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## **A pink dog with 20 legs – An explorative study on the beliefs of elementary school children explaining engagement in artistic leisure activities**

### **Abstract**

*Drawing, painting and doing handicraft rank among the most widespread leisure activities of children and are assumed to have positive effects on their development. Moreover, artistic activities are a form of societally valued cultural participation. Nevertheless, many children do not voluntarily engage in any such activities. To foster artistic participation with its assumed positive developmental effects, it is necessary to know the beliefs of children that explain their engagement in these activities. To systematically explore these beliefs, an interview study based on the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 2012) was conducted with N = 26 elementary school children. The interviews were content analyzed using a deductive-inductive procedure, resulting in a differentiated set of categories comprising the children's beliefs explaining artistic leisure time activities (Cohen's Kappa = .91). Content validity of the generated set of categories and implications for further research are discussed.*

### **Keywords**

*Cultural participation; Artistic leisure activities; Elementary school children; Theory of planned behavior; Qualitative study*

## **Ein rosaroter Hund mit 20 Beinen – Eine explorative Studie über Überzeugungen von Grundschulkindern zur Ausübung künstlerischer Freizeitaktivitäten**

### **Zusammenfassung**

*Zeichnen, Malen und Basteln zählen zu den meist verbreiteten Freizeitaktivitäten von Kindern. Derartigen künstlerisch-kreativen Aktivitäten werden positive Effekte auf die Entwicklung der Kinder zugeschrieben. Zudem gelten künstleri-*

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*sche Aktivitäten als Teil kultureller Partizipation. Jedoch üben nicht alle Kinder derartige Aktivitäten in ihrer Freizeit aus. Um künstlerische Partizipation mit ihren mutmaßlichen positiven entwicklungsbezogenen Effekten fördern zu können, bedarf es umfangreichen Wissens zu den Überzeugungen der Kinder, die deren Ausübung künstlerischer Freizeitaktivitäten erklären. Im Rahmen einer auf der Theorie des geplanten Verhaltens basierenden Interviewstudie (Ajzen, 2012) wurden  $N = 26$  Grundschul Kinder systematisch zu ihren Überzeugungen hinsichtlich künstlerischer Freizeitaktivitäten befragt. Die Interviews wurden inhaltsanalytisch anhand eines deduktiv-induktiven Verfahrens ausgewertet. Ergebnis war ein differenziertes Kategoriensystem zu den verhaltensbestimmenden Überzeugungen der Kinder hinsichtlich der Ausübung künstlerischer Freizeitaktivitäten (Cohen's  $\kappa = .91$ ). Diskutiert werden die Inhaltsqualität des genierten Kategoriensystems sowie Implikationen für die weitere Forschung.*

## **Schlagworte**

*Kulturelle Partizipation; Künstlerische Freizeitaktivitäten; Grundschul Kinder; Theorie des geplanten Verhaltens; Qualitative Studie*

## **1. The significance of artistic activities**

Many children engage in drawing and painting very early in life, virtually as soon as they are able to hold a pencil. Later on, they also start making crafts using different materials. Some children, however, are more reluctant to engage in such activities in their leisure time than others. For example, in Germany, where the present study was conducted, about half of the children surveyed by Jänsch and Schneekloth (2013) reported painting and making handicraft as a regular leisure activity (cf. mpfs, 2013). By and large, this also seems to generalize to other countries such as the USA (Hofferth & Sandberg, 2001) or Australia (ABS, 2009). Thus, artistic activities can be considered popular leisure activities for many, but not all children.

Artistic activities for children such as drawing, painting, and craft making are widely promoted. Moreover, there is a twofold discourse on the special significance of these activities, which will be outlined in the following sections: First, participation in artistic cultural life is viewed as a basic human right. This alone might be considered sufficient reason to investigate artistic activities in children. Second, it is argued that being artistically active can foster autonomy and enhance imagination and creativity.

## **1.1 Artistic activities are protected by human rights legislation**

Artistic activities are a form of cultural participation and involvement. As such, they can be considered to be a basic human right (General Assembly, 1948; UNESCO, 2005). In article 31, paragraph 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989), the contracting countries emphasize children's right to full participation in cultural and artistic life, and, consequently, the provision of adequate and equal opportunities for such participation. In Germany, this resulted in political actions aimed at the integration of cultural and aesthetic education within the school context and its consideration in school development processes (KMK, 2013). Moreover, it is argued that opportunities to engage in this field should be provided not only within the school context, but also within the context of extracurricular and leisure time (Bäßler, Fuchs, Schulz, & Zimmermann, 2009; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, & Lord, 2005). Therefore, empirical investigations are warranted to identify aspects that facilitate or hinder engagement in artistic leisure activities.

As stated above, the status of cultural participation as a basic human right might already be considered reason enough to justify why artistic leisure activities among children should be the subject of scientific inquiry. In the literature, however, there is also another main line of reasoning which is related to the putative effects that are associated with artistic activities.

## **1.2 Artistic activities are a means for fostering autonomy and enhancing imagination and creativity**

Activities such as drawing, painting, or making crafts with different materials are widely assumed to provide opportunities for experiencing autonomy and allowing fantasy free reign. Proponents of this position state that when children engage in artistic activities in their leisure time, they are provided with an opportunity of creating their own ideas and imaginations of what they want to produce and how to produce it, largely independent of external guidelines or requirements. This may include unconventional ideas and inventions, driven by openness and curiosity. Artistic activities may thereby provide children with a means of exploring the world in their own individual and creative way, while applying and developing their imagination (Cropley, 2006; Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009; Preiser, 2006; see also model of Urban, 2004). During the artistic creation process, children may decide themselves whether the product matches their own standards or whether they have to look for alternative ways to reach their own targeted objectives. Thus, artistic activities may provide children not only an opportunity for experiencing autonomy and for applying imagination and fantasy but also for acquiring self-regulative competencies by implementing their own ideas while following their particular interests (cf. Cropley, 2006; Sternberg, 1985). In addition, through such activities, children may foster the development of their perceptual skills, judgment, and imagina-

tion regarding artistic works and performances (Liebau, 2008). This, in turn, could stimulate a differentiated perception of the surrounding environment (UNESCO, 2006). It is argued that practical experience is of crucial importance within this process: The more children practice, the more they may benefit in terms of perceived autonomy or imagination and regarding the development of their perceptual skills (cf. Liebau, 2008). Moreover, it goes without saying that practicing and long-term participation are also the basis for an acquisition of high competency levels of artistic proficiency in the respective field (cf. Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Römer, 1993). Beyond the human rights discourse, the discourse on effects that are associated with artistic activities hence also generates a demand for research on beliefs that may explain why or why not children engage in artistic leisure activities.

## **2. Where do we go from here?**

The lines of argument presented so far are not contradictory. Artistic activities may be an important form of cultural participation protected by human rights legislation while also providing children with important developmental opportunities. However, both of these frequently cited arguments are from an adult perspective that does not necessarily represent children's cognitions.

So what do children say when they are asked why they engage or do not engage in painting, drawing, or craft making? Of course and as outlined in the previous section, one might assume that the vicinity of artistic activities to imagination and creativity might play a pivotal role not only from a normative perspective, but also from the children's point of view (Cropley, 2006; Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009; Preiser, 2006). Although there is ample literature on issues such as facets of creativity and their measurement (e.g., Krampen, 1993; Richards, Kinney, Benet, & Merzel, 1988; Torrance, 1998; Urban & Jellen, 1995), on the development of creativity in children (e.g., Berner, Lotz, Kastens, Faust, & Lipowsky, 2010; Charles & Runco, 2000-2001; Torrance, 1968), or on conditions of the school environment that foster creativity (e.g., Berner et al., 2010; de Souza Fleith, 2000; Serve, 2000), we did not focus on this aspect. Rather, we aimed to remedy the scarcity of qualitative studies that investigate the whole bandwidth of beliefs of elementary school children regarding an engagement in artistic leisure activities. Thus, it was the goal of the present paper to systematically explore these beliefs from the children's own perspective.

### **2.1 Person- and environment-related beliefs regarding artistic activities – The theory of planned behavior**

Whether children decide to engage or not to engage in an activity does not depend solely on factors related to personal characteristics or motives (e.g., the ac-

quisition of skills or the intrinsic value experienced while performing the activity). Rather, environmental factors such as socialization agents approving such activities, a stimulating environment, or necessary resources should be taken into account as well (cf. Berner et al., 2010; de Souza Fleith, 2000; Runco, 2004). To comprehensively explain engagement in artistic activities, it is hence important to take a broad perspective that embraces both personal and environmental factors. For that reason, the present study was based on the theory of planned behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1985, 1991, 2012) which incorporates both aspects.

The TPB consists of three predictor constructs: (a) the *attitude* (positive/negative evaluation of the behavior in question), (b) the *subjective norm* (perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior) and (c) the *perceived behavioral control* (PBC; perceived capability of performing the behavior, divided into *self-efficacy* – the subjective evaluation of personal competencies – and *controllability* – the subjective evaluation of actual environmental circumstances). *Attitude*, *subjective norm* and both components of *PBC* are based on beliefs which either result from personal experience or derive from information from other sources (such as friends or media): *Behavioral beliefs* act as a basis for the *attitude*, *normative beliefs* as a basis for the *subjective norm*, and *control beliefs* as a basis for the *PBC*. With these components, the theory is considered to specify all immediate determinants of planned behavior (cf. Kröner, 2013). The more favorable the *behavioral beliefs*, the *normative beliefs*, and the *control beliefs* are, the stronger the individual's intention to perform the behavior in question and, finally, the higher the probability of showing the behavior should be (Ajzen, 1985, 1991, 2012).

Due to the combination of comprehensiveness and parsimony, the theory of planned behavior provides a suitable starting point for elicitation studies exploring the salient beliefs that determine the behavior under scrutiny. Besides their genuine value, such elicitation studies lay the groundwork for subsequent quantitative scale development studies.

## 2.2 Focus of the present study

From a theoretical point of view, the decision to engage in artistic activities in leisure time can be considered as conscious, planned process. Given the unsatisfactory state of research in this domain, we will start from the domain-general framework provided by the TPB that may be filled by a fine-grained pattern of cognitions related to specific salient beliefs regarding artistic activities. Moreover, we will adapt the TPB framework to the target group under scrutiny. This refinement process has the potential to foster an adequate group- and domain-specific theory development (for findings from previous studies supporting the suitability of the TPB for leisure time activities see Ajzen & Driver, 1991; Armitage & Conner, 2001; Hagger, Chatzisarantis, & Biddle, 2002; Hausenblas, Carron, & Mack, 1997; Rhodes & Dean, 2009).

Beyond its adaptability to various domains and age groups the TPB provides researchers with detailed instructions how to conduct thorough qualitative elicitation studies exploring and systematizing children's salient beliefs determining the behavior under scrutiny. However, TPB-based research projects nevertheless often waive such elicitation studies or they do not pay sufficient attention to their documentation and publication (Downs & Hausenblas, 2005; Hausenblas et al., 1997). This is particularly distressing as elicitation studies are essential for a detailed, adequate and comprehensive collection of the salient beliefs regarding the behavior under scrutiny. Moreover, such elicitation studies respectively the resulting sets of categories provide an important basis for further scale development work.

Thus, we started from the scratch and used the TPB in the present study to systematically elicit and categorize a broad range of group- and domain-specific salient beliefs that might explain why elementary school children engage or do not engage in artistic leisure activities. For our elicitation study, as already mentioned, we interviewed the children themselves regarding their beliefs to engage in artistic leisure activities. In doing so, we referred to the paradigm of indirect measures of the TPB constructs described by Francis et al. (2004). As for elementary school children it is more difficult to write down responses on open-ended questions – and in consequence running the risk of a limited variety of answers – we decided to conduct one-to-one oral interviews (for the different forms of conducting an elicitation study see Francis et al., 2004).

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Sample**

In the present study,  $N = 26$  elementary school children ( $n = 12$  females,  $n = 14$  males) from grades 2 and 3 were interrogated via qualitative interviews. These students attended either urban or rural schools located in Bavaria, Germany. Overall  $n = 9$  visited a rural school;  $n = 17$  visited one of two urban schools. Moreover, the schools differed in number of students (min. = 297, max. = 466) and number of students with migration background (min. = 1 %, max. = 39 %). Students from the entire range of the achievement continuum were systematically included in order to obtain a heterogeneous sample composition. Therefore, teachers were asked to suggest students from all performance levels as participants. For participation, a declaration of consent signed by the parents was required.

As recommended by Francis et al. (2004), the procedure and the interview guide presented in detail in the next section were piloted (with two elementary school children, grade 2, midterm of school year). The children had no problems in understanding the questions; therefore, no modifications were deemed necessary.

## 3.2 Instrument and procedure

### 3.2.1 Procedure conducting the interviews

Based on the guidelines for conducting a TPB interview study outlined by Francis et al. (2004), semi-structured interviews were designed. The first author interviewed the elementary school children, recording all interviews with a dictation machine. Initially, the interviewer introduced herself and briefly outlined the purpose of the interview. As a warm up, she asked the children about prior experience with scientific studies and about their leisure activities in general. Afterwards, she presented a paint box and colored crayons and asked: “Do you paint or do other things like crafts, woodcarving, or sewing in your leisure time?” We chose this kind of setting to create a child-orientated interview situation and as a stimulus to enter the narrative sequence (Moschner, Wagener, Anschütz, & Wernke, 2008). Then, we elicited beliefs related to engaging or not engaging in artistic leisure activities in accordance with the predictor constructs of the TPB. This happened by asking questions that aimed at (1) *behavioral beliefs* (“What do you [not] like about painting or doing other artistic activities in your leisure time?”), (2) *normative beliefs* (“Who approves [does not approve] of you painting or doing other artistic activities in your leisure time?”), and (3) *control beliefs* (“What makes it easy [difficult] for you to paint or do other artistic activities in your leisure time?”). In the end, the interviewer asked the children whether something else came to their mind when thinking about activities like painting or other crafts. Regarding expressions of children’s artistic leisure activities, our focus was on activities such as drawing and painting as prototypical examples of children’s artistic expressions in this age. This decision was based, among others, on the study by Glăveanu (2011), who found out that it is a widespread opinion in western countries that drawing is a particularly adequate field for the expression of arts and creativity in children. Following results from the literature concerning children’s understanding of cultural participation, it can be assumed that children hold a quite conservative understanding of arts or artistic activities (af Ursin, 2016). Nevertheless, in addition to drawing and painting as prototypical examples, we asked the children to add other artistic activities they pursue in their leisure time. For this purpose, as mentioned above, we named crafts, woodcarving and sewing as examples beyond drawing and painting. These examples derive from the curriculum of arts education in elementary schools for the second and third grade. All interviews were conducted in a quiet room at the respective school.

### 3.2.2 Preparation of the interviews for analysis

According to the guidelines proposed by Francis et al. (2004), we content analyzed the interviews. During analysis, we followed the adaption of Mayring’s (2010) procedure outlined by Kröner et al. (2012). In a first step, we literally transcribed all



recorded interviews based on transcription rules defined in advance (referring to Mayring, 2002): We corrected the transcripts, modestly smoothing grammatical deficits resulting in grammatically correct sentences without changing the content. In case of doubt, we retained the exact wording. Moreover, we decided to code the original statements while keeping them in the context of the entire transcript instead of paraphrasing them.

### 3.2.3 Coding process

Using the software MAXQDA 11 (Kuckartz, 1989–2014), we applied a deductive-inductive procedure to generate a set of categories. As a deductive starting point, we used the TPB predictor constructs *attitude*, *subjective norm*, and *perceived behavioral control*, the last one already subdivided into *self-efficacy* and *controllability* (Ajzen, 2002). As the present study directed at a more fine-grained analysis than that provided by the three general TPB predictor constructs, we aimed at a further differentiation of these predictor constructs. With this in mind, we inductively differentiated the initial deductively designed set of categories step by step while coding the material. For our initial rating we aimed at selecting around two-thirds of the conducted interviews. As we planned to survey third graders in subsequent quantitative-empirical studies, we gave priority to this group during selection of interviews for the initial rating. Thus we selected  $n = 14$  interviews from children attending the third grade while paying attention towards avoiding too skewed distributions of gender ( $n = 7$  girls and  $n = 8$  boys) and characteristics of the selected schools ( $n = 6$  children attended a rural school with a very low level of children with migration background and  $n = 8$  children attended an urban school with a higher level of migration background). In doing so, we aimed at receiving a quite heterogeneous selection of interviews covering as large a bandwidth as possible of different beliefs regarding children's engagement in artistic leisure activities. In addition we decided to include four interviews of children attending the second grade to our analyses ( $n = 2$  girl and  $n = 2$  boys of an urban school with high level of children with migration background). Note that we assigned the statements to the categories solely according to their content. During categorization, we did not consider whether a statement contained a belief that might result in an engagement or in no engagement in artistic leisure activities. Similarly, we did not automatically categorize a statement according to one of the three main categories just because it happened to be part of an answer to a question that aimed at eliciting statements related to a certain category. For example, if the question was "Why do you like to paint?" and a student answered "Because I am such a good painter", we nevertheless coded this answer as an example of *PBC*, not as an example of *attitude*. After coding approximately 30 % of the material, we made a formative check of reliability, including an intensive discussion of the assignments of the codings to the elements of the set of categories developed so far in the research group of the second author. Subsequently, we revised the categories according to the results of the

discussion. This procedure was repeated once again after the next few interviews and – as a summative check of reliability (Mayring, 2008, p. 12) – at the end of the initial rating. Parallel to generating the set of categories, we developed comprehensive guidelines containing the definitions and delineations of the categories and selected statements that might serve as examples. These guidelines were repeatedly reviewed and edited. As we noticed a content-related saturation after analyzing  $n = 17$  ( $n = 8$  girls and  $n = 9$  boys) of the interviews chosen for the initial rating, we skipped analyzing one interview ( $n = 1$  girl attending the second grade of an urban school with high level of migration background). Subsequent to the initial rating, a colleague who had not been involved in generating the set of categories and discussing the categories within the project team did the follow-up rating of the  $n = 17$  interviews using the developed guidelines. Once both ratings (the initial and the follow-up rating) were completed, we compared them to assess the inter-rater agreement based on the lowest level of categories. In case of disagreement between the two raters, we decided consensually how to categorize the statement in question. This made it possible to quantify the number of participants whose answers could be assigned to each element of the set of categories. Subsequent to the comparison of the initial and the follow-up rating, the remaining interviews ( $n = 9$ ) were categorized by the first author. As these interviews could be easily assigned to the set of categories there was no evidence that crucial aspects were missing in the set of categories or that the sample size should have been extended.

#### 4. Results

As shown in Table 1, a differentiated set of categories containing beliefs that may explain the engagement of children in artistic activities in leisure time emerged from the qualitative interview study. Over the whole deductive-inductive procedure of generating the set of categories, the five deductively derived categories could be preserved and could be inductively differentiated into further subcategories and aspects. A total of 392 statements were excerpted from the interviews. The median of the distribution of the statements per person was  $Md = 15$  (min. = 8, max. = 23). On average, five statements per person and question (referring to the questions asked for the main categories) were assigned to the set of categories ( $Md = 4$ ,  $M = 5.02$ ,  $SD = 1.62$ ). The assessment of the inter-rater agreement was based on  $n = 245$  statements of the  $n = 17$  interviews of the initial rating. The assignment of the coded statements to the elements of the set of categories resulted in Cohen's  $\kappa = .91$ . According to the criteria of Fleiss and Cohen (1973), this inter-rater agreement is very good (Wirtz & Caspar, 2002). An overview of the resulting set of categories together with both the distribution of all coded statements at the main category and subcategory level and the number of persons who commented on each category is shown in Table 1. In the following, the main categories with their subcategories and aspects will be described in detail.

**Table 1:** Elements of the set of categories explaining engagement in artistic leisure time activities

Elements of the set of categories		Number of coded statements	Number of interviewees in each category
1.	Behavioral beliefs/attitude	190	26
1.1	Motivation in action	92	25
1.1.1	Fantasy and autonomy	47	18
1.1.2	General pleasure/favor vs. no pleasure/favor or boredom	45	22
1.2	Motivation with respect to thematically congruent consequences (production, interaction, learning)	58	23
1.2.1	Making of things	35	21
1.2.2	Interaction/spending time together	17	13
1.2.3	Learning	6	3
1.3	Thematically incongruent costs and benefits	40	21
1.3.1	Compatibility with vs. mutual exclusion of other activities, objectives or desires	28	17
1.3.2	(Negative) accompanying effects	12	7
2.	Normative beliefs/subjective norm	96	24
2.1	Family	3	3
2.2	Parents	33	21
2.3	Siblings	19	13
2.4	Grandparents	15	10
2.5	Other relatives (e.g. aunt, uncle, or cousin)	8	6
2.6	Friends	10	9
2.7	Teachers	3	3
2.8	Other persons	5	5
3.	Control beliefs/perceived behavioral control	106	25
3.1	Self-efficacy	58	25
3.2	Controllability	48	23
3.2.1	Availability vs. no availability of time	20	14
3.2.2	Availability vs. no availability of material	23	19
3.2.3	Surrounding conditions	5	5
In total		392	26

*Note.* For each element of the set of categories, the number of coded statements is given, along with the number of interviewees from whose interviews these statements were derived. Note that the number of interviewees for higher-level categories is often less than their sum for the respective lower-level categories. This is due to the fact that during the computation of the number of persons commenting on higher-level categories, persons with codings in more than one lower-level category were counted only once.

#### 4.1 Main category behavioral beliefs/attitude

The main category *behavioral beliefs/attitude* (1.; see Table 1) contains statements concerning positive and negative perceptions of artistic activities. This main category was inductively differentiated into three subcategories: *motivation in action* (1.1), *motivation with respect to thematically congruent consequences* (1.2), and *thematically incongruent costs and benefits* (1.3). This differentiation between thematically congruent and incongruent consequences fits nicely with Heckhausen's definition of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation that is based on the (in)congruence of action and action goals (Heckhausen, 1989, 1991; Rheinberg, 2006).

The first subcategory, *motivation in action* (1.1), includes statements referring to the action itself, irrespective of its consequences. Within this subcategory, two aspects could be identified. The first is *fantasy and autonomy* (1.1.1), containing statements concerning fantasy (e.g., "... that you can discover something, that you can think up something... like for example a pink dog with 20 legs" ["... dass man was entdecken kann, dass man sich was ausdenken kann... wie jetzt zum Beispiel ein rosaroter Hund mit 20 Beinen"], B24) and perception of autonomy, especially the opportunity to act out creativity, i.e. to decide what is to be designed and how it should be designed (e.g., "... because you can always come up with something new..., for example, that it is not dictated ... that you are free to paint whatever you want" ["... weil man sich immer neu überlegen kann ..., dass es z. B. nicht vorgegeben ist ... dass man da einfach wild drauf los [malen kann]"], B26). The second aspect is *general pleasure/favor vs. no pleasure/favor or boredom* (1.1.2), expressing the fun of being artistically active (e.g., "Why do you like to paint? Because it is fun" ["Wieso malst du gerne in deiner Freizeit? Weil das Spaß macht"], B21).

The second subcategory, *motivation with respect to thematically congruent consequences* (1.2), represents beliefs regarding an engagement in artistic activities in leisure time that refer to "natural" consequences of an activity. This subcategory comprises aspects like the *making of things* (1.2.1) – for personal use or as a present – (e.g., "... why do you like to do it? ... it's fun because I can make something" ["... warum tust du das gerne? ...das macht mir Spaß, weil daraus kann ich was machen"], B6), *interaction or spending time together* (1.2.2) while being artistically active (e.g., "... especially with a friend, because we can paint together, then it is really interesting", ["... vor allem mit einem Freund, weil wir dann zusammen malen können, ist dann sehr spannend"], B7), and *learning* (1.2.3; e.g., "That you learn something, like which kind of wood is best for hammering" ["Dass man da auch Sachen erfährt, welches Holz besser ist zum Hämmern oder so"], B6).

Within the third subcategory, *thematically incongruent costs and benefits* (1.3), we distinguished two aspects. The first aspect is *compatibility with vs. mutual exclusion of other activities, objectives, or desires* (1.3.1; e.g., for compatibility: "Because [when being artistically active] you do not just hang out in your free time, doing something stupid" ["Weil man da einfach in seiner Freizeit nicht einfach so rumhängt und irgendetwas Komisches macht"], B24; for mutual exclusion: "And why you don't paint that much? Because I usually play outside with

my friends” [“Und wieso malst du nicht so viel? Weil ich meistens raus gehe, mit meinen Freunden spiele”], B3). The second aspect is (*negative*) *accompanying effects* (1.3.2) of artistic activities (e.g., “Personally, I do not like the idea of how easily I could injure myself when carving or working with wood” [“Also ich selber finde es manchmal beim Schnitzen und bei Holzarbeit auch nicht gut, also dass man sich da Verletzungen so leicht zuzieht”], B22).

#### 4.2 Main category normative beliefs/subjective norm

The main category *normative beliefs/subjective norm* (2.) was differentiated into the different persons or groups of persons approving or disapproving an engagement in artistic activities in leisure time. The children named several groups of persons either tied to their families or outside their families (see Table 1 for details). A typical statement regarding *subjective norm* would be: “Who, do you think approves what you are doing [painting, craft making ...]? My mother” [“Wer glaubst du findet das gut, wenn du das machst? Meine Mutter”], B1.

#### 4.3 Main category control beliefs/perceived behavioral control

The main category *control beliefs/perceived behavioral control* (3.) contains statements concerning factors that make the performance of a certain behavior easier or more difficult. In the present study, the theoretical classification into *self-efficacy* (3.1) and *controllability* (3.2), as suggested by Ajzen (2002), could be maintained. Within this classification, the subcategory *self-efficacy* (3.1) did not need to be further differentiated. It comprises statements regarding the subjective evaluation of personal competencies concerning ease vs. difficulty when engaging in artistic activities (e.g., “And why is it easy for you to be artistically active in your leisure time? Because I am already good at doing it” [“Und wieso fällt dir [das Malen und Basteln] leicht? Weil ich es einfach schon gut kann”], B6; “... is it sometimes difficult for you? ... Making crafts sometimes, if I have to make such tricky folds” [“... fällt es dir auch manchmal schwer? ... Basteln manchmal, wenn ich so knifflige Faltungen machen muss”], B15).

The subcategory *controllability* (3.2) refers to the subjective evaluation of the actual environmental circumstances and perceived control over these circumstances. This subcategory could be further inductively differentiated into the three following aspects: The first is *availability vs. no availability of time* (3.2.1; e.g., “And is there something that hinders you from being artistically active? ... when I have to do something else beforehand. Or playing piano, for example, comes first... the important things always come first” [“Und gibt es etwas, was dich vom Malen oder Basteln abhält? ... wenn zuerst was anderes gemacht werden muss. Oder zum Beispiel Klavierspielen geht vor... es gehen die wichtigen Sachen, gehen halt immer vor...”], B26). The second aspect is *availability vs. no availability of materi-*

*als* (3.2.2; e.g., “... we have three paintboxes, we have more than 20 paintbrushes, we have more than three packs of wax crayons, ...” [“... Malkasten haben wir drei Stück, Pinsel haben wir über 20, Wachsmalkreidepäckchen haben wir über drei, ...”], B16). Third and last aspect is *surrounding conditions* (3.2.3; e.g., “... what hinders you [from painting or making crafts]? ... my little brother [disturbs me]” [“... was hindert dich dann immer [am Malen oder Basteln]? ... wieder mein kleiner Bruder [der stört mich]”), B17).

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 Main results

The objective of the present study was to explore and categorize the self-reported salient beliefs of elementary school children regarding their engagement in artistic leisure activities. To this end, we conducted a qualitative elicitation study. The result of this study is the set of categories displayed in Table 1, representing a fine-grained picture of the beliefs explaining the engagement in artistic leisure activities from the children’s perspective. The deductive-inductive procedure for generating the set of categories was shown to be successful: While the classification of the main categories deduced from the TPB could be maintained over the whole coding process, we were able to inductively differentiate these main categories into subcategories and their aspects. High inter-rater reliability was reached when matching the interview statements to the categories. As will be outlined in the subsequent section, the resulting comprehensive set of distinct categories can serve as a taxonomy for the salient beliefs of children about why they engage or do not engage in artistic activities. In future studies, these results may in turn be used as starting point for the generation of items for a following quantitative pilot study and for the promotion of these activities among elementary school children.

### 5.2 Considerations regarding content validity of the generated set of categories: Personal vs. environmental and domain-specific vs. domain-general beliefs

From the beginning, we took a broad perspective encompassing both personal and environmental factors in order to gain a sufficiently comprehensive overview of the beliefs regarding an engagement in artistic leisure activities. In fact, both individual characteristics or motives and environmental factors turned out to be relevant for the children: In terms of individual factors, for example, the subjective connectedness of artistic activities to fantasy, autonomy, the intrinsic value, and the fun that is inherent to artistic production was important to the children. While in terms of environmental factors, they mentioned aspects such as the perceived opin-

ion of socialization agents – cf. *subjective norm* (2.) – as well as other environmental factors (availability of time and materials – cf. *controllability*, 3.2.).

Both personal and environmental aspects that emerged from the present study fit with previous results of the research on creativity: Among the personal aspects, factors like openness, unconventional ideas, and autonomy, which were shown to be crucial determinants for creativity in prior research (Urban, 2004), also emerged to be relevant for artistic leisure activities (cf. category *fantasy and autonomy*, 1.1.1). Similarly, the aspects of intrinsic value (cf. category *general pleasure/favor vs. no pleasure/favor or boredom*, 1.1.2) and of having confidence in one's own capacities to manage a certain task (cf. category *self-efficacy*, 3.1) are important in both self-determination theory and our study (cf. Ryan & Deci, 2000; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

Among the environmental resources, the availability of time and social factors such as appreciation or pressure experienced through others, as mentioned by Runco (2004), for example, were named by our participants as well (cf. categories *controllability*, 3.2 or *subjective norm*, 2.). As an example of the influence of environmental factors on creativity in elementary school children, Berner et al. (2010) found that environmental features such as parental interest in art or general level of creativity inside a school class may positively affect creativity at an early elementary school age. Similarly, the parental interest or interest of other persons was mentioned by the children in our study as well (see category *subjective norm*, 2.).

Above and beyond the aforementioned accordance of our results with the mainstream of prior research, some aspects that emerged from our study have been less frequently mentioned in earlier literature. This, for instance, relates to distractions through alternative leisure time activities (cf. category *compatibility with vs. mutual exclusion of other activities, objectives or desires*, 1.3.1). Although this aspect has not received much attention in previous creativity research, its appearance in our study is consistent with results of research on leisure time activities and motivation, where it is discussed under the heading of “indirect costs” (see Dietz, Schmid, & Fries, 2005; Nippold, Duthie, & Larsen, 2005; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Note, however, that beyond this rather general construct, our set of categories also encompasses aspects that were hitherto seldom considered and are quite specific to the artistic domain: For example, our participants found it important to produce something when being artistically active (see statements within the category *motivation with respect to thematically congruent consequences*, 1.2). Along the same lines, they considered the aspect of (*negative*) *accompanying aspects* (1.3.2; e.g., you could hurt yourself while working with different instruments and materials such as hammer, scissors, wood) as relevant to their decision regarding an engagement in artistic activities in leisure time. Within this category, positive effects could theoretically occur as well; the children, however, mentioned only negative consequences.

Taken together, many of the aspects in our set of categories are congruent with prior research on determinants of artistic activities. Other aspects seem to have been neglected so far but are either in line with theoretical reasoning or empiri-

cal research in related domains or clearly relevant to artistic production. Thus, the construction of a content valid set of categories can be considered successful. To a certain degree this success can be attributed to our adherence to the methodological guidelines for elicitation studies and qualitative content analyses.

### **5.3 Limitations and avenues for further research**

#### **5.3.1 Sample size**

This study is one among few qualitative studies that systematically explored elementary school children's beliefs regarding an engagement in artistic leisure activities. Although the sample size appears to be moderate, it nevertheless can be considered sufficient for our purpose: After coding two-thirds of the material, theoretical saturation was observed, i.e. analyzing the remaining interviews did not result in any new elements of the set of categories. Moreover, the number of participants is in accordance with the recommended number of approximately 25 participants, as outlined by Francis et al. (2004).

#### **5.3.2 Age of participants**

One critical point of note concerns the age of the children: One might argue that children from grades 2 and 3 have difficulties verbalizing their thoughts and feelings. In the literature however, guided interviews are recognized as an adequate research method for this age group, as long as the questions asked are adjusted to the language competence and cognitive abilities of the children (Emde & Fuchs, 2012; Heinzl, 2012). Within the present study, the questions were worded quite simply (see Section 3.2), and no difficulties in the children's understanding the questions could be discerned. Additional support for the assumption that the children did not have any problems answering our questions comes from the considerable number of statements coded in our study: On average, we were able to code five statements per person and question (cf. Curtis, Weiler, & Ham, 2010; Sutton et al., 2003).

#### **5.3.3 Background information**

As the focus of this study was to elicit the salient beliefs of the children concerning the TPB constructs and in order to keep the interviews short (due to a limited attention span of children), only a minimum of background variables was collected. In subsequent studies, more detailed information on the socio-cultural context from the children as well as from their parents should be collected. This could provide more insights and a deeper understanding of the influence of the socio-cultur-



al context on, for example, the engagement in artistic activities, the attitude toward such activities or the relation between identified determinants and the frequency of being artistically active.

### **5.3.4 Definition and frequency of the investigated artistic leisure activities**

As outlined in the Section 3.2 we named and demonstrated some prototypical examples of artistic leisure time activities of second and third graders while focusing more on drawing and painting as prototypical examples. Nonetheless, the children were free to add further artistic leisure activities. Following the literature, such a “conservative” understanding of children’s participation in arts/artistic activities is in accordance with the perspective of adults in western countries as well as consistent with the children’s perspective (af Ursin, 2016; Glăveanu, 2011). Nevertheless, for future studies it would be interesting to gain more insights into the children’s own understanding of “art” and “artistic activities” and to investigate the empirical distribution as well as more information about the frequency and duration of being artistically active. From such studies, a more comprehensive picture of the diversity of children’s artistic leisure activities and the relative importance of these activities might emerge.

### **5.3.5 Explanatory value**

As mentioned previously, this study represents the first step of an ongoing process of scale development. At the moment, more evidence regarding the relative importance of the identified beliefs needs to be collected: Is it an increase in fun that is pivotal for engagement in artistic leisure activities? And are there other variables that contribute to the explanation of these activities above and beyond the intrinsic value? Nonetheless, the set of categories generated in our study provides a suitable point of departure for deducing detailed research questions for further studies.

### **5.3.6 Further research**

In order to answer the aforementioned questions, the next step would be to derive questionnaire scales from the set of categories containing the salient beliefs of elementary school children regarding engagement in artistic leisure activities (see Table 1). Such scales might in turn be applied to longitudinal studies investigating the development of artistic activities. Moreover, such studies might take a broader empirical approach, including further facets of cultural participation. At the same time, they may focus on theoretical issues specific to the cultural domain that are easily overlooked in studies that try to include the entire range of possible leisure

activities. By adopting a longitudinal perspective and deepening our understanding of a certain class of activities, such studies might add to our theoretical knowledge on the determinants and effects of cultural participation (see Kröner, 2013).

Beyond the scale development work reported in the present paper, there are further aspects to take into account when investigating artistic activities in leisure time among elementary school children. For example, within the framework of transfer research that focuses on non-artistic effects of artistic activities, Rittelmeyer (2013) outlined different approaches aiming at a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of such transfer effects: First of all, a so called analysis of situational experience could lead to a deeper understanding of the specific situation when being artistically active and the subjective experiences of children during the activities (for example by conducting narrative interviews). But not only the situation, but also the quality of the artistic activities or products are important when it comes to predicting potential transfer effects. Rittelmeyer (2013) argues that a structural analysis of artistic activities, including an exploration of the specific educational goals that may be reached via the respective activity as well as an analysis of the competencies that may be acquired is essential for this purpose. For example, in further quantitative studies a test measuring drawing skills (which might include among others the representation of graphical perspective, proportions and concise representation) could be used to account for the quality of children's drawings. However, as the focus of the present study was to investigate the beliefs regarding the practical engagement in such activities, neither the situational experience nor the quality of the activities were investigated in this first step.

## 6. Conclusion

The comprehensive, fine-grained picture that emerged from the present study based on the children's own perspective provides support for the relevance of both personal and environmental aspects to elementary school children's engagement in artistic activities. It is no surprise that the human right to cultural participation and the provision of opportunities for such participation, as discussed at the beginning, were not explicitly mentioned by the children. Unsurprisingly, most children at this age are not aware of the human rights discourse. Nevertheless, the set of categories may provide a point of departure for endeavors to facilitate access to cultural participation and hints where to begin when developing interventions that aim at promoting artistic leisure activities for elementary school children. As a starting point, the generated set of categories can be used to develop content-valid questionnaire scales on the determinants of elementary school children's artistic leisure activities.

It has not been the purpose of our study to draw any conclusions regarding potential effects of artistic activities on personality development. Nor did we aim at an answer to the question whether such effects are unique to artistic activities or

whether they may be reached equally well or even more easily by other means. However, we are confident that for any such effects to occur, children need to engage in artistic activities in the first place. This is why we provided a synthesis of the beliefs that are potentially explaining the engagement in artistic production in leisure time from the perspective of the children themselves.

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