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Key Dimensions of a Multicultural Art Education Curriculum

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Abstract

In an effort to encourage further integration of multicultural curricula, this article aims to detail several key dimensions of multicultural education, particularly as they apply to art education. Drawing on Banks's (1994b, 1995b, 1996e, 2004) dimensions for multicultural education, these dimensions include content integration, equity pedagogy, knowledge construction and transformation, empowering school culture and social structure, and prejudice reduction. Each dimension is explored in depth, and how scholars in art education have addressed each of these dimensions is highlighted within the article. Armed with the understandings offered within this paper, perhaps art teachers will feel more versed and find greater comfort in attempting to incorporate multicultural programming into their art curricula or to extend their existing multicultural endeavors.

Key Dimensions of a Multicultural Art Education Curriculum

Introduction

During exploratory interviews as a part of a larger ethnographic study focused on multicultural art education, veteran art teachers indicated that they were hesitant to incorporate multicultural curricula for various practical reasons. Chief among them was that teachers often feel underprepared and uncomfortable about teaching multicultural art, as it is something they know little about. Hence, in an effort to encourage further integration of multicultural curricula, this article aims to explain several key dimensions of multicultural education, particularly as they apply to art education.

In order to establish a contextual groundwork, this paper begins with a brief overview of the foundations of multicultural art education in the U.S. The remainder of the article focuses on a more detailed look at each key dimension of multicultural education, and how each of these dimensions may be approached in art education, as suggested by scholars. The multicultural dimensions discussed offer components that educators may incorporate or aspire to incorporate into their artrooms as they integrate multicultural curricula. My hope is that with these understandings, educators will be able to identify routes for their own journeys towards inclusion of multicultural practices, or locate their existing multicultural practices and engage further strides to enhance them.

A Brief Overview of the Foundations of Multicultural Art Education

Though multiculturalism has its roots in the late 1800s, the oppressive environment warranting its creation still exists today, and with globalization creating an ever more diverse U.S. population, the need for multicultural education is even more relevant. Today, the United States is experiencing its greatest immigration levels since the early twentieth century (Suárez-Orozco, C. Suárez-Orozco, & Quin, 2005). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), immigrant students comprise the fastest growing population in U.S. public schools today (as cited by Banks, 2006). As of 2010, children of immigrants accounted for approximately one out of every four (23.7%) elementary and secondary school aged students¹ (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2010, as cited by Migration Policy Institute Data Hub, 2010). Multicultural education serves to address such diversity. Its primary goals are to promote justice, equity, and respect for all by teaching students the attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary to participate in multiple cultures within their community, the nation, and the globe (Banks, 2006).

¹ Data for children ages 6-17 years old.

Scholars in art education frequently draw on James A. Banks's extensive work in general education (e.g., Adejumo, 2002; Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001, 2002; Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996; Kantner, 2002; Kuster, 2006; Mason, 1999; Noel, 2003; Stuhr, 1994, 2003). Considered the "father of multicultural education" (World Library of Educationalists, 2006), we turn to Banks for the foundations of multicultural education².

A number of scholars in art education point to the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of the 1950s and Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s as the starting point for multicultural education curriculum reform (e.g., Adejumo, 2002; Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001, 2002; Davenport, 2000; Delacruz, 1995b; Kantner, 2002; Stuhr, 2003). However, Banks (1991, 1994b, 1996a, 2004; Banks & C.A.M. Banks, 1995) explained that the impetus for reforms began much earlier, in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Banks (1996a) underscored the African American studies movement as a foundational root of current multicultural education, and credited scholars such as George Washington Williams (1882, 1883/1989), W. E. B. DuBois (1899/1973, 1896/1973), Carter G. Woodson (1919/1968, 1921), Horace Mann Bond (1939), and Charles H. Wesley (1935/1969).

Prior to the 1950s, the work of these Black scholars was largely unrecognized by mainstream White academia, and before the 1960s Civil Rights Movement they could only find jobs in predominantly Black schools and colleges (Banks, 2004). With their literature, these scholars fought against this type of pervasive erasure and discrimination. They argued that by creating and presenting a more accurate depiction of African Americans in U.S. history and life, the racism, discrimination, and stereotypes that proliferated mainstream U.S. constructions would be undermined and invalidated (Banks, 1996a, 1996d). They challenged the incompleteness of metanarratives that, in their partiality, "suggest[ed] not only that some parts of the story don't count, but that some parts don't even exist" (Banks, 2004, p. 49). The problem was that the canonized place of metanarratives in school curricula, and their validity, were rarely contested; early African American studies aimed to bring this problem to light by focusing on the perspectives and contributions of African Americans to the culture of the U.S. (Banks, 2004). Thus, the first phase of multicultural education was African American ethnic studies³ (Banks, 1996a).

² Though I am aware of the postmodernist debates on history, for the sake of clarity of flow in this article, I utilize a linear interpretation of multicultural education's historical foundations.

³ As noted by art education scholars (Collins & Sandell, 1992; Delacruz, 1995a; Smith, 1996), critics of multicultural education have voiced the concern that multiculturalism is derived from middle-class European values and tradition, and to forward its practice would be to further European hegemony. The underlying assumption of these critics' arguments is that multiculturalism has European roots. In contradiction to this argument, as discussed above, Banks (1996a) traced the roots of multicultural education to the work of early African American studies scholars who developed their works to counter White European hegemony and domination. His scholarship refutes these critics' assertions. Critics' claims that multiculturalism is derived from European values seems to be a Eurocentric, hegemonic attempt to yet again silence the voices of marginalized

With African American studies as a pioneering venture to counter Anglo-European hegemony⁴ in U.S. education, multicultural education continued to develop as scholars with interests in other marginalized groups (such as women, disabled peoples, and other ethnic groups) asserted their voices (Banks, 1996a; Young, 1999). In line with the momentum of ethnic studies, Gay (1983) asserted that three forces converged in the mid-1960s to further drive curriculum reforms: the Civil Rights Movement, critical analysis of textbooks, and challenges to the deficiency orientation (as cited by Sleeter & Grant, 1988). The cultural deficiency orientation⁵ would serve as a justification for assimilationist practices in educational reform throughout the 1960s (Duesterberg, 1998; Sleeter & Grant, 1988). During this time, art educator June McFee (1961/1970) published *Preparation for Art*, in which she utilized an anthropological approach to studying cultures, and showed that art and its practice varied by cultural grouping in their efforts to maintain distinct cultural identities. Furthermore, individuals within cultural groups differed. This put an initial dent in the commonly held notion of universal truths about art (Smith, 1996).

In the mid-1970s critical conflict theorists in education, drawing on Marxism or neo-Marxism, looked at socioeconomic hierarchies and argued that curricula served to reproduce social inequities in society based on class (see, for example, Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Willis, 1977). Conflict theorists began with the premise that there are social inequities in U.S. society; thus, their primary concern was with the betterment of this situation for the disenfranchised. Through school, they asserted, hierarchies of domination-subordination existing in the social structure were reinforced (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Willis, 1977). They argued that schools are socializing forces, and that schools could not change unless society changed. The underlying assumption of conflict theorists was that individuals will adapt to their environment in the absence of conflict, and schools were not seen as forums for broaching issues of conflict, but rather for indoctrinating students into societal norms. Recognizing the hegemonic function of schools, Apple (1979) elaborated on the implicit ideologies often hidden in curricula and the structuring of schools. He argued that the curriculum served as a vehicle for hegemony by reinforcing dominant cultural values and dispositions in a conservative manner. Furthermore,

Blacks and their contributions to the formation of multicultural education, and to instead credit Europeans with the origins of multiculturalism.

⁴ *Hegemony* is the perpetuation of a dominant group's control and influence over others through either physical force or the spread of ideology that serves to attain people's conscious and/or unconscious assent to this domination (Balibar, 1996; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Williams, 1977). African American studies' struggles to counter Anglo-European hegemonic attempts are strongly reflected in the discussions of the previous paragraph.

⁵ The approach is based on a stance in the social sciences and anthropology, such as that advocated by Baratz and Baratz (1970), that middle-class Anglo culture is the standard and model to judge all others against, and those who do not meet up to this standard are *culturally deficient* (as cited by Sleeter & Grant, 1988).

the structure of schooling and positioning of schools as disseminators of objective knowledge served to promote dominant ideology as natural, an unquestionable given, and hence avoided conflict. Knowledge, presented as objective fact, “cannot enable students to see the political dimension of the process by which one alternative theory’s proponents win out over their competitors” and become so-called objective knowledge (p. 89).

In line with this philosophy, multicultural scholars in art education began to highlight the elitist conceptions of art stemming from discipline-based art education (DBAE) in the 1980s (Efland, 1990), in which art was taught as a universal set of knowable skills, processes, and facts, and a European canon was heralded as superior. In contrast to the universalist approach to art advocated in DBAE, McFee and Degge’s (1980) scholarship again endorsed an anthropological approach to cultural study, and emphasized a diversity of cultures and subcultures (as cited by Kantner, 2002). The *1992 Getty Center Discipline-Based Art Education and Cultural Diversity* conference provided a forum for multicultural art education advocates to voice their concerns. They criticized DBAE for its elitist, Eurocentric, universal formalist approach to art education, and lack of sensitivity to cultural diversity (Kantner, 2002). Kantner (2002) argued that this provided a stimulus for multicultural reforms in DBAE curricula.

National mandates for inclusion of multicultural components in art education curricula are now in place in the United States. In 1987, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education issued standards that included multiculturalism, and these have been updated and reasserted in 2000 and 2002 (Banks, 2004). The National Art Education Association (NAEA) aligns its goals with that of the National Visual Arts Standards, and both contain a multicultural requirement. The NAEA revised the *Standards for Art Teacher Preparation* in 1999 to require accredited art teachers to be attentive to multiculturalism⁶ (Kantner, 2002). What form these multicultural approaches might take in the artroom, however, is not specified. In order to assist art teachers in indentifying multicultural practices that they might utilize within their own classrooms, five key potential components of a multicultural art education curriculum are explored next.

Five Dimensions of a Multicultural Education Curriculum

To guide educators’ integration of multicultural programs into their classrooms, the following discussions detail Banks’ (1994b, 1995b, 1996e, 2004) series of dimensions that build towards

⁶ This is alternatively referred to as “cultural diversity” in the NAEA *Standards for Art Teacher Preparation* 2009 publication, and similarly asks for attentiveness to cultural diversity without indicating what form approaches to cultural diversity might entail.

transformative and social reconstructionist approaches⁷ to multiculturalism. These dimensions include content integration, equity pedagogy, knowledge construction and transformation, empowering school culture and social structure, and prejudice reduction (see Table 1). *Content integration* deals with the way information about diverse groups—that addresses a complex understanding of culture—is integrated into the curriculum. *Equity pedagogy* refers to how teachers modify teaching tactics and strategies to address individual students' learning styles. *Knowledge construction and transformation* emphasizes the promotion of critical thinking in order to help students to recognize that knowledge is socially constructed and influenced by a source's frames of reference. *Empowering school culture and social structure* addresses components of the school structure and system, and encourages students to take social action based on knowledge from transformational reflections related to issues of oppression. Lastly, *prejudice reduction* relates to the ability of instruction to decrease a tendency to stereotype and to increase the students' potential to see each individual human being as a valuable contributing member of society. A *social reconstructionist* approach to multicultural education includes all five dimensions, as advocated by Banks (1994b, 1995b, 1996d, 2004). A *transformative* multicultural approach similarly addresses these dimensions, but does not call for students to take social action as a social reconstructionist approach would.

⁷ Transformative and social reconstructionist approaches are two multicultural education approaches repeatedly advocated by numerous scholars in art education (e.g., Ballengee-Morris, Mirin, & Rizzi, 2000; Barbosa, 2007; Bastos, 2006; Chalmers, 1996; Daniels, 2005; Dash, 2005; Desai, 2000, 2003, 2005; jagodzinski, 1999; Mason, 1995; Neperud, 1995; Neperud & Krug, 1995; Stuhr, 1994, 1995).

Table 1 Five Dimensions of a Multicultural Curriculum in Art Education

Content Integration	Equity Pedagogy	Knowledge Transformation	Empowering School Culture & Social Structure	Prejudice Reduction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content woven into overall curriculum, not as an appendage • Content available to all students (not targeted students assumed to be part of a group in focus) • Diverse perspectives shared by different groups about key issues, concepts, themes, etc. • Accurate, contextualized information shared • Voiced by members of group in study—emic perspectives • Unique contributions of individuals stressed • Heterogeneity of group underscored • Attention to multiple dimensions of identity • Hybridity and multiplex of influences on creation of artwork stressed • Multiple artists and artworks from group shown to dispel stereotypes • Interdisciplinary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention to individual learning styles: students seen as multidimensional individuals who are each different by time and context; teaching needs to adapt to the shifting social environments and individual students within those contexts • Begin from students’ lifeworlds: draw from their real life experiences, they help shape curriculum • Modeling equity: self-reflection of teacher • Cooperative grouping strategies: heterogeneous groups structured by teacher to work toward common goals • Live interactive visitors: insider perspective, active engagement, living example of an exception to a stereotype • Assessment: less competitively structured, no ranking against a norm, process of negotiated understanding and modification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum structure: Diverse perspectives shared by different groups about key issues, concepts, themes, etc. • Artworks as the sites of knowledge, the texts for deconstruction • Artists and viewers as creators of this knowledge: positionality, ideology, context of creation explored • Critical dialogues confronting issues of conflict (racism, stereotypes, other’ism) advocated as primary methodology for deconstruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students confront and research social issues of conflict, take a stance, and take action (which can be the creation of an artwork) • Systemic reform of school culture to embrace and reflect equity and non-oppressive strategies • Implicit ideology of curriculum used for liberation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A goal/desired outcome rather than a tactic or strategy • Curriculum decreases the tendency to stereotype • Increases propensity to see each individual as a contributing member of society

Each dimension will be elaborated upon below. As my intent is to provide guidance specifically for visual arts educators, I will highlight how scholars in art education have addressed each of these dimensions.

Content Integration

In terms of *content integration*, Banks (1994b, 1995b, 1996e, 2004) indicates that a curriculum would be transformed to integrate exemplars from diverse groups to highlight different perspectives on key themes, issues, concepts, and theories. The perspective from which content is viewed is key: Casting a Western gaze upon content originating from a non-Western area is hegemonic, and should be avoided. The nature of the content is also important: Ideally, accurate, contextualized information (perspectives, histories, contributions), voiced by members of the group in study, are integrated into the curriculum (Banks, 1991, 1994b, 1996b; Banks & C. A. M. Banks, 1995; C. A. M. Banks, 1996).

To address these two issues, multicultural art education scholars stress the firsthand, emic⁸ perspective of artists and members of the community from which an artwork has emanated (e.g., Adejumo, 2002; Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001, 2002; Chalmers, 1996, 2002; Congdon, 1985; Dunn & Occi, 2003; Gundara & Fyfe, 1999; Irwin & Miller, 1997; Spang, 1995; Stuhr, 1994; Stuhr, Petrovich-Mwanicki, & Wasson, 1992). As suggested by Stuhr et al. (1992), to investigate this point of view, the teacher may need to meet and consult with an artist, invite an artist into the classroom, or gather information and explanations about an artwork that are written by its artist. For instance, Irwin and Miller (1997) and Spang (1995) asserted that First Nations artists and Native Americans must be consulted when constructing instruction about artworks from these cultural groups. A case study in art education by Lee (2007) illustrated how first-person narratives of insiders enabled her preservice art teachers to empathize with artists and make personal connections with the cultural meanings of artworks from Korea in her classroom. Art would be experienced as it is practiced in real life, and as part of a sociocultural context (Efland et al., 1996; Stuhr, 1994).

In addition, cultural representations would be highly contextualized, and artists and artforms would be explored using ethnographic methods drawn from anthropology (Efland et al., 1996). “The unique contributions of individuals within these diverse social and cultural groups are stressed” (Efland et al., 1996, p. 82), thereby underscoring heterogeneity within the cultural grouping, and attending to multiple dimensions of an individual’s identity (such as gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, age, and disability). As such, the hybridity of cultures and

⁸ I refer to ‘emic’ in the anthropological sense, as involving the views of those who are a part of the community of focus, as voiced by those members of the community.

multidimensional influences on an artwork and artist would be underscored. Multiple artists and artworks from a cultural group might be studied to dispel stereotypes (Stuhr, 1994).

Content would be interdisciplinary, drawing on different subjects (Banks, 1996e, 2004; Sleeter & Grant, 1987, 1988; Grant & Sleeter, 2007a, 2007b). In the world of multicultural art education, this crossover is likely to be with social studies (Chalmers, 1981; Efland et al., 1996; Stuhr, 1994). It would also entail cooperative planning among teachers from different subjects (Stuhr, 1994).

How content is integrated—that is, where it is located in the curriculum—is another factor: Is content woven into the core curriculum, or is it presented as a separate course as an add-on to the mainstream curricula? (Banks, 2004). The audience for the curricula also needs to be taken into account: The content would be made available to all students, and would not be targeted at students who are assumed to be tied to a group under study by criteria such as race, ethnicity, gender, and class (Banks, 2004). An art teacher who embraces a multicultural approach might present a lesson and relay it to all students from the perspectives of diverse cultural groups, and incorporate exemplars from these groups (Andrus, 2001; Chalmers, 1996; Efland et al., 1996). As such, the perspectives and artworks of diverse cultures would be woven into the core curriculum, which is structured around concepts.

Equity Pedagogy

Equity pedagogy refers to the modification of teaching techniques, methods and strategies to accord with the diverse learning styles of students.

Individual Student Learning Styles

This does not imply that educators should assume that a particular learning style will accord with a student based on his or her race, gender, and/or class. In the recent past, general education researchers tended to conclude that particular cultural groups have particular learning styles. For instance, Aronson and Gonzalez (1998) surmised that African Americans and Mexican Americans respond more positively to cooperative teaching styles more so than competitive ones (as cited by Banks, 1996e). John (1972), More (1989), and Tharp (1989) concluded that Native American students are more passive and less responsive, and learn by quietly observing rather than listening and speaking (as cited by Wills, Lintz, & Mehan, 1996).

In contrast, cases in art education have been explored to dispel the myth that one should use specific teaching strategies and formulate expectations based on a reductionist stereotype of a group. Generalizing teaching strategies to all individuals within an ethnic population or other cultural grouping is essentialist and problematic, and does not attend to the needs of the

student within varying contextual situations. Ethnographic studies in art education by Hickman (1999), Andrus (2001), Neperud and Stuhr (1993), Wolcott (1967, as cited by Chalmers, 1981), and McFee (1961/1970), all underscored that educators need to relate to students as multidimensional individuals who react differently in different contexts and change throughout time. They found heterogeneity within cultural groupings, as well as differences in a singular individual, depending on the contexts in which the student is involved. They concluded that it is inappropriate for educators to develop expectations and to attribute particular learning styles to students based on stereotypes of the cultural group to which a student is assumed to belong. For instance, art teachers who hold to the myth that figural representations are prohibited in visual artistry for all Muslims, under all circumstances, and approach students of Muslim backgrounds with this understanding as truth, would be misdirected: Hickman's (1999) investigations with his students of Muslim backgrounds found that attitudes towards figural representation varied by individual student, and by context of use, such as life drawing versus sculpture. Research by Soganci (2006) focused on this same issue, and corroborated Hickman's conclusions. This indicates that teaching methods need to adapt to the shifting social environments in which they exist, and to individual students within those contexts.

Beginning from Students' Lifeworlds

In line with teaching to individual learning needs, the curriculum would draw on students' real life experiences (Banks, 1996e). In art education, students would be empowered to help shape the curriculum, and the curriculum would reflect interests from their daily life experiences and environment (Efland et al., 1996; Stuhr, 1994, 1995).

Modeling Equity

The teacher would also need to model the attitudes and behaviors he or she is teaching (Banks, 1996e, 2004). In art education, Andrus (2001) asserted that the art teacher should model equity in every teaching moment. Self-reflexivity is key to the formation of this non-prejudicial attitude and behavior: Art educators need to be particularly self-reflexive about their own biases and assumptions (see, for example, Albers, 1999; Chung, 2008; Cohen Evron, 2005; Knight, 2006; Staikidis, 2005).

Cooperative Grouping Activities

Heterogeneous grouping practices would be utilized (Banks, 1996e, 2004). According to Cohen (1972), cooperative learning involves activities in which heterogeneous groups—students from diverse groups—work together toward common goals (as cited by Banks, 1996e). The equal status of all members, particularly minority members, is prestructured prior to the cooperative learning activity. That is, the teacher is aware of the strengths of each

individual student, and members for each group are selected so that all can capitalize on their strengths in contributing to the group.

In art education, Efland et al. (1996) and Stuhr (1994) advocate for these types of cooperative learning activities. Hansell (2000) adds that frequency and duration of contact between group members is important, as students need time to develop friendships and empathy, as well as a connection to the environment and context in which group activities occur.

Live, Interactive Visitors

Members of different cultural groups would be invited into the classroom to share their cultural experiences and interpretations of events in-person (Banks, 1996e). Theorists in multicultural art education have often suggested inviting individuals from diverse backgrounds for live interaction with students in the artroom (Adejumo, 2002; Andrus, 2001; Carpenter II et al., 2007; Chalmers, 1992, 2002; Garber, 1995; Hart, 1991; Stuhr, 1994; Stuhr et al., 1992). In the rationale for direct contact with individuals, these authors often highlight that such an individual can provide an insider's perspective that is more accurate than that of an outsider to a cultural group. In general education, this direct and active engagement with a live person is seen as a more stimulating and concrete experience than reading from textbooks (Asher, 2007; Banks, 1996a; Donaldson & Martinson, 1977; Grambs, 1968; Sleeter & Grant, 1988). In art education, Carpenter II et al. (2007) also stressed the inspirational influence of in-person artist visits to their classrooms, which brings the abstract into reality. Furthermore, in contrast to texts, which promote the idea that knowledge is a set of static facts, live interaction with individuals helps students to understand the complexities of social reality and that knowledge is socially constructed (Banks, 1996a).

In addition, these in-person interactions may serve to reduce prejudices (Sleeter & Grant, 1988). Allport (1954), considered an authority on prejudice development, utilized cognitive development theory to explain that people have the tendency to function in line with a principle of least effort. That is, people will not change an established system of categorization, such as a stereotype, unless they are repeatedly challenged to do so. Exceptions to the categories challenge the system in place. Increased exposure to exceptions and repetitive challenges promote the modification of categories once held as true. When a student makes direct contact and has interaction with an individual from a stereotyped group that does not fit the stereotype existing in their system of categorizations, it challenges this preconceived stereotype. It moves the student from an abstract stereotype to a concrete experience that could serve to undermine the stereotype. In this sense, development of non-prejudicial behavior can be seen as akin to breaking a bad habit (Devine, 1989).

However, caution is necessary when inviting visitors into the classroom. A critical approach to their perspectives would be advocated—as addressed next in knowledge construction and

transformation (Banks, 2004); otherwise, as Desai (2005) cautioned with respect to art education, assumptions might be made that “forms are located in one culture—the culture of origin” (p. 294).

Assessment

Assessment processes in a multicultural approach that aims towards egalitarianism would be less competitively structured (Banks, 1996e). This would run contrary to mainstream assimilationist approaches to evaluation in which students are judged and ranked against a norm or standard (Sleeter & Grant, 1988). In art education, Boughton (1999) argued against standards-based testing, and asserted that it is not possible to determine beforehand what an ideal performance in art would be. Hence, there is no standard that educators should employ to judge students. Boughton (1999) and Freedman (2000) advocated the use of more holistic approaches to evaluation, and stressed the value of students’ interpretations and judgments of artworks as a process of negotiated understanding in which ideas can be challenged and are open to modification.

Knowledge Construction and Transformation

Banks (2004) described *knowledge construction and transformation* as a process that helps students to recognize that knowledge is socially constructed and reflects the ideology of its creators. Banks (1993, 1994a, 1995a, 1996b, 1996c, 1996e, 2004) has repeatedly underscored the importance of knowledge construction in multicultural education, as have many multicultural art education theorists as well as general education theorists (e.g., Adejumo, 2002; Asher, 2007; Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001, 2002; Bastos, 2006; Cohen Evron, 2005, 2007; Daniels, 2005; Desai, 2000, 2003, 2005; Giroux, 1981, 2005; hooks, 2000; jagodzinski, 1999; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Knight, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Neperud & Krug, 1995; Nieto, 1996).

The structure of a curriculum that incorporates knowledge construction and transformation is centered on concepts, events, and issues that are presented from the perspectives of a diverse series of groups: men and women from varying social classes, different ethnic groups, ages, and so forth (Banks, 1996e). These counterstories are critical to decentering dominant, hegemonic ideologies (Golding, 2005; Haynes Chavez & Chavez, 2001). As a “pedagogy of critical thinking⁹” (Giroux, 1981, p. 125), the process teaches students to question and deconstruct what is presented as undisputed knowledge and truth—to challenge

⁹ Critical pedagogy encouraging students towards social reconstruction has been criticized by scholars (such as Tomhave, 1992) for its elitist tendencies in its potential to induce students to advocate for one particular position as correct; that is, one vision of how the world should be socially reconstructed. This is important to consider when employing such a pedagogy.

Westerncentric, mainstream, hegemonic constructions of knowledge that reinforce existing power hierarchies (Banks, 1996b). Power relationships are interrogated as students investigate a source's purposes and who benefits from such a perspective (Banks, 2004; C. A. M. Banks, 1996; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000).

Knowledge construction and transformation pushes students to explore underlying biases and assumptions of a source's creators, and asks students to examine a creator's frame of reference and positionality (Banks, 1993, 1995a, 1996b; McLaren, 1986; Weiler, 1988). *Positionality*, as defined by feminist scholar Tetreault (1993), is about how one's context interacts with various dimensions of one's identity (such as gender, class, and ethnicity) to effect how one interprets the world. In deconstructing knowledge, students are involved in a self-reflexive process of knowledge construction themselves. They are involved in the critical examination of their own positionality and taken-for-granted assumptions, and how these shape their interpretations of the world in the process (Asher, 2007; Atkinson & Dash, 2005; Banks, 1996b; Giroux, 1981; Golding, 2005; hooks, 2000). Knowledge is presented as something that is created. It is "dynamic and interactive rather than static" (Banks, 1996b, p. 10).

Banks (2004) underscored that the process aims to help students understand how many diverse cultural groups have interacted and contributed to the development of U.S. society. It fosters critical thinking in individuals, as well as helps them to see how ideology is shaped and perpetuated and influences their world today and their unequal positions in it. Key to this understanding is the issue of representation (Banks, 1996e; Desai, 2000; Desai & Chalmers, 2007; Miller, 1996). It empowers students to recognize and deconstruct representations that reify stereotypes, that separate out groups as "others," and that perpetuate stratification in U.S. society (Banks, 1996e; Miller, 1996). Without knowledge deconstruction and transformation, multicultural understandings will be superficial and shallow (Duesterberg, 1998; Nieto, 1996). The underlying belief is that if students are armed with the skills to deconstruct knowledge and "interrogate the assumptions of the knowers," they will be less likely to fall victim to "knowledge that produces hegemony and inequality" (Banks, 1996c, p. 84).

In multicultural art education, artworks become the sites of knowledge, the texts for deconstruction, as does the Eurocentric canon, and students' and teachers' preconceived assumptions and stereotypes about categories of art and what is considered art (see, for instance, Atkinson & Dash, 2005; Ballengee-Morris, 2002, 2008; Bastos, 2006; Chung, 2008; Cohen Evron, 2005, 2007; Dash, 2005; Davenport, 2000; Desai, 2000, 2005; Efland et al., 1996; Klein, 2008; Knight, 2006; Lok, 2005; Parks, 2000, 2004; Staikidis, 2005; Ward, 2005). As advocated by these scholars, this implicates the artists, the sociocultural environment, and various power structures in play in the creation and reception of artworks. It emphasizes the importance of in-depth contextualization and ideological deconstruction. It also implicates the

viewing audience, and interrogates their positionality in their interpretations of an artwork. It underscores what Adejumo (2002) called the non-material expression of an artwork, the ideology associated with its creation and reception. For Dewey (1934), such an engaged perception, “an act of reconstructive doing... [in which] consciousness becomes fresh and alive” (p. 53), is paramount for the aesthetic experience (p. 53).

Stuhr (1994) suggested that if artists are invited into the classroom, they should be encouraged to talk about their social positions within the various cultural groups to which they belong. Furthermore, the class could be engaged in conversations about issues related to discrimination along various dimensions such as race, gender, ethnicity, and nationality (Efland et al., 1996; Stuhr, 1994). For example, students might explore the underrepresentation of Native American artists in galleries and museums across the U.S., and research different issues to uncover values and assumptions in arguments related to the issue (Efland et al., 1996). Through knowledge construction and transformation, students are educated to become critical thinkers who are able to examine their own life experiences (Stuhr, 1995).

As advocated by multicultural art education theorists (Desai & Chalmers, 2007; Efland et al., 1996; Golding, 2005; Stuhr, 1994, 1995; Ward, 2005) and exhibited in the few transformative multicultural art education cases on classroom interventions to be found in the literature (see Albers, 1996, 1999; Chung, 2008; Cohen Evron, 2001, 2005, 2007; Knight, 2006; Staikidis, 2005), the primary method for deconstruction of knowledge is engagement of students and teachers in critical dialogues that confront issues of conflict such as discrimination, stereotyping, racism, and oppression. This type of critical dialogue about issues of conflict is emphasized by critical pedagogy theorists such as Giroux (1981) and Freire (1985, 1992/2004, 1970/1993), and is exemplified by Freire (1992/2004) in *Pedagogy of Hope*. In the cases documented by Albers (1996, 1999), Chung (2008), Cohen Evron (2001, 2005, 2007), Knight (2006), and Staikidis (2005), art classes focus on the interrogation of stereotypes and assumptions, and their relationship to hierarchical structures of oppression. These dialogues deconstruct students' own preconceptions and underlying ideologies, as well as those found in and forwarded by art. In this dialogue, both the teacher and students are involved in the process of questioning and presenting potential interpretations. Teachers are reflective about their own dispositions, and ask critical questions that challenge students to think more deeply and question their assumptions and beliefs. Art is viewed as a receptacle and a vehicle for ideology. In line with Banks (1996b) and Giroux (1981), Greene (1995) argued that, in the absence of critical dialogue, students become passive receivers of allegedly undisputable facts, and are not challenged to question the norm. Stagnancy and reproduction of these stale facts are promoted. Students are not encouraged to challenge elitism and objectivism, nor given agency to liberate their imaginations and envision and shape their world and future. This is the antithesis of the vibrant potential of the arts (Greene, 1995).

Knight (2006), Staikidis (2005), and Chung (2008), each engaged students at the university level—all preservice teachers—in critical dialogues about issues of conflict that encouraged self-reflection about their own understandings and biases, and explored the negative impacts of stereotyping. Knight (2006) described her experiences teaching a graduate-level teacher education seminar entitled, “Using Contemporary Art to Challenge Cultural Values, Beliefs, and Assumptions” (p. 40). She enlisted discussion as her primary instructional format, rather than lecturing, in order to set the stage for members of the class to share and hear a variety of perspectives. They began by sharing their earliest “memories of human difference” (p. 42). They were asked to consider what they observed, felt, and what features of these observations generated positive or negative affect. They contemplated: “Were my reactions reality-based, or was I reacting to a stereotype?” (p. 42). Knight asserted that such explorations potentially encouraged students to discover the sources of their biases. Next, her class engaged with contemporary artworks from artists of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds who were “primarily residing in the United States” (p. 42). Many of the artworks confronted controversial issues such as “racism, sexism, classism, ageism, ableism, and other ‘isms’” (p. 42). Students were asked to view the works through alternative viewpoints—through the eyes of another classmate, or from differing ideological perspectives. They deconstructed the images for stereotype references, and “also questioned the individuals and institutions that create, control, and disseminate racist mediated texts” (p. 43). They considered the connection between stereotypes and prejudice, how these might influence behavior, and how such images might “provoke loathing or contempt of ‘the other’” (p. 43). Knight asserted that these discussions encouraged students “to question the assumptions reflected in each other’s positions” (p. 43). Furthermore, she contended, “They started to find out that what some consider as truth largely depends on the various assumptions they hold” (p. 44).

Similarly, Staikidis (2005) prompted her students to interrogate their assumptions. In her class, preservice teachers’ critical discussions confronted issues of conflict and explored their assumptions about contemporary art and artists in a postmodern arena. They debated the “philosophical European birth and shaping” of these ideas, and “began to dismantle stereotypes about terms such as contemporary art and artists in a postmodern art world” (para. 19). Platformed by these discussions, Staikidis introduced her preservice teachers to a variety of teaching structures that she learned under the mentorship of a male Tzutuhil and a female Kaqchikel Mayan painter with whom she had studied. Students utilized these teaching structures to inform and transform standardized lessons prescribed in the texts for the course. Staikidis reported: “Students stated that, at first, based on prior experiences with teaching multiculturally from an essentialist perspective, they felt this lesson would involve painting or weaving like Mayans” (para. 24). Instead, they came to recognize that the lesson incorporated alternative approaches to teaching and painting utilized by two Mayan painters. These alternative approaches to teaching and painting, these counterstories to a dominant Western

narrative, provided students with a means to review, reconstruct and transform assumptions typically presented as static knowledge, and to recognize instead a plurality of dynamic understandings.

In Chung's (2008) class, preservice elementary teachers also engaged in dialogues confronting issues of conflict as they proceeded to dismantle stereotypes. The class began with a discussion in which students shared their personal experiences with stereotypes, and contemplated how the media capitalizes on stereotypes in their daily life. Chung reported that these students surmised that stereotypes "contain layers of discrimination and dehumanization, and embody how the perpetrator of stereotypes considers others inferior and therefore disenfranchises them to be a subject of ridicule" (p. 24). The students contrived adjectives associated with stereotypes, listed these singularly on pieces of paper, applied these labels randomly to each student's forehead, and students then conversed with one another to "find out their partner's personal information... and if relevant to speak to their partner in a way that increased the visibility of the label on the other person's forehead" (p. 24). Chung contended, "The majority acknowledged that they were constantly aware of the label during the interaction" (p. 24). Students reported that, as labeled beings, "I felt different from the rest of my peers," "It allowed me to feel how people feel when we label them negatively," "This process makes me feel uncomfortable. I didn't really like being labeled," and "I have a better understanding as to why we shouldn't stereotype people" (p. 24). Students then created comic strips that illustrated an existing stereotype, and their participation in this creative process "enabled them to consider how stereotypes are social constructions and are purposefully manipulated" (p. 33). They followed this artmaking exercise with a critical dialogue using the artworks as "a point of departure for disrupting stereotypes" (p. 33).

Albers (1996, 1999), and Cohen Evron (2001, 2005, 2007) documented cases at the K-12 level. Albers (1996, 1999) illustrated how a sixth grade class engaged in discussion about issues of conflict related to sexism. In an exercise in which students were shown a series of artworks and asked to predict the gender of the artists, "the results revealed that many students held sexist views of what males and female artists are capable of creating" (Albers, 1996, p. 9). These sexist (and heterosexualist) beliefs were explored in a 40-minute discussion that accompanied the exercise, in which Ms. Wolf "carefully and thoughtfully asked questions that challenged students to think more deeply" (p. 9). Albers (1996) contended that the exercise "enabled students to reflect upon and transform their present sexist assumptions about the capabilities of males and females in art" (p. 206). Albers (1999) asserted that students were "affected by the conversation and are not the same people after these experiences" (p. 10). As evidence, she cited the reflections of a sixth grade girl: "I've learned that male and female artists think in almost the same way. Just because they are male or female doesn't mean that they should or do think in a particular way. I think that men and women seem much similar

because I have found out that the only way they are different is basically their physical appearance” (p. 10).

Cohen Evron (2001, 2005, 2007) detailed three high school classes in which the idea of “otherness” was deconstructed through critical dialogue, and approached via three different means. These scenarios will be discussed further in the next section, as these three lessons broached into the dimension of empowering school culture and social structure through students’ active creation of politically oriented artworks.

Empowering School Culture and Social Structure

With the dimension of Empowering School Culture and Social Structure in multicultural education, social action is promoted as students research and reflect on social issues, select and justify a stance, and are encouraged to take action on this position (Banks, 1996e, 2004; C. A. M. Banks, 1996; Grant, 1992; Grant & Sleeter, 2007a, 2007b; Nieto, 1996; Sleeter & Grant, 1987, 1988; Sleeter, 1991). Multicultural education, in this sense, is a call for individuals to “engage in social action to improve the social circumstances of all people” (C. A. M. Banks, 1996, p. 55). This social action might take the form of small demonstrations of justice in the elementary grades. For example, elementary students might make friends with individuals from other cultural groups, and participate in community projects to achieve a sense of political effectiveness; in this manner, students begin to learn that they can propel changes for a better world (Banks, 1996e).

In art education, students would aim to challenge existing preconceptions on particular art related issues, negotiate viewpoints and take a stance on an issue, and take action to reflect this stance (Efland et al., 1996; Stuhr, 1994). This provides an opportunity for students to engage in democratic action (Efland et al., 1996). This action might take the form of creation of an artwork, as in the three cases presented by Cohen Evron (2001, 2005, 2007) in which high school students created photographic and videographic pieces in their explorations of the idea of “otherness.” In one project, 10th grade students were asked to videotape interviews in which they learned something new about someone they labeled as “other.” In doing so, they were encouraged to investigate their understandings and experiences of “otherness,” and potential positionality as the “other” in relation to this person. Students interviewed diverse people including an Arab woman from Jaffa, a street sweeper, and newcomers from the former USSR. According to Cohen Evron (2007), the exploration helped to blur the dichotomy between “us” and “them;” and “contributed to the students’ understanding that everyone, including themselves, can be the Other, and that Otherness is situated” (p. 1040).

In another high school class documented by Cohen Evron (2005), Picasso’s *Guernica* (1937) was presented as a political artwork with thematic ties to high school students’ lifeworlds: The

artwork addressed conflict and victimization, ideas that resonated with students as they were surrounded by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Students compared and contrasted *Guernica* to a newspaper photograph of a Palestinian being taken into custody by the Israeli Army in the Gaza strip, and then to “staged photographs of Palestinian victims of the Intifada, taken by a famous Israeli photographer, Micha Kirshner” (p. 316). Through critical discussion, students investigated how the artists of these works manipulated elements of their visual compositions in their representations of victimization. In evaluating these images side-by-side, “students learned how the subject of war and its victims can be interpreted differently through the use of media and techniques, and that artists can express different perspectives and focus on various aspects of their topics” (p. 316). For these students, who were surrounded by a discourse in which Israeli’s were presented as “heroes” and Palestinians as the perpetrators of violence, these photographs presented a challenge to the dominant hegemonic narrative. The images presented counterstories with Palestinians as victims. Students had to re-examine the dominant narrative, consider a repositioning of the “other” as victims, and then create their own political artworks. Cohen Evron (2005) asserted that the project “troubled the objectivity of the knowledge and raised the question of constructing meaning by an audience in a specific political context” (p. 317). Rather than presenting *Guernica* as an artifact of a distant past, the teacher “confronted the students with its meaning in the learners’ present” (p. 317). As in the previous project, in viewing the alternate narrative, the “dichotomy of ‘us’ as good and ‘them’ as evil” (p. 317), was challenged.

Similarly, in a lesson with 11th graders, students again examined images of war, and deconstructed the hegemonic discourses presented in mass media’s depictions of Palestinian Arabs as the “other.” Through critical discussion of the photographs, the teacher encouraged her students to recognize the stereotypes, and “to analyze the photographer’s position regarding the event documented as well as the ideology and discourse within which it was constructed” (Cohen Evron, 2005, p. 318). Through these discussions, “students discovered that the ways events and people were photographed influenced viewers’ understandings and interpretation of them” (p. 318). They then created staged photographs themselves, focusing on their personal attitudes in their depictions of heroes and victims of war, and alternative perspectives to the dominant narrative began to arise in which students began to interchange Arabs and Israelis as victimizers and victims, as well as showed them in images of neutrality. In one image “they staged a scene of a sheep, and an Arab and an Israeli drinking coffee together” (p. 318). Through the course of the project, students were challenged to reconsider the idea of “otherness,” and to contemplate how visual portrayals could be used to manipulate viewers’ positions. Cohen Evron (2007) argued, “Dealing with the concept of Otherness is particularly important because it provides an alternative view of the Other as a stereotype, a homogeneous and unitary group which is different from us” (p. 1039). It broke down “us” versus “them” binary thinking, and instead promoted a recognition that a plurality of understandings exists (p. 1040).

In each of these cases, students engaged in critical discussions that confronted conflict and challenged the idea of “otherness.” They additionally empowered their artistic social voices through construction of an artwork that conveyed their positions, and in the process they were asked to contemplate the negotiability of these positions.

In addition to investigating social issues and taking action, scholars (Baker, 1981; Banks, 1996b, 1996e; Hillis, 1996) indicated that systemic reform of the school as a structural unit would need to be addressed to empower school culture and social structure. Banks (1996e) explained that a number of factors would need to be attended to for potential change, such as the “social climate of the school, extracurricular activities and participation, and staff expectations and responses to students from diverse cultural, ethnic, racial, and income groups” (p. 338). General education conflict theorists have long argued that inequities in social stratification are built into the structural system of schools, which serve to reproduce these inequities (Apple, 1979; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; hooks, 1994; Meier, 2002; Oakes, 1985; Willis, 1977). They underscored the idea that students adapt to societal expectations, and that U.S. society is fundamentally inegalitarian in structure (that is, society expects less from particular cultural groups, such as lower classes, ethnic groups, and so on). For example, Meier (2002) and Willis (1977), through ethnographic observation and interviews with students, found that societal expectations shaped lower class students’ expectations of and aspirations for themselves, and reinforced a cycle of reproduction of class hierarchies, much like a self-fulfilling prophecy. This reproductive rationality, however, allows little room for the agency of individuals as actors who can change their world. Nor does it recognize the active role of schools in both sustaining and *resisting* dominant ideology (Giroux, 1981). In line with Freire’s (1970/1993) work on critical pedagogy, Giroux (1981) and hooks (1994) saw the potential of schools to be a liberating force for society, rather than a hegemonically indoctrinating one. Freire (1985, 1970/1993) advocated that, through a process of *conscientization*, people learn to become critical of society, to deconstruct propositions of truth that serve to oppress individuals, and to act towards undoing these oppressive circumstances. In this sense, schooling can be seen as a vehicle that forwards either domination or liberation (Giroux, 1981, 2005). The liberatory path requires students and teachers to be actors working toward emancipatory change through engagement in transformative knowledge construction as well as social action. The school, as another active component within students’ and teachers’ educational lifeworlds, also needs to embrace non-oppressive strategies. All parties are engaged in recognizing the hidden curriculum—the implicit ideologies—embedded in school knowledge and structure (Giroux, 1981, 2005). They are asked to challenge oppressive ideologies, take a stance, and take action upon these positions in an effort to move society towards egalitarianism.

Prejudice Reduction

In terms of prejudice reduction, Banks (2004) asserted that instruction would decrease the tendency to stereotype, and increase the propensity to see all individuals as valuable contributing members of society. This appears to be a goal of an overall multicultural education curriculum, rather than a didactic tactic or strategy. An approach may aim at prejudice reduction, and this may be an art educator's underlying intention. However, whether it is achieved is questionable. Banks (1996e) concluded, "to implement multicultural education effectively, educators must attend to each of the five dimensions described above. . . . Although the five dimensions. . . are highly interrelated, each requires deliberate attention and focus" (p. 338).

Conclusion

We can aspire to thoroughly incorporate all elements of these five dimensions in order to create robust multicultural art programs. However, if art educators can begin to incorporate elements of dimensions of multicultural education bit-by-bit, drawing on the discussions herein, perhaps the prospect of integrating multicultural education into their curricula may not present so formidable a challenge. Having reviewed these five dimensions of multicultural education and how they have been addressed by scholars in art education, perhaps art teachers will feel more versed and find greater comfort in attempting to incorporate multicultural programming into their art curricula or to extend their existing multicultural endeavors.

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