

RESEARCH AGENDA

- **Dignity in Education and Work**
- **Collaboration—group work**
- **Social Change**
- **Educational Policy**
- **the Arts in Education**
- **Qualitative Research**

Dignity, Education, Work and Collaboration

My dissertation focused on the relationships between the artists who collaborate in higher education to produce theatre. I am interested in this subject because for a number of years I served as an academic theatrical designer, which allowed me special insight into the world of work inside theatre. Further, my future research will focus on the work relationships of those who, either by choice or by requirement, collaborate with others in order to do their job, whether that is in a field of art or in education and the social sciences. I am most fascinated by that unique relationship which develops between collaborators and which defines and limits the kind of work that may be done. And, ultimately, study of this kind offers insight into the concept of dignity of the individual worker.

My current area of research on dignity and the worker will focus on education department adjuncts.

Social Change

I am very interested in how education serves as a vehicle for social change. I am particularly focused on how the arts intersect with social change and educational policy. The following abstract for my paper entitled *Policy, Educational Goals and the Arts: Are the Arts and Education at Cross-Purposes?* was presented at the Midwest Sociological Society conference in the spring of 2006.

Abstract: Are the arts at cross-purposes with public school education? In the 1980's and 1990's, public schools often limited their arts programs in favor of the "core" curriculum: math, science, English, and history. Beginning in the mid 1990's, legislation at the federal level sought to formally include the arts as a core subject. With President Clinton's Goals 2000 Act, the arts were made, by federal law, a subject equal to that of the typical "core" subjects. What precipitated since then have been a powerful enactment of federal assessment standards (NCLB) and an avalanche of arts advocacy groups and

arts education researchers debating the value and the role of the arts in public school education. In the middle of this tug-of-war between federal requirements, arts advocacy and education rhetoric are the teachers and students of the arts. This paper provides an historical framework for arts in public school education, reviews several arts initiatives and Goals 2000 as positive steps to arts education and contrast those with the 1997 NAEP Arts Assessment and the NCLB, both of which may have negative impacts on schools and the arts, argues in favor of arts education as a public good.

Qualitative Research

I am a qualitative researcher who has had several experiences learning methodology, coding and analysis from my professors. I am co-author with Carolyn L. Wanat, Associate Professor, on a paper entitled: *Social Networks and Structural Holes: Parent-School Relationships as Loosely Coupled Systems*, which was presented fall 2007 at the University Council for Educational Administration in Alexandria, VA. An updated version of this paper has been accepted into the journal *Leadership and Policy in Schools*.

Abstract: This paper examines parental involvement in schools from theoretical perspectives of social networks and loosely coupled systems. Parents in one elementary school who were volunteers or members of Parent-Teacher Group (PTG) participated in two focus group interviews. Participants described relationships among parents who were involved in the school, noting differences between newcomers and established community members. Participants expressed opinions on adaptation to district change, maintenance of cultural norms by established parent groups, and challenges communicating with school leaders. Despite different interests and values, established and new parents worked together on activities to benefit children, the district, and parents themselves.