductor was of particular interest and students acted out a pantomime of the conductor’s baton. As evidence of their excitement and engagement, students tried to clap between movements, but quickly learned to wait. When a pause came in the music, students would look around to take their lead from others. The other half of the students went from wide-eyed to closed-eyed as they curled up in their seats and either pretended to or did sleep. This behavior spread through the



balcony, but I did not see this occur on the hall floor below. I did however, witness a sea of blue screens below and in the balcony, as many, if not most, of the adults were on cell phones or other devices during the performance. One teacher near me tried to hide the light from her students with her purse, while one male teacher was so bold as to have a full-sized iPad out in plain view. Of all of the adults visible in the balcony, only one was not on a device during the performance.

At the end of the one-hour performance, I spoke with three ushers, all retired music teachers from the Atlanta area. I mentioned the students sleeping. One of the ushers was quick to defend them, saying that possibly they had not slept or eaten and needed to rest. Another usher said that it was not uncommon for adult patrons to shut their eyes or even to sleep during performances because they could hear the music better with closed eyes and could relax. These ushers also said that it was possible that teachers had out their phones because they were coordinating bus pick-up or lunch schedules and that it might not mean that teachers were disengaged and setting a bad example for their students.

In an interview, a male teacher told me that these experiences were “great for the kids” and that the programming had been “integrated into art, social studies and ELA for months” at his school. Similarly, a female teacher told me that the field trips “are exposure” and that they “give kids some context to talk about music” (anonymous personal communications, February, 2018).

### **High Museum of Art**

The High Museum of Art, founded over a century ago with a permanent collection of 157,000 works, is the leading art museum in the Southeast. In 2018, the museum underwent a complete reinstallation that began after the students in this study attended their field trips. A field

trip to the museum costs \$8.00 per student with an optional add-on of a \$3.00 per student hands-on studio experience. Since 2003, an endowment funds a program entitled *Art Access* that covers the cost of field trips visits and buses for Title I schools in the area. This funding also pays for a staff person dedicated to meeting the needs of Title I school visits and building relationships within those schools and the community. Because of the *Art Access* program, the High is able to reimburse up to \$100,000 a year on bus costs. Students who visit as part of the *Art Access* program also receive a “Welcome Back” card that allow them to return on a future visit to the museum with their family for free.

In further efforts to remove barriers for students and families, as well as for the larger community, the High offers free admission one Sunday a month and can see as many as 6,000 patrons on that day. The High also standardized admission prices to \$14.50 for anyone 6 years and above in an effort to eliminate confusion with different price points for admission. Further, this ticket price includes special exhibitions, so patrons only pay once when they come to the museum. “We are really deeply committed to getting people early, getting people in, getting people comfortable...” with visiting the museum, said Virginia Shearer, the Eleanor McDonald Florza Director of Education for the High (personal communication, September, 2018). The High education department has a staff of more than a dozen, with 120 trained docent volunteers and another 150 docents in training.

We are always asking ourselves how we can better serve schools. What is the museum’s role in helping schools achieve their goals? How can we be really impactful and do something meaningful for students? Museums should be a resource for schools. We are better able to adapt content to meet schools’ needs, said Shearer.

On my first “field trip” observation at the High, a tour led by the museum’s Head of Schools and Teacher Services. Hurricane Irma hit Atlanta the week that I was there and consequently the public schools were closed and the field trip was canceled. Instead of the

planned field trip, I and several colleagues received a behind the scenes tour that the students would have experienced, including the High's new STEAM programming, as well as tours through the facilities, studio spaces, and the collection.

The following academic year I observed that same field trip alongside a dozen fifth grade students. A trained volunteer docent led the High Museum of Art's program, which featured a focused study of several works of art in multiple galleries. The field trip was designed as a two-hour experience; one hour in the galleries and another hour in the studios. However, the bus was more than fifteen minutes late, which meant that both the gallery tour and the studio tour were shortened. During the gallery tour, students were remarkably engaged as evidenced by when they were asking and answering questions, listening, and observing. Every few minutes I scanned the group and counted any students who appeared disengaged, whether that meant talking amongst themselves or simply staring off into space. While some were indeed more interested in other works of art near them, I did not count that as a sign of disengagement but as being even more engaged. They wanted to see more than what they were being shown. Oftentimes, some other work of art caught their interest and they wanted to pursue it and were restricted. The docent would refocus students with suggestions that they could return with their family for free and explore more of the museum another time.

Upon the conclusion of the gallery tour, docent ushered the students to a studio space where a staff teaching-artist welcomed them to what was planned as a sixty-minute hands-on studio art-making component. In interviews with the students, this experience was what they most enjoyed about the field trip. They were excited to have the opportunity to paint, something they were rarely, if ever, allowed to do at school (personal communications with multiple students, spring and fall of 2018). While the studio component seemed hectic and rushed to me,

and appeared slightly overwhelming to the teaching artist, she later told me the tour group was late which made her job difficult to complete in a shorter amount of time (personal communication with teaching artist, March, 2018).

Every child appeared fully engaged and trying to follow the directions of the teacher. Classroom teachers seemed particularly stressed during this time. The student to chaperone ratio observed was 12:1. While in the studio, two of the teacher-chaperones left, to the chagrin of two teacher-chaperones who were left in a crowded classroom with 24 students. As the teaching artist rushed through the activities, one classroom teacher began to threaten and then punish male students. One student was made to “sit out” for most of the studio experience, although I did not see him do anything obvious to deserve the timeout. It was unfortunate, but it was obvious that the stress of the day and the circumstances were wearing on the classroom teachers. It takes a lot of effort for teachers to take students on field trips. It would be certainly be easier to stay at school in a familiar and controlled setting. Relieving as much stress as possible for teachers should be a key goal of arts providers.

## **Student Stakeholders**

To answer the final research questions asked in this study, “What do participants think of the experience? What are their perceptions, and how do they make meaning from the field trips?” I refer to the student interviews. A convenience sample of student participants was requested through a contact with the Art Partners. She reached out to the schools with whom she had relationships and where she thought they would be most likely to agree to participate. Information about the research study and the interview process was then sent to the schools and the schools reached out to students. I interviewed any student for whom a consent form was returned.

My first student interview was with a student that I will call Trevon. He and I met in his school near his classroom where we sat facing each other in two chairs awkwardly placed in the hall, and where students and teachers occasionally walked by. He seemed shy. I introduced myself and began to ask him questions about his arts field trip experiences. He said that his favorite of the three field trips was to the art museum. When I asked why that was his favorite, he said “because we had, we made a project, and they had us looking at different kinds of art and stuff.” This was a common theme with all of the students I interviewed. They all loved the hands-on art making component of the field trip. One student said that is was “because we got to paint” and that they did not get the chance to paint at school (personal communication with Shanice, April, 2019). I also asked Trevon what his favorite work of art was. “I forgot what it called” he said. Luckily, I had observed his field trip and was familiar with the art he saw. I told him that was okay and to just describe it. “The, uh, it was different kinds of glass and stuff. At first, I thought it was one whole mirror, but then the lady, she said, she said it was like mirrors in front of each other.”



Figure 4. Gerhard Richter (German, born 1932), 11-Scheiben (886-3) (11-Panes), 2003, hard-coated tempered glass and wood

Trevon was recalling a favorite work of many of the students, called (*11-Panes*) by Gehard Richter, and he was telling a stranger about it in detail in the busy hallway of his school more than a month after he had attended the field trip. The quality of his recall was remarkable. He also expressed that he had listened to “the lady,” who was the tour docent. Trevon was equally able to recall his favorite parts of the *Jungle Book* play and the symphony performance that he attended up to three months prior to the interview.

In my second student interview session, a focus group of six students, they were similarly able to recall details about their field trip experiences. Additionally, during the near hour interview, students had a vibrant conversation with each other, recalling details and spurring their peers to recall and build upon each other’s remembrances. “I liked the TV that tells time” said Demetrius. A peer mumbled something. “Y’all didn’t see that?” (talking to his peers). Because it was like... It was like people on the inside that move around and ummm... clean it up and stuff.” Indeed, this description of the work was accurate and quite detailed. His peers remembered and began to agree. Demetrius seemed pleased.



Figure 5. Maarten Baas (Dutch, born 1978), *Analog Digital Clock* from the Real Time series, 2009, digital video (color, silent), dimensions variable.

He was describing, in detail, Maarten Baas' *Analog Digital Clock*. He was also connecting with his peers at that moment through a past common experience, and had created a new shared experience in recalling the details of the field trip. He had also been validated and validated the feelings of others by sharing his perception of a favorite work. Jasmine, also part of the focus group interview, then said, "My favorite part was when we had, we were with the lady and my teacher and she gave us a little ribbon and we had to swung it around a little glass mirror thing. Yah, and it made you go dizzy." "Oh yah" others in the group said in unison as they laughed and smiled. Then Darryl said "It had all that glass, so as soon as you looked you see all different people." All the students recalled the work and got very excited and chattered to one another about their remembrances of the piece. They were describing Anish Kapoor's *Untitled*.



Figure 6. Anish Kapoor (British, born India, 1954), *Untitled*, 2010, stainless steel, 118 1/8 x 118 1/8 x 24 inches.

In my final student interview, I met in a conference room of a school with a fifth grade student who attended the field trips the prior spring while in fourth grade. The student, who I will call Aliyah, was self-assured and ready to share her experiences. We spoke one-on-one for over thirty minutes. "I love field trips," she said, "mostly because I can get away from school, and mostly I can learn stuff about other things." I asked her to define a field trip for me as if she were

explaining it to a classmate who had never been before. “A field trip is like a trip away from campus where you can learn about other things you haven’t learned about ever before, or if you learned about it, you can learn more about it.” I asked Aliyah if she could remember field trips she had gone on in the past and she quickly named off four years’ worth of field trips, details about each one and what grade and school she was in when she attended. She was able to recall details of the field trips from the previous spring. She recalled what she made in the hands-on studio component at the art museum as well as what classmates made. She was able to recall her favorite work of art and even offered that it was “abstract.” Again, this recollection was from more than six months prior. Her favorite field trip was to the symphony, “I loved all the woodwinds, and the violin, and the brass, and violas.” She said she played several instruments herself as did her parents. “It’s really awesome to see people play it and professionals and things like that.”



Figure 7. Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, photo courtesy of ASO



Of all the students I interviewed, only one did not like the arts field trips and said he would rather have stayed at school. But after some discussion, even he was willing to say he would go back to the theater if he had been sitting where he could see. All other students, when asked, said they would return to all of the arts field trip venues and would recommend that their friends go there as well.

Finally, when asked about whether field trips were important experiences or if learning time might be better spent staying at school, students had this to say. “Because it tells us about how to do more work. It shows us how to draw... and to play instruments. And it shows us how to create,” said Trevon. Demetrius echoed his sentiments, “Because it is a learning experience. I learned that like, what if somebody want to be an artist like when they grow up. They can like get ideas from the art museum.” Darryl, who loved the field trips and could recall vivid details about all three experiences said this about the importance of field trip experiences, “Oh yes, it’s important because, um, when it be telling you about the work you be doing in the classroom, it reflects on your work. The captions under the pictures, they be showing me, when they be talking.” I particularly liked that he referenced that he had read the captions under the pictures to get more information. Finally, Aliyah, summed up the importance of field trips, “If you want your child to stay in school, make sure they go on a field trip to learn more about things...especially if you don’t want to see the same walls over and over again.”

### **Additional Findings**

It is worth mentioning, that in all of my field trip observations I did not see any chaperone who was a parent or caregiver. There were adults present, particularly at the symphony and theater performances with whom I was unable to speak, and it is possible that they were parents present. However, I have observed many field trips, both in this setting and

elsewhere, and parent chaperones generally have a sidelines demeanor that classroom teachers do not. I never saw anyone that I suspected was a parent and I never spoke with, or was referred to, a parent chaperone. I mention this because it is a testament to the importance of schools providing these arts field trip experiences. Busy parents may not be able to participate in these types of activities with their children. Further, the parents and caregivers themselves may not have had exposure to these experiences and might feel uncomfortable or unwelcome.

One of the research goals of the primary study and a reason for the longitudinal design is to follow students into middle school to see if the increased arts field trip exposure increases the likelihood that treated students select arts-related elective when they get the chance. Of the students I interviewed who were fifth grade students in the spring semester, all but one seemed to be unaware that they could choose elective classes when they went to middle school the next year. Of all the students I spoke with, only Aliyah knew that she had the opportunity to choose music class, and that appeared to be because she already played an instrument and had an older cousin in the band.

## **Conclusion**

The rich, descriptive evidence from this study adds to the understanding of the primary experimental study, as well as to the broader understanding of the value of arts field trips to stakeholders. It also provides stakeholders, especially students, with a voice to express the meaning and importance they place on the arts field trip experiences to visual art museums, the symphony, and the theater.

The words of “exposure” and “experience” were repeated by adult stakeholders again and again in interviews. Additionally, teachers, who must go to great trouble and effort to ensure that

students attend field trips, also stated that they believed field trips were an important and necessary part of their jobs of giving students a complete education.

Most importantly, student stakeholders clearly demonstrated that they learned from the experiences, retained that learning, could express that meaning long after the initial event, and connected that meaning to prior experiences as well as to the experiences of peers. Students could recall details about the recent field trips and often connected those experiences to similar past experiences of their own and used those to relate to and connect with peers. Further, students advocated for field trip experiences for themselves and peers.

### **Future Work**

While The Woodruff case presents interesting findings, it is unclear how generalizable these findings are to the larger context. In this case, 75% of students in this study reported having attended The Woodruff at least once before. Access is open and many barriers are removed. The Woodruff Arts Center is an amazing facility. Most communities do not have access to these types of award-winning arts institutions; therefore, it is unclear how impactful arts field trips experiences may be to more modestly funded or smaller arts facilities. Smaller facilities may be less able to offer the same range of experiences, or may have fewer resources to dedicate to their education programming. On the other hand, it is possible that smaller institutions are able to foster better relationships and feelings of belonging, or to provide other benefits to patrons that larger and less nimble institutions are less able to do. Additional work with a variety of populations and in a variety of settings is needed. A forthcoming study (Watson, 2019), detailed in the next chapter, surveying access to the arts, arts field trip attendance, and the impact of policy pressures on field trip experiences across the nation closes a small part of the gap in our knowledge about differences by state.

## References

- Adams, M., Foutz, S., Luke, J., & Stein, J. (2006). *Thinking through art Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum School Partnership Program year 3 preliminary research results*. Edgewater, MD: Institute for Learning Innovation.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*, edited by J. G. Richardson, 241–258. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Bowen, D., Greene, J., & Kisida, B. (2014). Learning to think critically; A visual art experiment. *Educational Researcher*, 43(1), 37-44.
- Bowen, D., & Kisida, B. (2018). Investigating Causal Effects of Arts Education: Experimental Evidence from Houston's Arts Access Initiative. *Kinder Institute for Urban Research* 7(4). Accessed at <https://kinder.rice.edu/research/investigating-causal-effects-artseducation-experiences-experimental-evidence-houstons-arts>
- City of Atlanta. *Cultural Experience Project*. Office of Cultural Affairs. Accessed at <http://www.ocaatlanta.com/?programs=cultural-experience-project>
- Erickson, H., Greene, J., Watson, A., & Beck, M. (2019). *Does art make you smart? A longitudinal experiment of the effects of multiple arts-focused field trips*. Department of Education Reform working paper 2019-05.
- Gadsden, V. (2008). The arts and education: Knowledge generation, pedagogy, and the discourse of learning. *Review of Research in Education*, 32(1), 29-61.
- Greene, J., Kisida, B., & Bowen, D. (2014). The educational value of field trips. *Education Next*, 15(1), 78-86.
- Greene, J., Hitt, C., Kraybill, A., & Bogulski, C. (2015). Learning from Live Theater. *Education Next*, Winter.
- Greene, J., Erickson, H., Watson, A., Beck, M. (2018). The play's the thing: Experimentally examining the social and cognitive effects of school field trips to live theater performances. *Educational Researcher*, 47(4), 246-254. Accessed at <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X18761034>
- Goldstein, T., & Winner, E. (2012). Enhancing empathy and theory of mind. *Journal of Cognition and Development*, 13(1), 19-37.
- Government Accountability Office (2009). *Access to arts education: Inclusion of additional questions in education's planned research would help explain why instruction time has decreased for some students*. Report to Congressional Requesters. February, GAO-09-286. Accessed at <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d09286.pdf>

- Jægar, M., & Møllegarrd, S. (2017). Cultural capital, teacher bias, and educational success: New evidence from monozygotic twins. *Social Science Research*, 64, 130-144.
- Kanevsky, L., Corke, M., & Frangkiser, L. (2008). The academic resilience and psychosocial characteristics of inner-city English learners in a museum-based school program. *Education and Urban Society*, 40(4), 452-475.
- Keiper, S., Sandene, B., Persky, H., & Kuang, M. (2009). *The nation's report card: Arts 2008 -- music and visual arts*. National Assessment of Educational Progress at Grade 8. NCES 2009-488. Accessed at <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/main2008/2009488.asp>
- Kisida, B., Bowen, D. H., & Greene, J. P. (2016). Measuring critical thinking: Results from an art museum field trip experiment. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2015.1086915>
- Kisida, B., Greene J., & Bowen, D. (2014). Creating cultural consumers: The dynamics of cultural capital acquisition. *Sociology of Education*, 87(4), 281-295.
- Kornrich, Sabino (2016). Inequalities in parental spending on young children: 1972 to 2010. *AERA Open*, 2(2), 1-12. Accessed at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2332858416644180>
- Lacoe, J., Painter, G., & Williams, D. (2016). *Museums as classrooms: The academic and behavioral impacts of "School in the Park."* Working Paper. Sol Price School of Public Policy, University of Southern California.
- Lee, B., Patall, E., Cawthon S., & Steingut, R. (2015). The effect of drama-based pedagogy on preK-16 outcomes: A meta-analysis of research from 1985-2012. *Review of Educational Research*, 85(1), 3-49.
- Ludwig, M., Boyle, A., & Lindsay, J. (2017). *Review of evidence: Arts integration research through the lens of Every Students Succeeds Act*. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research. Accessed at <http://www.air.org/resource/review-evidence-arts-integration-research-through-lens-every-student-succeeds-act>
- Maranto, R. (2015). *In Service of Citizenship: YES Prep Schools*. pp. 85-108 in Cheryl Miller and Gary Schmitt ed. *Trendsetting Charter Schools: Raising the Bar for Civic Education*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Matthews, J. (2009). *Work hard. Be nice.: How two inspired teachers created the most promising schools in America*. Algonquin Books, New York, NY.
- McCord, R., Ellerson, N. (2009). "Looking Back, Looking Forward: How the Economic Downturn Continues to Impact School Districts." Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators. Accessed at <http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Resources/files/LookingBackLookingForward.pdf>
- Randi Korn & Associates (2018). *Survey of Single-visit K-12 Art Museum Programs*. Unpublished manuscript, National Art Education Association, Reston, VA.

- Rabkin, N., & Hedberg, E. (2011). *Arts education in America: What the declines mean for arts participation*. National Endowment for the Arts, Research Report #52.
- Ruppert, S. (2006). Critical evidence: How the ARTS benefit student achievement. National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. Accessed at: <https://nasaa-arts.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/05/critical-evidence.pdf>
- Student Youth & Travel Association (2016). *Student youth and travel digest: A comprehensive survey of the student travel market*. Mclean, VA. Accessed at <https://syta.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/SYTD-Social-Impact-8.11.pdf>
- The Woodruff Arts Center. Accessed at <https://www.woodruffcenter.org/>
- 2010 U.S. Census. Accessed at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/decade.2010.html>
- Watson, A. (2019). State of the art: Declining trends in art museum field trip attendance. Working paper.
- Watson A., Greene, J., Erickson, H., & Beck, M. (2019) Altered Attitudes and Actions: Social-emotional effects of multiple Arts Field Trips. Department of Education Reform working paper 2019-04.

## **Appendix**

### **Semi Structured Interview for School Teacher/Student**

1. How long have you been at (School name)?
2. How many times have you been to this museum/ theater/symphony?  
[What about your students, have many of them been here before?]
3. Before you came, how did you/the students feel about going on a field trip to an art museum/theater/symphony?  
Did you talk about it in class before you came?  
Did you know ahead of time what you would be seeing/doing today?
4. What did you think about the experience?  
[What did your students think about the experience?]  
Can you give me some examples?
5. What was your/their favorite part?  
Why do you think that is?
6. Do you think you/ they will want to come back again sometime?
7. How is this compared to the other field trips you have been on at this museum/theater/ symphony?

