

# Three Voices on Multiculturalism in the Art Therapy Classroom

Jayashree George, Seattle, WA, Brooke D. Greene, Bloomington, IN, and  
Miranda Blackwell, Lincoln, NE

## Abstract

*Multicultural competence in art therapy continues to be redefined. The American Art Therapy Association (2003) Ethics Document was recently revised to list multicultural "awareness" rather than competence, thereby raising important questions about our profession's stance on multicultural competence. Awareness is the first in a series of steps towards achieving multicultural competence. It is within this context that we discuss reflective writing as a pedagogical tool. Generally, cultural competence is discussed in the context of therapist-client interactions. Seldom is the concept discussed within a pedagogical framework. This paper attempts to make concrete the process of gaining awareness through reflective writing by focusing on first-person narratives that emerged from classroom discussions about privilege, white experience, cultural encounters, and achieving multicultural competence. We found that encounters with the "other" helps create self-definition and that it is a lot easier to identify with the self-as-oppressed rather than the self-as-oppressor.*

## Introduction

Multicultural competence as a standard in art therapy continues to be in flux. In 2001, the American Art Therapy Association (AATA) had listed standards of multicultural competence in its ethics code and had defined it as "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that enable art therapists to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (p. 7). Interestingly, the wording changed in 2003 when AATA adopted new ethical principles and largely revised the ethics code. According to the revised document, multicultural "awareness" rather than competence is

desired, and the former definition of competence has been deleted (p. 8).

In our view, a profession needs to have goals of competence rather than awareness. Although awareness is an important ingredient for developing multicultural competence, it is only the first in a series of steps towards achieving multicultural competence. According to Sue, Bernier, Durran, Feinberg, Pedersen, Smith, et al. (1982), awareness leads to knowledge, which in turn leads to the development of skills. Awareness, knowledge, and skills can then lead to social action and social justice, which will move counselors (and art therapists) towards becoming culturally proficient. In this regard, the National Multicultural Ad Hoc Committee of the American Counseling Association began discussing "the need to promote the professional counselor's role as social justice advocate" (D'Andrea et al., 2001, p. 242). It is interesting to note that the AATA Ethics Document included the need for organizational cultural competence in 2001 as explicated by item 6.6 that reads: "Art therapists are able and willing to exercise institutional, group and individual intervention skills on behalf of people who are from a different culture" (p. 8). This item, which would have moved art therapy professionals towards adopting a social action and social justice stance, has been deleted from the ethics code in 2003. For these reasons, art therapists appear to have taken a significant step backwards in the development of standards for multicultural competence.

In keeping with our view of competence, we have chosen to focus on the first of the series of steps towards achieving cultural competence in building self-awareness. Item 6.2 of both versions of the ethics code reads: "Art therapists are aware of their own values and beliefs and how they may affect cross-cultural therapy interventions" (AATA, 2001, p. 7; AATA, 2003, p. 8). Even this awareness is only a part of what Sue et al. (1982) list within the category of awareness. They charge counselors to be aware of their own values, beliefs, attitudes, and biases regarding the self and others and to be aware of other perspectives, culturally expansive versions of identity development, and political and social issues and concerns.

Despite recent scholarship within art therapy advancing cultural competence (Calisch, 2003; Hocoy, 2002; Hoshino, 2003; Rousseau, LaCroix, Bagilishya, & Heusch, 2003; Talwar, Iyer, & Doby-Copeland, 2004; Talwar, Iyer, Doby-Copeland, & Lark, 2003), one continues to encounter myopia within the field regarding multiculturalism (Iyer, Talwar, & Doby-Copeland, 2003). Moreover, there

---

**Editor's note:** Jayashree George, DA, ATR-BC, teaches in the art therapy program at Antioch University Seattle. Brooke D. Greene, MS, earned her master's degree in art therapy at Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas and is currently Director of Therapeutic Services at the Bloomington Hospitality House in Bloomington, Indiana. Miranda Blackwell, MS, also earned her master's degree in art therapy at Emporia State University. A portion of this paper was presented at the 34th Annual American Art Therapy Conference as part of a panel titled "Dialogues in Ethnocentric Monoculturalism in the Art Therapy Profession" (Talwar, Iyer, Doby-Copeland, & Lark, 2003). Correspondence concerning this article may be sent to Dr. George at the Center for Programs in Psychology, Antioch University Seattle, 2326 Sixth Avenue, Seattle, WA 98121.

continues to be a paucity of pedagogical issues concerning multiculturalism in art therapy discourse (Calisch, 2003; Hiscox & Calisch, 1998). One issue is that art therapy students often have to work on issues of awareness and sensitivity because of their difficulty in understanding concepts such as privilege. It is in this context that awareness, as defined by Sue et al. (1982), becomes a beginning step on the road to cultural competence. The difficulty with this undertaking is that it is not formulaic; it involves an internal shift in worldview and a move from dominant discourses in mental health to one that sets the individual within his or her sociocultural-political context and that leads to a social justice perspective. The degree to which each student is able to make the shift varies. However, this is the aspiration for any student or professional in his or her quest for multicultural competence. George and Hoshino (2004) have reflected on this in greater depth and have made recommendations regarding the AATA's ethics code.

Cultural encounters take place within systems where some entities dominate others in the distribution of power. In the United States, the dominant system is informed by a Euro-American worldview leading to ethnocentric monoculturalism (Hiscox & Calisch, 1998; Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, & Alexander, 2001; Sue & Sue, 1999; Talwar et al., 2004). When there is dominance, the negative space is occupied by the other. The dominant worldview becomes privileged, and consequently, other points of view become underprivileged. Also, in unpacking the figure-ground metaphor, connecting the other to the negative space further underscores disempowerment. Therefore, one cannot discuss cultural competence without first discussing the role of privilege within a system of dominance that tends to underlie cultural encounters. This can happen only with intense self-reflection and awareness, prerequisites for cultural competence (Calisch, 2003; Hiscox & Calisch, 1998; Sue et al., 1982; Talwar et al., 2004).

Generally, cultural competence is discussed in the context of therapist-client interactions. Seldom is the concept discussed within a pedagogical framework or within the context of preparing students to work with culturally diverse people. Further, given the composition of the membership of the American Art Therapy Association (AATA), which is 90% Caucasian American and 91% female (Elkins, Stovall, & Malchiodi, 2003), one can safely say that there will be an overwhelmingly large number of female art therapists from the dominant culture treating persons from diverse cultures. This fact heightens the need for discussions about cultural competence in the art therapy classroom.

This paper, then, attempts to make concrete the process of gaining awareness through reflective writing by focusing on first-person narratives that emerged from classroom discussions about privilege, white experience, cultural encounters, and achieving cultural competence. First author George describes her experience of privilege in India and juxtaposes it with her U. S. experience as an educator of color. Authors Greene and Blackwell describe their understandings of white privilege through their contact with the other. Consequently, these narratives have impli-

cations for the understanding of racial consciousness leading to culturally competent mental health services.

## Multicultural Art Therapy Education

As an educator in a graduate art therapy program, George has encountered students struggling to understand culture as a set of internal constructs (e.g., privilege, power, identity) that are known and unknown. This has been evidenced by Caucasian students voicing their confusion, frustration, defensiveness, irritation, and anger with notions of "whiteness" and "white privilege." As George earnestly tried to understand white racial experience in the art therapy classroom, she found that it was a layered experience within a specific context. The rural Midwestern white experience, as constructed by a cohort of young students, was characterized by virtual isolation from cultures different from itself. Furthermore, she found that the students were caught in a "catch 22" in that they had grown up in schools and families that taught them to deny difference; this was in contrast to the graduate art therapy class on multiculturalism that taught them to examine differences and understand the politics of oppression (Hiscox & Calisch, 1998; Ponterotto et al., 2001; Sue & Sue, 1999; Talwar et al., 2004).

The textbooks used for George's multicultural class were *Tapestry of Multicultural Issues* (Hiscox & Calisch, 1998), *Counseling the Culturally Different* (Sue & Sue, 1999), and *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling* (Ponterotto et al., 2001). When resistance to reading material is present, safety and trust in the classroom become of paramount significance. Further, the different ethnicity of George was one more factor in heightening the complexity of the learning situation. According to Ronald (1999), "The space that Whites occupy is unclearly constructed and defined, and therefore is enigmatic" (para. 1). This assessment is particularly useful in helping Caucasian students define a space that can now begin to be clarified.

In the pieces that follow, we have reflected on our own experiences of privilege and of unfolding racial and gender awareness. We consider this process to be crucial for negotiating a learning space of safety, critical thinking, and honesty. George has written a short piece about her ruminations on privilege in India and her experiences as a woman, ex-wife, and educator of color in the United States. Her story is interspersed with voices asserting cultural perceptions. This is followed by Greene's story of an encounter with a racially different person and how it shattered her preconceived notions about race relations in the United States. Blackwell follows with her reflection on her experience of studying multiculturalism within the graduate art therapy program.

## George's Story

In this narrative, statements that appear in italics represent parallel Caucasian-American voices that struggle to reflect on the past and present.

### Art Therapist as Vacuum Cleaner Salesperson

“Life is a string of connections,” I wrote in my journal, “like box pleats on a curtain.” Sometimes, there is a peg missing and the pleat has no home and hangs midair, but the curtain hangs anyway. We had those types of curtains in Mumbai. I remember the cruddy mustard and brown curtains on which the door-to-door vacuum cleaner salesman expertly demonstrated by sucking up years of dirt from a 2" diameter of curtain onto a white handkerchief. There was the evidence. The mustard threads actually looked gold, and I imagined lighter curtains lit up with gold. We did not buy the vacuum cleaner. Maybe it would have erased the years of memory.

Here was Amy, who proudly brought a huge, flea-ridden, brown carpet to our on-campus apartment. She threw it on the floor and looked at us, her two brown, Indian roommates, expecting us to be jubilant. I smiled weakly and Savita was impassive. Amy carried on, moving the furniture, telling us the story of how she chanced upon the carpet in a dumpster and thought it would be fitting on the living room floor. She went to get a straw broom and raked the carpet seemingly clean while I tried to wrap my mind around the idea of something “not new” and “from the dumpster,” both unholy ideas for an item for the household. We could have used a vacuum cleaner. This carpet defied memories.

Can you vacuum up those memories that come to you without your knowing that you have a door open, when you don't even know you have a door? It is like a collective memory that can almost make someone psychotic. The other side of psychosis is intense analysis, a weaving of threads. My memories of caste differentiations and observations of race relations in America are two such collective memories.

*There is no diversity here.*

I went to WalMart to shop and ran into a couple of Asian Indians, some Hispanics, and a couple of African-Americans. Apples, Oranges, Guavas. I was lead to believe there was only one type of fruit available.

I have met two Indians. One of them, Meena, the voice on the phone said, “Ava non-Brahmin, they're non-Brahmins.” Only a Brahmin would think of giving me that kind of information, I had thought to myself. She was introducing me to an Indian family in my neighborhood. My brows wrinkled, invisible over the line, and she continued, “Just for your information.” I wondered how that piece of information would serve me. It almost seemed as if she wanted to warn me about a characteristic that would be crucial to my deciding whether to be friends with them or not.

Chandra was no exception. When I called her to make the first contact, she asked me which caste I was. I was surprised and dumbfounded. I hadn't been asked this question in years. I collected myself and replied, “Naan Brahmin, I'm Brahmin but I don't see differences.” She went on to ask me—

“Husband, what does he do?”

I replied, “I am not married.”

Chandra asked, “Where did you move from?”

I said, “California.”

Chandra persisted, “Husband, is he there?”

I replied with furrowed brows, “No, I am living by myself.”

She continued, “Is he in India?”

I replied, exasperated, “No, I'm single. I live alone!”

She finally got it, “Oh, you live alone!”

I replied, “*Aamaam*, YES!”

Why did it seem beyond her to entertain the notion of A Single Indian Woman Who Could Make It on Her Own? I obviously didn't feel comfortable enough to tell her I was divorced. Later, when I went over to Chandra's place to visit, her husband asked me the same question. “What *jaadi*, caste are you—Brahmin, non-Brahmin, Chettiar, Mudaliar?” I must have looked askance when he elaborated on the varieties—mangoes, jackfruit, papaya. I said, feeling futile, “Brahmin. I don't see differences amongst people. It's high time we dropped the differences.”

*There are no differences between blacks and whites. It is high time minorities stopped playing the race card.*

I had been blinded by my own privilege. It became clear to me that caste was a strong factor in their identity. Chandra said, “That family, down the road, they are also Brahmin. They're vegetarian.” It was like she was laying me within my group, pears amongst pears. A pear is not an apple.

I guess that too was a cultural divide: vegetarian, non-vegetarian. The fact was that for centuries they had been told to be conscious of the fact that they were nonvegetarian, non-Brahmins, and had been discriminated against by the all-powerful Brahmins on that score. They were non, sans, without power and divided by their hyphenated existence. Ironically, Brahmins supposedly represented nonviolence, yet they had perpetrated the worst form of violence—the violence of educated, premeditated abuse of power against those who were powerless and denied access to education and worship.

*We're not responsible for the past.*

I, too, had said years ago that I was not responsible for the past, in terms of caste-class relations in India. I later realized that I had to confront history and understand that when centuries' worth of oppression keeps a segment of people down and renders them helpless, then I am, in fact, accountable for restoring their lives, or at least for making interventions towards paying the interest on the debt of oppression.

I was only 18. I did not get admission into college to pursue a career in science, as I had always imagined I would. I was not given that chance. Or rather, the educational system had wrested that chance out of my hands. I did not have ministerial recommendation. One professor confessed, “Our hands are tied, *ma*” holding out her arms crossed at the wrist, as if to describe her predicament of upholding the quota system that prevented Brahmins from filling up all the seats for education. A certain percentage of seats went to economically “backward” classes and for “scheduled castes and tribes,” the politically correct word for the oppressed castes or outcasts that Gandhiji had termed *harijan* or the children of God.

“Equal opportunity,” “affirmative action”—I experienced a sense of relief to see the words in the United States. I had been oppressed. I deserved equal opportunity. I didn’t understand affirmative action. I said yes to Freedom, but how misplaced it was! I failed to understand that I had centuries’ worth of backing to make my way in education, to achieve my vision. There was no question of giving up. I learned privilege at my parents’ knee. I was Brahmin, educated, powerful. I was on my way, and I didn’t even know it.

*When I read the words, “I run the gauntlet between two worlds,” I thought of you and felt that the words echoed what you said,” Miranda observed, empathizing with her interviewee, an African-American woman.*

Chandra’s husband said, “I remember when we were boys, how we played by the temple. At the end of play, we got tired and would get thirsty. My friend’s mother didn’t want to give water because she didn’t want me drinking out of their cup. You know that’s just how it is.” I nodded sadly. I knew, but only from the side of the Brahmin experience. Was my empathy of any use? He had sounded so uncomplaining, as if there was no need to comment on the injustice or discrimination. It seemed powerful on account of the lack of drama.

*White guilt has no point to it. It only brought my parents grief, so I have given it up.*

As a woman and wife I had experienced oppression as a daughter-in-law in an orthodox family where the caste system reigned supreme. My mother-in-law said derisively about lower-caste people, “They don’t have it in them to receive the vibrations of the various Sanskritic chants. They can’t, even if they wanted to.” She actually believed it. They had a man-servant who had come to work for them as a young boy. He was a lower-caste boy who never entered their shrine room, who cut their vegetables but was not allowed to cook. He had his place, as I did mine. Daughter of my father, daughter-in-law to my father- and mother-in-law. Forever in a double-hyphenated transitional space, split multiple times.

*Can’t you just tell me what to do without my feeling like I need to apologize for being white? And no, I don’t want to be an activist making “interventions.” Yes, bell hooks says all that, and by the way, why does she spell her name in small letters? I was sure it was a typo. Can’t we all just be happy to be Americans and live in our little bubble? Of course, we need to study diversity. I like immigrants. They add to our culture. But you know, I’m sorry, but that’s a bad neighborhood, and yes, a lot of Hispanics (some of them are illegal) live there. It’s all Tyson’s Foods’ fault. They bring them over for cheap labor.*

Can you vacuum up caste? I would buy such a vacuum cleaner, having come into my own means. While we are at it, could we also vacuum up class? And violence, and inequality, and nuclear armaments, and fundamentalism, and oil refineries, and sweat shops, and blindness, and... and... and...?

No, one cannot use a magical vacuum to sweep away the reality of caste, class, inequality, or injustice unless one strives to examine the vacuum bag to deconstruct the content’s stratification. Vacuuming only continues to reduce

empathy and promote the very things multicultural awareness courses are attempting to address—blindness and denial. Neville, Worthington, and Spanierman (2001) state, “Many Whites are either unable to acknowledge (dysconscious denial) or choose to ignore (conscious denial) the privileges afforded them as a result of their racial group membership” (p. 267). However, when dialogue between individuals who are different from one another is encouraged, change follows. This idea is evidenced in the following narrative by Greene.

## Greene’s Story

I’ve got this new friend. His name is Harold (a pseudonym). He is an African-American from Florida who used to play for a university football team. I met him in a coffee shop last week. It was Valentine’s Day; I was single and dressed to kill in black silk pants and a red-hot, silky sleeveless top. He sat in the corner of the room, the only black person in the dimly lit shop, silently watching people. I noticed him, wondering whom he was there to see. I’d never seen any black kids at the coffee shop before.

Later that evening he approached me, and we talked for quite some time. He was persistent in his attempts to “get to know me” and “ask me on a date.” I found myself becoming increasingly anxious, thinking of past experiences with other black men in international schools abroad, remembering being pawed over and taken advantage of. Harold is a very attractive man, smooth skin, a shining smile, and a nice body. It was flattering to have someone so interested in me, especially on Valentine’s Day, but in the back of my mind I began to question his motives. He surprised me when he spoke of his experiences at a Christian camp for boys. Why should that surprise me?

I went out on a date with him—just once. A week later, I approached him in the cafeteria to say hello. I suppose not only to say hello, but I also wanted to talk to him about that Thursday night. Harold had hurt my feelings. He’d asked me to provide him with a word he couldn’t think of. When I did, he mocked me by saying, “You would know a word like that.” I wanted him to know that my feelings were hurt by his comment; it made me feel like I should apologize for my intelligence, for my education, for my upbringing. I wanted to know why he said it. Our conversation quickly turned to issues that I’d been reading about in class—“white culture” and “white advantage.”

Harold apologized and said he wasn’t even aware that he had been negative towards me. He explained to me that he’d grown up in an all-black community. Moving to attend college in the rural Midwest, a predominantly white community, made him become more aware of himself and more aware of whites. This move made him curious, wanting to learn about “white culture.” It was interesting to me that he would use this term, noticing that we were discussing it, painfully, earlier in class. I asked him to describe his perception of white culture.

He said that to be white means to get advantages. It means growing up knowing that you have opportunities and that you can do something with your life. I noticed that

I was nodding my head in agreement to this statement. My mother and father, even if they didn't always have money, always told me I could do anything I wanted in life, I could be anything I wanted to be. Harold pointed out that growing up, he was continuously told he would not be anything and that there was no hope for him to succeed in life. He had uncles and cousins involved in drug and alcohol use. He found there was no positive reinforcement from teachers or parents when he brought home good grades. What's the point if no one believes in you? How can you believe in yourself if no one else believes in you?

He continued describing white culture by saying that he has noticed white people are rarely "real." Not being real, he said, means whites often have a happy superficiality about them, pretending they are interested in others when they really are not. Black people are real. If they don't like you, they don't pretend to. White people pretend too much. They pretend to care. He laughed and said that it is funny that there are books about black culture and what it means to be African-American or Hispanic, but the irony is that white men write them.

I began to examine my own cultural past. My dad was in the U.S. Army and I attended the Department of Defense's schools most of my life. Living in a military community, I remember being surrounded by various ethnicities. In fact, many times, whites were a minority in the schools I attended. Many of my friends were Latino, Filipino, German, and African-American. I have always bragged about these experiences, feeling quite proud to have known people of other races—especially when, at 16, I moved to an Indiana high school with not one nonwhite student. Did my living with and around other races and ethnicities truly make me empathetic and understanding toward others?

I started looking deeper at my childhood experiences, wondering why, if I did understand black culture as much as I thought I did, I was so resentful towards the writings and the ideas about white culture and white advantage in the textbook (Ponterotto et al., 2001). Why was it so difficult to fathom the existence of racism and oppression in a postmodern world? It would be easy to believe that racism and oppression did not exist, that they were "excuses" used by people who simply didn't "try hard enough." However, Harold's life experiences drifted through my mind. Why was I so offended by the concepts of white culture and white privilege?

And then it hit me like a ton of bricks. I experienced racism growing up. Often, while walking through the halls in middle school and high school, I was hit and spit at because I was a "cracker." I was made fun of and beat up. Yes, at one point in my life, I was a minority. Shouldn't this point of connection make me empathetic and nondefensive? Perhaps it should, but by being the target of racism, I realized that on some level I harbor a lot of resentment, not empathy, towards a community of people.

If, after experiencing discrimination for 15 years of my life, this is how I feel, then that must be how the black community feels towards whites. It is a subtle feeling. It is a feeling that mostly I'm not aware of. It's the reason I was

anxious around Harold during our first encounter, though I didn't know why. It is so subtle it doesn't affect my daily interactions with individuals, but it is something that is just deep enough that it does affect my perceptions of a segment of people. For the first time in my life, I am beginning to understand the source of a black man's accusations concerning oppression and enslavement.

Previously, by denying my own experience of racism and, instead, holding tight to the belief that being in a multicultural environment made me understand other cultures better, I was able to alleviate any possible feelings of racial tension within myself. Beginning with my conversation with Harold, I became vulnerable to myself and with him. I am grateful to Harold for his honesty and his friendship. Had it not been for him, I might have gone into the field of art therapy and still be operating from a place of denial and ignorance.

Gutman (cited in Ponterotto et al., 2001) believes that individuals need to adopt color-conscious behaviors and policies to combat racial injustice and promote racial equality. Being conscious of color and the dynamics of race in societal interactions, people's thoughts and behaviors change to promote justice and fairness. Culture is created in the interface between cultures, just as self is created in the encounter between different selves (Mathews, 1998). Whereas Greene explored her consciousness in her encounter with Harold, Blackwell discovered it in her encounter with her professor, an Indian woman.

## Blackwell's Story

I had sat for my whole life among mostly all-white students in classes taught by all-white professors. I now sat for the first time in an all-white class in front of an Indian woman. A dark face with dark, kind eyes, staring back at me. Little did I know how much I would grow that semester. Why did she want us to change? She was always pushing us, willing us, showing us, and urging us, me, to make a change—a change I did not even realize that I needed to make.

Why should I change when everyone around me is the same as I am? I did not oppress anyone. I had no strength for that. I was just one small farm girl from the Midwest. Anyone could do, think, be anything he or she wanted, or at least that was the way I was raised. But I was being told something different. She said that people were not the same and that when I worked with them as an art therapist I needed to be aware of that. I am aware, aren't I? But I can't stop what my ancestors began. I can change only how I interact with people from a culture other than my own. I had taken history classes in school, but I had a complete lack of awareness of an alternate view of the history of my culture. I felt helpless hearing of the oppression that was going on, which I felt I could not change but had to be part of just because I was white. There was no way for my mind to work its way around this puzzle, which perhaps I had known all along but did not want to see my way around.

My experience in my multicultural class, despite being painful and frustrating, was a change that I needed to experience for I had no clue about the power of my skin color

and the centuries of oppression that went with it. I became more aware of the way I looked at and interacted with people from a culture different from my own. I also became aware of the impact that my color and gender made on people. This can be seen in an experience I had at an internship in an inpatient treatment setting where I worked with children of varying cultural backgrounds.

In an art therapy group of 7- and 8-year-old boys, the directive for the session was mask-making. My supervisor began the session by passing out white templates for the masks. The boys had incredulous expressions on their faces as they looked at my supervisor and said, "But we're not white." They asked for multicultural markers that matched their skin tones in order for them to complete the mask-making project. I was amazed at how perceptive they were to differences I would not have thought about at their age. This internship experience alerted me to struggles in the treatment setting between the African-American childcare workers and the Caucasian therapists. Race to me seemed to be a factor that affected the way treatment was rendered. Issues with color, race, ethnicity, and class can be seen in many facets of daily life that I had not wanted to be even remotely aware of until the veils of color and cultural blindness were lifted from my eyes.

## Conclusion

Blackwell was, initially, caught in a "myth of sameness" (hooks, 1995, p. 35) where "the absence of recognition is a strategy that facilitates making a group the Other" (p. 34). Greene's consciousness of her racial identity occurred in her juxtaposition of experiences in which she was the minority in the international school and yet remained a member of mainstream white culture. This happened through the mirror presented by Harold. Blackwell's awareness began with her experience in the graduate art therapy class. However, it was her internship experience that concretized her consciousness of race, color, and ethnicity. George had to think about her experience of privilege in her own culture and use that understanding to connect with her students. She also had to reflect on her experiences of being underprivileged as a wife and as a woman of color in the United States and bring that to bear on her teaching.

The above self-reflective stories depict contexts for gaining awareness of values and beliefs, one of the cornerstones for the achievement of cultural competence. This process of self-discovery happens in all three stories in the encounter with another who functions as a mirror, helping to create self-definition. Further, a theme arises in the three stories that it is a lot easier to identify with the self-as-oppressed or self-as-victim rather than the self-as-oppressor or the self-as-privileged. George felt victimized because she did not get admission into college to pursue a subject of her choice and blamed the quota system. Greene carried the negative racial experiences with African-Americans and Latinos in the international school, where she was in the minority, into her adjustment to mainstream American culture in Indiana, where she was part of a white majority.

And Blackwell's feelings of being oppressed appeared to come from her experience of feeling trapped by her "whiteness" and unable to change years of oppression against others that was started centuries before her time.

In each of the stories, defensiveness gave way to greater consciousness of self and other through self-reflection. In Ronald's (1999) words, "If we view whiteness as a collection of self-definitions that potentially balance or unbalance relationships with others, then we enable ourselves to move toward progress" (Conclusion and beyond, para. 5). As therapists, recognition of power differentials in the therapy situation starts with locating ourselves within power structures in our own lives, including cultural contexts. Without this recognition, we are bound to swim in a sea of distortion. Understanding history from mainstream and alternative viewpoints, developing critical thinking, and bringing in-depth discussions to class create a pedagogy that helps students and professors alike to move towards multicultural competence. Awareness can lead to theorizing, then to acquiring skills, and then to advocacy for social justice, a model that has already been incorporated in fields outside art therapy.

In conclusion, the key pedagogical issue in art therapy is to create a safe environment in the classroom for students to explore their cultural selves (Hiscox, 1998). Although art therapists have generally discussed cultural competence in the context of therapist-client interactions, they have seldom discussed it within a pedagogical framework. We have chosen to focus on the classroom as the environment for self-exploration, keeping in mind that it will impact the clinical situation in more ways than one. We recommend that with greater trust between the teacher and students, this exploration will prove fruitful in helping both become more aware and even change attitudes as Pinderhughes (1989) suggests. This paper makes concrete the process of gaining awareness through reflective writing that functions as a pedagogical tool. In the words of Hiscox (1998), "It is imperative that we begin to transcend cultural biases by acknowledging cultural differences" (p. 278). Pinderhughes (1989) further underscores the need for training that facilitates "understanding one another's personal experiences in relation to ethnicity, race, and power in a manner that also compels each to understand his [*sic.*] own unique responses and *take responsibility for them*" (p. 208). Further, she points out that education that promotes self-examination "enhances the ability to control and even change attitudes one has learned, to use systemic thinking, and to be comfortable with cultural difference. To achieve these benefits, training must focus not only on ethnicity and race but also on power" (p. 208).

The path towards multicultural competence is a recursive one (George & Hoshino, 2004) where recognition of power differentials is fundamental to a discourse on relationships characterized by inherent power differences, such as the therapeutic relationship. This discussion needs to begin in the classroom where the study of multiculturalism is a palimpsest on which fresh narratives about equality can take shape—*before* students go out to work with clients.

## References

- American Art Therapy Association. (2001). *Ethics document* [Brochure]. Mundelein, IL: Author.
- American Art Therapy Association. (2003). *Ethical principles for art therapists* [Brochure]. Mundelein, IL: Author.
- Calisch, A. (2003). Multicultural training and art therapy: Past, present, and future. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 20(1), 11-15.
- D'Andrea, M., Daniels, J., Arredondo, P., Ivey, M. B., Ivey, A. E., Locke, D. C., et al. (2001). Fostering organizational changes to realize the revolutionary potential of the multicultural movement: An updated case study. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (2nd ed.) (pp. 222-254). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Elkins, D. E., Stovall, K., & Malchiodi, C. A. (2003). American Art Therapy Association, Inc.: 2001-2002 membership survey report. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 20(1), 28-34.
- George, J., & Hoshino, J. (2004). *Multicultural competence or awareness? Art therapy's stance on multiculturalism in the ethics code*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Hiscox, A. R. (1998). *Cultural diversity and implications for art therapy pedagogy*. In A. R. Hiscox & A. C. Calisch (Eds.), *Tapestry of cultural issues in art therapy* (pp. 276-288). London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Hiscox, A. R., & Calisch, A. C. (Eds.). (1998). *Tapestry of cultural issues in art therapy*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Hocoy, D. (2002). Cross-cultural issues in art therapy. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 19(4), 141-145.
- hooks, b. (1995). *Killing rage: Ending racism*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Hoshino, J. (2003). Multicultural art therapy with families. In C. A. Malchiodi (Ed.), *Handbook of art therapy* (pp. 375-386). New York: Guilford Press.
- Iyer, J., Talwar, S., & Doby-Copeland, C. (2003). Deconstructing Kaplan's views on multiculturalism. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 20(2), 65-66.
- Mathews, N. (1998). Finding myself in America: An Indian art therapist's experience of acculturation. In A. R. Hiscox & A. C. Calisch (Eds.), *Tapestry of cultural issues in art therapy* (pp. 347-362). London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Neville, H. A., Worthington, R. L., & Spanierman, L. B. (2001). Race, power, and multicultural counseling psychology: Understanding White privilege and color-blind racial attitudes. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L.A. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (2nd ed.) (pp. 257-288). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pinderhughes, E. (1989). *Understanding race, ethnicity, and power: The Blackwell to efficacy in clinical practice*. New York: Free Press.
- Ponterotto, J. G., Casas, J. M., Suzuki, L. A., & Alexander, C. M. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of multicultural counseling* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ronald, L. (1999). White space, white privilege: Mapping discursive inquiry into the self. [Electronic version]. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 85(1), 38-54.
- Rousseau, C., Lacroix, L., Bagilishya, D., & Heusch, N. (2003). Working with myths: Creative expression workshops for immigrant and refugee children in a school setting. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 20(1), 3-10.
- Sue, D. W., Bernier, J. E., Durran, A., Feinberg, L., Pedersen, P., Smith, E. J., et al. (1982). Position paper: Cross-cultural counseling competencies. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 10(2), 45-52.
- Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (1999). *Counseling the culturally different: Theory and practice*. New York: John Wiley.
- Talwar, S., Iyer, J., & Doby-Copeland, C. (2004). The invisible veil: Changing paradigms in the art therapy profession. *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 21(1), 44-48.
- Talwar, S., Iyer, J., Doby-Copeland, C., & Lark, C. (2003). *Dialogues on ethnocentric monoculturalism in the art therapy profession*. Panel presentation at the annual conference of the American Art Therapy Association, Chicago, IL.

### Call for Papers

Art therapists and practitioners from other related disciplines are invited to submit articles and artwork for consideration for the first and future issues of the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art Therapy*. ANZJAT is a scholarly, peer-reviewed journal. Please e-mail the Editor, Joy Schmidt, at [mayfairdesign@hotmail.com](mailto:mayfairdesign@hotmail.com) or [journal@anata.org.au](mailto:journal@anata.org.au) for information relating to submission procedure.