DIVERSITY AT HAND: A STUDY OF TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF MULTICULTURAL ART EDUCATION PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

by

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(Under the Direction of Carole K. Henry)

ABSTRACT

Multicultural visual art education varies widely across the nation, both in quantity and quality. Models of art education differ in their level of commitment to the presentation of multicultural content, as well as the purposes for including that content. We can theorize that effective teachers want to utilize a variety of content, techniques, and outcomes in their classrooms, but to what extent do classroom practices reflect the dominant multicultural perspectives and priorities of the scholarly literature of art education?

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between scholarly writing on multicultural art education and the perceptions of K-12 visual art teachers. Qualitative research methods were used to identify a sample population and to collect, analyze, and report data on the perspectives and practices of 14 K-12 visual art teachers regarding seven multicultural art education topics: 1) curriculum, content, and resources, 2) art education, political action, and social reform, 3) aesthetics, 4) Western and non-Western
artistic traditions, 5) the cultural contexts of objects and artifacts, 6) teacher training, and 7) cultural contexts of teachers and learners.

A case study approach was employed for the study. A cross-case summary of the data was compared to the professional literature on multicultural art education to determine points of congruence and incongruence between multicultural art education theory and teachers’ perspectives and practices.

Implications of the study for teacher preparation programs, for practicing visual art teachers, for the profession of art education, and for art advocacy are presented in the last chapter. The implications include concerns for preserving the cultural contexts of objects and artifacts, increasing teacher awareness of cultural influences on artistic and aesthetic preferences, and establishing the role of multicultural social issues in visual art instruction. Multicultural art education’s contribution to helping teachers and students accommodate the diversity of the classroom is also discussed.

INDEX WORDS: Art Education, Multicultural Art Education, Diversity, K-12 Art, Art Curriculum, Postmodern Art Education
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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2004
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May 2004
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The foundations of my interest in cultures began with my parents’ two passions, their faith and their love of travel. The strong moral lessons couched in stories of fascinating people and places stirred me to experience more than just my corner of the globe. Their strong work ethic and lifelong love of learning have been my compass throughout this journey.

In thanking the many people who have helped me along the way, I must start with the leaders and members of the Georgia Art Education Association and the National Art Education Association, two organizations which have given me many opportunities for personal growth. Among these inspiring individuals, Dr. Verle Mickish introduced me to GAEA, opened many professional doors to me, and started me on the path to understanding what it is to be a professional art educator.

My sincere thanks go to Dr. W. Robert Nix, who helped me see the necessity of an advanced degree to take my zeal for art advocacy to a higher level. His wake-up call, “Dan, you’re not getting any younger,” started the process that culminates in this dissertation. As a role model, committee chair, and confidante, he has been my professional touchstone.

I wish to express many thanks to Dr. Carole Henry whose leadership, guidance, and professionalism have steered and inspired me. Her thorough knowledge of multicultural art education has helped me clarify and focus on issues relevant to this study. Her patience and support as my current committee chair have been instrumental in seeing it through to its completion.
The newest members of my committee, Dr. Pamela G. Taylor and Dr. Genelle Morain, have also provided much information and many resources which have enlightened this study. Many years ago, Dr. Morain’s cross-cultural studies class built the foundation for my understanding of multiculturalism. Dr. Taylor’s commitment to service learning as a dimension of socially responsive multicultural art education has set an example, not only for me, but for many of my colleagues as well.

The completion of my dissertation has been a long process in which many knowledgeable scholars have played a part. I am grateful for the contributions of Dr. Robert Clements, Dr. Heta Kauppinen, Dr. Andra Nyman, Marie Cochran, and Dr. William Squires, all of whom have served as members of my graduate committee. Dr. James Whitson provided valuable logistical support in facilitating access to the sample population for this study.

My thanks and apologies go to my daughter Myranda and my son Matthew, who, while growing up, have had to share their father with their third sibling - this dissertation. They have both become young adults of whom I am immensely proud. Finally, my greatest appreciation goes to my wife Mary, my sounding board, my editor, my muse, and my love.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For many years, American schoolchildren have been taught that art is a universal language. Americans have decorated their homes with reproductions of "great art", and those who can afford the expense have embarked on pilgrimages to the grand museums and monuments of Europe to marvel before the masterpieces of Western art. While most of the works they revere have rightfully earned their place among significant human endeavors, they represent a narrow, albeit rich, artistic tradition. How, then, can we say that art is a universal language if we consider only "our" art in drawing this conclusion? Such a question reflects the rise of multiculturalism in art education.

Multicultural perspectives transform the truism about art's universal nature into a hypothesis to be explored. Multiculturalism challenges art educators to present different parts of the world of art and to pull in multiple examples to compare. To successfully incorporate multiple perspectives, art educators must be willing to view the artistic contributions and aesthetic preferences of different cultures as equally worthy to be studied and valued. They must strive to present works and media that authentically represent the artistic climate of a culture in an accurate context free of stereotypes.
Multiculturalism tests art curriculum writers in several important ways. First, it requires activities that foster critical thinking, analytic skills, and personal responses to themes and issues. Second, materials and resources for the classroom must be plentiful and must present authentic examples, not stereotypes. An effective multicultural curriculum must also create links with the community, using members of a variety of cultures as resources whenever possible.

**Statement of the Problem**

Regrettably, some of the zeal resulting from interest in multiculturalism is really just hyperbole in the service of merchandising as commercial manufacturers of art resources have filled catalogs with products labeled “multicultural.” Nevertheless, art teachers are searching for ways to improve their instruction, seeking approaches that open up discussion to new concepts for imagery. Multicultural content, which broadens students' experience of the world, holds much potential to inspire, motivate, and transform both the students and their teachers.

Student populations are changing. The art tools and media available to them are changing also, as is their access to products and perspectives of other cultures via means of communication such as broadcast media and the Internet. If the subject matter of art is to remain relevant to these students, then educators must be willing to expand and revise its content to meet students' needs.
As educators rush to make those revisions, McFee (1999) warned teachers against teaching from cultural stereotypes. At the same time, she acknowledged that many teachers are likely to have received inadequate preparation to accurately represent multicultural content in their classrooms. She saw a need for art teacher preparation programs to devote more attention to the cultural dimensions of art and art history. Chalmers (1996) observed that:

"Curriculum has not kept pace with changes in theory....In universities, we have embraced the so-called new art history. Courses in aesthetics and art history are becoming increasingly interdisciplinary. We need to bring these perspectives to the schools." (p. 16)

Gallucci (1996) described what he called a "culture gap between the way art is often taught in the public schools and the way art education is thought about and discussed by university scholars and researchers" (p. 1). According to Gallucci, there is an ongoing concern among university researchers and writers that school art teachers ignore proposals for innovative practices in art education preferring instead to preserve the status quo of conventional teaching as practiced in their school districts. Meanwhile, many school art teachers assert that the prescriptive priorities conceived by academic researchers and theorists are designed for an idealized, clinical classroom setting. Teachers say that those proposals, although they may be theoretically and philosophically sound, fail to allow for the many obstacles to innovation,
from administrative resistance and budget limitations to classroom management issues and time constraints.

Multicultural visual arts education varies widely across the nation, both in quantity and quality. Models of art education differ in their level of commitment to the presentation of multicultural content, as well as the purposes for including that content. We can theorize that effective teachers want to utilize a variety of content, techniques, and outcomes in their classrooms, but to what extent do classroom practices reflect the dominant multicultural perspectives and priorities of the scholarly literature of art education?

**The Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between scholarly writing on multicultural art education and the perceptions and practices of K-12 visual arts teachers. Of particular interest in this study are teachers’ responses to the philosophical perspectives dominant in the literature of multicultural art education and the classroom practices suggested by those perspectives. Qualitative research methods were used to first select a sample population and then to collect, analyze, and report data on the participants’ perceptions of and practices with multicultural art education. Those perceptions and practices will be presented in relation to the dominant theoretical framework of multicultural art education as discussed in the literature of the field. Conclusions will be drawn regarding areas of congruence or incongruence of multicultural art education theory with classroom practice.
Rationale

There is general agreement among researchers and theorists that the modernist art education model is a particularly bad fit for multicultural art education. According to Gallucci (1996), though, many elements of current art classroom practice emanate from the principles of modernism. Wilson (1991) traced the ongoing presence of the modernist teaching model to overdependence by classroom teachers on the formalist-based study of the elements and principles of design. To effectively present multicultural content, teachers are better served by a postmodern perspective that tolerates variety and emphasizes content over form.

Some evidence exists that teaching practices in some art classrooms are out of step with current postmodernist positions of the academic research community. Chalmers (1992b) found instances of racism in public school art curriculum and examples of stereotyping and bias present in some classroom resources. Fehr (1994) discovered that teachers who wish to incorporate multicultural content in their classrooms often choose inappropriate methods to do so. In some cases, teachers have simply grafted works by artists of color and women artists onto a modernist curriculum. Chandra (1992) pointed out that some educators inappropriately apply the terms “primitive,” “idol,” “fetish,” and “tribal art” to classical and traditional African art. Delacruz (1996) accused the makers of art education curriculum products of perpetuating misinformation about multicultural art by supplying classroom teachers with materials that perpetuate cultural stereotypes.
Over the decade of the 1990s, the selection of multicultural resources grew and the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of multicultural art education matured. Continuing dialogue in the literature produced an evolution of multicultural art education theory, and gave rise to questions concerning the translation of concepts of multicultural art education from the literature to the classroom. These questions touch on multicultural art education in relation to seven issues: 1) curriculum, content, and resources, 2) art education, political action, and social reform, 3) aesthetics, 4) Western and non-Western artistic traditions, 5) cultural contexts of objects and artifacts, 6) teacher training, and 7) cultural contexts of teachers and learners.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study examines the perceptions of 14 K-12 visual arts teachers with the aim of discovering those teachers’ attitudes and practices involving multicultural art education. The teachers who participated in the study were all employed by one school district during 2003. While a nationwide study of the perceptions of all K-12 art teachers regarding multicultural art education would have provided the ideal amount of information, such a task was neither practical nor possible for this researcher.

The qualitative research design of this study encompasses certain limitations. First of all, while the results of this study might be generalized to other K-12 art teachers, it is understood that these results reflect the perceptions of this group of 14 teachers only, and not the entire population of K-12 art teachers. In selecting sampling methods for this qualitative study, it
was decided to reject randomized probability sampling, which “allows the investigator to generalize results of the study from the sample to the population from which it was drawn” (Merriam, 1998, pp. 60-61) because the intent was not to test a quantitative hypothesis. Rather, the goal was to discover and report practicing teachers’ ideas, attitudes, and processes regarding multicultural art education. Thus, purposeful nonprobability sampling was used due to its appropriateness to situations in which “the field worker expects mainly to use his data...to solve qualitative problems, such as discovering what occurs, the implications of what occurs, and the relationships linking occurrences” (Honigman, 1982, p. 84). Purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to find information-rich cases, “those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61).

This study does not attempt to provide statistical evidence promoting one set of instructional practices over another. It does not purport to suggest a theory or a model of multicultural art education to be generalized to art classrooms across the nation. Rather, it intends to report the interpretations of multicultural art education as practiced by visual art teachers in one school district.

**Definition of Terms**

The terms "multiculturalism" and "multicultural education" have been either adopted or adapted by individuals, groups, and institutions to serve specific political or social aims tailored to particular audiences or agendas.
Thus a clear definition of multiculturalism is essential to clarify the perspective and purpose of this paper. Early definitions of multiculturalism described it as the recognition that society is composed of groups based on such factors as ethnicity, race, religion, nationality, language and income (Lovano-Kerr & Zimmerman, 1977). In its current application, the term has expanded to include grouping by such factors as gender, disability, and sexual preference (Dilger, 1994).

In its position paper *The American tapestry: educating a nation* (1991), the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) delineated a clear distinction between "multicultural education" and "multiculturalism":

Multicultural education suggests a specific course or a separatist approach to expanding cultural diversity in school. Multiculturalism is an appeal for broad cultural inclusion and consideration of every facet of the school environment, including teacher preparation, classroom climate, text books and instructional materials, and curricula and co-curricula activities. (p. 2)

[NASBE] calls... for an education steeped in multiculturalism - an approach that draws from and respects the many cultures in our country and around the world. This approach recognizes the growing interdependence of world cultures and prepares students for the reality of the next century, as well as fully acknowledging, nurturing, and respecting the cultural diversity that exists now in American classrooms. (p. 22)
Because the concern of this dissertation is the presence of multicultural content in art education, it is important to specify that the definition of the term "multicultural" herein stems from the designation of multiculturalism in education as set down by NASBE.

As stated above, it is difficult, if not impossible, to devise a definition of multiculturalism that is universally understood or accepted. The central activity of the research for this paper involves reporting of visual art teachers’ perspectives on and practices with multicultural content. Thus, the meaning given to the term "multiculturalism" should be useful to the task and consistent with the material to be analyzed. The teachers who participated in the study use art curricula formulated under the auspices of one of the state boards of education which make up the constituent membership of NASBE. For this reason, the definition proposed by NASBE in *The American tapestry* has been selected as the basis for this study. It is a definition the organization borrowed from the Delaware Multicultural Education Institute:

Education that is multicultural recognizes, accepts, values, affirms and promotes individual diversity in a pluralistic setting. Further, the term "multicultural" embraces and accepts the interdependence of the many cultural groups within our country and the world at large; racial, ethnic, regional, religious, and socioeconomic groups, as well as men and women, the young and the old, and persons with disabilities. Education that is multicultural rejects the misguided notion that individuals melt into a homogeneous group divesting themselves of their
heritage. Instead it prizes similarities and differences as valuable resources for all students. (1991, p. 5)

As a reflection of the principles of multiculturalism in education, multicultural art education teaches that each culture's art and aesthetic standards are equal in merit, and that the presentation of those cultures in the classroom must be free of stereotypical, romanticized, or trivializing notions. Multicultural art education engages students in a critique of the collective practices, performances, rituals, and beliefs which shape the art of a particular culture (Ecker, 1990). It acknowledges the interaction between individual artists' cultures of origin and their experiences in the dominant culture (Henry & Nyman, 1997). The multicultural emphasis also aims to make students aware that their responses to works of art are influenced by both their own culture and that of the artist (Delacruz, 1995; Dilger, 1994; Efland, 1990).

Terms and their meanings vary according to the viewpoints of the individuals who invoke them and the individuals who respond to them. Because one purpose of this study was to discover K-12 visual art teachers’ perspectives on multicultural art education, no definitions were prescribed for them in the research design. In this way, the participants’ level of acquaintance with the issues and principles of multicultural art education could be accurately assessed.

In the field of multicultural art education, acceptable terminology, especially the terminology used to refer to members of cultural groups, has evolved over time and can differ from one region and one cultural group to
another. The design of this study called for the participants to respond to quotations from the writings of multicultural art education theorists and advocates. Since some of those writings were published early in the emergence of multiculturalism as a topic in art education, some quotations may contain terms which have since been replaced by more accurate or acceptable ones. Where such terms are used in the quotations, they should be seen as a reflection of the time at which they were written.

“Tolerance” is one term, however, which must be defined for the purpose of this study. Because a related word, “tolerate,” suggests to some individuals only a grudging acknowledgement of cultures different from one’s own, some readers may believe that “tolerance” denotes a very low level of commitment to multiculturalism. In this study, “tolerance” is best described as the absence of intolerance. The Southern Poverty Law Center’s website, www.tolerance.org, clearly outlines the aims of tolerance as a concept in multiculturalism. It explains that an atmosphere of tolerance is one which promotes “respect for differences and appreciation of diversity.”

**The Structure of the Dissertation**

Chapter II of this dissertation presents a review of relevant literature which formed the basis for an understanding of multicultural art education and revealed dimensions of the topic to be investigated in the basic research questions. Chapter III describes the formulation and execution of the research plan, which took form as a case study of K-12 art educators. Chapter IV presents a summary of the responses of the study participants to the interview
instrument that was used in the case study. A cross-case summary of the data that emerged from the interviews leads to an analysis of the basic research questions in Chapter V. Chapter VI discusses the outcomes of the case interviews in relation to the professional literature on multicultural art education and outlines the implications of the study for teacher preparation programs, the art teaching profession, art advocacy stakeholders, and future research.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

**Historical Development of Multicultural Art Education**

The foundations of multicultural art education in the United States can be traced to conditions and challenges that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s when the United States saw the rise of divisive political issues and gradual but profound sociological changes. Today, multicultural art education reflects the effects of the struggle, which began for the US in those two transformational decades, to redefine itself, the same struggle which continues to evolve in the present century.

Grant and Sleeter (1993), McFee (1993), and Cahan and Kocur (1996) pointed to the civil rights movement as the initial source of impetus for reforms which turned educators’ interests toward issues of inclusion for diverse groups of learners. In the late 50s and early 60s, the doctrine of separate-but-equal education for African Americans, criticized and protested by many as institutionalized racism, came under attack. Once the practice was struck down in the judicial system, both legislative initiatives and court decisions regarding equal access to education arose to address the needs of a widening range of groups. Measures originally intended to fight racism were later applied against sexism, classism, and disability-based discrimination. This
inclusionary atmosphere gave rise to the multicultural education movement, which reached its height in the 1970s.

McFee (1993) traced the growth of multicultural art education in the publications, organizational structure, and professional development opportunities of the National Art Education Association (NAEA). Evidence of interest in multicultural themes in art education began to emerge in NAEA publications in the 1950s, when a few articles on the crafts of non-western cultures appeared in its journals. The Committee on Minority Concerns was established as an NAEA special interest group in the late 1960s. The International Society for Education in Art organized several congresses on multicultural art education throughout the 70s and 80s.

The decade of the 1980s brought a reactionary backlash against inclusionary and multicultural education. The most publicized and most widely heeded influence on education was the 1983 report of the Carnegie Commission on Educational Excellence, A Nation at Risk. The back-to-basics emphasis that the report engendered effectively eliminated funding for multicultural education programs (Grant & Sleeter, 1993).

Art educators, fearing the curtailment of their programs, scrambled to place their subject matter in the mainstream of basic education. The Getty Center for Education in the Arts promoted discipline based art education (DBAE), stressing the study of visual art's productive, aesthetic, historical, and critical components as academic disciplines (Walling, 2001). To further protect the status of art in public school curriculum, art educators sought to
show their subject to be a standardized, measurable body of skills and knowledge. The National Art Education Association joined with the Music Educators National Conference, the National Dance Association, and the American Alliance for Theater and Education to form the Consortium of National Arts Education Associations (Goodwin, 2000). In 1994, the work of the Consortium culminated in the publication of the National Standards for Arts Education (MENC, 2003).

With the rise of both the DBAE model and the National Standards for Arts Education, prevailing aesthetic values and notions of “good” or “important” works of art in North American classrooms were dominated by a Eurocentric point of view. Chalmers (1992b) suggested that this dominance was the fallout of two centuries of scholarship devoted to rationalizing slavery, colonialism, racial differences, class structures, and sex roles. Anderson (1996) pointed out that the very framework for organizing the Standards into the disciplines of art, music, dance, and theatre and the similar framework for subdividing art education into the disciplines of production, criticism, history, and aesthetics were themselves part of a Western concept which ignored the integrative nature of the arts in some non-Western cultures.

Hirsch (1987) took the assumed supremacy of white Western culture a step farther. He prescribed a list of some five thousand items which students should recognize in order to become culturally literate in Western society. He acknowledged that his list was very heavily weighted toward elements of Western Eurocentric culture, but defended his promotion of that dominant
culture by proposing its mastery as the path to equality for members of all
groups wishing to enhance their status as individuals in American society.

Opponents of cultural literacy saw it as an exclusionary motif
promulgated by a cultural elite minority. Some writers disputed Hirsch’s claim
of the democratizing effects of Western cultural literacy. Freedman (1994b) felt
that the establishment of an elite body of cultural knowledge, even if it is to be
made available to everyone, reflects a hierarchical societal power structure
which works against, not for, democracy.

Hamblen (1990b) criticized cultural literacy’s ties to modernist
assumptions of universality in both artistic expression and aesthetic response,
as well as its failure to acknowledge the multicultural society for which it
claimed to be a benchmark. Any art that originated in societies outside the
mainstream was valued only if it expressed themes and forms which mirrored
those preferred by Western Modernism. She proposed instead that “cultural
literacy” be redefined as an ongoing ethnographic process of replacing
assumptions of universal aesthetic standards with a growing awareness of the
multiple perspectives of the cultural contexts in which works are produced.

By the end of the 1980s, a shift in demographics also focused new
attention on multicultural education. Depressed economic conditions and
political upheaval in foreign countries, as well as promising opportunities for
investment and employment in the United States, brought new immigrants in
the late 80s and early 90s. As a result, teachers began to encounter a growing
number of ethnic backgrounds among the students in their classrooms. They
learned, as Lippard (1990) pointed out, that individuals who share a common language might represent a variety of ethnic, religious, social and political subcultures, thus complicating the process of cross-cultural dialogue. The changing ethnic makeup of the population, the "browning of America," began to open wider venues for diverse voices in politics and society. At the same time, the term "multiculturalism" was expanding to include a wide range of "otherness."

In art education, DBAE, the dominant instructional model in the US, began to meet opposition (Dilger, 1994; Hart, 1991). Critics charged that it was heavily steeped in Western aesthetics and that its reliance on works representative of that tradition rendered it inadequate and inappropriate for the study of multicultural art forms. Desai (2000) stressed the need for teachers to understand that aesthetic standards differ among the world’s cultures. She pointed out that divergent aesthetic principles affect not only the production of an art object but the response to it. Teachers who present art objects to diverse student populations need to recognize that each student will receive that object from his or her own culturally based set of aesthetic standards. Freedman (1994a, 1994b) criticized the assumption of many DBAE proponents that Western aesthetic principles are universal and that they can be used to analyze any object from any culture. She warned further that emphasizing the technical and formal aspects of objects, a favored technique of DBAE analysis, leads to inappropriate assumptions of similarities in culturally different objects.
Hamblen (1990a) pointed out that the organizational structure of DBAE was out of step with the prevailing climate being promoted by major educational literature in the late 1980s. DBAE incorporated conservative traditional practices involving “a tightly controlled curriculum, reliance on top-down decision making, emphasis on prescribed educational outcomes, [and] standardized testing” (p. 29). These elements were a poor fit for the site-based, teacher- and student-empowering, collaborative, pluralist model being urged and implemented at that time by general education reformers.

In response to such discontent, the Getty Center took steps to examine DBAE from a pluralist perspective. The concerns of multicultural education first appeared as a topic at the second DBAE issues seminar in 1989. Following that seminar, Getty published the first of seven sets of prints and lesson plans in its Multicultural Art Prints Series. In 1992, the third Getty sponsored issues seminar was organized around the theme of Discipline-based Art Education and Cultural Diversity (Zimmerman, 1997).

Meanwhile, discipline-based art education was evolving into what Hamblen (1997) termed “Neo-DBAE.” Though the Getty Center had been the primary disseminator of information on DBAE during the 1980s, individual art educators not allied to Getty began to develop programs based on their own understanding of DBAE. Because of the predominance of DBAE themes in state and national professional conferences and workshops, as well as in curriculum resources, these educators’ interpretations reached a broad audience of practitioners. Types of art outside the traditions of Western fine
art began to appear in DBAE lessons. Some teachers began to venture beyond
DBAE’s “safe” emphasis on techniques and formal qualities to approach
controversial issues and socio-political criticism in art. Finally, the momentum
toward standardized objective testing in the classroom gave way to a call to
include portfolio review and other alternatives for assessing student
performance in art (Davis, 1992; Stankiewicz, 1992).

Despite the willingness of proponents of DBAE to rethink and enlarge its
content, a number of art educators found it inadequate and inappropriate for
teaching multicultural art. They argued that three of its four disciplines –
criticism, aesthetics, and art history – are Western concepts that do not exist in
some cultures. Thus, they said, DBAE is unsuitable for studying non-Western
cultures (Abiodun, 2001; Blocker, 2001; Fehr, 1994; Garber, 1995). Hoffman
(1997) suggested that DBAE’s institutionalized conservatism was incompatible
with the aims of social criticism and social reconstruction to reject and replace
establishments and value systems which maintain the conventions of
dominant culture.

As Smith (2002) reported, the end of the twentieth century saw a change
in leadership in the Getty Center and its renaming as the Getty Institute for
Education in the Arts. Shortly after the reorganization, the Getty Institute was
disbanded. References to DBAE began to appear less frequently in art
education professional literature. In their presentation to the International
attributed a waning interest in DBAE to what they perceived as flaws in its design:

We knew that the Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) structure under which we had been operating since its inception by the Getty in the 1980s had not only lost its edge, but had become a burden, an impossibly fragmented approach to teaching about art. We had not lost our belief that the world of art and artworks had become more complex and that the teaching of art must reflect that complexity. Nor did we believe any less in the importance of looking at the critical and philosophical foundations of artworks, but looking at them as separate and detached entities created a program that was becoming increasingly problematic for us. (Gaudelius, Stankiewicz, & Wilson, 2002, ¶ 2)

At the end of the twentieth century, many of the writers and theorists who questioned the relevance of DBAE proposed a shift in focus for art education toward an interest in visual culture. According to Efland (2004), the roots of visual culture lie in the cultural studies movement of the 1970s and 1980s. He defined visual culture as “an all-encompassing category of cultural production that includes the traditional fine arts, as well as various forms of popular culture” (p. 235).

As visual culture expanded the definition of art and art forms, new media, facilitated by technology and often utilized for commercial purposes, brought cinema, television, computers, and the Internet within the scope of art education. Boughton (2004) cited the need to take into account student
interest in popular arts. “If students are to understand visual culture and contribute to it,” he urged, “they must understand the power of visual seduction and the complex ways in which it is achieved” (p. 266). The ultimate goal of visual culture for Davenport (2003) was to empower students to “engage with, critique, resist, and ultimately manipulate for themselves the flow of images that define and shape their lives and cultural identities” (p. 13). She stated that any object can provide insight into the people or culture that produced it. She proposed that a careful decoding of an object through critical analysis reveals the hidden “relationships, processes, and agendas” (p. 14) to help students understand both the cultural context of the object and their own cultural perspectives in response to it.

**Philosophical Basis for Multicultural Art Education**

At the same time that societal changes were raising new issues for educators, the advent of post-Modernist art theory established the philosophical roots of multicultural and cross-cultural art education. Modernism, the prevailing theory that had dominated art for some one hundred years, began to give way to Postmodernism with the pop art movement of the 1960s.

Fehr (1997) traced the foundations and development of Modernism. He found the beginnings of Modernism in the humanistic ideals of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. During the Romantic era, the image of the artist as an individual contesting societal norms began to emerge as an emphasis in literature. Soon after, in the mid-nineteenth century, a revolution
against the repressive nature of academic classicism arose. Artists began to break with the repressive rules and content prescribed by the cultural conservatism dictated by the art academies. They made freedom of expression and originality the hallmarks of Western artistic production of the era.

The concept of the artist as a social outsider continued into the twentieth century. The philosophical perspective of Existentialism emerged among some artists as a horrified response to what they viewed as the murderous abuses of power and technology during the two world wars. They began to craft a revolt against the possibility of abuse and politicizing of art by fascist and totalitarian regimes. In an effort to keep art pure from political and cultural referents, the Modernists stressed innovation and work that evolved toward abstraction (Clark, 1998). Fearing the potential misappropriation of visual iconography for nefarious political purposes, artists began to turn away from realistic imagery and adopted Abstract Expressionism. By embracing pure abstraction, they attempted to create art forms that were immune to exploitation by political entities (Clahassey, 1986).

As this new apolitical art evolved, artists developed an aesthetic sense intended to distance themselves from middle class Western society and bourgeois mainstream taste. Reasoning that any art accepted by mainstream society is susceptible to political manipulation by that society, the Modernists were not at all distressed if the general public failed to understand their work. In the Modernist hierarchy of aesthetic merit, popular representational art was assigned a place below that of abstract painting. The revolving door of the
avant garde in Modernist art demanded that each time one style gained acceptance in popular culture, artists must abandon it in favor of the next cutting-edge style (Holt, 1990).

As Modernism’s pursuit of abstraction continued to confound mainstream society, the art critic attained a central role. Reliance on the authority of critical experts and theoreticians installed a Western aesthetic system which used a set of principles to evaluate works of art according to their formal abstract qualities (MacGregor, 1992). Those principles were assumed by artists and critics to be universal. Hart (1991) identified four prime criteria – individuality, originality, permanence, and form – as the hallmarks of this formalist - universalist aesthetic system.

Modernism’s drive to abstraction and apolitical art began to find opposition in the atmosphere of profound societal and political change that characterized the 1960s. The newly emerging post-Modern art theory held that art could no longer exist in a cultural vacuum. Artists began to see their works, not as objects to be protected from society’s abuses, but as weapons to use against those abuses.

At the same time that the works of many Western artists began to connect with the realities of life in the last half of the twentieth century, the advances of the Civil Rights movement and the women’s movement provided another impetus for the rise of Postmodernism. Minorities and women, who had been marginalized in white male dominated Western society, secured a place in a broad range of endeavors, including the visual arts.
As these groups began to gain a voice, they recognized a lack of connection between the values of the Western formalist tradition and their own lived experiences (Anderson, 1995). The long-held Modernist belief in art as universal communication and in the universality of aesthetic response to formal qualities in art began to give way to the Postmodern view that universal truths do not exist. Rather than immutable truths, the Postmodernists saw a collection of culturally-based preferences and attitudes. Hagaman (1990) cited the influence of feminist art critics in shifting the emphasis in criticism away from form to the role of narrative in works of art. Milbrandt (1998) summarized the tenets of Postmodern philosophy and their ensuing implications for visual art:

Postmodernism has decentered the individual and creativity (at least in theory) while emphasizing the interaction of language, culture, and society....Postmodernists assert that facts are interpretations and that truths are not always absolute. Knowledge itself is viewed through the lens of culture and language....In this postmodern era, pluralism has become the synonym for diversity in content and style. (pp. 47-48)

Because Postmodernism acknowledges the existence of multiple perspectives, it also recognizes that those perspectives may produce conflicting positions. Since it thrives on the juxtaposition of incongruent elements in new combinations, Postmodernism encourages cultural borrowing, ambiguity, and contradiction. Thus, individuals in Postmodern society can identify themselves
with any number of groups according to affinities of ethnicity, culture, age, and gender (MacGregor, 1992).

**Multicultural Art Education Models**

Banks (1988) identified four approaches to multicultural education. The first is the “contributions approach,” in which holidays and celebrations of heroes and heroines are observed on special days by activities disconnected from the rest of the curriculum. In the “additive approach” multicultural exemplars are connected to the regular curriculum, but they are presented only for their illustrative value to the mainstream culture. The “transformation approach” uses multiple perspectives to present issues and themes. Banks’ final approach, the “decision-making and social action approach” moves beyond recognition of cross-cultural contexts in the curriculum to spur students to take action against social and political inequities such as racism and sexism.

Sleeter and Grant (1987) developed a hierarchical list of five approaches to multicultural education, which Zimmerman (1990) adapted to visual arts education:

1. Additive – lessons or units with some ethnic content are added to the curriculum.
2. Cross-cultural celebrations – special events or holidays are observed with art activities to promote harmony in the classroom.
3. Single-group studies – the art of particular cultural groups is studied in order to promote issues of social justice or equity.
4. Cultural diversity – the curriculum is designed to reflect multiple ethnic and cultural perspectives. It emphasizes unity in diversity.

5. Decision-making and social action – teachers and students not only acknowledge diversity, but use art to challenge inequity and oppression of marginalized groups by the dominant culture (p. 24).

Clark (1998) noted two types of models for postmodern and multicultural art education. In the reformist model, culturally pluralistic exemplars and concepts enhance Western art forms and methods. This model includes four changes to traditional modernist art education practice: experimentation with alternative media and technologies, exploration of non-Western concepts of space and design, expansion of established artistic canons, and exposure to hidden stream art and artists. Rather than adapting an existing approach to art education, the reconstructionist model rejects traditional systems and replaces them with this sequence:

1. Learning begins with the lived experiences of the students;
2. These personal experiences are generalized using historical contexts;
3. A cross-cultural perspective is used to emphasize the human dimension; and
4. The students are challenged to articulate alternative futures and scenarios for social change. (pp. 9-10)

Clark proposed that the best model of art education is one which balances cultural pluralism with cultural assimilation, individual assignments with
group ownership of art projects, innovation with imitation, and cooperative learning strategies with competitive ones.

Chalmers (1992a, 1999), a major proponent of a discipline-based approach to multicultural art education, urged teachers to design programs that go at least as far as Banks’ transformation approach in examining concepts, issues, and themes from diverse cultural perspectives. Chalmers also proposed that by adding a dimension of social reconstruction, a DBAE-based multicultural art education could attain Banks’ highest level of multicultural education, that of decision making and social action. He suggested that it is possible to identify common views, vocabularies, and concepts across cultures while at the same time maintaining diversity and individuality. He developed a checklist of questions teachers should ask themselves in order to establish a balanced approach to multicultural art education:

1. Are we knowledgeable about and sensitive to students’ differing cultural backgrounds, values and traditions?

2. Do we demonstrate respect for cultures and backgrounds different from our own and acknowledge that all groups can produce and define cultural artifacts that are “excellent” and that in all cultures “art” exists for rather similar reasons?

3. Do we provide a classroom atmosphere in which students’ cultures are recognized, shared, and respected?
4. Are we developing, and actively encouraging the development by others, of culturally appropriate curricula materials to supplement those whose treatment of different groups is limited or biased?

5. Do we give students an opportunity to teach us what we don’t know or understand about the arts of their cultures? Do learning and teaching operate in both directions in DBAE classrooms? Do we involve parents and other community members in classroom activities? (p. 23)

Some multicultural education models are conceptually flawed to the extent that, in practice, they actually sabotage their own stated goals. Garber (1995) outlined four confusions about multicultural education which impede some programs from incorporating true cultural diversity. The first error involves the misinterpretation of what qualifies as cultural diversity. For example, selecting Spanish painter Francisco Goya as a representative of Hispanic culture or studying Picasso’s appropriation of African mask images mistakenly identifies examples within the Eurocentric tradition as multicultural art.

The second error Garber identified involves studying artworks and cultural artifacts from the dominant culture’s point of view. In many cases, teachers attempt to graft multicultural content onto existing programs without knowledge of or concern for the cultural context within which the art or artifact was produced. Ignorance of the history, beliefs, and practices of the culture in
which the artist or maker worked often leads to misunderstanding of the connection of ritual and meaning to the object being studied.

Homogenization is a third confusion hampering multicultural art education in some classrooms. This reckless practice occurs when several culturally distinct groups are erroneously assumed to be one homogeneous culture because they share a common factor such as language or racial identity. Hicks (1994) called this practice a “pedagogy of erasure” (p. 151). She related a personal anecdote which illustrates the damage the practice can inflict:

My assumption about the community membership and identities of my African American students led to the pedagogical assumption that they, as members of a greater African cultural heritage, would have some special affinity for African images and artifacts. . . . By linking African American students to Africa with the intention of empowering them through an exposure to African culture, other students were led to perceive these students as essentially African. This contributed to an erasure of their actual identities which had been formed in their own American contexts by the various communities to which they actively belonged. (p. 151)

The fourth confusion that Garber identified impairs multicultural art education by exoticizing the cultures it presents. Taking place most often in elementary programs intended to teach diversity, this approach directs students’ attention to “foreign” aspects of a culture such as food, clothing, or
music. Items produced for the tourist trade are often presented as authentic cultural artifacts. As a result, students receive the message that the culture is alien to their own “normal” culture. Thus, the students have been denied the opportunity to attain appreciation and respect for the culture’s customs and values.

To remedy these misconceptions about multicultural art education, Garber (1995) recommended that art educators develop a “border consciousness” (p. 223). In this model, teachers select one culture existing in close proximity to the dominant culture of the community in which they work. They then lead their students in a gradual and thorough assimilation of the culture. Immersion in the culture is essential to the realization of that goal. To access the culture, students must make direct contact with its members. Ideally, students should carry their educational experiences beyond the confines of the classroom and the school day in order to enter the culture and experience it on its own terms. The desired outcome for students is the development of new perspectives, values, and knowledge and, most importantly, “the decentralization of one’s own culture as right” (p. 230).

Postmodern pedagogy involving multicultural art calls for the establishment of a new education power structure. Desai (2000) declared that social, ideological, and cultural factors affect the representation of art from racially and ethnically marginalized groups. Control of those factors is in the hands of the dominant culture, which has a vested interest in speaking for marginalized groups in ways that preserve and extend its own political and
economic dominance. As evidence, she cited the fact that multicultural instructional resources published by the National Art Education Association in *Art Education* were drawn exclusively from major museums in the United States, rather than from “tribal” or “minority” museums. She pointed out that “what major museums exhibit as the history, values, beliefs, and identities of the community are in fact representations of certain powerful groups in society” (p. 119). Desai cautioned that such practices serve political interests and contribute to stereotypes and otherness, a phenomenon that places certain groups psychologically on the fringes of majority culture.

Fehr (1994) shared this view of the domination by majority culture of the representation of marginalized groups. He called for a new principle of art education, one that would expose the power structure that limits access for some to the art establishment. He suggested that the art classroom is only one of many venues where such learning should take place. He urged that teachers facilitate contact between students and the cultures present in their community, either by taking students out of the school building and into the community, or by bringing guest artists and speakers to the students. He also reminded teachers not to overlook the “art of the streets” (p. 6). Recognition of the power of the media to distort the characteristics of a culture is a key element of Fehr’s model of art education. He emphasized the importance of equipping students with the analytical skills to recognize the ability of the media to manipulate the representation of groups and individuals.
Many advocates of postmodern art education believe that multicultural contacts for students must begin in the local community in order to be effective. For them, multicultural content must be locally specific and locally controlled if it is to be meaningful. Students should be able to personalize their engagement with community based multicultural art education in ways that are meaningful to them (Anderson, 1996; Davenport & Zimmerman, 2001; Efland, Freedman, & Stuhr, 1996; Fehr, 1997; McFee, 1995; Muni, 1999; Zimmerman, 1999).

Community based learning is an important component in the multicultural and social reconstructionist model of education. In this model, students use analytical and critical thinking skills to identify and examine social issues and then act upon those issues with the intent of reforming society (Ciganko, 2000; Delacruz, 1996; Freedman, 2000; Hicks, 1994; Milbrandt, 1998; Perrin, 2001). One aim of multicultural and social reconstructionist education is the removal of barriers to the equitable distribution of social and political power and resources as a way to improve the academic achievement of all students. Taylor (2000) cautioned educators who desire to engage in social reconstructionist practices that doing so requires a strong commitment. She pointed out that motivating students to use art to inspire social change and instilling in them the hope that they can instigate such change cannot occur if students are given only a few examples of issues-oriented works of art to examine. Their engagement with socially responsive art must be deep and sustained.
Wasson, Stuhr, and Petrovich-Mwaniki (1990) identified six elements necessary to construct an effective program for teaching multicultural art in a social reconstructionist model. They stressed the importance of contact between students and the first-person histories of a culture’s members. They advocated: (1) a socioanthropological approach to learning about both the makers and the cultural context of art, (2) the exploration by teachers of their own cultural and social biases, (3) community based education that incorporates students’ cultural values in the planning of art instruction, (4) anthropological methods for identifying the values of cultures within the community and their influence on aesthetic production, (5) a culturally responsive pedagogy that reflects the sociocultural and ethnic diversity of the students and the community, and (6) a democratic approach which gives disenfranchised groups a voice in art education. They suggested that students follow these steps when exploring the art of various cultural groups:

1. identify important social issues related to religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, age, and mental and physical abilities,

2. gather data related to them,

3. clarify and challenge student values,

4. make reflective decisions,

5. take action to implement their decisions (Stuhr, 1995, p. 147)

Many elements of multicultural art education were incorporated into the Standards for Art Teacher Preparation (Henry, et al.,1999), presented by the National Art Education Association as a guideline for college and university art
teacher education programs. Among the repertoire of teaching skills proposed by the Standards are: (1) awareness of artists who represent gender and ethnic diversity, (2) knowledge of the cultural, historical, geographical, and stylistic contexts of artists and artifacts, (3) a global perspective on major artistic styles and historical periods, (4) understanding of the social, political, and economic issues which shape both traditional and contemporary art, and (5) sensitivity to culturally based differences in students’ artistic and aesthetic responses to art.

Another body, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) set benchmarks for exemplary teaching practices in Art Standards: Early Childhood and Middle Childhood (2000) and Art Standards: Early Adolescence Through Young Adulthood (2001). The NBPTS offers national certification for teachers who pass its rigorous evaluation process. In both documents, the NBPTS listed standards for accomplished art teachers, including competencies that relate to the teaching of multicultural art education. The NBPTS characterized accomplished art teachers as those who thoroughly research the cultural authenticity of art experiences and objects they present in class. Accomplished teachers also grasp the ritual and functional roles of authentic objects from diverse cultures. They recognize and respect their students’ culturally based perspectives and values, and they are aware of the influence of their own culture, biases, and values on their teaching. Above all, they guard against racist, sexist, and ethnocentric content
or attitudes that tend to stereotype some cultural groups and trivialize their traditions.

While all three of these standards documents accept the influence of socio-political contexts and issues on artistic production, they stop short of embracing the social reconstructionist model of art education. In fact, the multicultural and social reconstructionist model does not enjoy universal appeal among art educators. Much of the disagreement stems from teachers’ discomfort over presenting politically charged issues in the art classroom (Clark, 1998). Gallucci (1996) found that some teachers expressed the fear that presenting emotionally charged issues in the classroom would incur reprisals from their school officials and their community. Some teachers questioned the appropriateness of art education for addressing sociological ills. “Where is the integrity in this discipline when repeatedly art is seized upon as a vehicle to promote one cause after another?” Foley (1996, p. 5) asked. Stinespring (2001) wrote that some teachers see the social reconstructionist model as the loss of an opportunity for serious engagement in the making of art. Eisner (1994) expressed his reservations about the potential of the model to turn art education into a “handmaiden to the social studies” (p. 190).

**Multicultural Resources in Art Education**

*Celebrating Pluralism*, the 1993 seminar on Discipline Based Art Education and cultural diversity sponsored by the Getty Center for Education in the Arts offered not only addresses and breakout sessions; it also featured a commercial resource center of multicultural art education videos, slides, posters, games, and books. Upon perusing those materials, ethnic diversity specialist Christine Sleeter, one of the invited speakers, observed that most of
the resources failed to meet her criteria for multicultural material that is
critical, political, and action-oriented:

[T]o my dismay, I found that the great majority of the material
conceptualized multicultural art as the study of folk art around the world
(and usually “long ago”). Some materials . . . tended to focus on history
and to lack incisive critiques of race relations. I didn’t find anything that
drew on art produced by multiple American sociocultural groups, let
alone that focused on social justice issues. (in Cahan & Kocur, 1996, p.
8)

As interest in multicultural art education has grown, both individual
educators and commercial suppliers of art education materials have developed
many publications and other media to answer the call for multicultural
resources. Some of the instructional books are aimed at a primary audience of
elementary generalists, while others are intended for visual arts specialists. A
review of examples of publications in this genre reveals some issues which are
problematic. Often, they present lesson plans which guide students through
art production activities in which they imitate the art forms of various world
cultures. They devote little attention to the place of those art forms in each
culture. Often, too, contemporary “household” materials such as paper plates
or plastic soda bottles replace the indigenous media of the original art forms.
Such substitutions, while cost effective or practical, make it difficult for
students to access authentic learning experiences in their exploration of
multicultural art.
Delacruz (1996) conducted a study of multicultural art education products, analyzing materials that were advertised or promoted for multicultural content in school supply catalogs or at state and national art education conferences. She found discrepancies between many of those products and the multicultural curriculum approaches prevalent in the professional literature. While materials intended for use in secondary schools were less flawed than elementary level art texts and activity books, Delacruz found that most of the products she examined failed to match multicultural art education theory. Some of the merchandise guided students to focus on formal (Western) design concepts with traditional or exotic media. Others removed objects from their cultural contexts or implied incorrect aesthetic connections between “similar” works from diverse cultures. Still others treated multicultural art as a superficial whirlwind “world tour” of studio activities. Finally, many products presented only “safe” or “nice” works of art while ignoring those that addressed difficult social or political issues relating to the cultures in which their makers live and work.

Cahan and Kocur (1994) also discussed the scarcity of contemporary works relevant to social issues in multicultural art textbooks, slide sets, and reproductions. They cited the philosophical shift among contemporary artists and critics of the early 1990s toward a “politics of difference” (p. 26) which questioned monocultural views of history and authority. Without the inclusion of those artists’ works and perspectives as resources, social reconstructionist
multicultural art education could not fulfill its goal to question and reform present social conditions.

For socially responsive art education to effectively fulfill its potential to inspire ethical practices and reforms, the selection of materials and resources bears careful consideration. Sleeter (1996) urged educators to present learning experiences that engage students in thinking about and acting upon issues which affect the human condition. Wisely chosen materials enhance art education’s potential to repair political damage done to marginalized individuals and groups, but, as Henry and Nyman (1997) stated, “True multicultural art education should encompass the vast body of works of art created by the members of diverse cultural groups on a continual basis” (p. 93). It is also important that students have access to information on the rationale for selecting particular exemplars, including the cultural criteria applied to the choices (Collins & Sandell, 1992).

Marantz (1999) recommended picture books as effective materials to use in investigating cultures. For him, they offer an artist’s interpretation of the history, mythology, or contemporary life in his or her culture. They provide a means of translating that culture’s imagery to assist “aliens” to begin to understand some of the culture’s perspectives. Because each picture book offers only a glimpse of a culture as interpreted by a single artist, Marantz emphasized the importance of familiarizing oneself with several books from a region. Cruz-Jansen (1998) offered an important caveat for any teacher selecting multicultural materials for classroom use. She pointed out that some
culturally authentic materials promote negative stereotypes that may exist within a culture. Often, stories reveal gender and racial biases in a culture. She observed that in many Latino cultures, most of the folklore and literature emanate, not from the majority population of African and Indian ancestry, but from the Spanish-descended white Latino elite. “Just because a book is ‘multicultural’ doesn’t mean it is free of bias” (p. 1).

McFee (1993) cautioned that both teachers and students must be aware of cultural differences in aesthetics, cognition, and values. Thus, instructional materials which present multicultural content but are based on traditional Western concepts and values may not be effective for all students (Ecker, 1990). For example, Dilger (1994) pointed out that art education is deficient in the number of instructional materials written in languages other than English.

Chalmers (1996) proposed a multicultural discipline based art curriculum, which emphasizes various cultures’ approaches to dealing with universal themes. His view echoes Dissanayke’s (1993) work, which stresses the arts’ universality across time and place. She called for attention to be paid to the work, the artist, the audience, and the function of art in the society where it was produced.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Preliminary Study

The genesis of this investigator's interest in multicultural art education began with a research project conducted in 1992 for a course in art education research methods. The purpose of that study was to investigate the status of multicultural education in current art curriculum practices. An objective and anecdotal questionnaire was administered to the subject population. The sample was made up of 12 K-12 visual art teachers who participated together in a staff development activity. All participants were certified art specialists who taught in a suburban school district in Georgia.

The survey consisted of seven self-report items which requested information about the instructional content of teachers’ art lessons, as well as information about the participants’ grade level assignments, years of teaching experience, and levels of training (see Appendix A). Two of the questions asked teachers for subjective anecdotal responses regarding the study of Western and non-Western art. The surveys were mailed to the participants and were returned anonymously. All surveys were answered and returned to the researcher.

The survey responses were tabulated to determine the extent to which teachers were dealing with art forms from various cultures and the percentage
of time that they would devote to teaching about the art of those cultures if they had adequate resources to do so. The participants’ answers to the items on the questionnaire demonstrated that they placed more emphasis on Western or Eurocentric art than on the art forms of non-Western cultures. Survey results indicated that the teachers who responded to the questionnaire devoted an average of 54.4% of their instructional time to the teaching of Western art forms and 45.6% of their time dealing with multicultural art.

The teachers did indicate, however, that they would prefer to deal with multicultural art education during a larger percentage of their instructional time if they had appropriate resources and adequate personal expertise. Respondents reported that, if they were given appropriate resources, the distribution of instructional time would change to a mean of 23.8% for Western art, while the teaching of the art of non-Western cultures would increase to a mean of 70.2%.

Twelve of the participants chose to express their opinions on survey items which called for anecdotal responses. They were divided in answering the question, “Do you feel that too much emphasis is put on the study of Western art?” For seven teachers, Western art was indeed overemphasized, while five teachers stressed its importance, citing it as a source of “our heritage and our roots” or as a way for students to “understand changes in history.”

Despite their differences regarding the teaching of Western art, all respondents agreed that more emphasis should be placed on the study of non-Western art. Lack of resources and lack of personal knowledge were identified
by four participants as impediments to incorporating more multicultural lessons into the art classroom. “Since these movements often involve themes, ideas, and religious subject matter that is very different from our own,” cautioned one teacher, “I feel that principals, parents, etc. are not very receptive to the idea of these movements.”

**The 2003-2004 Study**

**Subjects**

The subjects for the current study were K-12 visual arts teachers within Georgia who utilize multicultural content in classroom instruction. The case selected for this study consisted of K-12 visual arts teachers in a suburban school district near a major metropolitan area. A survey instrument was administered to identify teachers in the school district who incorporate multicultural content in their classroom instruction (see Appendix B). The intent of the selection process was to find “information rich cases” (Patton, 1990) of teachers who have experience with multicultural art education. Fourteen participants were selected based on their responses to the survey instrument and their willingness to participate in an interview. All subjects in the sample population were certified to teach visual art in grades K-12. At the time of the study, three participants held bachelors degrees and eleven participants had earned masters degrees or were enrolled in graduate coursework leading to a masters degree. Five participants completed their undergraduate degrees in studio art, and nine participants held undergraduate degrees in art education. Because the research done in preparing the review of
literature for this study revealed that multicultural topics began to appear
genently in the professional literature of art education by 1990, it is relevant
to point out that six of the subjects had completed their undergraduate degrees
and begun their careers prior to that year. Among the 11 masters degrees held
or being completed by participants, five were in art education, five were in
general elementary or primary education, and one was in sculpture. The
subjects’ length of service in art education ranged from two to 20 years. Three
participants had taught five years or less, five had six to ten years experience,
two had taught eleven to fifteen years, and four teachers had sixteen to twenty
years experience. At the time of the study, seven subjects were teaching in
elementary schools, three in middle schools, and four in high schools.

**Design of the Study**

The design of the study was descriptive in nature, examining the
perceptions and practices of 14 K-12 visual art teachers regarding
multicultural art education. The study took place between August 2003 and
February 2004. There is no assumption that the findings pertain to a longer
period of time. The study was limited to a narrowly defined population and
purposeful sampling (Huberman & Miles, 1998; Merriam, 1998), rather than
random sampling, was applied. According to Merriam (1998), “Purposeful
sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover,
understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which
the most can be learned” (p. 61). The intent of the study was to generate a
description of the participants’ perspectives on multicultural art education and
their classroom practices involving multicultural content. The participants were informed of the intentions of the researcher, who employed a multiple site case study that incorporated the responses of fourteen teachers working at thirteen different locations. Only two of the participants were assigned to teach at the same school. It was expected that the teachers’ responses would provide evidence of the nature of their involvement with multicultural art education and the extent to which they integrate it in their classrooms.

**Research Procedures**

**Origin of the Research Idea**

As discussed earlier in this chapter, a preliminary survey of K-12 visual art teachers concerning multicultural art education was conducted in 1992. The purpose of that survey was to determine the amount of instructional time teachers devoted to multicultural content, as well as their positions on the desirability of teaching about the art of non-Western cultures. At the time of the initial survey, interest in multicultural art education was growing within the art education community. The review of the literature for this study revealed that articles on multicultural art education topics had begun to appear regularly in the art education literature by 1990. Later, the prevalence of multicultural art education in the literature peaked between 1997 and 2001.

The review of literature also disclosed that many authors have published books and articles on the topic of multicultural art education, but that by far, the majority of them discussed the topic from the stance of advocacy or theory building. There have been few articles devoted to teachers’ classroom practices
with multicultural art education. This absence of discourse on instructional practice prompted an interest on the part of the researcher to learn more about what actually transpires when multicultural content enters the classroom.

**Developing Questions for the Study**

Initially, the researcher was interested in exploring how the concepts of multicultural art education translate from the literature to the classroom and whether the prevalent perspectives of multicultural art education literature have informed or altered teachers’ approaches to multicultural content. As described in Chapter One, seven topics within multicultural art education emerged through an examination of the literature to define the direction of this investigation. The topics are: 1) curriculum, content, and resources, 2) art education, political action, and social reform, 3) aesthetics, 4) Western and non-Western artistic traditions, 5) cultural contexts of objects and artifacts, 6) teacher training, and 7) cultural contexts of teachers and learners.

Within these topics, issues to be investigated for this study were identified. The following issues were identified for each topic:

1. Curriculum, content, and resources
   - Do teachers believe that studying multicultural content in visual art classes contributes to greater tolerance of diversity?
   - What approaches do teachers use when teaching multicultural content?
   - What are teachers’ perceptions of the resources available to them for teaching multicultural content?

2. Art education, political action, and social reform
• What role do social issues play in teachers’ classroom instruction?

3. Aesthetics

• What principles guide teachers’ approaches to aesthetics?

4. Western and non-Western artistic traditions

• What are teachers’ perceptions of the relationship of Western artistic traditions to the contemporary cultural makeup of the United States?

5. Cultural contexts of objects and artifacts

• To what extent do teachers establish a cultural framework for the objects and artifacts they present to their students?

6. Teacher training

• What are the sources for teachers’ knowledge of multicultural art education?

7. Cultural contexts of teachers and learners

• What has been the impact of teaching multicultural content on teachers’ own perceptions and perspectives?

Designing the Instrument for the Study

Once the guiding questions for the study were delineated, an instrument to solicit responses from the study participants was designed. Because of the initial interest in the rendition of theory into practice, it was decided that the instrument would consist of passages from the literature on multicultural art education to which the participants would be asked to respond. In most cases, participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the quoted passages. In some cases, they were asked to choose from two quotations, the
one most closely aligned with their own perspective on a given topic. In other cases, follow-up questions asked teachers to reflect on their own practices or to give examples from their classroom experience. These quotes and questions were selected for the interview instrument. Follow-up questions are shown in italics:

**Curriculum, Content, and Resources**

A. We should be suspicious of ... programs that assess and judge all art using only Western aesthetic tenets. (Chalmers, 1992a, p. 19)

*Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please explain why.*

B. [D]ividing the [National] Standards [for Visual Arts Education] into disciplines – art, music, dance, and theater – and dividing visual art into the ... disciplines of production, criticism, art history, and aesthetics is quintessentially Western in conception and structure. This selects against the nature, forms, and structure of the arts from many of the world’s non-Western cultures, in which the arts are connective and integrative rather than disciplinarily distinct. (Anderson, 1996, p. 58)

1. *Do you agree or disagree that the Western based concepts of Discipline Based Art Education were inadequate for understanding the art of non-Western cultures?*

2. *Simply put, do you believe that the Discipline Based Art Education model worked for teaching and learning about the art forms of all cultures?*
C. [T]he broad categories of multicultural and cross cultural arts are absent or
given token representation in most art education textbooks and state

1. Considering the texts and curriculum guidelines available to you, do you
agree with this statement?

2. This statement was made in 1989. As you have watched changes in
curriculum and resources over the past decade, has this situation
improved, deteriorated, or stayed the same?

3. Are there any materials or resources you have found to be particularly
useful for multicultural content? If so, give examples.

D. [S]tudying even just one other culture leads to greater tolerance of diversity
because “the de-centralization of one’s own culture as right’ will have a
transferability to learning about other cultures and cultural artifacts.”
(Davenport, 2000, p. 369)

Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please explain why.

E. [O]ne error is to “exoticize” a culture or people, for in “exoticizing” we make
that culture or people “other” than ourselves....Focusing on food and
clothing in a multicultural unit turns attention to color and taste
differences. If we go no further, we are making superficial differentiations
based on the look or taste of something. This is one of the most common
errors...in teaching diversity at the elementary school level. (Garber, 1995,
p. 222)
Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please explain why.

F. [imitative multicultural art lessons using inauthentic household materials]

[The]he stated outcomes may be laudable, but in the process of translating them into classroom “activities”, the art form or technique being studied becomes trivialized.... (Chalmers, 1992a, p. 18)

1. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please explain why.

2. Are you able to present multicultural studio experiences that preserve the authenticity of the art from being studied? Why or why not?

3. Is the multicultural studio activity still worth doing if you must use household materials?

Art Education, Political Action, and Social Reform

G. Accomplished teachers are alert to stereotypical, racist, sexist, and ethnocentric content in written resources, works of art, current events, and in the play, language, and social interactions of students. (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2001, p. 29)

1. Is there a place for issues involving bias, prejudice, discrimination, and racism in your classroom instruction?

2. If so, how do you address them? Please give examples.

3. Are these topics desirable for art class content? If you agree with this statement, are there any impediments which hamper you from addressing these issues?
H. Bringing works of art that deal with social issues into the art classroom is one way of making visible to our students some of the social issues and concerns of our world. (Taylor, 2002, p. 48)

_Do you agree or disagree that visual arts instruction should address social issues? Please explain why._

I. Art education should be centered on contemporary social issues and not individualized art-making activities. (Delacruz, 1996, p. 87)

1. _Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please explain why._

2. _What is the appropriate role of social issues in the art classroom?_

3. _What is the appropriate role of studio production in the art classroom?_

J. Some school teachers have expressed an understandable concern that the current emphasis on such emotionally charged issues as multiculturalism, feminism, and ecological consciousness-raising puts them under pressure to politicize their art classrooms beyond the tolerance of local school authorities and home communities. (Gallucci, 1996, p. 5)

1. _Have you experienced any resistance to or censorship of multicultural issues and content in your classroom?_

2. _If you have experienced resistance or censorship, has it come from administrators, students, parents, the community, or from some other source?_
Aesthetics

K. Consider these statements which reflect two opposing views of aesthetics:

All art can be understood through certain analytical (Western) aesthetic models. (Freedman, 1994a, p. 133)

Each art form has its own internal aesthetic which must be evaluated from within its own set of standards. There is, therefore, no one universal aesthetic which applies to all art forms. (Hart, 1991, p. 150)

Which statement most closely reflects your own philosophy of aesthetics?

Please explain your choice.

L. Critical differences in perceptions and expectations across cultures do exist. . . .(Morain, 1986, p. 4)

Art teacher candidates. . . are sensitive to differences in artistic and aesthetic responses of students to works of art and to the varying artistic and aesthetic values of different cultures. (Henry et al., 1999, p. 11)

1. Do you agree or disagree? Please explain why.

2. How do you approach aesthetics in your classroom? Do you vary your approach according to the cultures represented in your classroom?

3. What kinds of activities involving aesthetics do your students engage in?

Western and Non-Western Artistic Traditions

M. No racial, cultural, or national group makes art that is superior to another’s. (Stinespring & Kennedy, 1995, p. 140)

Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please explain why.
N. I believe the traditionalist notion that the Western canon is sufficiently broad and multifaceted to serve a multicultural, multilingual, multi-ethnic United States is myopic. (Anderson, 1996, p. 57) American culture is not synonymous with Western traditions and Western values. (Sahasrabudhe, 1992, p. 14)

1. *Do you agree or disagree? Please explain why.*

2. *What comprises American culture?*

Cultural Contexts of Objects and Artifacts

O. [Teachers] know that sometimes authentic objects that are made for specific ritual or ceremonial functions in one society might be perceived as objects of art or teaching tools by those outside the culture. In helping students examine the roles and purposes of art artifacts, and artists in diverse cultures, accomplished teachers generate learning experiences that foster respect for the customs of others. (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2001, p. 28 and 2000, p. 24)

1. *Can you effectively present a cultural artifact in a visual art class without placing the object within its cultural framework? Should you?*

2. *Is it important to learn about the culture in which an art object was produced to learn about the object itself?*

P. [T]he *technical* and *formal* attributes of artifacts are often focused upon in art curriculum, making vitally different cultural artifacts appear to be similar. (Freedman, 1994b, p. 166)
1. Describe your typical approach to presenting a cultural artifact or object to your students.

2. What techniques do you use to lead students through an exploration of the object?

3. Do you ask questions to guide students’ observations? If so, give examples.

Teacher Training

Q. Teacher education programs in the visual arts provide ...

(a) experiences which train students to engage in inquiry in the history of art, acquire knowledge of the context in which works of art have been created, and foster respect for all forms of art. Students are introduced to artists and artifacts from a variety of cultures, periods, places and style. . . .

(b) a knowledge of the cultural context surrounding major artistic styles and historical periods of the development of art from a global perspective. This knowledge includes those political, economic and social issues surrounding the emergence of traditional and contemporary art forms....

(c) a knowledge of traditional and contemporary artists representative of diversity in regard to gender and ethnicity. . . . (Henry et al., 1999, pp 3-4)
1. Do you feel that you have been well prepared to teach multicultural content? If so, did that preparation come from your university art education teacher training experience?

2. Please describe your university experience regarding your preparation to teach multicultural content.

3. Please describe any other sources for your knowledge of multicultural art education outside your university experience.

R. Accomplished teachers research concepts and topics they wish to explore with their students to make sure the learning experiences selected are authentic to the traditions of the culture being considered and relevant to students. (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2001, p. 29 and 2000, p. 25)

1. Do you research the authenticity of concepts and examples attributed to a culture before presenting multicultural content in your classroom?

2. Where do you go to find the information you need to present multicultural content?

Cultural Contexts of Teachers and Learners

S. We acknowledge teaching as cultural and social intervention and therefore, in any teaching endeavor, it is imperative that teachers not only confront, but also consistently be aware of their own cultural and social biases. (Wasson, Stuhr, & Petrovich-Mwaniki, 1990, p. 235)
1. How has the experience of presenting multicultural content affected you as the teacher?

2. Have you had experiences in teaching multicultural content which have caused you to adjust or realign your own attitudes and opinions?

T. Teachers understand the importance of respecting cultural values and norms that students bring from home. They know that there are contrasting cultural views of some art concepts and that not all cultures share the same aesthetic. (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2001, p. 28 and 2000, p. 24)

1. Describe briefly the demographic makeup of your student population.

2. Have you planned instruction to reflect this makeup?

3. How do you inform yourself about the cultural makeup of your student population?

Phase One: Selecting the Target Population

Because of the availability of baseline data from the 1992 survey, it was decided to conduct a case study of visual arts teachers in the same school district where the 1992 project was conducted. Merriam (1998) recommended that a study of a single case be used when “we have a general question, an issue, a problem that we are interested in, and we feel that an in-depth study of a particular instance or case will illuminate that interest” (p. 65). Eisner (1998) pointed out that discoveries about a single case are relevant to the larger class from which it is drawn in a qualitative study:
The theme, embodied in the particular situation, extends beyond the situation itself. . . . What one learns about one school can raise one’s consciousness to features that might be found in other schools; the study does not claim that other schools will share identical or even similar features but rather that these are features one might look for in other schools. (p. 103)

Since one focus for this study was the teachers’ classroom practices, selecting the case from a single school district offered certain advantages. First, although budget funding levels might vary among individual schools at the discretion of the principals, all teachers have access to the same district-adopted materials and resources. Teachers can also avail themselves of additional resources which are readily available due to the district’s proximity to a major metropolitan area. Additionally, the district’s K-12 visual art curriculum is based on the Georgia Quality Core Curriculum for Visual Art (Georgia Department of Education, 1996) which, in turn, reflects the principles and priorities of the National Standards for Visual Arts (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, 1994). Thus, teachers in the school district are expected to craft their instructional practices to fit the same curricular framework. Finally, because of the availability of baseline data from the 1992 study, longitudinal changes in the status of multicultural art education in the district could be assessed.

Statistics gathered from the Georgia County Guide (University of Georgia, 1998) show that the diversity of the community served by the school district
has grown since 1990. In that year, the population of the county covered by the school district was listed as 91% White, 7.9% African American, 1.1% Hispanic, and 1.1% “Other”. By 2000, those numbers had shifted to show 75.91% White, 18.42% African American, 2.86% Hispanic, and 1.61% Other (CensusScope, 2004).

The diversity of the student population of the schools has grown as well. The district’s 1992 ten-year self study reported the student population as 89% White, 9.6% African American, .7% Hispanic, .6% Asian, and .1% Native American. In January, 2004, 56.6% of the students were White, 33.5% were African American, 4.8% were Hispanic, 3.5% were multi-ethnic, 1.5% were Asian and .1% were Native American (---- School System Student Ethnic Report). Data from the school district’s program of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), a program established to serve migrant and immigrant students, demonstrate the growth of diversity within the student population. The first formal ESOL program began at one high school in 1994 and enrolled four students. Since that time, the ESOL program has grown to serve 338 students in 23 schools in 2003. In that year, 19 different language groups and 25 countries were represented in the school district (C. Barnes, personal communication, December 9, 2003).

**Phase Two: Selecting the Sample Population**

For Phase Two, a survey was developed and permission was received from the school district’s instructional supervisor to contact visual art teachers. The survey consisted of ten self-report items asking teachers to
record the percentage of instructional time they devote to Western and non-Western cultures. Three questions asked teachers to give anecdotal responses about their perspectives on the teaching of Western and non-Western art.

The survey, along with a cover letter soliciting the participants’ participation and an informed consent form, was mailed to each visual art teacher in the school district (see Appendix B and Appendix C). A total of 21 surveys were mailed. Of that number, 16 were completed and returned and results were tabulated. The intention was to eliminate from the pool of potential participants any teachers who do not include non-Western content in their classroom instruction. Therefore, any teachers who indicated that 100% of their instruction dealt with traditional Western art would be eliminated from the case. However, each teacher who returned the survey indicated at least 21% of instructional time devoted to the art of non-Western cultures. Thus, all 16 survey respondents met the qualifications to join the case and participate in the interview phase of the study.

Phase Three: Scheduling the Case Interviews

A request to schedule an interview and a cover letter explaining the content and logistics of the case interviews were mailed to the 16 potential subjects (see Appendix D). Fourteen teachers responded that they were willing to be interviewed. Two teachers did not return the response form, so the final sample population consisted of 14 members. Within the final group of visual art teachers, seven taught elementary grades Kindergarten through five at the
time of the study, three taught middle grades six through eight, and four taught high school grades nine through twelve.

Each participant was contacted to schedule a convenient time and location for his or her interview. All but three of the interviews were conducted at the participants’ school work sites. Two participants preferred to be interviewed at the researcher’s work site, and one participant was interviewed in her studio.

**Phase Four: Conducting the Case Interviews**

The first interview was conducted in October 2003, and the final interview was completed in February 2004. The researcher followed the same procedure for every interview. Each one was recorded on a Sony ICD-ST-10 digital recorder and was later downloaded via computer onto an audio compact disk. To lessen the possibility that any interview data might be lost due to a mechanical malfunction, all interviews were also recorded on a portable cassette recorder. Each participant was made aware that his or her answers were being recorded.

To insure consistency, the introductory instructions and interview questions were read aloud to the participants from a prepared script (see Appendix E). Each quotation was printed in a large, readable font (minimum 18 point) on a separate 5 ½ inch by 8 ½ inch card. The author citations for the quoted passages were omitted from the cards so that participants’ responses would not be influenced positively or negatively if they recognized the names of the authors of the passages. Participants were allowed to read each card
silently at a comfortable pace before being asked follow-up questions based on
the quotes.

The majority of the interviews were easily completed within the 30 to 45
minute time frame conveyed to the subjects in the cover letter soliciting their
participation. The shortest interview lasted 28 minutes and the longest one
required 75 minutes.

Phase Five: Transcribing the Interviews

In Phase Five the interviews were transcribed verbatim from the
downloaded audio files. Each completed transcription was checked for
accuracy against the audio recording of the interview. To further insure
accuracy, the finished transcripts were made available to the participants for
their review. No participants requested any changes or corrections, so it was
assumed that the transcriptions were faithful to the content of the interviews.

Phase Six: Analyzing Data from the Interview Transcripts

In Phase Six the data gathered in the interviews was analyzed. To
facilitate the placement of data into categories corresponding to the interview
questions, the transcripts were typed onto a blank interview script template.
After each interview transcript was read, a written summary was prepared and
is included in Chapter Four. Data from the transcripts was rearranged and
grouped together by the question numbers to compare all participants’
responses to each question. The answers were compared and relevant
comments and new concepts were noted. The final analysis of this data is
presented in Chapter Five.
Summary

The study consisted of six phases which focused on the perceptions and practices of 14 K-12 visual art teachers regarding multicultural art education. Phase One selected a target population of 21 K-12 art educators in a suburban school district which was located near a major city and based its visual art curriculum on the National Standards for Visual Art Education. A survey instrument was administered in Phase Two in order to select the 16 teachers who indicated that they taught multicultural content. In Phase Three, the researcher solicited the continued participation of those subjects and scheduled interviews with the 14 individuals who agreed to participate. Those teachers became the sample population and were interviewed in Phase Four. In the interview, they were asked to respond to passages drawn from multicultural art education literature. Phase Five consisted of transcribing the interviews and checking them for accuracy. In Phase Six, the data from the interviews was summarized and analyzed to establish an accurate depiction of the teachers’ perspectives on multicultural art education. The summary of the data which emerged from each participant’s interview is reported in Chapter IV, and Chapter V presents the cross-case analysis of the data.
CHAPTER IV
SUMMARY OF CASE INTERVIEWS

Introduction

After the participant interviews were recorded, transcribed, and checked for accuracy, each one was summarized to provide information about each participant’s perspectives and practices concerning multicultural art education. Information is also given about each participant’s education, experience, teaching assignment, and student population.

One important factor that has influenced the configuration of the elementary art program during the 2003-2004 school year should be discussed here. Before August 2003, each elementary school in the district was served by one full time art teacher and one full time music teacher. The district used local monies to fund all elementary fine arts teaching positions. Due to shortfalls in local revenues and federally and state mandated staffing requirements for elementary schools, the district was unable to continue full funding for all elementary fine arts positions for 2003-2004 (C. Barnes, personal communication, November 12, 2003). It reduced its elementary art and music teaching staff by half. Elementary fine arts teachers were assigned to two schools. At the request of the elementary music teachers, each
elementary fine arts teacher taught for nine week quarters at each of his or her two schools, rotating a total of four times during the school year.

Rather than being an isolated case of changing local priorities, the cutbacks in instructional time for art may represent a growing national trend caused by the federal *No Child Left Behind Act*. In a study conducted by the Council for Basic Education (*Academic Atrophy*, 2004), 25% of 956 school principals surveyed reported decreased instructional time for the arts due to the need to meet *No Child Left Behind* standards in reading, math, and science. In schools with large minority populations, the act’s impact was even greater as 42% of the principals of high minority schools said that they expect additional decreases in arts instructional time.

**Summary of Case Interview of Teacher A**

Teacher A works in a high school with a population of approximately 1450 students. As the only art teacher in his school, he teaches a range of courses in both two and three-dimensional media. Teacher A holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Drawing and Painting and a Master of Fine Arts degree in Sculpture with add-on certification in Art Education. He has seven years of teaching experience at the high school level and two years experience teaching at a fine arts academy.

**Curriculum, Content, and Resources**

Teacher A agreed that Western aesthetic tenets are not appropriate for assessing and judging all art. According to him:
Aesthetics come out of cultural traditions. There are lots of variant cultural traditions that are quite different from our own. I mean, just the concept of perspective in Western art is very different from Asian art, the way they stack space. The notion of realism in a lot of Western traditions is very different from the symbolic use of forms in say, African art or Pre-Columbian art. There are different systems of meaning, but I think that it helps us to see how other cultures set up those symbolic systems.

Regarding the practices of Discipline-Based Art Education which separate visual art into the four disciplines of production, criticism, art history, and aesthetics, Teacher A acknowledged that such divisions do not reflect the way that the arts exist in some cultures. However, he felt that the reality of the current structure of public education necessitates a certain amount of categorization and division. He spoke of the difficulty of achieving a balance between the Western preference for separation into categories and the need to recognize the integrative nature of the arts in many cultures:

Those discrete categories often don’t exist in real experience as strictly as we create them in academics, in an attempt to pigeonhole things academically. I think it’s true that art is a unifying and integrative experience that transcends categories and that should be part of what we try to teach, or impart in giving students an experience of aesthetics and art. But it’s probably necessary to some extent for setting up a curriculum to have those sorts of things. It’s just another situation where the ideal clashes up against the reality of having to set up a school
system or curriculum. I think it’s sort of regrettable, but we can always try to balance those two opposing ends of the spectrum. I think that the idea of what non-Western society is – like Balinese theater that might combine dance, music, and all these things with rituals and beliefs – would be hard for somebody from outside to experience unless they were in the culture. But we should try to impart that sort of understanding to students. But I don’t think we can well merge the curriculum into some sort of multimedia catch-all either.

He was not ready to reject the Discipline-Based approach to art education as a starting point for students to approach the art forms of any given culture, so long as the teacher emphasizes the cultural context of those art forms:

It’s probably a workable model to expose the students, but, hopefully in the end, students will get the idea that this is sort of extraction from the cultural, and within the culture those things exist together in a more unified whole and not as these little pigeonholed activities. How many students really get that from the experience I’m not sure.

Teacher A believes that the resources available to teach multicultural art content have increased in number over the last decade. “I think most of the current materials I’ve seen have really tried to counterbalance the old tendency to just emphasize Western culture, or have made an attempt,” he stated. He cited decisions by individual teachers and constraints on instructional time as two limitations on the effective presentation of multicultural content:
Now whether individual teachers implement those things in the same ratio that they're in the curriculum materials is quite up to question. I know in my own experience, I've tried to include more non-Western cultures, but just with the timeline you’re given and with an eighteen week semester, it’s difficult.

In his own classroom Teacher A found videos to be a useful resource for presenting multicultural content. He depended on the collection of a museum on the campus of a local university for information on pre-Columbian culture. He also found teaching materials prepared by the staff of a large metropolitan art museum to be excellent for teaching about African art and contemporary works by African American artists.

Teacher A agreed that there is value in studying the art and artifacts of other cultures in order to de-centralize the assumed rightness of mainstream culture. In his words, “studying other cultures through their art, their material culture, and their belief systems...opens us up and probably does make us more tolerant.” He warned, though, that teachers must exercise caution and objectivity to take students beyond the level of superficial and stereotypical differences:

I think it’s a mistake in some cases to exoticize or romanticize or just focus on phenomenal aspects of culture . . . that make them different from us. On the same token, other cultures are different. We learn about the differences, we learn about the similarities, and I think we have to be careful to try to be objective and to open students’ minds
about different belief systems and so on without trying to make it
entertainment, focusing too much on the exotic, focusing egregiously on
that aspect of things. If you start talking about Mayan art and
civilization or Aztec civilization, pretty soon the kids ask, “Did they really
sacrifice people?” A lot of kids will just focus on the blood and gore and
not really see the underlying belief system, which was rituals based on
trying to insure agricultural productivity. It’s hard for them to
understand how those kinds of things can be related. I think we want to
avoid egregiously exoticizing people, but at the same time realizing that
there are differences in cultures, but that we’re all human and that there
are similarities as well.

Teacher A recognizes the danger of trivializing the art forms and
production techniques of a culture by merely imitating cultural examples or
creating “faux” artifacts with improvised materials. To minimize such
mistakes, he tried to open his students’ eyes to the aesthetic perspective of the
culture being studied. He explained his approach:

If you were doing Native American and you went out and bought feathers
from a craft store, you can end up making things that look like tourist
trinkets. I think the essential – what we try to do is impart an
understanding of their culture and their point of view and try to have the
students make aesthetic judgments that are tempered from that
understanding. Whether they make objects that look old or new, they
somehow reflect different visions and concepts that those cultures may reflect.

He used an example of a ceramics lesson to illustrate his attempt to preserve cultural authenticity:

If you were doing pre-Columbian ceramics and you talked about their forming methods and you had a background of their mythology and their relation to the land, and you did something on slip decoration. I think the students could respond with slip painting on vessels in a way that’s authentic to them, but that’s been tempered and transformed by their exposure to pre-Columbian ceramics. To just imitate the work is probably to miss the point to some extent. Hopefully their vision would be transformed after they were exposed.

**Art Education, Political Action, and Social Reform**

Teacher A did not shy away from politically charged content, but he did not plan lessons specifically to deal with political or social issues. He preferred to allow such topics to arise naturally out of his students’ responses to artworks in the course of a lesson. He provided an anecdote which demonstrates the circumstances under which issues involving bias or prejudice became part of his instructional activities:

I don’t think that I have consciously written lesson plans around those things as much as they may come up in discussions of reproductions of artworks, especially contemporary artwork that is politically provocative
or deals with stereotypes and that sort of thing. I’ve had students react to things that I wasn’t aware of initially. I remember showing a student some of the early cartoons because of their interest in cartooning. I was showing him the “Yellow Man” cartoons. He had an Asian background and reacted really negatively toward the stereotype. I explained that that was part of the 1920s. Stereotypes of Chinese or Asian people with exaggerated racial features were more common in humor, even in the Second World War with exaggerated Japanese buck teeth and slanted eyes. Beginning to see and understand those things is part of being visually aware, but I don’t consciously plan that as part of the lesson as much as I’ve responded to students’ reactions.

While he was firm in his support of making room for social and political issues in the art classroom, He was equally firm in his contention that art learning should be centered on production. He clarified his position on social issues versus art production:

I do agree that social issues have a part and that those two realms overlap. But I still feel that the benefits students get from art production activities and the understanding they can come to through those activities is of more importance in my opinion than addressing social issues through art. . . . I think that studio production is more enhanced and meaningful to the extent that you make students aware of lots of cultural traditions and all the other issues that have gone into the many, many streams of influence that have come into art throughout time.
I usually don’t spend a large amount of time in my classes dealing with [social issues]. I maybe do ten or fifteen percent during a semester because personally I feel I’m just more biased toward those unifying aspects of aesthetic experience. I guess to some extend I just have a problem with art that tries to be too blatantly political.

He found that lessons focused on art criticism furnished what he considers his best opportunity to introduce contemporary issues:

I think it’s a viable vehicle to discuss social issues during art criticism activities, maybe putting in a number of works that would provoke strong reaction in terms of awareness of those things. I would still in my classroom make it part of the realm that overlaps art, just like it overlaps a lot of other issues.

Teacher A was aware that social and political issues presented in a public school classroom can potentially engender controversy or censorship. He discussed his approach to sensitive instructional content. In his opinion, it is appropriate for the teacher to open students’ eyes to all sides of an issue related to the art they are studying. He did not believe, however, that the teacher should espouse a particular stance on most issues:

I try to address things with an open mind and get students to address them with an open mind. But I am aware that if one were to skew the curriculum too much to try to impart a certain point of view, it could raise the hackles of local people, and that is kind of a tightrope to walk. I’m not really afraid of that. It’s just that I feel it’s not my role to push
those things to the extent that anyone would feel that an art lesson was politicized too much to the left or too much to the right or anything like that. But I’m aware of that existing as a danger or as a possibility in some cases.

He said that including political or social issues in his classroom had not subjected him to any form of censorship from school administrators, parents, or the community, although he was prepared to defend his choices if they were ever challenged:

I’ve thought sometimes about materials that I’ve put out or shown students that some religiously conservative parents might object to – nudity in paintings and things like that – but I weigh things before I display them. I basically feel that if I were challenged, that I would feel comfortable defending my position to use those as curriculum materials.

He did express some concern over students’ responses to issues oriented content and the resulting influence on some teachers’ practices:

I think sometimes teachers, myself included, may avoid or not go into [social issues] much because racial stereotypes and so on are so sensitive to a lot of students. You don’t know how their reaction goes. I suppose that that’s more reason that we should try to open those things up and have dialogue to heal over the automatic emotional reaction and try to shed some light and understanding on it. Art is certainly one avenue to explore that.
Aesthetics

Teacher A agreed that Western aesthetic models are not universal. He expressed his strong belief that:

Art is understood through its context. We have to constantly strive to expand the students’ notion of what the context for the creation of the artwork is. There are multiple interpretations of reality through art....I think that any culture that makes art is doing it for a reason that was generated within that culture and it’s valid and deeply meaningful within that culture.

He emphasized the need for university art education programs to prepare teacher candidates to acknowledge culturally based aesthetic standards. “I think it should be a goal of teacher preparation programs to broaden the awareness of students to different aesthetic belief systems from different cultures,” he explained.

In his own classroom Teacher A varied his approach to aesthetics according to the cultural art forms or artifacts he presented. He used a lesson on African masks to illustrate his technique:

If I’m talking about African masks, and the students are saying, ‘This looks really creepy,’ or ‘I don’t like it because it doesn’t look realistic,’ I try to impart to them that the real purpose there is through symbolic power and through abstract symbolic language that’s not really concerned so much with realism, that meaning is compressed, that several different things may exist simultaneously in one form, and that
Western art is often limited in that a thing has to be specifically what it is and not something else. In art from other societies that we might consider primitive, things can have three or four roles simultaneously. Those are higher, more metaphorical ways of thinking.

Despite his commitment to informing students about different aesthetic systems, he was unsure of how well he succeeded in meeting that goal:

I don't know how successful I am in class. Outside of production, I guess it’s pretty much limited to discussion and art criticism exercises, looking at art from other cultures. I think trying to inculcate into [students] sympathy with the aesthetic responses from other cultures during the art production itself is sort of a goal I have, but I don’t know how often that’s achieved.

Western and Non-Western Traditions

Teacher A acknowledged that the Western canon in art has played a strong role in the development of American culture. He stated that in recent years, though, students’ recognition of cultural traditions has been derailed by American consumerism:

I think a lot of the tendencies I’ve seen recently in art education to critique consumer culture is kind of appropriate, that a lot of our students aren’t really aware of our own traditions going back to Europe and that sort of thing. . . . We have become a culture that’s immersed in consumerism. Maybe aesthetics in art can help students to see those things more objectively....Hopefully, the study of art can allow them to
see how symbols, and status symbols, and those sorts of things as status within groups may have an inordinate influence over them, that they can get a little bit of objectivity. Yes, I think certainly American culture is part of that whole Western tradition, but for me a lot of things have been overshadowed by consumerism. Maybe that is a role for aesthetics in helping to let students have a different perspective.

**Cultural Contexts of Objects and Artifacts**

Teacher A believed that an art object or artifact must be placed in its cultural context when presented in a visual arts class. However, he was unsure of the extent to which his students were able to understand the relevance of that context:

I think it’s challenging to present it in a classroom and preserve the cultural context in a coherent enough way that the student gets the full significance of its role in the original culture. That’s the same with museums or anything when it’s removed from its original context.

He conceded that there is a tendency to examine the formal and technical aspects of objects in art curriculum. He agreed that such a practice may cause teachers and students to risk making inappropriate connections or generalizations by looking at similarities among unrelated objects from different cultures. For him, beginning with the cultural context when introducing an object or an artifact to his students helps him minimize this problem:
I do agree to some extent that in describing technical and formal attributes often we look to commonalities if we’re discussing the elements of design and so on. I usually introduce artifacts by talking about their cultural context first, talking through stories or mythology and that sort of thing that would bear light on the role of the artifact within the culture and then maybe secondarily talk about elements of art and those issues.

Teacher A also relies on storytelling and questioning techniques to build his students’ sense of the cultural contexts of objects. He encourages his students to invent a story about an unfamiliar object, “asking them to project interpretations on it and then asking them questions to challenge those interpretations.” Through those questions he would lead the students toward a discovery of the object’s true role in the culture that produced it:

Next week I’m going to be talking about pre-Columbian ceramics, for instance, a particular object from Peru that’s a ritual corn planting device. Most students would have no prior connection to that type of object, but it would in almost all of them elicit some response about what it is. We can take those interpretations to sort of steer it back towards what it really is or what we believe it to be.

**Teacher Training**

Regarding his educational preparation to teach multicultural art, Teacher A acknowledged gaps in his own knowledge. He said he does not blame this situation on any inadequacies in his pre-service teacher education training. Rather, he feels that multicultural art covers such a vast body of
knowledge that it is impractical to expect a teacher to master all of it. He chooses instead to pursue in depth knowledge of several cultures to which he feels drawn and to specialize in teaching about the art of those cultures. He pointed out that his own preparation as a studio art major and art history minor may have given him some advantage over teachers who majored in art education due to course requirements in studio art that differ from those for earning an art education degree:

I had more art history as a studio art major, and I had to take certain art history classes for my major. When I went back to get certified to teach, I had to take art education classes. I should distinguish that because I had a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree and Master of Fine Arts before I became certified to be a teacher, and I feel that, from what I know about teacher certification programs that a lot of students who come through with only a BFA or an art education degree probably would not have nearly as much in depth [study of multicultural art]. I think they probably take a couple of art history survey classes and that may be about it in some programs. It is touched on in the other art education classes about the necessity to address art of other cultures. I fear that a lot of students who come through those programs would have a cursory understanding.

Three resources have served Teacher A well in his efforts to research multicultural art education:
There have been some inservice staff development activities that I participate in that have helped, [along with] reading, going to museums, museum education programs, and [two local museums]. Lately, I’ve been reading things about pre-Columbian art and Mesoamerican culture. I’m interested in them and have researched them.

He also keeps his personal library of art books up to date and consulted it often for research. However, he finds it difficult to find enough time to research the validity or authenticity of multicultural art learning resources:

I guess we all make certain assumptions and believe things that we’ve been told. I try to introduce to the class that all these things are filtered through cultural lenses. But I don’t go out with a fine-toothed comb to try to challenge every assumption. We do use certain curriculum materials, and a lot of the time I represent things based on pre-prepared materials that I personally don’t have time to challenge and go back to the source of.

**Cultural Contexts of Teachers and Learners**

Teacher A indicated that he tried to remain alert to the influence of his own cultural perspective on his approach to multicultural content:

There have been times when I realize I’m presenting ideas or concepts about cultures. I realize that my own awareness or understanding of the cultures is severely deficient, that it is tempered by who I am and the experiences I’ve come through. I try to make them aware that any
time we’re addressing or looking at other cultures, we’re working through biased filters of our own experience.

He also recognizes the diversity of cultures represented by the students he teaches and plans part of his instruction to reflect those cultures:

Yes, I do try to do at least some units that cover the cultural backgrounds, whether students are aware of them or not, that may go back several generations and that would have been represented by their ethnic groups and cultures.

To inform himself about the cultural makeup of his student population, Teacher A stated, “I guess I might be informed to some extent by the materials distributed by the Board of Education. Easily, those are too general to be of much use or help.” However, he said he feels that his personal contact with students provides him the most useful demographic information:

I’m aware that sometimes we have misconceptions – that all Hispanics are from Mexico, that all Black students – I had a Black student who spoke Dutch. This knowledge can only be acquired through interviewing the students, talking to them about their family and their background.

**Summary of Case Interview of Teacher B**

At the time of the interview Teacher B had nine years of experience teaching art. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Painting and add-on certification in art education. She was teaching at two elementary schools working with students from kindergarten through fifth grade.
Curriculum, Content, and Resources

Teacher B agreed that Western aesthetic principles are not appropriate for evaluating art from all cultures. “Western aesthetic tenets are certainly not the only tenets out there. Also, because we are part of that world, we should not set out to judge others,” she stated. She indicated, though, that she found the Discipline-Based Art Education model to be effective for teaching about the art forms of all cultures, as long as teachers were willing to expand content to include non-Western concepts:

I think most of us who are teaching art are intelligent enough not to be prejudiced against other cultures, and open-minded, and so, I think we can go beyond real specific things, you know, just relating to Western art, and maybe use some of these ideas and branch out to reach our students.

Teacher B expressed a mixed reaction to the resources available to her in teaching multicultural art. She said she feels that the local school system and the local art curriculum guidelines afford her the freedom and flexibility to incorporate art from other cultures. She was not satisfied with the textbooks her school system had adopted:

In thinking about the textbooks we have in elementary, when we had our year of adoption, they weren’t my first pick, but – and not because of scheduling and everything else – it’s kind of difficult to use them. I do feel like they do at least give some credence to non-Western art and a look at multicultural art. I think our curriculum allows for that as well,
but I think also that our curriculum and our system in general allow us to use a lot more resources besides just our own textbook. The Internet is Teacher B’s most useful resource for multicultural content: You can get on there and look up not only information about a country and its culture, but you can look up specific types of art you may want to teach from that culture. So I’d say for me the Internet is number one. There are also some pretty good videos out there. Crismac is a company that offers some videos and resources that are multicultural related. Teacher B sees multicultural art education as a valuable vehicle for overcoming limitations in her students’ life experience and world view. When asked to respond to this statement, “Studying even just one other culture leads to greater tolerance of diversity” (Davenport, 2000, p. 369), she stated: Where we teach I haven’t found a lot of kids have visited places outside even [this state], and so I think that through art, if you can teach them multicultural lessons throughout the year, that gives kids the opportunity to see and realize that there might be some neat things or some cool things about another country. They can appreciate artwork from that country and realize that it’s different, but that different isn’t bad. So I think that it’s sort of an eye-opening experience. And in teaching multicultural art, you’re also teaching exactly what this statement is saying. You’re teaching that there are other people out there in the world and that just because they’re different doesn’t mean they’re bad.
She did not agree, however, that drawing attention to cultural differences when teaching multicultural content causes students to view the culture being studied as an exotic “other.” She believes that it is possible to use surface differences as an entrée into the culture if the teacher is committed to taking students deep below that surface:

I might bring in things like food and clothing when I’m teaching about art. . . . Part of my job, not as an art teacher, but as a human being, a Christian human being, not that I’m bringing my religion into my classroom, but to teach tolerance of others. And so in teaching about other countries and cultures, if I’m bringing in food and clothing, therefore I’m trying not to just stop at that point. I’m trying to get them to understand that different isn’t necessarily bad, it’s just different.

She does not support the notion that multicultural art lessons tend to trivialize the art forms being studied when students are directed to produce imitations of those art forms by using improvised materials. For her, the value of the studio activity experience outweighs the importance of replicating the original techniques and materials in the process:

Sometimes we don’t have access to whatever the authentic or appropriate materials might be. You know, we can’t go out and gather berries and indigenous plants and turn them into paint colors and things like that, so I think that in our classrooms we have to use what we find that’s close enough. So I don’t really think that trivializes it. We can teach about what other cultures really use and then make the jump with our kids
and say, ‘That’s not really possible for us to do that, so we’re using these materials.’ I guess as much as possible I would try not to study another culture’s artwork, or a specific type of artwork and then make sort of a dumbed-down version or a very crafty version of that culture’s artwork....I try not to trivialize it and not simplify it down so much that it’s so far removed from what the original artwork was.

**Art Education, Political Action, and Social Reform**

Teacher B rarely raises issues of bias, prejudice, discrimination, and racism when discussing art objects with her students. She indicated that when those subjects do come into her instruction, they arise in response to students’ comments. She attributes the lack of prominence of such issues to the fact that she is teaching in an elementary school:

Students may make a negative comment. If we’re looking at artwork by a [minority] artist . . . some . . . student may say something, and, you know, I just take the opportunity to talk about it if its presented or brought up. I don’t usually bring up any of these topics, I guess, as much in an elementary type setting.

One reason for her reluctance to teach certain issues to her students is her concern with parental scrutiny of elementary programs. “At the elementary level we sort of have to tip-toe a little bit because of parent input and parent influence at [the elementary] level,” she explained. This perceived need for caution sometimes places her in difficult situations:
You know, I can’t discuss my religion with my students. I certainly have opinions about racism, sexism, but at the grade level I teach, I feel it’s difficult for me to offer opinions. A lot of time in elementary class, kids want to know my opinion if something like that comes up. They ask me, “Well, what do you think about it?” or “Should I think this way or that way?” So I think for [elementary teachers] it’s a little more difficult because we can’t answer difficult questions like that, and we can allow discussion to go on, but, you know, if it gets mean spirited then it’s difficult to handle. And once again for me at the elementary level, I would probably be more particular about which social issues I’m addressing.

Despite her concern for finding a balance between tackling social issues and respecting community standards, she has experienced no problems with censorship of multicultural issues in her classroom. “I sort of self-censor I guess, just based on the age level I teach and thinking about parents who might say, ‘Stop teaching my child this or that.’”

Teacher B disagreed with the proposal that art education should be centered on contemporary social issues. She said she feels that too many external demands are placed on art curriculum content at the elementary level to allow social issues to become a major focus:

If we look at our curriculum and if we look at what we should be doing in our classrooms, at all levels, it’s not just a cut and dried choice between contemporary social issues and art making activities. There are a lot of
things that we are required now to teach. Trying to make a choice just between these two, I’m not sure is fair or appropriate. And I really don’t think that art education should be centered on contemporary social issues or individualized art making activities.

She suggested that social issues could appropriately be given more emphasis in middle school and high school visual art programs. “I guess that maybe at the elementary level, maybe less [emphasis on social issues]...and as you get older you can maybe give it more importance in the classroom,” she proposed.

**Aesthetics**

Teacher B rejected the application of Western aesthetic standards to evaluating art from every culture. However, she emphasized the importance of teachers and students learning the perspectives of a culture before examining its art forms. “We have to do a little research on our own into that culture before we go analyzing and appreciating,” she explained.

When teaching an aesthetics lesson, she finds it useful and stimulating to access the perspectives of students whose backgrounds reflect cultures outside the Western mainstream:

Students from other cultures in our school a lot of times are Hispanic, and we’ve had Australians recently and some others. I’m always excited and open when those students are in there and can present another opinion.

She described the types of aesthetics activities she presents to her students:
Mostly in discussing art, discussing reproductions, and as we’re reading through the book and studying artists, we do comparisons. We’ve actually done several activities like that where we compare two works of art and are discussing style, appreciating different things that each artist has done. I guess mostly in a group discussion.

**Western and Non-Western Artistic Traditions**

Teacher B agreed that no racial, cultural, or national group’s art is superior to another’s. “I may not like every one, but that doesn’t mean it’s inferior,” she said. She also stated that she believes that American culture involves more than only Western traditions and values. “I think American culture is ‘to thine own self be true.’” While she did not offer a concrete definition of what comprises American culture, she suggested that “media is a big influence on our culture.” She proposed that accessing coverage of the United States from foreign media sources would provide valuable information about the world’s impressions of American culture.

**Cultural Contexts of Objects and Artifacts**

Teacher B acknowledged the importance of presenting art objects within their cultural contexts. She finds that knowledge of an object’s cultural framework is essential to understanding that object:

I think it’s possible to do that if you have enough other visuals to share with your students to put that artifact in the context that it comes from. In other words, if you just bring out an object and just put it on the table
and say, “Hey, this is from that culture,” and didn’t show any other visuals of that object in its appropriate environment, then I think that would be wrong. So I think you have got to have other resources to put it into its context.

Teacher B described two of her preferred practices for presenting cultural artifacts to students. Her first technique presents students with a “teaser” to pique their interest at the beginning of a unit of study:

Well, I like to typically start out by giving my students sort of a teaser for homework where I will ask them to find out where some place is, like we’re going to get in a new unit, and for homework they find out where Oaxaca is when we’re doing Oaxacan artwork. Most kids will find that out, no problem. A lot of kids will get on the Internet to find things like that.

Another technique she relies on is the presentation of many visual images to help students place the object in its appropriate cultural context. Her resources for this purpose include examples, reproductions, illustrations, and videos. Whenever possible, she uses videotapes that show artists in the target culture demonstrating the production of similar objects. She said she prefers to guide the students through explorations of objects by asking them questions. She gave several examples:

I ask sparking questions, maybe, “Tell me what you see. Are there patterns? What types of colors are used?” Looking for line, things like
that. Comparing, you know, “Have you seen anything else like this? Have you studied anything else like it?”

**Teacher Training**

Teacher B feels that her preparation to teach multicultural content differs from that of other art teachers because she holds a studio art degree:

> I don’t really feel like I’ve been well prepared to teach multicultural. I’m not the typical student who has a degree in art education. I have a studio degree in painting. I went for a year to add on certification in art. . . . What experience I’ve had or education I’ve had has come from reading, looking up, reading on my own, picking and choosing, saying, ‘I’m going to do this this year.’

She also depends on the Internet and her personal experiences traveling to Mexico to inform her knowledge of multicultural art.

**Cultural Contexts of Teachers and Learners**

Teaching multicultural content has benefited Teacher B by broadening her understanding of art and artists. Regarding the demographic makeup of her student population, she estimated that 75% of her students are Caucasian and up to 25% are African American with a small Hispanic population. She said that Hispanic students and students from other cultures comprised less than 5% of her school’s population. When asked if she tailored her lesson plans to reflect the demographic makeup, she replied, “Probably not this year. It’s been a tough year.” She cited the 2003-2004 school year as a particularly difficult one due to external logistical challenges for elementary art teachers in
her school district. The factor to which she referred was a decision by her school district’s administrators to require elementary art specialists, who were previously assigned to one school, to serve two schools each year. Despite that impediment, however, she has used personal contact with her students as a reliable source of information on the cultures represented in her school population:

I guess [I inform myself] primarily through discussions with my students. I see the whole school and I see the whole school several times a week, so just seeing the kids very often, I guess. At any given moment in elementary school kids are likely to tell you anything. They’re pretty open without asking prying questions. But you can get them to talk about whether customs in their culture are very different, or if their family is diverse. Especially around holiday times they talk about traveling, and this and that, so I just try to talk to them as much as I can, I guess.

**Summary of Case Interview of Teacher C**

Teacher C is a veteran teacher with 17 years of experience in art education. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Painting. She teaches in a high school of approximately 1435 students. Her school is the only high school in the district staffed by two visual art teachers instead of one. In addition to her high school teaching assignment, Teacher C has taught evening classes in art history as an adjunct faculty member at a private four year university for fifteen years.
**Curriculum, Content, and Resources**

Teacher C believes that visual arts programs should not be based entirely on Western aesthetic principles, but she pointed out that those Western principles do enjoy prominence in current practice. “I do think that art using only the Western aesthetic tenets is very narrow. Certainly I would hope that we wouldn’t always do that, but I think we do that now,” she explained.

She agreed that the organizational structure of Discipline-Based Art Education is too narrow for understanding non-Western art forms. To illustrate her position she gave an example:

I agree with this. In fact I was just reading the other day how they had compared the Western aesthetic and for example the aesthetic of art produced by Hindu women. In every point it varied. It was directly opposite, even to the permanence of it. I thought that was interesting because it stressed our idea of permanence, and yet theirs, while it’s transitory, is more permanent because it’s lasted for generations and for hundreds of years.

She also stated that the Western tendency to stress the individuality of the fine artist cannot accurately and appropriately accommodate study of cultures in which artistic production tends to be a collective activity.

Teacher C said she finds art texts at both the high school and college level to be heavily weighted toward Western content:

Even in the college course I teach, I’ve taught art history at [a private university] for 15 years. I’ve taught through several editions of Gardner’s
and particularly *Living with Art*. Now they’re starting to include more
Korean, and Japanese, and all that, but it has traditionally been
European and Western art.

She has seen an improvement in the inclusion of multicultural content in
newer textbooks and in recent revisions of older texts. However, she prefers to
present multicultural art through media she has prepared herself:

I like to use slides, but I make them myself. I like them a lot better than
videos. We can’t afford digital kinds of media, so the slide is old, but it’s
always there. And it allows time for student input during discussion.

For Teacher C, studying the art of other cultures is important because
students need to see that their own culture’s perspective is not the only valid
one. She tells her students to give “the same credibility to other cultures as we
give our own.” She said that teachers should “tell our students that we judge
art based on certain criteria and other cultures just don’t do that. They’re just
as valid.” She agreed, though, that it is possible to exoticize a culture if
teachers focus only on those aspects of a culture which may seem different,
odd, or quaint to some American students. She said that she fears that it may
not be possible to teach about non-Western cultures without engendering a
certain sense of “otherness” about the cultures:

I don’t think it’s possible not to exoticize, when it’s beyond your culture.
But what this says is to stop at the differences and to approach it from a
very shallow [depth]. I wouldn’t approach it at all unless I could do it in
depth, unless I felt like I was giving students some deeper understanding
of the “whys.” Just to touch on it and show the differences seems like it broadens the gulf.

She is aware of the potential for trivializing cultures when teachers direct students to imitate art forms using improvised materials. She stated that the unavailability of authentic materials should not by itself disqualify an art form from being used in the classroom:

I think it does become trivialized, but I think it’s better to become somewhat trivialized than to never be introduced at all. And we really have to consider our resources. I think it’s important while using improvised materials to introduce them through pictures, slides, videos, or something, what the authentic materials are.

Through her emphasis on including media showing students the real techniques and materials which produce an art form, Teacher C tries to create a balance between cultural authenticity and household materials in production activities. She said she feels that this practice is valid because “It can create a curiosity in some [students] to investigate it further.”
**Art Education, Political Action, and Social Reform**

Teacher C stated that she avoids racial and ethnocentric issues in her classroom instruction. She pointed out that it is sometimes difficult for a teacher to recognize controversial issues. “I think we may not always know with ethnocentric content. We may not recognize it,” she explained. She suggested that issues of classroom control cause her and many of her colleagues to resist raising contentious political issues:

I think that kids are smart enough today that I could see how in some schools this could get out of hand. I think that there are plenty of school teachers who feel that discussion would go some place that they couldn’t handle. I still think they should be addressed in the classroom to some degree. But I would have to say that when I’m giving presentations, I don’t really discuss these issues. I pretty much go by the art history books and go by the state curriculum. And really, it doesn’t stress political issues.

Despite her hesitation to approach issues of racism as part of her planned instruction, she does feel a responsibility to confront issues of racism raised by the students themselves:

When I hear racist remarks, I do intervene. I think it’s wrong to ignore [racism] and just tell [students] to shut up. I do address it. I don’t prolong it, because I don’t have that much confidence in myself that I
could do a really lengthy discussion. I always try to teach them values to some extent.

Concerning contemporary social issues, Teacher C stated that the art classroom is an appropriate and democratic place to allow students to explore them:

As you know, in the art classroom we have all levels of intellectual ability, and it gives young people of all ability levels who might not otherwise have an opportunity on those issues. Higher level [academic core] classes discuss that, but do the lower level classes discuss it? Not very much.

She does not consider herself to be properly trained to teach a visual art curriculum centered on social issues. However, she sees studio production activities as a valuable avenue for students to explore and respond to social issues which confront them in contemporary society:

[Art is] an outlet for expressing one’s feelings, other than verbally. A lot of kids could not express [their feelings] verbally, but they can do it visually. There’s no right or wrong, unless it’s something that’s against school rules. When an event arises like 9/11, we do artwork about that, and I think it helps soothe the wounds.

Teacher C has encountered only one instance of resistance to multicultural content. She was surprised that the opposition had come from a student:
I have my students make one of those African fertility dolls. I have an African one and one I made, and I talk about them and show slides. One African American girl came up to me in private and said that she couldn’t make one, because in her religion, they didn’t believe in magic. So that was resistance that I thought was most interesting. I’d never had anyone say that.

Although she has never experienced direct censorship of her teaching materials or instructional content from school administrators, she cited an incident which suggested to her the potential for censorship from district level administrators:

When [the previous high school principal] started here, I’d never taught before, and I asked him what’s his opinion on whether or not I could show, for example, [Michelangelo’s] nude *David*. He said he felt like that was a historical masterpiece and could be shown. Then a couple of years later still at this school I had access to a video that Andy Warhol had made. In this video was a brief back view of a nude person, and I, stupidly now as I look back, called the county office. I don’t even know the person I talked to. I described what I wanted to show and asked if it was acceptable, and the answer was, “How much do you value your job?” That was the answer. I’ll never forget that. But David’s front view reveals more than a nude back view.
**Aesthetics**

Teacher C agreed that there is no universal aesthetic that can be used to evaluate all art forms. She stated that she prefers to begin with “a more general aesthetic, and then go to a specific one,” when she teaches art from other cultures. She also agreed that teachers should be sensitive to the varied aesthetic and artistic standards of different cultures. Unfortunately, she feels that her own education did not prepare her to accurately present the aesthetics of non-Western cultures:

I think we need to be educated as to what [other cultures’ aesthetics] are, because my education didn’t touch on that. All I know about it has been through my own investigation, like reading in NAEA journals. I don’t feel I have the understanding of a whole lot of different cultures’ aesthetics. And I don’t think I would want to get into the quagmire of explaining something that I don’t understand. There are a few [cultures] I understand and I do try to convey those to the students. As you know, some of them get it and some of them don’t.

**Western and Non-Western Artistic Traditions**

Teacher C said she feels that, because art is made for different purposes by different people, no art is superior or inferior to another. She was less sure, though, when asked to agree or disagree with the statement, “American culture is not synonymous with Western traditions and Western values” (Sahasrabadhe, 1992, p. 14). “I don’t think you can generalize like that. I
think [American culture] is more synonymous with [Western traditions],” she explained. She compared American culture to a fabric:

\[ \ldots \text{made of immigrants that have all melded into one. I think the information glutony that we’re faced with all the time – it’s like when I do my artwork today, I draw on every tradition, every age, every country. To me, that’s what our art’s about, and even the chaos.} \]

**Cultural Contexts of Objects and Artifacts**

Teacher C stated that examining art objects of other cultures fosters respect for those cultures among students. To accomplish this goal, she begins the presentation of a cultural artifact to her students by establishing a historical and geographical framework for it. She explained:

\[ \text{I think you should put it within a place and time. I definitely think you should set the stage. You could create misunderstanding if you don’t. I find that learning about the civilization and the politics, I find that much more interesting personally.} \]

She described a typical unit on multicultural art in her classroom:

\[ \text{Well, I show slides of African art and I talk about the kinds of things you see in African art, what they value. For example, why heads are bigger and why foreheads are higher, and certain materials they used to denote kingship. They used leopard skins to denote kingship. And then I have [students] do a reading, because there’s a lot of focus on reading now. And I have them answer a worksheet I have generated from the reading.} \]
And then I have them make a piece and I give them choices. I vary it. Sometimes it has to be as close as possible to the actual artifact, and other times it just has to evoke a feeling.

Teacher Training

Teacher C said she finds that her own teacher pre-service training has prepared her to learn about the historical contexts in which works of are were created, but not the cultural contexts of art from a global perspective. She also said that she has not been educated in the political, economic, or social issues that accompanied the emergence of the world’s art forms. Regarding her university preparation to teach multicultural content, she explained, “No, I have not been prepared. It’s been an independent quest, something I frankly don’t have a lot of time to do.” She chose books as a useful resource to fill in gaps in her knowledge of multicultural content. She turns to those books to research the authenticity of multicultural concepts and examples before presenting them to her students:

I mostly teach out of my own library. And in my own library I have a number of books on a particular culture. Not on every culture, but on Japanese, African, and so on. And sometimes [I go] to the Internet. I have a collection of videos too, but more often I go from books.

Cultural Contexts of Teachers and Learners

Teacher C agreed that teachers should be aware of their own cultural biases. In fact, she said that her students sometimes help her identify her own biases:
I think teachers should be aware of their own cultural and social biases. I think sometimes you’re not aware of them. And kids are quick to point them out, as you know. And I’m always glad when they do. It’s learning about yourself.

Teaching multicultural content has also challenged her to be well prepared:

Yes, I think when I teach multicultural lessons, they are very hard for me. I have to study a long time. Even after I’ve studied, they don’t come easy. And then the pronunciation – oh, my gosh.

She feels that the time and effort she devotes to planning multicultural lessons are rewarded, not only by students’ reactions to the content, but by her own responses as well. As she explained, when she teaches about art objects and artifacts from other cultures, she feels “a greater appreciation, a real empathy for the artists who made them. They really have enriched my life.”

She estimated that the demographic makeup of her school includes “fifty or fifty-one percent African American and maybe four or five percent Hispanic. I don’t know how many Asians [there are].” To reflect this cultural makeup, she had begun to expand the cultural content of her lessons. “I’ve thought a lot about it, and I do one African unit. I would really like to broaden it. I’ve felt that for a long time,” she said.

**Summary of Case Interview of Teacher D**

At the time of the interview Teacher D held a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art Education and a Master of Arts in Art Education. She had taught for seven years, all in the same school district. She had four years elementary teaching
experience and three years in high school. The high school in which she taught had an approximate student population of 1350. As the only art teacher at her school, Teacher D was responsible for teaching all visual arts courses in two and three dimensional media.

**Curriculum, Content, and Resources**

Teacher D stated that Western aesthetic tenets should not be used to judge all art. “I just feel like that type of aesthetic judgment would be biased,” she explained. However, she does feel that the Western-based concepts of Discipline-Based Art Education are “somewhat adequate” for understanding the art of non-Western cultures. She said that she chooses to use the Discipline-Based model to teach multicultural content because “that’s the way I was taught in college. Honestly, that’s the only method I’ve ever used.” She disagreed with the statement that most textbooks and curriculum guides give only token representation to multicultural and cross cultural arts. She uses the book *Art in Perspective* (Dorra, 1973) as a multicultural resource and finds it to be helpful.

She agreed that studying other cultures is important to help students de-centralize their own cultural perspectives:

I agree with this statement and I just feel if you do the study of social studies even outside art, generally, you’re going to be more tolerant to other cultures when you start to learn about and relate to what their life is like, just as with your own lifestyle.
She also agreed that studying another culture in depth is essential to avoid focusing on superficial differences of the culture and thereby making its practices appear peculiar. She was not ready to completely reject the process of exploring a culture’s art forms by imitating them in studio activities which adapt the art forms using improvised materials:

[What are the other options? Okay, if we don’t give [students] an idea of what [an art form is] about, then how can they grasp it? If we just talk about something and they’re not experiencing it visually or kinesthetically, they might not understand.

She cited two factors which impede her efforts to preserve the authenticity of multicultural art forms in her classroom: her lack of opportunity to travel to the target cultures and her dependence on the authority of others. She stated, “For the most part, what I know is from what other people have been taught or think to be right.”

**Art Education, Political Action, and Social Reform**

Teacher D indicated that she is comfortable presenting to her classes issues involving bias, prejudice, discrimination, and racism. She feels that those topics are appropriate for discussion in a high school art class, “if everyone can maintain their composure.” She indicated that there are few circumstances that would cause her to hesitate to address a controversial topic although, as she said, “if I had a Board [of Education] member in the room, I would not feel as comfortable talking about it.” She finds gender based issues to be particularly pertinent to her teaching:
With me being a woman, maybe I’m a little biased, but we talk about the fact that we don’t know a lot about women artists, that it’s harder to find out things about women artists. Things like that certainly come up. So that’s what comes to mind first of all.

Teacher D expressed her belief that visual arts instruction should address social issues. She gave the absence of such topics from other subject areas as the reason for her position stating, “I don’t know that [social issues are] always addressed as much as [they] should be in other classes, but I think that’s our responsibility.” While she said she is ready to make room for social issues in art instruction, she feels that they should not form the core of a high school art program:

I think that contemporary social issues should be a part of what we do, but I don’t think everything we do should center around that. I think that social issues should be addressed when studying art history, but then also if you’re doing projects where the student is being expressive, then certainly something like that would come out. I think that certainly the art making activity is very important. Studio production for me personally weighs more heavily than social issues.

Censorship of multicultural and social issues by parents or school officials has not been a problem for Teacher D, and she has felt no pressure to politicize her classroom to suit community standards. The only resistance to content or subject matter that she has experienced has come from students.
Often, the issues raised have centered on the conflict between bias and free expression:

Last year I had a couple of students who did artwork that included the rebel flag, and so some of my other students brought it to my attention and said that it made them feel uncomfortable. I have experienced that. The only resistance I’ve ever experienced with things like that has just come from the students. We’ll sit down and talk about it together and it never goes any farther than that.

**Aesthetics**

Teacher D supports the view that Western aesthetic standards are not applicable to every art object and artifact. In fact, she is keenly aware of divergent aesthetic standards whenever she assigns grades to her students’ work. She described her dilemma:

I feel that art is subjective. I don’t feel that there’s any one way to evaluate art. I struggle with that every day in grading art, because it is so very subjective. I think that each individual piece should be evaluated separately. That’s a real challenge to do.

To foster students’ sensitivity to culturally-based aesthetic differences, Teacher D tries to establish an atmosphere in which all perspectives are welcome and valued. She explains her rules to her students before conducting a class critique:
When we’re doing group discussions, basically there are no wrong answers. I tell them when we start off, “Nothing you say is going to be wrong today. You’re going to listen to what each other has to say and respond to what each other has to say.” So it’s clear that there are no right or wrongs when they’re writing about a piece, when they’re critiquing a piece. Basically, I say, “If you give your opinion, you’re not going to get it wrong. I want your opinion.” We have two [group critiques] a semester, and we try to keep those on a positive note. I don’t want to do anything with damaging one’s self-esteem. We keep it really positive, and basically, everyone in the class has to talk about another person in the class’s work.

**Western and Non-Western Traditions**

Teacher D agreed that no racial, cultural, or national group’s art is superior to another’s. According to her, “I don’t know that any of us have the authority to say what’s better and what’s not, what’s superior and inferior, so I certainly agree that no group’s art is superior.” She also agreed that the Western art canon is not broad enough to serve a multicultural population. She said that it is not accurate that “everyone else should be going along with what we’re doing. I don’t see that we’re at that point at all.”

**Cultural Contexts of Objects and Artifacts**

The proposition of presenting a cultural artifact in a visual art class with reference to its appropriate cultural context was problematical for Teacher D.
She stated that she believes that it is important to learn about the culture in which an object was produced. However, she also stated that it is better to present the object without its cultural context than to fail to present the object at all.

Teacher D related the procedure she follows to teach her students about a cultural object or artifact:

The first thing I bring up in discussion is not the formal aspects at all, but it would be the functional aspects. That would be the first thing we would talk about, and then we would go into the other areas. The function of the piece is the most important thing. We start by describing exactly what we see. We start out with the shallow things and then go into the deeper the symbolism, but we start out with a description.

She uses questioning to guide students’ observations of the object. She gave examples of the questions she typically asks:

I always ask, “Do you think the artist is trying to tell us something? If so, what is it? What do you get when you first look at this? What is your initial feeling that you experience? Was the artist trying to be political?”

Yes, I ask a lot of questions.

**Teacher Training**

Teacher D does not feel that she was well prepared by her pre-service teacher education program in the area of multicultural art education. She said that issues involving the cultural contexts of artists and artifacts were
introduced, but not explored in depth. “I did have a couple of education
classes that were not art related that touched on [multiculturalism]. I never
had a whole course about the issue,” she explained.

To inform herself about multicultural art education she depends on
articles she reads in art education magazines and journals and on information
she researches on the Internet. Because she is concerned about presenting
correct information, she tries to research the authenticity of what she finds:

You know, everything’s so biased, it’s really hard to know if what you
have is authentic or not. . . . I want to present culture as accurately as I
can. . . . Sometimes I talk to our history teachers as well. I guess the
easiest and the quickest [source] is the Internet. I usually go right to the
Internet. And I also speak with some of our social studies teachers, the
teachers that I feel are unbiased.

Cultural Contexts of Teachers and Learners

Teacher D described the effect of teaching multicultural content on her
concept of her role as teacher:

It makes me aware of the power that I have over my students and I try to
be very, very careful about that. And as soon as they start asking me
about things that teachers have said in other classes, it makes me really
question how influential we are over these kids. I try to tell them, ‘You
know, don’t believe everything your teachers tell you.’ I think they’re
being told some things by teachers that say, ‘It’s the truth, it’s gospel.’
And I tell the students, ‘Question what I’m saying. If you don’t agree with me, do your own research and come back and tell me.’ It just makes me aware of how influential we are and I try to take that seriously. I try to be very careful about my own opinion.

She stated that the presence of students from non-Western cultural origins causes her to choose her words carefully and heightens her sensitivity to those students’ perspectives and cultural practices:

I think that if we’re discussing a culture that I have a student from, a non-traditional religion in my class, I notice I’m more cautious and careful about what I say and try to be more sensitive. Just having them in my class one period makes me more careful in my other periods when they’re not there. I just try to be sensitive to their feelings.

She described the demographic makeup of her school. At the time of the interview she estimated that the school had a population comprised of thirty percent African-American students and ten percent other minorities. She believed that most students in that ten percent are “a mix of Indian, Asian, and Hispanic.” She said that she was able to make this estimate because information on the school’s racial and ethnic makeup is shared and discussed regularly with her in department head meetings. She explained why she has not made specific accommodations in her instructional approach to reflect the diversity of the student population. “I don’t think I have changed my instructional approach so much,” she said, “because multicultural issues have always been important to me.”
Summary of Case Interview of Teacher E

At the time of the interview Teacher E held a Bachelor of Science degree in Art Education and a Master of Education degree in Primary Education. She had eighteen years of teaching experience. In her current teaching assignment she serves two elementary schools, moving between them every nine weeks. She estimated the student population of each school to be between 630 and 650.

Curriculum, Content, and Resources

Teacher E stated that she believes that programs based on Western aesthetics are not adequate to teach about the art of non-Western cultures, because, as she said, “In different cultures, art is different.” She feels, therefore, that the Western based concepts of Discipline-Based Art Education were not appropriate for studying the art forms of all cultures.

She said she feels somewhat hampered in her attempts to present multicultural art lessons by the relative lack of multicultural content in the resources adopted by the school district seven years earlier. She described their limitations:

In the textbook that we have they really don’t really cover a lot of multicultural art. We have Portfolios (Portfolios: A State of the Art Program, Turner, 1998), and they don’t teach us as much of the cultural issues, the cultural things as I teach. They talk some about art in the
community, but they don’t talk about all the different nationalities and all the different cultures all over the world.

She has seen improvements, though, in newer resources. She cited several that are particularly helpful:

The availability of materials has become...it’s changing. It’s changing and getting better and better and better. The materials are great, so that’s wonderful. There’s lots more books and catalogs and all sorts of things – magazines. So, it’s better. I’ve got tons of catalogs that have lots of multicultural [materials]. There’s a catalog that I use called Crismac, and that’s got lots of multicultural stuff in it. Crystal Productions has lots of multicultural stuff in it too. And Shorewood has lots [of materials]. But those are just some examples.

Teacher E places value on providing students with opportunities to encounter the art of other cultures as a way to engender tolerance of diversity:

When you learn about other cultures, you start comparing yourself with other people and you start seeing just the differences. You start seeing similarities. You understand about celebrations and you think, ‘Oh, well, that’s why they do that. You know it’s not because they’re weird. They don’t have that skeleton mask because they’re celebrating some devil thing. They’re celebrating that because their grandparent died.’ It is a wonderful thing to learn about other cultures.
The proposition that teachers risk exoticizing a culture by drawing students’ attention to apparent differences such as food and clothing was one which she had not considered before. Upon reflection, she agreed that such practices can produce negative results:

You know, I didn’t really think about [exoticizing], but if we go as far as looking at food and clothing of a culture, that isn’t very deep, is it? When you look at what people make and all of the traditional things that they build and just whatever people do, you learn to understand the culture completely, rather than just what they eat and what they wear.

When asked her opinion of a statement about production activities that use household materials to imitate multicultural art objects, Teacher E was willing to consider the possibility that those activities trivialize the original art forms. However, she concluded that she considers the statement to be offensive:

Oh, if you don’t use the stuff the people use and if you do it in kind of a junky way? Well, in some ways I guess so, but in some ways, some of the things I do with my kids, I don’t do them in a junky way. I make them as nice as I can. My masks and things that we do are beautiful. They’re not junky. They’re gorgeous. So I try not to make them junky. So I disagree. That offends me.
She feels that she is able to minimize the danger of trivializing multicultural art experiences by showing her students images and reproductions on authentic art forms from the culture being studied.

**Art Education, Political Action, and Social Reform**

Teacher E stated that teachers must be aware of content in resources they use that could potentially be viewed as culturally stereotypical, racist, sexist, or ethnocentric. She agreed that this awareness should extend beyond the art classroom to include attention to current events and students’ interactions with one another. “I think that you have to be alert to everything so that you don’t offend anybody in any way,” she said, “and then you just have to know what’s going on.”

She disclosed that she believes that even at the elementary level, some discussion of social issues in art class is appropriate to stimulate students’ interest in a project, activity, or unit. She mentioned slavery, segregation, and the war in Iraq as some of the topics she has shared recently with her students. She explained, “It’s stimulating, it really is, for them to learn about different things. You know, they might as well know what’s going on in the world.”

She agreed that social issues should be a part of visual art education, but she did not concur that instruction should center on social issues. She said she does not focus her teaching on production activities either, preferring
instead to vary the approach and content in response to teachable moments arising from current events:

    I just do a variety of activities, lots of activities. I don’t really focus on one particular thing, one particular subject. Sometimes I switch back and forth. Sometimes I do social type things. I’ll do something with cultural stuff. I switch and do lots of different things.

Teacher E reported that she has not experienced resistance to her presentation of multicultural issues in the classroom. She stated that in her eighteen year career she has never been subjected to censorship by students, parents, administrators, or community groups.

**Aesthetics**

Teacher E explained her position on applying Western aesthetics to non-Western art. “Each art form is different. It depends on who makes it and where the person is from. . . . I don’t think everything depends on Western standards,” she said. When engaging in activities involving aesthetics, however, she indicated that she does not vary her approach according to differences in the cultural backgrounds of her students:

    Usually when I use art from [non-Western] cultures, I just approach it the same way I do with kids from our culture. I introduce it in the same kind of way, like it’s new to them too. Lots of times they’re not familiar with art from their own country. It’s like it’s new to them. I think that’s
probably what it is, they’re not familiar with it. So maybe that is because
they’re so young.

**Western and Non-Western Artistic Traditions**

Teacher E agreed that all cultures’ art forms are of equal merit. She also
agreed that the canonical Western artistic tradition is not broad enough to
encompass the multicultural makeup of the United States. She used the
“melting pot” metaphor as her definition of American culture. As an example of
her concept of the multicultural nature of American society, she described her
own family:

My grandparents were Italian, my grandmother and grandfather. It was
all Italian, and my father was Yugoslavian. His parents came from
Yugoslavia, so my family was multicultural, you know. It was all
Yugoslavian and Italian and it was great. And there were all sorts of
making stuff: crafts and art, and artists on one side, artists on the other
side. All this multicultural stuff came naturally.

**Cultural Contexts of Objects and Artifacts**

Teacher E places an emphasis on giving her students a sense of the
cultural context of objects and artifacts. To accomplish this goal she utilizes
several types of media:

I explain things. I show [students] pictures. I always show a part of a
video if I can. I have a lot of that type of stuff, reproductions, the three
dimensional type and the picture type. They have as many examples as
possible because without that, I find it’s pretty hard to give the kids a good example.

When presenting a cultural artifact or object, Teacher E said that she begins by informing her students about the culture and then leads them in exploring the object itself:

Well, I talk about the culture, talk about how something was made, what it was made out of, where the material was found, how [the artists] found the materials, how they made it, and just everything. [I tell about] the whole procedure and just totally how it was made, what it was made from, what they used it for.

She said that, when engaging students in production activities, she looks for opportunities to replicate the cultural concept through authentic materials and techniques. For instance, she might have students make their own brushes from pine needles or gather dirt and clay to make paint.

**Teacher Training**

Teacher E said she cannot give credit to her pre-service university teacher training for any of her knowledge of multicultural art education. Instead, she gained that knowledge through her own research and through inservice activities with her colleagues. She described a recent year-long project that generated useful materials for elementary art specialists in her school district:
All last year all of the elementary art teachers in [the district] worked for a month. We’d have a meeting and each of us would present a [packet of] one month’s worth of work and we’d share. Then we’d go and work for another month and put together another packet. One month we worked on artists, and then another month we worked on multicultural things. Each time we’d really put our heart and soul into it. We came up with packets of the best information we could put together. We really did some great work.

When she works on her own to research the authenticity of multicultural content, she relies on books, magazines, and the Internet and, when possible, tries to cross-reference the information she finds.

**Cultural Contexts of Teachers and Learners**

The experience of incorporating multicultural content has enhanced Teacher E’s job satisfaction:

I definitely enjoy teaching more. I enjoy ordering materials now more than ever before. For one thing, there are more [multicultural] materials on the market, and then the information that’s out there. I enjoy researching, because when I go to look for something on the Internet or in books, there’s all this stuff. It’s not a struggle looking for stuff now. It’s fun because the information is there. That’s part of it. And the kids love doing all the projects that I’m doing. I don’t care what culture I’m teaching, they love everything. They’re like ‘Ooh!’ with whatever it is.
They love it. Every project that I do that’s multicultural they really enjoy.

I haven’t had a complaint.

Along with her enthusiasm for her work, she said that she has experienced personal growth through her involvement with multicultural art education.

She estimated that the demographic makeup of her school’s student body is 70% white, 20% African-American, and 10% other ethnicities. To reflect this composition, she tries to incorporate “pretty much every different culture, pretty much a little bit of every different culture.” She was not aware of any formally organized source for demographic data on her students. Instead she relies on visual and aural cues. “You can just see,” she stated. “Some kids have an accent. I don’t know for sure where everybody’s from.”

Summary of Case Interview of Teacher F

At the time of the interview Teacher F held a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art Education and a Master of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education. She had fourteen years of teaching experience, all with her current school district. In her current teaching assignment she served two elementary schools, moving between them every nine weeks. She reported the student population of the first school to be 650, with 600 students at the second school.

Curriculum, Content, and Resources

Teacher F agreed that visual art programs should not use Western tenets to assess all art. “We need to promote multiculturalism with our students and give them an idea of things that go on in other areas besides just our own little
circle,” she explained. However, she said she believes that the Discipline-Based Art Education model was effective for teaching and learning about the art forms of all cultures.

She has found that the textbook and curriculum adopted by her school district give adequate representation to multicultural and cross cultural content. She said, “Our textbook and curriculum that we have for [this school district] do take into account many multicultural and diverse representations.” She also stated that the availability of multicultural materials has improved since she began teaching. She said that the multicultural resources she enjoys using are her textbook’s visual aids and the portfolios of lesson plans prepared by teachers in her school district.

Teacher F was asked to agree or disagree with a statement proposing that elementary school multicultural units that focus on differences in elements such as food and clothing are guilty of exoticizing other cultures. She was uncertain of her position on this issue, but she suggested that it is possible to explore such elements effectively:

[O]f course we don’t have food in the elementary art room, but for the younger children, we do look at clothing as art, and I think that’s fine. I don’t know if I agree or disagree. I think it just sort of depends if you just hit the surface or if you go into what the colors mean and so forth. Like, we’re studying Kente cloth right now. It’s pretty and there’s a pattern, but then we talk about there being green for the harvest and red
for the sunset. One of my students today, her family’s from Ghana, so that brought it home.

She agreed that using household materials in multicultural studio “projects” risks trivializing authentic art forms, especially when improvised materials might confuse students’ impressions of the original art form. “I just think that in elementary, some children are just so concrete in how they perceive things,” she said. Nevertheless, she said that she recognizes that sometimes authenticity is limited by the materials she is able to provide her students. She gave an example:

One thing comes to mind. In the second grade text it talks about trade beads, and it explains what they are. It would be nice to make those out of clay, but I don’t have a kiln at either school. And so we roll up paper. And that’s how we make our trade beads. They look good; they don’t look homemade. It would be nice to make them out of clay, but I think something’s better than nothing.

**Art Education, Political Action, and Social Reform**

Teacher F stated that she does not believe that issues of bias, prejudice, discrimination, and racism belong in elementary art instruction. However, she agreed that visual arts instruction can be a vehicle to address social issues:

I can think of a couple of things, like Rockwell’s painting about Ruby Bridges, and there’s another one, *The New Neighbors*. Kids look at those and they ask, ‘Why? What was that about?’ I mean, there are some . . .
children who just don’t have a clue as to what the generation before has
gone through to have what they have now. This is a good way to share
history as well as sharing art.

She indicated that she had not been subjected to any attempts to censor
multicultural issues and content in her classroom. She also said that she
disagrees with the notion that teachers are under pressure to politicize their
classrooms by addressing potentially divisive social issues.

**Aesthetics**

Teacher F agreed that Western aesthetic models are not adequate for
understanding all art. She said she supports the position that there is no
universal aesthetic standard. “I guess it goes back to the saying that beauty’s
in the eye of the beholder,” she explained. “We’re all different and depending
on our experiences through life there can’t be just one set of values.”

She also agreed that teachers should be sensitive to the culturally based
aesthetic values and artistic responses of their students. When approaching
aesthetics in her classroom, she uses questions to guide her students’
exploration of art objects. She also uses a token response game to stimulate
her students’ aesthetic response. Lack of time is one impediment which
hampers her ability to provide activities involving aesthetics. Since the school
district began requiring her to teach in two elementary schools instead of one,
her instructional time with each group of students has been cut in half. She
explained, “We just don’t have time to delve into [aesthetics] in nine weeks. I’m
here for nine weeks, and I’m lucky if I see each class nine times for forty
minutes.”

**Western and Non-Western Artistic Traditions**

Teacher F does not see any racial, cultural, or national group’s artwork
as superior to that produced by another. She also does not see American
culture as only Western in its traditions and values, but she said that it may be
viewed that way by other cultures:

> I know that American culture is this melting pot and our goal is to be
> multifaceted with multiculturalism. At the same time, other cultures see
> us as an American culture, so they kind of want us together.

**Cultural Contexts of Objects and Artifacts**

Teacher F said she believes that effective teachers help students examine
“the art, artifacts, and artists in diverse cultures” (*National Board for
Professional Teaching Standards*, 2001, p. 28) in order to build respect for the
customs of other cultures. When asked if students should learn about an
artifact without being taught about the cultural context of the object, she
responded, “Just to say ‘This is art for art’s sake’? I guess you could do that,
but why would you?” She asserted that knowledge of the cultural framework of
an object is essential to understanding it. When presenting a cultural artifact
or object to her students, she said she asks them, “What do you see? What do
you think this is? Why would an artist make this? What is it made out of?”
She also encourages brainstorming and teaches her students that “no question’s a stupid question.”

**Teacher Training**

Teacher F indicated that her university education gave her neither knowledge of the cultural, political, social, and economic contexts of traditional and contemporary art nor knowledge of artists representative of gender and ethnic diversity. She described her university experience:

Well, my art history was very informative, however, my professor was so knowledgeable that he just stuck in one area for a long time, so I’m sure there are some things that I didn’t learn about. So I’ve just kind of picked up some things with my own study.

As a result, she does not feel that her pre-service training prepared her to teach multicultural content.

A more useful preparation for her was an inservice activity that she and her elementary art colleagues in the school district designed for themselves the year before:

One of the great things we did last year when we met once a month is that we would each take a time period or a culture and we would each bring in a lesson plan, so by the end of the year we had a stack of plans that work.

She also depended on computer based media for information on multicultural art. “The Internet’s a great thing, and sharing lesson plans with other teachers
has been very insightful,” she said. She made a point of thoroughly reading the materials she found before presenting them to her classes.

**Cultural Contexts of Teachers and Learners**

When asked about the impact of the experience of presenting multicultural content, she replied that her own world view has grown:

It’s just a reminder about the diversity of not just our culture here.... I think that the more you know, the more you can appreciate. There are so many times that I learn something new, and it gives me a greater appreciation for what I learn. I try to be like that with the kids.

It is important to point out that Teacher F taught at one of her two elementary schools for thirteen years before the school district added the second school to her teaching assignment. She described the demographic makeup of her second school’s student body:

Well, here we’re largely Black and Hispanic. A lot of the Hispanic [students] – I shouldn’t say ‘a lot,’ but several of the Hispanic [students] don’t speak English, so I have to make sure they’re paired up with someone who can interpret for them. Economically, we’re very low on socioeconomic, very high on free and reduced lunch.

She found noticeable differences in the populations of her two schools. In the first school, she has been accustomed to working with a student body that is primarily upper middle class and majority White. She said that she has made
adjustments in her teaching at her second school, which has a diverse student population:

I can tell you that I have changed. I had this idea of what I was going to teach [at the second school], things that were very similar to what I taught at [the other school], and then I realized there are just things I cannot do.... But, gee, I’ve changed.

**Summary of Case Interview of Teacher G**

At the time of the interview Teacher G held a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art Education. She had five years experience teaching visual art. In her current teaching assignment she served two elementary schools, moving between them every nine weeks. She estimated the population of the first school to be 650, while there were 450 students at her second school.

**Curriculum, Content, and Resources**

Teacher G agreed that visual art programs should not promote Western aesthetics as an appropriate measure for evaluating art from all cultures. She suggested that its prevalence in American art education is due to art teachers’ familiarity with it:

I agree because the Western approach is the traditional approach, and I am from the Western European [area]. That’s where I grew up, so that’s what I know. It’s kind of like with religion, that this is the right way, but you can’t judge everyone with the same measure.
Teacher G was aware that the arts of some cultures are not composed according to Western models. Therefore, she agreed that the Western-based Discipline-Based Art Education paradigm was inadequate for understanding art from non-Western traditions. She explained her reasons:

I just did research on multicultural art education in different countries around the world, and the one thing that I found out is that in the other countries, art is taught as part of music and dance and theater, and we do divide it over here. You can’t break the culture apart into just one segment because that’s not how it is from another culture.

Despite the limitations of Discipline-Based Art Education as an intercultural teaching model, it is her preferred instructional method for teaching her own students:

I really like the discipline-based model because of how you hit on so many parts of it. Nowadays, so many teachers are just stuck on art production and they just lack on the other parts. You do want the kids to experience hands-on production activities, but without the other three, you’re not really teaching art.

Regarding the availability of textbooks for multicultural art education, Teacher G said that the textbooks she uses cover a variety of cultures. She was not certain that those cultures are presented effectively, however. “[The textbooks] don’t always follow what they’re trying to teach,” she said. “Some kids don’t really get the connection why we go from one thing to another.” She was asked by the interviewer whether she thinks the presence of multicultural
content in textbooks has improved over the past decade. Because she had taught art for only five years at the time of the interview, she declined to voice an opinion.

Teacher G agreed that encountering information about the art of other cultures allows students to broaden their tolerance for cultural practices that differ from those of their own culture. She explained how the process was beginning to transform her students’ views:

The more different cultures that the students know, the more they realize that each person is so different, but that doesn’t make their values right. This whole year I’m teaching multicultural art to fourth and fifth grade, and every project is a completely different continent, completely different culture. Sometimes they will judge things. They will say, ‘That’s just dumb,’ because they judge on their values. And so I try to break that kind of habit for them. Now, the more we’ve done it, they’re coming to understand these people’s lives are completely different. I think it does broaden their horizons and how they see the rest of the world and how they see themselves in it.

To minimize the possibility that her students focus only on superficial differences or exotic features of a culture, Teacher G said that she attempts to create a thorough and realistic exploration of the culture for them. However, she found this goal particularly challenging when working with her youngest students. “I do try to place them in an environment,” she explained, “but the smaller the kid, the less they understand that.”
Like many visual art teachers, Teacher G faces the dilemma of balancing authenticity with practical considerations when conducting multicultural studio experiences. She admitted that the need to adapt multicultural art forms and techniques for presentation in the elementary art classroom sometimes trivializes the art being studied. She cited the availability of materials and students’ technical skills as factors she considers when adapting multicultural studio experiences:

You have to use what you have. And also not being a master at a particular technique, you have to adjust it to your students’ skills and your own skills to even present particular processes. And so, [the original art forms] do become trivialized. But at elementary level you do have to make it as simple as possible.

She said that the level of authenticity she is able to preserve depends on the art form itself:

It depends what activity you are doing. When we’re studying Chinese ink drawing, we have ink, and obviously we don’t have bamboo brushes, but we just made do with what we had. You know, we looked at the examples, and we understood that we weren’t able to achieve [ink drawings] exactly because of the materials. The students understand that and they learn the process, even though with different tools. But when we did [a lesson on] African mud painting, we went and got our own mud from outside. Even though it was a different color of mud, the
students really got into it and into the process. And that made it fun for them.

**Art Education, Political Action, and Social Reform**

Teacher G welcomes opportunities to introduce issues involving bias and discrimination through multicultural content. She gave an example of how she deals with gender bias:

We definitely talk about [gender bias]. When we study different cultures, [I say that] with the aboriginal art, only men participate in this. And you have all the boys go ‘Yeah!’ And the girls are like, ‘Whatever!’ And when we do the molas from Panama, [I say that] only girls participate in that. And so we talk about how different societies are structured. It doesn’t make one sex better than the other. It’s just different structure. And so I brought it up to the United States. I said, ‘Well, how is our culture structured?’ They were like, ‘We’re all equal.’ And I said, ‘That’s right. That’s why both of you will do it.’ They thought they didn’t have to do it. I was like, ‘No, that’s not the point. I’m just informing you about that.’ It all depends on my knowledge.

She feels that opportunities to explore social issues allow students to build their tolerance of other cultures. Therefore, she said that topics related to bias, prejudice, discrimination, and racism are appropriate to her classroom:

I think they are desirable because the more communication you have with the students, the more they’re finding out, the more they’re
learning. They’re hopefully learning to tolerate different kind of views.

Just if I’m not absolutely sure what the reason [for a cultural practice] is, then I don’t want to get into conversations if I don’t have the answers.

She said that she feels that addressing social issues in the art classroom is not only appropriate but important for her students. She sees it as a way of connecting students with both history and the contemporary world they inhabit:

Art should be a reflection. It’s a mirror of society. As long and as far as history can look, you find social issues. It’s like newspaper; it’s just documentation. And so, it’s important for the students to be able to look at the works of art and be able to understand what they’re talking about.

In defining the proper role for social issues in art education, Teacher G stated that neither social issues nor production activities should occupy the bulk of instructional time. Due to her preference for the Discipline-Based model, she feels that a balanced approach works best:

If it’s discipline based, you sort of have to do a little bit of everything.

You can’t really say it’s one or the other. I know in elementary school, which is where I’m teaching, if we do the social issue, it will be related to the art making activity later on, because you can only keep [students] so long talking and looking at things. They want to be making something.

When asked if she has incurred any resistance to her teaching of multicultural art, Teacher G said that some parents have questioned some of
the content she presented in class. Often, parents’ complaints center on religious issues:

You will have parents who, just because we’re studying other cultures, will say that I’m preaching that culture’s beliefs. So they will call here and go, ‘What did you tell my son about . . .?’ – and it’s usually the religion. They have strong beliefs about their religion and I just have to explain to them, ‘I’m not preaching the religion. I’m just explaining how that reflects in [the culture’s] art.’

She went on to say that her explanation usually allays the parents’ concerns. While these situations are significant, they are not frequent. She estimated that she has received only ten complaints in her teaching career. In one of her two schools she is able to communicate with parents about what their children are studying in art through the school newsletter. She is also open to parents who convey information about their families’ religious practices and prohibitions, and she tailors lessons accordingly. She felt that these two factors have minimized the number of misunderstandings or complaints from parents.

**Aesthetics**

In her own childhood and adolescence, Teacher G was taught to use Western aesthetic standards to evaluate both Western and non-Western art. When she began studying visual art at the college level, she was taught from the perspective that each art form has an internal aesthetic. She stated that,
as a result of that experience, she now believes that there is no universal set of aesthetic standards.

She agreed that it is essential that art teachers be sensitive to differences in aesthetic and artistic standards among the world’s cultures. That sensitivity should extend beyond the multicultural content they teach to an awareness of the culturally-based differences in individual students’ response to art.

Regarding her own presentation of aesthetics to students, Teacher G stated that she is not able to incorporate as many aesthetics activities as she would like. “I see [students] for forty minutes once a week,” she said. “If I spend three or four [aesthetics] lessons per culture, we wouldn’t get very far.” Due to time limitations, her aesthetics activities consist of asking students questions to generate their responses to objects and artifacts. “When we’re concluding the work, it will be a couple of questions, but it’s very trivialized,” she disclosed.

**Western and Non-Western Artistic Traditions**

Teacher G agreed that no cultural group’s art is superior to another’s. She also agreed that the Western artistic canon does not reflect the multicultural makeup of the United States. She described her concept of the wide-ranging character of American culture:

It’s just difficult to say [what comprises American culture]. I mean, I’m not even American myself. It’s just a big salad with everything in it, and mooshed, and aged, and turned over and flipped upside down. It’s just such a blend, and it’s evolved. You can’t even take one particular route.
Evolution is what it is. You have a combination of several different factors. It’s pretty wild, I would say. There’s really no one way to describe it. There are so many things going on. It’s the world in one country.

**Cultural Contexts of Objects and Artifacts**

Teacher G stated that she always builds a cultural framework for each object that she presents to her class. “When I bring something, I always try to explain how it came to be. When we’re looking at it you have to,” she explained. Because of a variety of cultures represented in the school community, she said she is often able to rely on students or parents to bring authentic cultural artifacts to the classroom. She related a recent experience that occurred when she was preparing to teach about molas:

One parent saw on the map that the next thing we were going to do was molas. Her mother-in-law’s from there, so she brought all these molas that she has. You know I only have posters, and now I had real things in the classroom. And the students just went to them and looked at all the little stitching that they would never see on the posters or a slide. For my kids to understand it, I always place it in the cultural context.

Teacher G stated that when presenting a cultural object or artifact to her class, she begins by discussing its country of origin, including the climate, geography, political system, as well as the art materials available there and the techniques that are used. Although she does not have access to videos about all the cultures her students study, she does include a video whenever one is
available. She said that she then leads her students through an exploration of the object by asking them questions. She asks them to speculate on the techniques and materials used and to compare them to methods and materials the students use to produce their own artwork.

**Teacher Training**

Teacher G felt that she has been adequately prepared in multicultural art education by her university pre-service education:

I remember taking at least two courses in [multicultural art education] and through the entire course that’s all we did. We had to actually make a project and we studied it in detail and had to write research papers and that’s my first experience with multicultural [art education]. I’d seen art from different countries from my travels, and just from books, but growing up in Europe where Western art is dominating anyway, we had never studied anything. Growing up under Communism on top of that, you just didn’t study things from other places, because we were the ‘superior’ people. So I think I had very good college professors who stressed the importance of that. And from my research that I did, multicultural art is really dominating almost every continent nowadays.

Like several other elementary teachers interviewed for this study, she viewed a recent year-long elementary art in-service workshop as a valuable resource for multicultural content:

You know those little meetings we had last year with the art teachers in the county? In one of the meetings we did, we had each person
presenting one culture. [I presented] my favorite one that I felt the most competent in explaining, and the other people did too. I’m still learning from the other teachers, because their classes are different from mine. I think [I learn by] just sharing things with other teachers. We traded lesson plans, so they pretty much did all the hard work for you. All we had to do was just read them.

The Internet, magazines, and books are other resources of information on multicultural art cited by Teacher G. She stated that, while she wants to present only accurate facts to her students, time limitations restrict her ability to research the authenticity of her sources. She said that she remedies this situation by using only sources she trusts and by consulting more than one resource.

**Cultural Contexts of Teachers and Learners**

When asked to reflect on the impact of teaching multicultural content on herself as the teacher, Teacher G, who grew up in Europe, responded, “I think it’s made me more open minded to different things because I’m used to my own culture. But I’m really not here in my own culture, so I see a lot of differences.” She said that her contact with multicultural art education has generated an ongoing process for her. “The more I’m finding out, the more I’m changing with it, too, as are the students.” She found one challenge brought by her awareness of multiculturalism to be the difficulty of assigning grades to students’ work in art. Because she has become aware of cultural differences in
aesthetic standards, she began to wonder, “Am I looking at the aesthetics from my point of view as opposed to theirs?”

In describing the demographic makeup of her schools, she said that, at one school, her students come primarily from a middle to upper level socioeconomic background. The majority of the student body is White with a few African-American and Hispanic students. She estimated that the demographics are reversed at her second school. She said that more of the families in that school’s district are of lower socioeconomic status with larger numbers of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch programs. She said that the number of African-American and Hispanic students is larger at the second school, although she did not estimate the percentage of representation of those groups in the school population.

Teacher G stated that, while she would like to design instructional activities that are responsive to the multicultural makeup of her second school, she is not able to do so due to factors outside her control. At her first school she sees her students twice a week for nine weeks; at her second school she sees each group of students once a week for nine weeks. At her first school, she teaches twelve to twenty students from one grade level in each class; at the second school, she teaches thirty-three students from two to three grade levels in each class period. Thus, she said, with similar supplies and resources at each location, she uses a basic set of lesson plans at both schools.
Summary of Case Interview of Teacher H

At the time of the interview Teacher H had 20 years of experience teaching art. She held a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art Education and a Master of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education. She was teaching at two elementary schools working with students from kindergarten through fifth grade. She estimated the student population of one school to be 550, and the population of the second to be 650. She rotated between the two schools every nine weeks. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, she served as her school district’s elementary art resource teacher.

Curriculum, Content, and Resources

Teacher H agreed that art education programs should not rely entirely on Western aesthetics because Western principles are not appropriate for evaluating art from all cultures. “There’s just no way to judge another culture unless you know something about the culture and what [its people’s] beliefs are,” she stated. When asked if the Western-based concepts of the National Standards for Arts Education and Discipline-Based Art Education were adequate for understanding the art of non-Western cultures, she expressed surprise:

I guess I never thought about separating [the arts] into disciplines as being Western. I guess I thought that concept was universal, but it may not be. I still think you can assess [non-Western cultures’] work, but I don’t think you can truly understand it without understanding their connectivity and the way they integrate it into all areas. That’s a pretty
interesting thought. I just never thought about [Discipline-Based Art Education] that way before. I just thought of it as a way of assessing all things in a universal way. I never thought about it, that other cultures think of art in a different way than we do. That’s just interesting.

Teacher H expressed a mixed reaction to the resources available to her in teaching multicultural art. She said that many textbooks give only token representation to multicultural art. She pointed out that the textbooks she uses were written by Western authors and asked, “How can they know how people from other cultures would think about [their art]?” She stated that, while textbooks have improved in recent years by showing contemporary non-Western art alongside ancient examples, she finds children’s books to be a more useful resource. “For any multicultural subject I could pick, I could probably find twenty children’s books beautifully illustrated with aspects of that subject,” she explained. She went on to explain how she utilizes children’s books in teaching multicultural art:

Children’s picture books are what I love to use. We’ve been studying Chinese dragons and the qualities of Chinese dragons. [My student teacher and I] built this lesson together. She read a book that I had found called the Dragon’s Pearl (Lawson & Paul, 1992), which was right on. While students were working she was reading the book, and it just totally enriched the lesson. So, I would say I use picture books a lot to enrich the lesson.
Teacher H saw multicultural art education as a valuable vehicle for opening her students’ worldview to new experiences. When asked to respond to this statement, “Studying even just one other culture leads to greater tolerance of diversity” (Davenport, 2000, p. 369), she stated:

I think kids need their world opened up. It’s just egocentric, especially little bitty kids. Everything is about them, but they love to hear about other cultures. They have such a black and white view of the world. They need to know the grays.

She agreed that drawing attention to cultural differences when teachers present multicultural content causes students to view the culture being studied as an exotic “other.” In her opinion, though, those instances are more likely to occur at the elementary level in general classrooms, rather than in an art class:

That’s more of a regular classroom thing to do, although I’m not saying it couldn’t happen in an art room. I think in art we tend to look a little bit more for meaning, rather than the superficial. The units that I see that classroom teachers do are things like that - food and clothing, just looking at external differences, rather than internal differences and similarities. So, I would say that might be true of regular classrooms more so than elementary art classrooms.

She supported the notion that multicultural art lessons tend to trivialize the art forms being studied when students are directed to produce copies of those art objects by using improvised materials. She said that this practice
becomes a problem when the teacher places emphasis on imitating the form of the authentic artifact without exploring its meaning. “The main thing, though,” she stressed, “is will the student understand the symbolism?” Therefore, she would not reject outright the use of household materials:

I do think authenticity matters, but I think meaning matters more than just product. If [students] really understand the meaning and they’re using household products but they do understand the symbolism, I think there is some merit there. There’s some worth, but it’s just in how it’s presented. If it’s trivialized, it’s trivialized. If they find meaning and understanding and they understand why you’re using that material as opposed to another, it could still have meaning.

Teacher H proposed that sometimes the factors impeding teachers from using authentic techniques and materials lie outside the teachers’ control. “It’s a money thing a lot of times,” she explained. Other times, authentic tools and materials cannot be found. She said she had even run afoul of her two schools’ interpretations of zero-tolerance weapons policies due to the nature of some of the tools required to employ authentic art making techniques.

**Art Education, Political Action, and Social Reform**

Teacher H said she feels that it is essential that art teachers address issues of bias, prejudice, discrimination, and racism in instruction. She pointed out that many of her student teachers have been surprised to find those issues being discussed in the art classroom:
What amazes student teachers, when I have them, is they think you come in and teach art, and that’s what you do intend to do. But you’re teaching so many other things. It’s just unbelievable the things you’re trying to teach kids that are about how you treat other people, whether it’s a race, or a sex thing, or whatever.

While she does not hesitate to teach about social issues, she indicated that she remains vigilantly aware of her community’s standards:

I think [social issues] are appropriate. They’re almost necessary, but you have to be really careful with some things. I mean, there’s a bit of what the community expects you to teach their kids. You’re always trying to keep that in mind, the place where you’re teaching. I’ve taught at a lot of places. It’s more appropriate at some times than at others.

She stated that she is also careful to tailor the depth and gravity of the presentation of social issues according to her students’ developmental levels, because some issues are too complex for younger students to grasp.

Teacher H disagreed with the proposal that art education should be centered on contemporary social issues. She said that doing so would deprive elementary students of important opportunities to “make their own beginnings, make their own interpretation of whatever their world’s entailing at that moment.” In her classroom, teachable moments involving social issues usually stem from occurrences related to classroom management:
I guess I’m having to address it more in classroom management and accepting each other and each other’s ideas and each other’s art. That’s where I have to end up addressing it a lot. And then, you can use art a little when it comes, and they will see a similarity between the art and something you’ve been telling them about the way they should treat each other. Sometimes they’ll see a connection there.

Teacher H stated that she has experienced minimal interference with or censorship of multicultural issues in her classroom. She said that she has met a “tiny bit” of resistance from administrators and parents regarding issues of religion. “Some parents sometimes don’t want you to talk to their kid about other beliefs,” she explained. She said that she has learned to be careful when she presents multicultural content to students:

I have to be very clear that I’m not preaching [religion]; I’m just opening their minds up to what the rest of the world is thinking, and why they produce the things they do, and what that means. I wouldn’t go so far as to say [parents and administrators] censor it, but they do express concerns.

**Aesthetics**

Teacher H stated that “because I never thought about things having their own internal aesthetic, I guess I’ve always gone upon all art being understood through certain analytical models.” At the time of the interview, she said she was beginning to change her point of view. She no longer saw Western aesthetics as an appropriate measure to analyze non-Western art forms. She
speculated that applying Western aesthetics to non-Western art might cause
the viewer to oversimplify the meaning of an object or artifact. She also
suggested that adopting the aesthetic perspective of another culture is not an
easy task. “Unless you’re totally involved in that culture, how would you know
their internal aesthetic?” she asked.

Teacher H said she believes that, generally, teachers wish to be sensitive
to cultural differences in students’ artistic and aesthetic responses, but that
their lack of familiarity with the cultures their students represent may impede
their attempts. She described how she presents aesthetics to her students:

Of course we do games and stuff like that, but I really hate to separate
aesthetics. I know [some teachers] look at the [curriculum guide] and
say, ‘Okay I can check that off, and check that off, and check this one
off,’ and artists don’t think that way. To me, aesthetics just has to be
daily what you do and talk about daily with [students’] artwork as well as
famous artworks. I just get so tired of seeing people piecemeal their art
instruction. They think, ‘Check something off.’ I just get tired of that.
That’s not the way an artist thinks.

**Western and Non-Western Artistic Traditions**

Teacher H agreed that no racial, cultural, or national group’s art is
superior to another’s. “It almost implies a misunderstanding of what art is,
because art to me is not meant to be superior,” she said. She also said that
she believes that American culture involves more than only Western traditions
and values, but that the predominance of Western influences in American
society often gives the impression that the opposite is true. “I can see how that could be called myopic,” she explained. She went on to say that perhaps this shortsightedness about one’s own culture exists outside the United States as well. “I think if you go to another culture that they’re myopic about their culture,” she proposed.

**Cultural Contexts of Objects and Artifacts**

Teacher H acknowledged the importance of presenting art objects within their cultural contexts. She suspected, however, that teachers do not always establish a clear cultural framework:

> You know what happens? Most art teachers are just constrained by time. What they do is they try to [present the cultural context] really fast. To understand a culture, there’s no way you can do that fast. It’s almost like [students] need to be studying all aspects [of a culture], almost school wide or class wide because there are so many aspects to understanding it. But I don’t think you can [study multicultural art] without understanding the context. Otherwise, you’re just making cute little things.

Teacher H described her preferred practices for presenting cultural artifacts to students:

> Usually you have an art reproduction of the object, or something from that culture that’s modern. . . . Having real things is wonderful if you can afford them and find them. . . . I usually want to talk about the
geography. I mean, I usually want to at least show where we’re talking about. . . . I tend to create folders [about the artifacts]. [Students] can open up the folder and try to learn as much as they can.

She said she also likes to guide the students through explorations of objects by asking them questions. She gave examples:

I guess what we’ve been doing recently with the Chinese dragons is asking [students] to think about the beliefs that people had in the past with the dragons, about the emperors and their beliefs about the Chinese dragons, what their characteristics were, what the lore was about them. We contrast them with the way things are now and what China is now. We try not to get too much into the political thing about China, because it’s easy to get off task with what you’re trying to teach them. Usually they just have to understand that there aren’t emperors there now.

**Teacher Training**

Teacher H felt that her university pre-service experience left her ill prepared to teach multicultural content. “Anything I know I learned after [college] as far as multicultural content,” she stated. She attributed this lack of preparation to the fact that she was educated at a time when the Western perspective was considered a universal standard. She has attempted to make up for lack of multicultural art education training by reading books, magazines, and journals and by using the Internet.
She said that she does research the authenticity of the information on multicultural art that she presents to her classes. She also gave her students credit for spurring her interest in doing further research:

I’m always wanting to know more about something. For instance, the folders I make are always becoming unbearably thick over time. You start out thinking you know [enough], and then you learn more and more things about [a culture] and then you find more and you get more curious about it. Students will ask questions, and you’ll say, ‘Hmmm, you know that’s a good question,’ and you’ll research that, add that to it. The kids themselves allow you to look a little deeper.

**Cultural Contexts of Teachers and Learners**

Teaching multicultural content has benefited Teacher H by broadening her understanding of other cultures’ art and artists. “You start to think about the way they think more, and it opens up more meaning to me,” she explained. Regarding the demographic makeup of her student population, she estimated that 80% of her students are Caucasian and up to 18% are African American with a small Indian population of 2%. When asked if she tailors her lesson plans to reflect the demographic makeup, she replied, “I would say I think everyone needs to know about other cultures equally.” She said that she informs herself about the cultural makeup of her school through personal contact with her students as a reliable source of information:

There’s no mechanism built into the schools to find out [demographic information]. We have school emergency cards [listing students’
ethnicity], but I learn basically by talking to the students themselves. They tell you so much.

**Summary of Case Interview of Teacher I**

Teacher I had five years of experience in art education, one year teaching middle grades and four years teaching high school. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Drawing and Painting and a Bachelor of Science degree in Art Education. At the time of the interview, she was pursuing a Master of Education degree in Art Education. She teaches in a high school of approximately 1435 students. Her school is the only high school in the district staffed by two visual art teachers instead of one.

**Curriculum, Content, and Resources**

Teacher I said she believes that visual arts programs should not be based entirely on Western aesthetic principles. “We’re looking at art from all over, from all different cultures, so we need to be looking at them from those viewpoints as well,” she said.

She was unsure whether she agrees or disagrees with the proposition that, because it is based on Western concepts, Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) was inadequate for understanding non-Western art. She began by stating her support of DBAE:

I think it’s a good working method. If you tried to judge or discuss [non-Western art] based on those types of things like criticism, art history, aesthetics . . . , you can apply those as long as you’re not only applying
Western aesthetics, or Western ideals. . . . I’m not sure how to say if I agree or disagree.

She finally concluded that, in her opinion, DBAE worked for teaching and learning about the art forms of all cultures.

Teacher I found the district’s high school art text to be weighted toward Western content with token representation of multicultural art:

I like the textbook that I have. I do like it, but I think that it gives token representation [to multicultural art]. I mean, it’s pretty – it covers people that you’re always going to see. The textbooks are really not that developed in the [multicultural] area quite yet, so I wouldn’t say it’s absent, but I would say it’s given token representation.

She did see an improvement in the inclusion of multicultural content in newer textbooks, along with the coverage of other arts, such as music and dance, in non-Western cultures. However, her favorite resource is a book called *Calliope’s Sisters* (Anderson, 1990):

It’s an outstanding book. It’s separated into about nine different cultures, but they’re not cultures that you usually [encounter]. They give excellent examples of specific artwork or art forms that in our Western culture we might think of as craft. It’s an excellent resource. I used it in my Master’s class and I love it. I use it here too.

For Teacher I, studying the art of other cultures allows students to see that there are other valid cultural perspectives besides their own. “[When] you get very in depth into a culture, you have much more of an understanding and
an empathy. It completely extends your own personal boundaries, belief systems, and you grow,” she said. She agreed, though, that teachers sometimes exoticize a culture when they focus only on its different, odd, or quaint aspects. She said this approach is detrimental because “it’s not looking at the similarities as well as differences.”

She agreed that teachers can potentially trivialize art forms by directing students to imitate those forms using improvised household materials. She stated that some adaptations are occasionally necessary in the contemporary art classroom:

If there’s not a way for you to get the authentic materials in order to pursue a project or a series based on another culture, I think it’s okay to attempt similarities. I mean, there’s not going to be a way to reproduce [some original art forms], some of the things anyhow. There are some materials that don’t even exist any more. It could be a learning process, but you would want to be really careful not to say, ‘This is something we can do with tempera,’ whenever [artists in the culture] might have been grinding actual pigments. It would be important for you not to trivialize it, but I don’t think it’s wrong to attempt to recreate something with whatever you can.

Through her emphasis on showing students the real techniques and materials which produce an art form in a non-Western culture, Teacher I tries to create a balance between cultural authenticity and household materials in production activities. She said she feels that this practice is valid:
There are things we can do that are exactly the processes that people used and use still in different cultures, but the process is something – and in learning the processes they went through, I feel like it’s a good learning experience. I feel like [students] are being made aware of materials they may not have heard of or ever used or seen, and so, yes, I feel like I’ve had good, effective outcomes in terms of their product looking similar, but they understand the process. I care about the process.

**Art Education, Political Action, and Social Reform**

Teacher I stated that she is comfortable incorporating issues involving bias, prejudice, discrimination, and racism in her classroom instruction. She said that addressing those issues allows students to communicate their thoughts, and that she believes art is about communication. She added that, while she thinks that these topics benefit students, she is aware that they must be handled carefully:

There are things that I would get strong reactions from, and emotions from, and expressions from. So yes, there’s a place for [those issues] as long as you carefully handle the information that you’re presenting, or the way you present it. My biggest fear would be to offend a group of people, any group of people in my classroom, so as long as it’s handled with taste and both sides are presented, and everyone has a chance to
share a visual or written response, then yes, I definitely feel like it’s important.

She described one of her successful activities that dealt with stereotypes:

I actually have a packet that I’ve put together of all different stereotypes. I have [students] do a written description of what a person looks like just based on the [stereotype]. And then we look at people like Bettye Saar, very strong statement art that has to do with racism, or has to do with stereotypes and breaking those down, and boundaries, and things like that. They go back and reevaluate what they’ve written. And they have to be honest with themselves, with whether or not what they’ve said has a racial tendency, or a stereotype, that they have just put people in a box, or that they realize they have done that.

Teacher I stated that she does not shy away from addressing social issues in her classroom because she believes that students need to be aware of them. She said that, at the same time, she is aware that not every group of students she teaches can handle such content appropriately:

Are they desirable to use? If you want a strong reaction, yes. You have to know your students. You have to know your student body . . . and your school. You know, [being] safe is not necessarily bad, if you want to keep everyone happy . . . if you kind of like to keep an equilibrium. [In that case], you may not want to address some of these issues. I do.
every time, but I do read my group, and when I know that I have a group that can handle it, yes, I do.

Teacher I indicated that both social issues and studio production have a proper place in the art classroom. She said that she introduces social issues primarily to her older students, but that she prefers to work mainly on art processes with her freshman students, who she says lack the maturity to approach difficult contemporary topics. She said she feels that the appropriate role for social issues does not lie at the center of art instruction:

I feel like [social issues] are a good starting point. [Students] need to be made aware that art is a communicative tool, and that every painting expresses something they’re not going to agree with. I feel like [social issues] definitely have a place. I just don’t think they should be the entire focus. I feel like studio production is very important. I feel like that is more of a primary focal point.

Teacher I has encountered no instances of resistance to her inclusion of multicultural content. She attributes the ease with which she can present non-Western art to her students to the evolving demographics of her school. She said that, as the student body becomes increasingly diverse, students encounter multicultural perspectives in more and more subject areas at her school. The ambiance of tolerance for multiculturalism does not mean that her teaching experience has been free of censorship, however. “I do feel at times like I have been censored in terms of artists that I can show,” she explained.
“Some of the content might be more mature, so I don’t even fight that any more. I used to.” She said that the source of the censorship has been parents.

**Aesthetics**

Teacher I agreed that there is no universal aesthetic that can be used to evaluate all art forms. She stated that she does not believe that Western aesthetic models are helpful for understanding art from other cultures. She also agreed that teachers should be sensitive to the varied aesthetic and artistic standards of different cultures. In her own experience, one incident taught her that a culture’s definition of social roles for males and females can affect the way certain students respond to her critiques of their work:

> It was hard for me to help [some male students from one non-Western culture] because I didn’t know how, until there was a female student from that culture [in another class]. When I tried to talk to her about her work, she told me, ‘Okay, if you want to address me on this, this is how you need to phrase it.’

She described her approach to teaching aesthetics in her classes:

> Some of the best lessons I’ve done with aesthetics have been things that involve writing about aesthetic experiences. We’ll look at [aesthetics] when we’re looking at artwork, we’ll talk about aesthetics in terms of the formal definition of their response, but it’s usually a written response for me of a simple experience.
Western and Non-Western Artistic Traditions

Teacher I felt that no culture’s art is superior or inferior to another’s. She agreed that Western art standards do not adequately cover the diversity of artistic production of a multicultural United States. “There’s always room for more, to learn more, to know more,” she stated. When she was asked to define what comprises contemporary American culture, she stated, “American culture to me is pop culture. It’s very fast culture. We’re the land of promise . . . and we want it quick. It’s a very ambitious culture.”

Cultural Contexts of Objects and Artifacts

Teacher I stated that examining authentic art objects of non-Western cultures fosters respect for those cultures among students. “I definitely feel it adds authenticity to what I’m saying to bring in actual artifacts if I have them,” she explained. “If [students] can touch it, it’s like having someone who is from that culture there to talk to them. It’s a connection they make.”

She said she feels that it is essential for students to learn about the cultural context of an object. She said that, with this goal in mind, she likes to allow students to pass objects around the room while she introduces the technical aspects of tools and materials in the culture where the objects were produced:

I think that it’s important to discuss the culture to understand where [its members are] coming from, what tools exist there in order to make [an
art object]. So, technically speaking, I approach it from that way, introducing the culture.

She said that, in order to guide students’ observations, she often directs them to make descriptive statements as they examine the object. If she feels that students are not connecting with the object, she asks leading questions, such as, “What do you like about the shape of this?” or “What does this remind you of?”

**Teacher Training**

Teacher I found that her own teacher education training had prepared her to learn about the historical contexts in which works of Western art were created, but not the cultural contexts of non-Western art. She completed her undergraduate degree in 1998, at a time when she noted a focus on multiculturalism in art education. She said that, unfortunately, this focus did not carry over into what was taught in her coursework:

> [Professors] were focusing on multicultural education. That was the big thing for everyone to be doing, but in terms of teaching it to us, they didn’t really know where to start, it seemed like. This was probably big in the eighties, and they weren’t doing it yet. It really hadn’t been implemented to us, which is always that trickle down process.

She said she feels fortunate that her graduate school experience with multicultural art education has been more productive:

> When I got into graduate school at [a local university], I was really interested in [multicultural art education]. The people that were in my
classes were Yoruba and from Nigeria. It was awesome. It was really a
good experience for me because a lot of the information I got was
firsthand. So it was from the people, but it was ultimately through that
class. And now I’ve been taking more multicultural and feminist art
history just to continue my own knowledge.

She chose the Internet as a useful resource to fill in gaps in her knowledge of
multicultural content. She turns to it to research the authenticity of
multicultural concepts and examples before presenting them to her students.
She said that she feels strongly about conveying only correct information to her
students. “I do not want to be unprepared and try to speak on something if I
do not have a good understanding of it,” she stated.

**Cultural Contexts of Teachers and Learners**

Teacher I said that she has become educated through the process of
presenting multicultural content. She pointed out, “It’s broadened my
awareness of my own ethnocentrism.” An added benefit she identified is the
connections she has formed “with all different types of students.”

Teacher I said that she has several sources of information on the cultural
composition of her school’s population. She said that some information is
communicated in faculty meetings, and she gleans other information by
observing and talking to her students. She estimated that the demographic
makeup of her school includes fifty percent African American students and
thirty-five percent “Caucasians, with a good number of Hispanic and Russian
students and a few Asian students.” She described how she attempts to reflect this cultural makeup in planning her lessons:

We do have such a large African American population in my classes. And I know we do celebrate Black History Month, but you know, it’s just a month, and that’s not very long. But if it was a month out of a semester, that’s a pretty long time. It just depends. I try to do a lot of things because I want [all students] to relate. I want them to get involved and feel like it has something to do with them. So yes, I definitely try to reflect the population in the classroom.

**Summary of Case Interview of Teacher J**

At the time of the interview Teacher J had taught art at the middle school level for five years. She had nine years experience as a high school art teacher. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Art Education and has begun work on a Master’s degree. She estimated that the student population of her school was approximately 880.

**Curriculum, Content, and Resources**

Teacher J agreed that visual art programs should not judge all art using Western standards. She said that “we should always question” programs that look only to Western aesthetics when assessing non-Western art forms. She stated that the Western based concepts of Discipline-Based Art Education were inadequate for understanding the art forms of the world’s cultures. While said she thinks that the DBAÆ model worked effectively for art from some cultures, it was not helpful for studying all cultures.
Teacher J agreed that multicultural and cross-cultural arts are given token representation in most art education textbooks and state curriculum guides. She said that this situation has not changed over the past fifteen years. She said that her reasoning for this statement is based on the fact that “I take it as responsibility [rather] than to rely on textbooks.” She added that her two most useful resources for teaching multicultural art are the Internet and the students themselves.

Regarding the value of studying other cultures in order to decentralize the correctness of the perspectives on one’s own culture, Teacher J agreed that the goal is a worthwhile one, but she doubts that it is often achieved in actual practice. She explained her position:

I think the concept is great. I’m not sure that [studying other cultures] actually does what it says here, that it leads to ‘greater tolerance of diversity.’ I think the concept in hopes of having it do that is great.

She agreed that teachers sometimes make errors in presenting non-Western cultures by emphasizing superficial elements that make them appear strange to some Western students. She did not choose to explain why she agreed with this position. She also agreed that creating imitative multicultural studio experiences with improvised materials may tend to trivialize the art forms or techniques being studied. However, she does not feel that trivialization always occurs, and that its presence or absence depends on the teacher. She said, “I can agree with the trivialization part, but I think that . . .
depends on who’s teaching it and how much experience or how much research
they have in it.”

Teacher J stated that, in some cases, she is able to present culturally
authentic studio activities:

I think that I am [able to preserve authenticity] for certain cultures, being
that I am an African American woman. Truly, I can because I’ve
experienced it, I’ve lived it. I think that it becomes more difficult for
those cultures that I’m not familiar with.

When asked if multicultural studio experiences are still worth doing with
improvised household materials, she responded, “Why not? It seems like it
would be even more.”

**Art Education, Political Action, and Social Reform**

Teacher J agreed that there is a place for issues involving bias, prejudice,
discrimination, and racism in her classroom instruction. “There has to be
because it comes up,” she said. She cited a recent classroom experience to
describe her typical approach to addressing these issues:

I try to address them point blank, straight on, head on. We recently had
an assignment where we tried to do a play off of Red Grooms’ *What’s the
Ruckus?* . . . Our *Ruckus* is going to be based on the typical school bus
scene. So I asked the students to describe the typical student on a bus.
We ran the gamut from Asian – we had one kid who went on and on
about what an Asian person would look like – to describing the
overweight child. We had one group who went so far as to say that the
overweight child would have cookie in his hand eating. . . . So, yes, we discussed it, and I told them that this wasn’t your opportunity to release your pent-up racist, sexist, stereotypical beliefs. I just want what you believe the typical student looks like, what’s going on in their mind, what are they wearing, and so on. That’s how we just address it.

She said that topics involving racism and bias are desirable for art class content. She discussed the circumstances under which she considers them appropriate:

I think they’re relevant. I think they make the classroom more interesting for me, and if I’m more interested, I would think that my students would be. The only thing that I found that hampers it [is that] I don’t want to cross the boundaries or step on toes to where the parents are upset, or where administrators have to come in. So I try to push it as far as I can, and let it go.

She went on to say that it is sometimes difficult to withhold her own opinions on the social issues that she presents to her students. “I have to draw the line,” she explained. “Do I come down on one side for or against? I come into trouble there.” She emphasized that, despite the decisions she must make every time, “It makes art more interesting and makes it more relevant to pull from what’s happening in [students’] world right now.”

Teacher J disagreed, however, that social issues should form the center of instructional activities in the art classroom. She said she feels that they are
most appropriately used as an activity to motivate art production. She preferred to give the central role in art education to studio production:

Appropriate role of studio production? . . . You need it for the base. Well, you have to have it in order to have something to grade, and you need it for [students’] aesthetics as well. I think the production itself is the major part. Art for me is the production.

She said that she has not experienced any censorship of multicultural issues by school administrators, parents, or the community. “I don’t feel the pressure or have the concern [to censor multicultural content],” she explained. She stated that the only resistance to multicultural content has come from students, but she did not give any examples of incidents involving such resistance.

**Aesthetics**

Teacher J agreed that there is no universal set of aesthetic standards to evaluate all art forms. “[An art object] must be evaluated from its own set of standards,” she said. “I don’t think all art can be understood through certain analytical aesthetic models.” She also agreed that differences in artistic and aesthetic responses exist across cultures. However, she said she is unsure of the extent to which teachers are sensitive to those differences. “I cannot say that all art teachers or candidates are sensitive to the differences. I would hope that we are. I can’t say that I am,” she stated.

She described her approach to aesthetics in the classroom:
Especially with it being middle school art, I try not to focus on the beauty that is or is not. . . . I try to go back to giving [students] certain standards of what I’m expecting them to do . . . , something that can be met by each student. I try to grade based not so much on if it’s pretty to me, but if you met those standards, because the aesthetics to me may not be to you. . . . [S]o, I try to stay away from cornering myself based on what’s perceived to be beautiful or not.

She said that her students engage in activities involving aesthetics primarily when she conducts a group critique:

We do critiques in which they clearly discuss and give their opinions. We discuss feelings and the right way to say something that you disagree or find to be a negative statement. We also look at professional artwork as to what that artist believes to be beautiful, or what they consider to be art. . . . I would say that we deal with [aesthetics] mostly when we critique.

**Western and Non-Western Artistic Traditions**

Teacher J agreed that no racial, cultural, or national group’s art is superior to another’s. She was not sure whether she agrees or disagrees that American culture is not synonymous with Western traditions and Western values. However, when asked to define what comprises American culture, she stated, “The apple pie, the Norman Rockwell is what I think most people would see as American culture, the really straight-laced, realistic artwork.”
Cultural Contests of Objects and Artifacts

Teacher J said that she believes that it is possible to present a cultural artifact in a visual art class without placing the object within its cultural framework; however, she believes that teachers should not do so. She agreed that it is important to learn about the culture in which an art object was produced in order to learn about the object itself. She described her approach to presenting a cultural object or artifact to her students:

My typical approach would be to locate all the information I could to make sure that I’m giving all the correct information. Rather than to just stand and tell, I would give [the object] to them first, get an opinion of what they think it is, how do they think it was used, and then share the information that I know. That would be the best way to do it.

She shared some questions she might ask to guide students’ observations of the object:

[What]do you think it is? How do you think it was used, or how do you think you would use it? If you had to use this tool today, what would you do with it? I encourage them to go to the Internet and see what they can locate.

Teacher Training

Teacher J indicated that her undergraduate preservice training did not prepare her adequately to teach multicultural content. “No, I don’t feel like I was well prepared, though it was years ago when I received my education. I would love to workshop in it, would love to learn more, or a better way to do it.
. . .” She explained. She said that the only preparation she could recall from her undergraduate program was one mask making assignment. She added that she has managed to find other sources for her knowledge of multicultural art education:

Firsthand, [I have learned] of course through traveling, and the Internet, and my daily associations, the people that I may know who may be from another culture. Growing up, one of my good friends, her mother was Native American so as a child, we went to her powwows and did all that. Teacher J also gets information from some textbooks and magazines. She said that she finds the periodical Scholastic Art to be a useful resource. She said she tries to research the information that she presents to her classes, but that she does not research the authenticity of the information she finds.

**Cultural Contexts of Teachers and Learners**

Teacher J stated that the experience of presenting multicultural content has had a profound effect on her as the teacher:

I think it’s made me address some of the biases that I might have or some of the preconceived notions that I might have. Especially, I’ve worked in both settings. I’ve worked in the minority schools where Black students might be in the majority, so I’ve worked in both cases. Both were learning experiences for me. It’s made me aware of some of my biases in how I address my students in just day-to-day dealing with them.
When asked to describe the demographic makeup of her school’s student population, she gave this estimate:

I would say 70% of my students are middle class. I would say a majority of my students are White. Thirty percent of them are Black, and here lately I’ve noticed an influx of Hispanics. I’m not certain how many are at or below the poverty level. I think it’s diverse. I would say that it’s . . . probably one of the more diverse situations I’ve been in.

Teacher J said that she has not made adjustments in her instruction to reflect the cultural backgrounds of her student body. She also said that she gathers information on the school’s demographic makeup primarily by personal observation. “I’m not going out of my way to research this,” she pointed out.

**Summary of Case Interview of Teacher K**

At the time of the interview Teacher K had taught art for eight years at the elementary level. He holds Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees in Ceramics and Graphic Design and a Master of Education in Early Childhood Education. In his current teaching assignment, he was serving two elementary schools working with students from kindergarten through fifth grade. He estimated that the student population of each of his schools was approximately 600 students.

**Curriculum, Content, and Resources**

Teacher K agreed that programs that assess all art using only Western aesthetic tenets should be viewed with suspicion. Initially, he was uncertain whether the Western-based concepts of Discipline-Based Art Education were
adequate or inadequate for the study of non-Western art. Upon further reflection, he concluded that the discipline-based model was in fact inadequate for understanding the art of non-Western cultures.

Regarding the resources available for teaching multicultural content, Teacher K said that he believes that the texts and curriculum guides available to him give adequate representation to multicultural arts and that the representation of multicultural arts in art education resources has improved over the past decade. He said he finds the school district’s adopted elementary art textbook to be a particularly useful resource:

I really enjoy the Barrett Kendall [Portfolios] textbook series (Turner, 1998) that we’re doing in elementary school, and the prints that go along with it are great and cover a pretty broad range. There are still some holes there and some gaps to fill, but it’s excellent I think.

He agreed that studying even one other culture leads to a greater tolerance of diversity, an opinion he has developed through personal experience:

It did not make any sense until I first visited another country, and then I started studying other forms of art and really getting into their culture and wanting to know ‘Why this?’ and ‘Why that?’ It really made a lot of sense, and I pretty much believe everybody should go out of the country a couple of times for an extended period of time.

He said that he has witnessed instances in which students’ attention has been drawn to exotic or trivial aspects of a culture because only superficial
differences in the culture’s practices have been emphasized. He stated that, as a result, he has occasionally heard students make comments about a culture that would be received in a negative fashion by a member of that culture.

Teacher K was asked whether using improvised household materials tends to trivialize multicultural art forms. The issue of preserving the cultural authenticity of an art form was problematic for him:

I don’t know. You’ve got to really focus on the multicultural level, and I feel this is a good thing, but, on the other hand, sometimes things are trivialized. I’m kind of riding the fence on this. We do this on an elementary level. We’re getting enough [multicultural content] done. We’re getting familiar with it, but it is trivialized a lot. Sometimes, just because of supplies, we have to.

He continued to say that certain art forms lend themselves to authentic experiences for elementary students:

I love to teach Maria Martinez and talk about pottery. Of course, we can get our hands on clay. We can teach hand building. I can get really in depth with those, and with any kind of clay area at all . . . , so it works out. But in other areas it’s kind of tough to do.

He found value in conducting multicultural studio experiences when household materials must be substituted for authentic ones, “because even some is better than none.” He said that in such situations he always explains the reason for the substitution to his students. He tells them, “We’re using this for this reason because we don’t have access to [authentic materials].”
Art Education, Political Action, and Social Reform

Teacher K said that issues of bias, prejudice, discrimination, and racism are appropriate for his classroom instruction, particularly when students have learned prejudice elsewhere. Due to time limitations, however, he is not able to devote a great deal of time to those topics:

[I introduce the issues] briefly, not as much as I would like to, because even at the young age of some of these children, they have already been taught things that are unfortunately negative. We have a certain amount of time to get a project going and get the lesson taught, and if you don’t watch it, you’re not teaching art, you’re teaching social studies class.

He said that he uses special events as one opportunity to address social issues related to multicultural content:

February I was going over Black History month. I really went in depth with Faith Ringgold with the students. I talked about the importance of female art, but, more importantly, of African American art. I talked about all the prints that I could get a hold of, something to get in their face, and I gave examples about the diversities and the things [African American artists] had to overcome during their time period doing these things, and I talked about the importance of doing that.

While social issues do have a place in Teacher K’s classroom, he does not see them as a central focus for a visual art program. “I don’t think you should really focus so much on social issues,” he stated. “There’s a lot of art out there that’s not based on social issues. . . . I don’t want to turn art into . . . a social
issue forum in my class.” He said that he feels that studio activities are very important at the elementary level, but that there is room for both social issues and studio production:

[Studio production] is definitely necessary. Oh boy, if you want to get a kid’s attention, you can’t sit there and lecture to them, even in a fun way. In elementary school they come in expecting that we’re about to do something with our hands, and so it’s extremely important. I think that you need to have a nice mix of both.

Teacher K has had no personal experience with censorship of multicultural issues in his teaching, although he said he recognizes the potential of some issues to produce a negative reaction. He said that if he were to encounter resistance, it would probably come from parents and not from administrators or students. He felt that the administrators at both his schools support him and would back his decisions if parents questioned them. He added, though, that, while some issues may be valuable, they are not acceptable for elementary classrooms. He said that he accepts both his principals’ standards as the final authority for acceptable content and that he would not defy those limitations. “That’s just a line that you can’t cross,” he explained.

**Aesthetics**

Teacher K had difficulty selecting from two opposing views of aesthetics. One view holds that a Western aesthetic model can be used to understand all art forms, while the second view states that each art form should be judged by
its internal aesthetic because there is no universal aesthetic. “I’m almost riding the fence on [this issue] again,” he said. “I kind of see both of these here. You know, sometimes art just is because the person that made it thought it was.” Regarding culturally based differences in students’ artistic and aesthetic preferences, he said that he believes that pre-service teacher candidates are sensitive to such differences, but that their conscious recognition of those differences diminishes over time. “I think after being in the field a few years, they don’t become sensitive to it any more,” he stated. He did not indicate that he reflects cultural differences among his students by varying his approach to aesthetics. His primary concern for engaging students in aesthetics is to avoid token response activities that would lead them to evaluate art objects only in terms of utilitarian or practical concerns such as, in his words, “That would look great on a sofa,” rather than in terms of students’ preferences for the aesthetic qualities of the object on its own terms. He prefers to recreate a museum experience for students when leading them through aesthetic activities:

We’ll put up the art work that each class has made and we treat it like a museum. We’ll walk around and look at it as a group. We talk about it. Or, we’ll even do kind of a little critique, and so, that’s a really effective way of . . . treating it like a museum, even putting up another class’ work and hiding the names so they don’t know and just talk about what they see.
Western and Non-Western Artistic Traditions

Teacher K said that he generally agrees that the art of no racial, cultural, or national group is superior to that of another. “I mean, I have my favorites, but they change. And I don’t know how any are more superior to the other,” he explained. He was also asked to respond to a quote stating, “American culture is not synonymous with Western traditions and Western values” (Sahasrabadhe, 1992, p. 14). While he said he does not believe this statement is currently true, he acknowledges that the character of American culture is evolving:

I think I disagree on this, but on the other hand, we’re becoming extremely diverse, and it’s really changing right now. America is really changing so much in the past five years. . . . I disagree with it for right now, but . . . within five years from now I don’t think anyone can disagree with that at all.

He characterized American culture as “a big mixing bowl.” In considering visual art’s role in contemporary culture, he stated, “American art has become . . . an independent thing. . . . I’m not sure if it’s really even fair to call it American art.”

Cultural Contexts of Objects and Artifacts

Teacher J said he believes that it is possible to present a cultural artifact in a visual art class without placing the object within its cultural framework, but that it is probably not a good practice to do so. He does find certain
instances in which he prefers not to build a cultural context for the objects he presents:

I was in Greece a while back and I had photos. [The students and I] were talking about the different sarcophaguses [sic], and we didn’t really go into detail about what they were used for. I wanted [students] to see them for the art and not for what their utilitarian use was.

He continued to say that in most instances, however, students need “enough [information] to know what they’re dealing with, what they’re seeing” when dealing with the cultural context of an art form. He discussed a unit on pre-Columbian art from Mexico as an example of his typical approach to presenting multicultural art:

In the past I have done clay lessons with the different gods from Mexico, and Yucatan, the sun god, the moon [god] and all that. And you know, I would still have to go into the culture and talk about it. I would have to talk about why [the objects] were created, why they were there, what was the belief, so I still did that. I still talked about how we did it, and where it came from, and why it was there, and why it was made, and - the big one - why we’re making it, and why we’re doing something similar to it.

He said that he uses questions to guide students’ observations of multicultural art. For example, in presenting the Aztec calendar, he uses questions to help students discover its original purpose:

They thought it was pretty, and they never saw it as a working piece of art. I don’t think it was so much considered art during that time, but,
boy, children think it’s just a beautiful piece of work. After you talk
about it, they see that it’s a working piece and art.

**Teacher Training**

Teacher K said that he has been well prepared to teach multicultural
content by his university art education teacher training experience:

My art professor in college was wonderful. It seems like we covered
multicultural art most of the time. We would have units
. . . of different multicultural projects and it was broad, so a lot of times
we would choose ourselves. We did weavings and we hardly ever did
anything which you would call based on the masters. Everything was
almost folk art to me because everything was multicultural. I cannot
really remember covering too much that was not multicultural.

He said that the opportunity to travel to other countries has also informed his
knowledge of multicultural art:

I’ve been to quite a few different countries, and you know, being in art, I
can automatically seek out those things first. That’s probably been my
favorite thing, because it meant more to me and I could give a lot more
information than just what I learned in college. It was seeded with me
more deeply, and it meant more to me.

Teacher K also indicated that he does verify the authenticity of the information
he presents about art from non-Western cultures. He said that, because of
the availability of the Internet, he not only checks out sources himself, but
engages some of his older students more deeply in multicultural content by
assigning them projects requiring them to do further investigation of objects and processes. He said that he also uses museums as resources to ascertain the authenticity of concepts and examples before presenting them to his students.

**Cultural Contexts of Teachers and Learners**

Teacher K said that the experience of presenting multicultural content has been a positive learning opportunity for him and has placed some students in the role of teacher:

Since being a teacher, I’ve learned more about cultures other than just the places I’ve been. It’s been really a learning thing for me, but that’s been really good. I’ve learned a lot from just being an art teacher, and actually, the best thing is these students that come in who know a little English and can give me more [information about their cultures] than what I’ve learned on my own.

Not only have some of his international students furnished useful information, but they have afforded him opportunities to realign his opinions of cultures based on his contact with them. In particular, he gained a new perspective on Russian art by what he learned when he became acquainted with the family of one of his students. “I actually got to know the parents,” he explained, “and I learned a lot more from them and I thought ‘Wow. Books don’t tell you this kind of stuff.’”
He described the demographic makeup of his school’s student population as “sixty or seventy percent minority Black students and . . . a large concentration of Latino students . . . and there’s a few Russian students and . . . some Indian students.” He estimated that one percent of the student body is Native American. He said that because of the large percentage of African American students, he has planned his instruction to reflect the demographic makeup of the student body. He has also incorporated “a lot of southwestern, even Mexican art and Native American art, but not to the point I was satisfied with it.” He said he does not have a formal process or resource for determining his school’s cultural makeup. Instead he informs himself by observing and talking to students in the classroom.

**Summary of Case Interview of Teacher L**

At the time of the interview Teacher L had taught art for two years at the elementary level. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Art Education. Due to budget cutbacks, her teaching position was eliminated after this study began, and she found employment in a neighboring school district. Her answers are based on her teaching experience while she was employed in the school district selected for this study. She estimated that the student population of the first school where she taught was approximately 350.

**Curriculum, Content, and Resources**

Teacher L agreed that Western tenets cannot be used to judge all art. In fact, she said, “I would probably agree that anything that’s all inclusive in the world of art has got to be a little bit suspect in my opinion.” When she was
asked if the Western-based concepts of Discipline-Based Art Education were inadequate for teaching and learning about non-Western art forms, she responded that, despite the fact that all her training has had a Western-based perspective, she sees its limitations for multicultural art:

    It’s something I don’t think that I’ve actually thought about. I was trained in a Western education and actually these things are familiar - criticism, production, history, and aesthetics. But I think that looking at art this way. . . , that’s a good way to break it down, but maybe for the complete understanding of something that’s non-Western, maybe we should try to look at it more from that culture’s point of view. That makes sense to me. I agree with that.

She did see DBAE as an appropriate starting point for investigation of a culture’s art forms:

    I believe [DBAE] teaches our kids how to look at and understand as far as trying to get them into the other culture and trying to get them to understand that point of view. You may have to go a little bit deeper than that, because I think that they’re just going to get a surface understanding of different cultures with the same approach to every single culture. So I think that they need a little bit deeper than what the discipline base is giving them.

    She agreed that the curriculum she used in the school district gave only token representation to the art of non-Western cultures, but she did not feel that this fact reflects a lack of commitment to multicultural art education by
the district. “I think that’s a time restriction actually,” she explained. “With as many kids as we have to teach and with the little amount of time that we are given, I believe that we’re given a token amount of time to teach any topic.”

She said that the limited presence of multicultural art in the elementary curriculum reflects a recognition by the curriculum writers that teachers do not have time for a deep exploration of multicultural topics with their students. When she was asked whether the representation of multicultural art education in curriculum and textbooks has improved over the past decade, she said that she must examine the question from the perspective of a former K-12 student of art, due to her short time in her teaching career:

From what I remember being younger, . . . [multicultural content] doesn’t stick out in my mind as something that we concentrated on. I’m thinking as I got older I was seeing it a bit more and more. . . . So if it was a progression over time, I’m sure it probably is more predominant now than it was back then.

She has found the multicultural resource books and materials available from art education supply catalogs to be useful and plentiful. “I have not come up lacking from trying to find something. I found that if I’m trying to find something it’s out there,” she stated.

Teacher L agreed that studying at least one other culture helps students understand that their culture’s perspectives are not the only correct ones. She believes, though, that calling attention to surface differences such as food and clothing customs interferes with this goal. For this reason, she helps her
students find similarities as well as differences when comparing Western and non-Western cultures. “We don’t only look for the differences, you look for the sameness too,” she explained. “If you teach only the differences, you’re actually getting less tolerant.”

She acknowledged that teachers, herself included, sometimes imitate cultural art forms or techniques with improvised materials:

I would agree. I’ve found myself guilty of doing this. . . . I’m thinking of maracas . . . , and instead of using the actual gourds that they used or materials, you know, we would use materials like a Coke bottle.

Continuing with the example of making maracas, she said her reasons for not always preserving cultural authenticity of materials and techniques lie in problems of logistics and money:

I can’t because of money, basically. And how are you going to store that many gourds? It’s so much easier to use toilet paper tubes than it is to use hollowed out logs . . . , and I guess I sort of make it okay with myself to know that we’re being creative and that I show them how to use objects in other ways. And I try to bring in something authentic to show them so that they’re not seeing just these cheap imitations, so that they can actually see. The kids are really amazed at all the work that went into [the authentic object], so, if I can, I try to show them. More often than not because of money and because of just materials that are available to me, I can’t use authentic materials.
She went on to say that multicultural studio experiences are worth doing, even when teachers must resort to household materials, but she cautioned that teachers must communicate with students about the target culture’s authentic materials and processes.

**Art Education, Political Action, and Social Reform**

Teacher L said that she does address issues of racism and prejudice in the art classroom, particularly when presenting the work of African American artists to her students. She also addresses those issues in response to her students’ behavior. She stated, “I think that I have to be very aware in my classroom as well about what the kids are saying to each other.” She said that she has used visual art to present topics related to racism and sexism in the past two years, but much of the work she has done to combat prejudice and bias takes place when she works with students individually.

She believes that social issues are appropriate for the elementary art classroom, and she feels that she can approach such topics without fear of administrative or parental censorship, although she is aware that teachers are expected to use prudence in discussing them:

> [Social issues are] definitely appropriate if we’re talking about multicultural issues. You talk about the life of the artist and the things that they had faced in their lives. How do you talk about that without bringing those topics into discussion? I really haven’t felt restricted on the things I say to my kids. [Administrators] tell me not to put too much of a focus on it though, which I understand.
She said that, while she sometimes introduces social issues that have been faced by contemporary artists, she does not find political issues appropriate for elementary classes:

I think using art as a platform for politics is not something that especially elementary kids need. But to deal with racism and sexism, why wouldn’t you deal with social issues? At least on the surface, to get [students] thinking about it, I think that it’s appropriate. It does affect the art world. Everything affects the art world.

Although she feels that social issues have a place in elementary art instruction, she does not believe they belong at the center:

I cannot imagine packing in my whole art program and starting from contemporary social issues when I’m dealing with 5 year olds. I think that [social issues are] definitely a part of it, but [they don’t] need to be the main focus.

At the same time, her instruction does not center solely on production activities either. She said she prefers to vary the types of activities she presents to develop a blended, well-rounded program.

**Aesthetics**

The question of accepting or rejecting the concept of the universality of Western aesthetic models caused Teacher L to be conflicted:

There are certain models that we are taught to analyze, describe, and interpret. All these things are supposed to be able to be applicable to everything that you look at, and I even teach the kids that . . . you can
use these things to problem solve as well, not just to understand art. So, to an extent, I can say all art can be understood through Western aesthetic models, but at the same time what kind of thing are you looking for? [If] you want to get a deep understanding of a multicultural [art form], you need to look at it from that particular culture’s point of view and get deeper than just the Western model allows you to, so I can’t really say. . . . But I’m not going to give up my Western aesthetic model. I cling to that one because I teach that one too.

Despite her preference for the Western aesthetic model, she agreed that there are culturally based differences in students’ aesthetic preferences and that teachers should be sensitive to them. Typical aesthetics activities in her classroom include inventing stories about paintings and writing imaginary letters to artists. She said that she varies her presentation of aesthetics activities according to the culture represented by the artist being studied, but she did not indicate that she alters her approach to aesthetics to reflect the cultural makeup of her student population.

**Western and non-Western Artistic Traditions**

Teacher L agreed that no culture’s art is superior to another’s. She said she feels that making such a judgment conflicts with the principles of multicultural art education:

Why would we even teach multicultural art if we’re going to assume that one race is a superior to another? It seems to undermine the whole purpose of doing it, and to teach art, you’re teaching about many
wonderful differences and similarities, but across the entire world. And if you’re going to teach one as superior, why bother learning about the others?

She also agreed that the Western artistic canon is not broad enough to serve the multicultural makeup of the United States:

A lot of people say that America has no culture, but it’s hard to make that statement when we’ve been producing art that’s ‘American.’ . . . We have so many [races and cultures], and I think that helps to create a culture of our own, so to teach strictly Western, to try to paste that on to us as a label, I don’t think that works.

She said she believes that individuals define American culture according to their own experiences:

When they asked me [in a university course] what my American experience was, I came up with something that had to do with the strength of women, because it was from my family and from people I grew up with having to have strong female figures in the family. A friend of mine that grew up down the street is defined by her religion. . . . And for somebody else it could be something totally different.

She used the “salad bowl” metaphor to describe her concept of American culture:

It’s hard to put one sentence on [American culture] and really sum it up, because it’s so varied. Now, we’re a salad because everyone keeps their own identity, but we’re a part of the whole, and I think that sums it up.
Cultural Contexts of Objects and Artifacts

Teacher L agreed that it is important to place art forms and objects in their cultural context. She said that this practice is particularly important to her when she presents objects that may be viewed as sacred in their original context:

I think that I try to teach respect. I try to, especially on sacred objects, ceremonial objects, ceremonial totems, and things like that of that nature, I really try to get that point across that it’s a very serious thing. It’s not a plaything, it’s not a child’s toy.

She said that learning about cultural context helps students understand the object or artifact they are studying. She disagreed that comparing objects from different cultures causes students to make inappropriate connections between them. She said she believes that, on the contrary, such comparisons make objects and art forms memorable for her students.

When leading students through an exploration of a cultural object, Teacher L prefers to provide hands-on activities to spur their interest in the object. She described a unit on Native American owner sticks to illustrate her approach:

We talked about how [the students] made [their interpretations of owner sticks], what kind of objects they used to make it personal, starting with sticks like everyone else’s. How are you going to make it reflective of you? And that’s how we got a better understanding of what they’re looking at. And if they’re looking at a picture of an [authentic] owner
stick, they’re thinking about who made it and what kind of materials
they had to make it, and I think that helps a lot to better understand
where it came from.

She said that she does use questions to guide students’ explorations of objects
from non-Western cultures. Regarding the types of questions she uses, she
said that she asks “just questions that get them more engaged and then it gets
them asking more. I think a good teacher is constantly asking questions.”

**Teacher Training**

Teacher L said that her university teacher training experience made her
aware that she would be expected to teach multicultural content, but that she
did not receive focused instruction in multicultural art education. “I really
don’t feel I was specifically trained for that,” she stated, “but I did know that
that’s a big part of what I was going to be doing and that it was important.”
She said her knowledge of multicultural content has primarily come from
independent study. She has also solicited resource materials from friends who
have traveled to Asia. She said that her own travel experiences have motivated
her to learn more about other cultures. She said that she is able to verify the
authenticity of information using the Internet or other media before she
introduces multicultural content in her classes. She said that resources for
investigating multicultural art forms are plentiful, particularly commercial
lesson planning kits for visual art teachers, but that, unfortunately, often those
resources present only generalities with little or no in-depth information.
Cultural Contexts of Teachers and Learners

Teacher L said that the experience of teaching multicultural content has heightened her consciousness of her own biases and has caused her to be wary of transmitting them to her students:

It would be easy to be biased without even knowing it. . . . I am trying to make sure that I'm not bringing [my students] any of my own biases, because that would be so easily transferred to them, to the kids. You learn your biases from other people I think.

While she was aware of the potential of bias to impact her teaching, she could not recall any instances or experiences that have caused her to realign her own attitudes or opinions.

She estimated the demographic makeup of the school where she taught in 2002-2003 as fifty percent African American, forty percent Caucasian, and ten percent Hispanic and Asian. The diversity of the student body at that school had furnished her some useful resources. “I had some African students, and they actually got to bring in some of their own blankets and their own cultural things from their homes,” she explained. She said that she talked to the school counselors and the classroom teachers to get information on the demographic makeup of her school. She said that many parents were actively involved in the school, and that she was able to gain personalized information on the cultural backgrounds of her students by conversing with their parents.
Summary of Case Interview of Teacher M

At the time of the interview Teacher M had taught art at the middle school level for three years. She had 14 years experience as a high school art teacher. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art Education and has begun a Mater of Arts degree in Art Education. She estimated that the student population of her school was approximately 850.

Curriculum, Content, and Resources

Teacher M stated that she agrees that visual art programs should not use only Western aesthetic tenets to assess all art:

I think that for each culture, you would have to take into consideration the culture the work is coming from before you can assess and judge it. I think going through the steps of art criticism as we’ve learned can be a good start, but you have to consider other things.

While she did not determine Discipline-Based Art Education to be inadequate for understanding the art of non-Western cultures, she said that she does believe that the DBAE model should be supplemented by other knowledge in order to be effective:

I think DBAE is a great way to start. It is a good way to look at a work of art, and try to digest it and understand it, but again with non-Western culture, you have to know more to fully understand it. I might look at a piece of Indian art or Islamic art. I might not know what the symbols mean or what the cultural things are. They might be beautiful symbols
but have some really hidden meaning that would totally change the
work.
Thus, she said, she feels that DBAE worked to some degree for teaching and
learning about the art forms of all cultures.

Teacher M said that she believes that current textbooks and art
curriculum give token representation to the art of non-Western cultures. She
based this opinion on the fact that the content of the instructional and
curriculum materials provided to her reminds her of her experiences as a
student, which did not teach her very much about other cultures. She did say
that curriculum and resources have improved over the past decade, “both with
local resources like [a municipal art museum’s] exhibits, to the diverse cultures
we have in our school now.” She stated, “I would say it has improved, but not
by big leaps and bounds by any means.”

She cited personal experience as the most effective resource she has
found for presenting multicultural content. She gave an example of students’
responses to materials loaned by another teacher at her school:

We have a new PE teacher here who has served some time in China. She
brought in lots of artwork that she purchased there. It was actual
artwork, not just posters or prints. To show that to a class and to do a
project from that kind of resource - the kids are much more in tune to
seeing actual artwork, rather than just a poster or transparency. And it
was from the origin. It’s not a printed resource, and I think that makes a
big difference.
She agreed that learning about other cultures leads to greater tolerance of diversity. She pointed out that the presence in her school of a student from Iraq has deepened other students’ perceptions of that country’s culture. “It makes things a lot more understandable, and I think that works through the art too,” she explained.

She acknowledged that the practices of a culture are often exoticized or trivialized through activities that draw attention to superficial differences. She felt, however, that such differences should be used as an avenue to open up deeper investigation of the culture:

I think that [exoticizing] happens a whole lot, but I also think that might be something that helps to start the interest in that culture. It’s a shame not to go further than the surface things. . . . I think that you have to take it further, though. I agree that [exoticizing] is something that we do a lot, and I think that it is something that we should try to take further.

She also stated that she does not think that multicultural studio experiences which use improvised materials trivialize the original art form being studied. She maintained that the use of improvised household materials does not negate the value of a multicultural studio activity. “As long as the kids are learning from it and still expressing themselves, I think that’s what’s important,” she said. She is not always able to preserve the cultural authenticity of the art form being studied when she leads students through a multicultural studio activity:
Even if you’re doing a Native American pottery project, you’re still limited to some degree. You don’t know what materials they might have used. You can make a good stab at it, but it’s not always going to be just like what they did.

**Art Education, Political Action, and Social Reform**

Teacher M said that she feels that issues involving bias, prejudice, discrimination, and racism should be addressed in the art classroom. Having taught visual art for 14 years at the high school level before becoming a middle school art teacher, she acknowledged that she had to adapt the issues-oriented content of her class to the maturity level of her middle school students:

I think it’s important to bring those [issues] to the forefront especially to make kids learn from history. I’ve learned as a middle school teacher that I had to adjust the way that I address those ideas and issues, but I still think that they need to be addressed. Today . . . we talked for a long time about the Holocaust and I think that’s valuable. We kind of went on a rabbit chase there, but I still think that it’s valuable information and something that they will remember.

She said that her commitment to addressing social issues is tied closely to her philosophy of teaching:

Probably one of my strongest feelings about what I teach in art is that [students] are creating history like the artists before us. That’s how we know about the cultures. Without the social issues, how will we leave a
record of what’s going on in our society, and how will we find a positive way to express that?

As far as impediments to teaching about social issues are concerned, Teacher M said that time limitations are the only factors that hamper her from addressing them. She has only nine weeks to work with each group of students that she teaches and “you’re limited with which subjects you can hit.”

While she was enthusiastic about including social issues in her classroom, she does not feel that art education should be centered on contemporary social issues, rather than art making. “It has to be both hand-in-hand,” she said. She suggested that, by allying social issues and studio activities, the teacher fosters opportunities for students’ self expression related to the issue being addressed:

In a lot of projects that I would attempt to do, even with this [middle school] age level, social issues should be maybe the subject matter given, and then the creation that comes from that would be [students’] own feelings toward that social issue.

Censorship of multicultural issues was not a problem for Teacher M. She attributed the lack of resistance to multicultural content to the fact that she self-censors material to establish a level that she finds appropriate for her middle grades students:

I don’t think anyone has censored what I’m teaching, but I think I choose to do that myself based on the age level I’m teaching. It’s all come from myself with concern for my students, and parents, and community.
**Aesthetics**

Teacher M was asked to choose between two statements about aesthetics. The first one asserts that all art can be understood through Western aesthetic models. The second statement rejects the existence of one aesthetic which applies universally to all art forms. She indicated that her own education and past practices align with the first statement, but that she finds truth in the second one:

> Again, my personal history is with the first one, that you can break down a work of art based on the aesthetic models we’ve learned. However, the second one I would have to say would probably be the best, especially for multicultural works. You would have to look more closely as to what is a part of that culture. Based on my history, the first one is what I do more often, but I think the second one is more accurate or more appropriate.

She agreed that culturally-based differences in artistic and aesthetic values do exist and that teachers should be sensitive to those differences. However, she said that she does not vary her approach to aesthetics according to the cultures represented in her classroom. “I don’t think I would vary it because of that, and I don’t limit it because of that either,” she clarified. She described some of the aesthetics activities she conducts in the classroom:

> [I do] everything from a treasure hunt, looking for different things in a work of art, to – like I’ve said, in middle school I’ve learned to do things in a different way than I might have in high school - maybe making it a bit
more fun or making it more of a puzzle or a challenge, but also down to just class discussion, going through the steps [of art criticism].

**Western and Non-Western Artistic Traditions**

Teacher M said she believes that it might be acceptable to begin students’ exploration of a cultural artifact without placing the object within its cultural framework, “to start with to get them to look at the piece just like you would look at any other work of art.” She said that removing the artifact from that framework should occur only at the introductory stage:

I think once you’ve [shown students an object], it would be necessary to go through further and say, ‘Okay, now this object was used in death rituals,’ or whatever, and then let them see it in a new light. [I would ask them] if their feelings about it change. I think that you’d have to go a little further.

When presenting a cultural artifact to her students, Teacher M likes to begin with a warm-up activity:

If it is something that they are unfamiliar with, . . . I show it to them on an overhead transparency, or poster, or magazine . . . and ask them what they think it is to start with. It might be a guessing game, a put-your-hand-in-the-box kind of thing. And then I turn it into a class discussion because I think that kids love to talk, and they love to talk about why it was like that and what it might have been used for. Then, and especially if they know there is no right or wrong answer, they can just kind of guess and come up with good answers.
She said that she continues the exploration of the object by leading students through the steps of art criticism, and then includes the history that goes with the object. She frequently uses questions to prompt students, especially if students are not responding with the result she desires. “I might say, ‘What do you suppose this little nodule on the side is used for?’ I might point out some things that will make them look a little closer,” she explained.

**Teacher Training**

In Teacher M’s opinion, her preservice university experience gave her a strong background in classical Western art history, but not in multicultural art education. She suggested that this shortcoming in her preparation may be due to the fact that she completed her university degree 17 years prior to the time of the interview, at a time when she said that multicultural issues had not yet come into prominence. She said that her best sources for information on multicultural art education have been “experiences of people who have been places, including myself.” She said that she does research the authenticity of cultural examples and concepts before she presents them in her classroom. To find information on multicultural art, she said she depends on the Internet:

Truly, I look at web sites nonstop, just trying to find the information that I want, and luckily, now we have so much information available at our fingertips, whereas we used to have to go to the library, or go to a research situation, or buy the book. And while I still do that, I like the concreteness of [the Internet].
Cultural Contexts of Teachers and Learners

The experience of presenting multicultural content offered Teacher M certain challenges:

I think that the hardest thing for art teachers . . . is that you have to put aside your personal preferences. . . . You have to put all of that aside and try to present [multicultural content] in the most unbiased way you can so that you’re representing a lot of things. And for me, it’s almost like you lose your own self trying to make sure that you can provide a very open forum for everything.

She said that teaching multicultural content has caused her to reevaluate some of her own attitudes and opinions:

My personal preference for some work of art – it might not have been my thing – and then, once I learn more about the culture, what caused it to be what it was. Then I have a greater appreciation for it, and more of an interest for it just kind of grows from there.

When asked to describe the demographic makeup of the school’s student population, Teacher M estimated that, of the two hundred students she sees each day, approximately fifty percent are Caucasian, thirty to forty percent are African American, and “a good many are Hispanic or Mexican children, as well as children from overseas. I guess a good ten percent of that would be from overseas.” She said that she thinks she is able to reflect the cultural backgrounds of her students in planning instruction. She pointed out that, while each group of students is in her class for only nine weeks at a time, she
does teach the students for three years. “Even if I don’t cover everything in a nine week period, by the time I’ve had then from sixth grade to eighth grade . . . , we usually cover a good range [of cultures],” she explained.

She used two sources of information about the cultural backgrounds of her students. Statistics gathered by the school provided her with quantitative data on the students. She supplemented this data by asking her students to write a letter to her:

I have them write a letter a ‘Dear Mrs. [Teacher M]’ letter. They have to let me know something about themselves, and they can include anything that they want to share, including their own heritage, or anything they want to tell me. . . . When you have two hundred [students] each nine weeks, it’s hard to get to know them, and so that’s a good way to get to know them one on one.

Summary of Case Interview of Teacher N

At the time of the interview Teacher N had taught art for one year in a middle school and five years at the elementary level. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Art Education and a Master of Education degree in Elementary Education. She is also certified to teach Social Studies. She estimated that the student population of her school was approximately 850.

Curriculum, Content, and Resources

Teacher N said that she agrees that visual art programs which assess and judge all art using only Western tenets should be viewed with suspicion because, as she put it, “Kids need more of a variety than just Western
aesthetics.” However, she also said that the Western-based concepts of Discipline-Based Art Education were adequate for understanding non-Western art. For her, the DBAE model worked for teaching and learning about the art forms of all cultures.

She stated that the textbooks and curriculum guides adopted by her school district give token representation to multicultural and cross cultural arts. She agreed that visual art curricula and resources have improved over the past decade to become more inclusive of multicultural art forms. The materials she found to be most useful are the ones she ordered from a visual art education supplier. “I order lots of stuff from Crismac because they have sets of different cultures – videos, visuals, and written material, and all in one compact packet,” she explained.

Teacher N agreed that studying other cultures encourages students to develop greater tolerance of diversity. She said that this goal is particularly important because of the cultural diversity among the students themselves:

I think that students should study more than one [culture]. I think your multiculturalism should be an integrated part because there are so many different kids, different religions, different ethnic groups all together in one building, and they need to understand that a lot of kids don’t have an understanding of their own culture.

She disagreed that elementary programs may exoticize cultures by focusing on superficial differences such as food and clothing. She said that her
program is not guilty of this error because she does not teach about food and clothing:

When I taught multicultural units in the elementary school, we never talked about food or clothing. We talked about [a culture’s] art and their history, so we never talked about food or clothing. I would say that it would have to depend on the individual teacher. I guess you could take a census. In the art classroom, we mainly stuck to the different histories of the different cultures and the arts of the different cultures and the artists from those cultures.

She said that she believes it is possible to maintain the authenticity of multicultural art forms without trivializing them when they are translated into classroom production activities. For her, the teacher is the catalyst to either preserve or destroy the cultural authenticity of an art form:

I could see how [the art form] could be trivialized because I don’t like the way that some people do stuff. But when I do multicultural units, I try to [preserve cultural authenticity]. . . . When I travel . . . I buy stuff and I bring it so [students] can see it and I try to have the kids do the same designs [artists] do [in the culture] and why they do the designs and really get into it. . . . I think the right teacher could make it worthwhile.

**Art Education, Political Action, and Social Reform**

Teacher N said that issues of bias, prejudice, discrimination and racism have a place in classroom instruction, particularly for “explaining why you shouldn’t [commit such offenses].” She pointed out that “things are going to
come up. You should discuss them.” When she addresses those issues in her classroom she does so through comparing and contrasting cultural practices. “We discuss how in different cultures, different religions celebrate different things and how they believe different things.” She said she also teaches her students that what they read in books often reflects the cultural biases of authors:

That’s why I tell them, ‘Don’t believe everything you read, because it may not be the right thing.’ And they should always check their sources, because if you have someone born in America writing about a Middle Eastern culture, they may Americanize it a little too much and not really get the authenticity that you should have.

She found topics involving bias or racism to be desirable for art class content, with a caveat that teachers must present only age-appropriate topics to their students.

She said she feels that social issues are appropriate subject matter for the art classroom because children are already exposed to those issues in advertising, on the radio, and in movies. “And some artists do a very good job of it,” she maintained. “It might give kids and idea of how to express their ideas in those areas too.”

She disagreed, however, that art education should center on social issues, rather than art production. “Art education shouldn’t be centered on anything specifically,” she said, preferring to give social issues a minor role.
She went on to describe what she considers the proper balance of classroom activities:

At least half of your time should be spent on production. I do a lot of art history because I love art history. We do criticism and aesthetics, but kids want to make stuff. They don’t want to just sit there and listen to you talk. . . . They get enough of that in their regular classroom. They get bored.

She also stated that she has never experienced problems with students, parents, or school administrators resisting or censoring multicultural issues and content in her classroom. “I’ve been very lucky,” she said. “I’ve never been censored. We talk about everything.”

**Aesthetics**

Teacher N agreed that each art form has its own internal aesthetic and that there is no universal aesthetic that applies to all art forms. She said that this position closely reflects her philosophy of aesthetics:

I agree that there is no one universal for all art forms, because every person thinks about art a certain way. I may hate something that you like. For example, I can’t stand folk art. I can’t teach it because I hate it so much. I mean, I find no good in it at all. It just gives me the heebie-jeebies and I don’t want to teach it. . . . So to me, that’s very individual, aesthetics especially, because people are going to react to art in different ways.
She also agreed that teachers should be sensitive to culturally based differences in artistic and aesthetic responses.

She described how she conducts a typical lesson involving aesthetics:
I think I usually start out with the basics about what aesthetics is and then work my way out from there, because a lot of kids have no idea what that word means. We kind of go through that first, and then work our way out from there. A lot of times with aesthetics, there is no right and wrong, so you’re going to have different kinds of things.

She said that she often has students write about aesthetic experiences as well as about artwork. She guides their responses through questions such as “How does this make you feel? What do you think about this? Are there any memories you have?”

**Western and Non-Western Artistic Traditions**

Teacher N agreed that no racial, cultural, or national group makes art that is superior to another’s. She also agreed that American culture is not synonymous with Western traditions and Western values. However, she said she disagrees with a quotation stating, “The traditionalist notion that the Western canon is sufficiently broad and multifaceted to serve a multicultural, multilingual, multi-ethnic United States is myopic” (Anderson, 1996, p. 57). She defined American culture as “an ever changing thing, because what makes up the American culture in the 50s is very different from what makes up American culture today.” She added, “and it’s gotten a lot racier.”
Cultural Contexts of Objects and Artifacts

Teacher N said that it is neither possible nor desirable to present a cultural artifact in a visual art class without placing the object in its cultural framework. She agreed that learning about the culture in which an object was produced is important for learning about the object itself. She said that, when she presents a cultural artifact or object to her students, she begins by asking them questions about it. “I'll just ask questions to see if they can figure it out, if it’s really obscure. And that will lead into it really well, because it gets them interested,” she explained. She facilitates her students’ exploration of the object by bringing several resources to class and encouraging students to search for information about the object. “We try to find out as many different things from different sources as we can,” she said.

Teacher Training

Teacher N believes that she was well prepared to teach multicultural content by her university art education teacher training experience. That preparation consisted of one class in multicultural art education. “It was about all kinds of cultures,” she said. “And we learned [how to write] lesson plans. We did activities, and I had a very good teacher.” She indicated that her colleagues are another useful source for information on multicultural art education. “Most of my friends all have a specialty that they like to teach that’s a different culture, so we kind of get together and share,” she explained.

She agreed that it is important for teachers to research the authenticity of concepts and examples attributed to a culture before presenting
multicultural content in her classroom. She listed several sources she uses for information about multicultural art:

I go to the Internet. I ask people . . . from [the culture], and I get book from the library and research it. Like when I was teaching about the Middle East, we had some students from all those areas, and I would ask them, ‘Is this really the way it is?’ . . . It’s like I don’t want to give them a bunch of bull that’s not true, so I really try to do my homework before I present it. But if [students] do find other stuff, I really encourage them to bring it in.

**Cultural Contexts of Teachers and Learners**

Teacher N said that the experience of presenting multicultural content has made her more aware of the variety of cultural backgrounds of all the children in her schools. She described the demographic makeup of her student body:

I would say we are about 50-50, 50% White and 50% everything else. I mean, there’s a lot of different demographics at this school. I would probably have to say 30% African-Americans, 5% Asian, 10% Spanish cultures. You can’t just say Mexican, because they’re not all from Mexico, because they’re from all over. And then we have children from the Middle East too.

To inform herself about the cultural makeup of the student body, she said, “I look around the school. I see what comes into my classroom.”
Chapter V

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

This chapter consolidates and summarizes the data gathered from the analysis of the participants’ responses in order to discover these participants’ perspectives on the basic research questions and to characterize multicultural art education as it is practiced in one school district. The research questions were used to establish categories for a cross-case summary of the interview responses. As the summary proceeded, one category of information emerged – issues in teaching multicultural art education at the elementary level - that had not been anticipated in the development of the research questions or the interview instrument. A discussion of this data, which relates to concerns raised by elementary visual art teachers, follows the summaries of the basic research questions.

Curriculum, Content, and Resources

1. Do teachers believe that studying multicultural content in visual art classes contributes to greater tolerance of diversity?

The teachers were firm in their commitment to the belief that multicultural art education enhances students’ tolerance of diversity. Thirteen participants, or 93%, agreed that studying even one other culture helps students reevaluate the perspectives of their own culture. Teachers G, L, and N said that teachers should present more than one other culture in order to
deepen students’ acceptance of contrasting cultural practices. Teacher K added that “everybody should go out of the country a couple of times” to truly explore other cultures’ perspectives. Teachers E and G cited instances from their own classrooms in which students’ awareness and acceptance of other cultures grew through engagement in multicultural units or activities. Their experiences bear out Davenport’s (2000) proposition that learning about another culture fosters student tolerance of diversity by de-centralizing their own culture. Teacher J, the one participant who did not express strong agreement, stated that the concept of teaching tolerance through learning about other cultures is a good idea, but she was unsure whether it achieves the desired results in actual practice.

2. What approaches do teachers use when teaching multicultural content?

The participants in the study rejected the use of Western aesthetic standards to evaluate non-Western art forms. They agreed with Chalmers (1992) and Desai (2000) that programs based only on Western aesthetic tenets are not comprehensive enough to embrace differences in aesthetic standards among the world’s cultures. They generally agreed with Teacher A, who stated the belief that aesthetic responses are a function of a culture’s traditions. While they came readily to this conclusion, a discussion of Discipline-Based Art Education as a program centered on Western concepts caused disagreement and a certain degree of confusion for some participants. Fourteen percent of the participants, Teachers J and N, said they believe that the discipline-based approach is adequate for learning about the art of non-Western cultures, while
50% of the participants, Teachers A, C, F, G, I, L, and M, found DBAE to be an inappropriate or incomplete model for teaching non-Western art. Teachers B, D, E, H, and K, equaling 36% of the participants, were unsure whether DBAE was an adequate system for presenting non-Western as well as Western art. Thus, more participants supported the prevalent position found in the literature on multicultural art education which holds that DBAE is not a suitable model for teaching about non-Western art (Abiodun, 2001; Anderson, 1996; Blocker, 2001; Fehr, 1994; Freedman, 1994a, 1994b; Garber, 1995; and Hamblen, 1990a). However, with 36% of the participants in doubt about endorsing or rejecting DBAE, it cannot be said that a majority of the teachers agree on the model’s appropriateness to multicultural art education.

In fact, 36% of the participants, Teachers D, F, G, I, and N, said they believe that the DBAE approach still works for teaching and learning about the art forms of all cultures. Twenty-one percent of the participants, Teachers A, B, and M, indicated that DBAE is an appropriate point of entry into any culture’s art, but that it should be supplemented by activities and techniques which go deeper to put students in touch with the target culture’s perspectives. Teacher H did not take a position on this issue. She said that, because she had always assumed that the concepts of DBAE were universal, she needed time to reflect and reconsider her stance. The remaining 36% of the participants, Teachers C, E, J, K, and L maintained that DBAE was not a workable model for studying all cultures.
All but three teachers, or 79% of the participants, agreed with Garber (1995) that focusing on differences such as food and clothing in a multicultural unit is an unwise practice because such activities draw students’ attention to factors they may view as exotic peculiarities. Because the accusation of exoticizing cultures is often directed at elementary programs (Garber, 1995), it is pertinent to point out that Teachers B, N, and F, the 21% of teachers who did not reject this practice, currently teach or recently taught art at the elementary level. Each participant emphasized that they always go beyond surface differences when teaching about cultural practices. Teacher B stated that she tries to foster students’ respect for those differences. Teacher F added that she teaches her students about the symbolism of colors and patterns when they look at clothing as art forms. The eleven participants who agreed that calling attention to differences exoticizes a culture all stated that they emphasize similarities between their students’ lives and the target culture. As Teacher A explained, “We have to be careful to try to be objective and to open students’ minds about different belief systems . . . without trying to make it entertainment.”

The participants did not like having to engage their students in multicultural studio experiences which use improvised household materials. Eight participants (57%) agreed that doing so trivializes the original art form or technique being studied. Five participants (36%) said they believe it is possible to preserve the authenticity of the art form because they use artifacts, reproductions, prints, slides, or videos to familiarize students with authentic
materials and processes. All the participants pointed out that limitations imposed on their art programs prohibit the preservation of authenticity in some multicultural studio experiences. Lack of money and lack of access to authentic materials are the impediments they cited most often. At the elementary level, teachers indicated that students’ manipulative skills limit the processes and techniques they can use. One participant (7%) was undecided on this issue.

Despite their differences of opinion on the trivialization of art forms, every participant agreed that multicultural studio experiences are still worth doing when household materials must be substituted for authentic ones. Their reasons included the beliefs that some contact with multicultural art is better than none, that meaning matters more than product in understanding an art object, and that improvisation of materials or processes encourages students’ creativity and problem solving skills.

The teachers in the study do make efforts to provide students authentic contact with multicultural art forms. Ceramics is one medium that two teachers noted as being most easily translated from a cultural context to a classroom setting without resorting to improvised materials or processes. Two other teachers described painting or sculpture activities in which students gather natural materials, such as sticks or mud, to use as tools or pigments. Thus, while the majority of the participants share Chalmers’ (1992) contention that trivializing of art forms and processes occurs when teachers adapt them to improvised materials, they believe that the realities of limitations placed on the
classroom necessitate some substitutions. They maintained that they are able to take measures to support the cultural authenticity and contexts of the art forms and processes that they alter for classroom use.

3. What are teachers’ perceptions of the resources available to them for teaching multicultural content?

In 1989, Bandy and Congdon stated that most art education textbooks and curriculum guides ignore multicultural arts or treat them as an afterthought. Sixty-four percent of the participants agreed that the textbooks and curriculum guides available to them give token representation to multicultural content, while five participants, or 36%, said that the coverage of multicultural art is adequate. Teacher A suggested that the proportion of time devoted to non-Western cultures in a visual art class reflects the individual teacher’s level of commitment:

I think most of the current materials I’ve seen have really tried to counterbalance the old tendency to just emphasize Western culture. . . . Now whether individual teachers implement these things in the same ratio that they’re in the curriculum materials is quite up to question.

Among the teachers who are dissatisfied with their textbooks or curriculum guides, two participants found that, although multicultural topics are included in the texts, they are not presented effectively. Teacher E said that the depth and breadth of multicultural content in her elementary textbooks are not adequate to match the amount and quality of content she teaches. Teacher G’s elementary textbooks cover many cultures, but multicultural content appears as isolated projects or activities that do not
encourage students to build on prior knowledge or skills when they begin a new unit of study. Her experience reproduces what Delacruz (1996) and Sleeter (in Cahan & Kocur, 1996) found when they reviewed art education publications and products for multicultural content. Teacher C, who is an adjunct university instructor, stated that the Western bias of her high school textbooks is reflected in the college art history survey texts she uses as well. Teacher H pointed out that, because she believes the texts and the curriculum were written by authors whose cultural background is Western, she wonders if the choice of multicultural content in them reflects only a Western perspective. Regarding the multicultural content of the school district’s curriculum guide, Teacher B stated that, although the elementary textbook is difficult to use for teaching multicultural art, the flexibility of the district’s curriculum guide allows teachers to supplement the text with useful outside resources. For Teacher L, the lack of extensive coverage of multicultural topics in the elementary curriculum guide reflects not a lack of interest in non-Western art, but a recognition of the limitations of time placed on elementary art classes. She characterized the curriculum guide as a collection of “tips” on multicultural art upon which individual teachers can build as time allows.

The majority of the participants said that, while they are not always satisfied with their textbooks, multicultural resources have improved over the past decade. Seventy-nine percent, or eleven participants, said that they have more and better resources for teaching multicultural content. Twenty-one percent, or three participants, said that the quality and availability of
multicultural resources have not changed in ten years. Two of these teachers have taught for seven years. It is relevant to point out that these teachers began their teaching careers in the district the year that new textbooks and curriculum guides were adopted. Therefore, they have not examined or used the district’s previous textbooks or curriculum guides.

Among the multicultural art education materials available to them, Teachers D, F, H, I, K, and N (43%) find books to be particularly useful resources. While Teachers D and F draw on the multicultural content in the adopted textbooks, Teacher H said she builds multicultural lessons on stories and illustrations in children’s picture books. As Marantz (1999) pointed out, picture books provide a means of translating the perspectives of a culture by presenting them through the interpretation of artists who are products of that culture. Teacher I uses and recommends *The Calliope Sisters*, a book that presents and discusses the art forms of nine different cultures. The book has proven helpful to her, both for teaching art at the high school level and for studying multicultural art education in her graduate program.

Six teachers (43%) said they utilize prints, slides, transparencies, or other visual aids and Teachers B, E, and N named the suppliers Crismac, Crystal Productions, and Shorewood as reliable sources for those materials. Teacher A said he likes the quality of the curriculum resources offered by two local museums, especially for studying pre-Columbian culture, African art, and contemporary African American artists.
Art Education, Political Action, and Social Reform

4. What role do social issues play in teachers’ classroom instruction?

Eighty-six percent of the participants said that issues of bias, prejudice, discrimination, and racism should be part of visual art instruction in the classroom. Two teachers (14%) disagreed. Teacher E found those topics inappropriate for the elementary level. Teacher C said that she does not plan high school instruction around those issues because she has difficulty recognizing biased and racist content in resources, and she fears that she may inadvertently offend students who are sensitive to such content. Teachers G, H, I, L, and M described lessons or units they have designed in order to address social issues through multicultural visual art activities, as recommended by Taylor (2002), who stated that introducing art that addresses social issues “is one way of making visible to our students some of the social issues and concerns of our world” (p. 48). Perrin (2001), Ciganko (2000), Freedman (2000), Milbrandt (1998), and Hicks (1994) also urged teachers to allow students to examine social issues in hopes that students will be motivated to take action on those issues in order to improve society. The topics they deal with include racism, sexism, slavery, segregation, and cultural stereotypes. The remaining participants who agreed, Teachers A, B, D, E, J, and N, discussed their practice of tackling issues of racism or bias in response to “things that come up.” These teachers’ answers gave a sense that, while they respond to social issues that arise in the art classroom, they do not proactively plan lessons or units around such topics.
The participants acknowledged that teachers sometimes hesitate to undertake difficult social issues. Teachers A and C cited the unpredictability of some students’ sensitivity to what they perceive as racial and cultural stereotypes in images as an impediment to dialogue in the classroom. Teacher B noted the difficulty of managing classroom discussions of social issues, particularly when students make mean-spirited statements. Other considerations that teachers said they weigh before allowing students to explore social issues include parental and community standards or preferences (Teachers B, H, and J), administrators’ comfort zones (Teachers D and J), time constraints (Teacher M), and age appropriateness of the topic being addressed (Teacher N).

All participants agreed that visual art instruction should address social issues, with Teacher C cautioning that social issues acceptable for elementary classrooms should be chosen carefully. Delacruz (1996) proposed that teachers should give social issues and not art production a central role in art education. While the participants supported the presence of social issues in the classroom, they were not ready to place them at the center of their art programs. They seem to share the concern expressed by Stinespring (2001), Foley (1996), and Eisner (1994) that sustained engagement with social issues in visual art classes turns attention away from serious art making and edges art education closer to the discipline of social studies. Teachers A, D, I, and M (29%) said that there should be a balance of social issues and art production activities as the main thrust of instruction. Teachers B, E, G, L, and N (36%)
said that no one aspect of instructional content should be the main focus. They preferred instead that students be afforded a great variety of art experiences. Teacher C said that she would need more training in order to center her instruction on social issues.

When asked to select the proper role for studio production in the art classroom, 46% of the participants, Teachers A, B, D, I, J, and N selected it as the primary focus of art education. These teachers stressed the relevance of studio production in students’ motivation to study visual art. They indicated that they have observed that their students eagerly engage more intensely in studio activities than in any other component of art instruction. Teachers E, K, and L (21%) said that production should occupy half of instructional time, balanced with the other half of the time spent on social issues. Teachers H and M (14%) cited studio production’s value in allowing students to express their ideas and feelings as its prime role in the classroom. Teacher G stated that production activities are important for helping children develop basic skills and creativity, as did Teacher F, who went farther to say that those skills build students’ self confidence and sense of accomplishment. Together, Teachers G and F represented 14% of the participants.

Clark (1998) and Gallucci (1996) noted that some teachers are uncomfortable addressing social issues in the art classroom because they fear reprisals from school administrators and their communities. However, the majority of the participants indicated that the presence of multicultural social issues has been generally accepted by students, parents, administrators, and
the community. Eighty-six percent of the participants said they have not experienced resistance or censorship when presenting multicultural issues. Teachers C and G were the only participants who mentioned incidents of resistance, one involving a student and one involving parents. Both episodes stemmed from issues of religion. Teacher C’s anecdote concerned a student’s refusal to participate in a particular studio activity on religious grounds. Teacher G had dealt with parents accused her of preaching a religious doctrine opposed to their own values when she taught about the belief system of a non-Western culture.

The participants generally agreed that they have not been troubled by censorship of multicultural issues. Several teachers speculated on the potential sources of resistance to multicultural content. Teachers C and H thought that any censorship would most likely come from school administrators. Teachers G and I identified parents as a possible source of resistance, and Teachers D and J said that the students themselves are more likely to oppose learning about multicultural issues. Teachers B and M pointed out that self-censorship has helped them maintain control over their instructional subject matter.

Aesthetics

5. What principles guide teachers’ approaches to aesthetics?

Seventy-nine percent of the participants, or eleven teachers, believe that there is no single universal aesthetic model. They agreed that each art form should be evaluated from an internal set of aesthetic standards, as proposed by
Hart (1991) and Hamblen (1990b). While no participants ascribed to the viewpoint that there are universal aesthetic models through which all art forms can be analyzed, 21% of the participants, Teachers H, K, and L, stated that they cannot choose between universal and contextual aesthetics. This apparent paradox may stem from the fact that, as four participants pointed out, many visual art teachers were schooled in the Western universalist aesthetic model. Teachers H and L suggested that it may be appropriate to begin with aesthetic generalities regarding form and design and move to a deeper analysis informed by cultural contexts when examining multicultural art forms.

The question of the cultural context of aesthetics extends beyond the content of multicultural art education to the aesthetic responses of the students themselves. All participants agreed that teachers should be aware of differences in students’ artistic and aesthetic responses, along with cultural influences on those preferences.

Despite their unified view of the issue of sensitivity to differences in aesthetic preferences, 50% of the teachers indicated that they vary their approach to aesthetics according to the cultural backgrounds of the students in their classes. Twenty-nine percent said that they do not alter their approach. The remaining participants (21%, or three teachers) related their approach to aesthetics, but their responses did not refer to culturally based aesthetic preferences. Their stance on this issue is consistent with the
positions of Desai (2000) and Morain (1986) and with the Standards for Art
Teacher Preparation (Henry, 1999).

The participants’ responses indicated that, to involve students in
aesthetic activities, Teachers A, B, D, H, J, K, and M use group critiques often,
and Teachers A, D, I, L, and N use writing activities. Teachers F, H, and M also
use games relating to aesthetics. Teachers G and N use questions to guide
students’ explorations of aesthetics, while Teacher A supplements group
critiques with reading assignments. Teacher B often places two art objects side
by side and leads students through a compare-and-contrast activity with them.

**Western and Non-Western Artistic Traditions**

6. What are teachers’ perceptions of the relationship of Western artistic
traditions to the contemporary cultural makeup of the United States?

The participants agreed with Stinespring and Kennedy (1995) that no
racial, cultural, or national group’s art is superior to the art produced by other
groups. Sixty-four percent, or nine participants, said they believe that
contemporary American culture encompasses more than Western traditions
and values, and that, therefore, the Western aesthetic canon does not match
the multicultural character of the United States. For those teachers,
Anderson’s (1996) contention that Western aesthetic and artistic traditions are
not “sufficiently broad and multifaceted to serve a multicultural, multilingual,
multi-ethnic United States” (p. 58) rang true. Twenty-nine percent, or four
participants, said that American culture reflects the Western canonical
tradition in art. They disagreed with Sahasrabudhe (1992), who stated that
American culture is not synonymous with Western values, and Fehr (1994),
who went farther to state that the dominance of Western standards exerts power to marginalize the representation of non-Western artists and art forms. Teacher K, a member of the latter group, said that, while he believes that Western principles dominate American culture today, the growing diversity of the United States will cause that supremacy to wane. He said that, as a result, within the next five years he expects to change his position on this issue. One participant did not respond to this question.

The participants were asked to describe what they believed comprises American culture. Teachers A, B, F, and I said that the prime factors in contemporary America are the media, pop culture, and consumerism. Teachers D and M used the familiar metaphor of a unifying melting pot, and Teacher C followed a similar theme, describing “a fabric made of immigrants that have all melded into one.” Teacher D went on to say that the melting pot is her idealized definition of American culture, but that, in reality, the presence of traditional Western values dominates the culture. Teacher J also expressed this view. Teachers G, K, and L employed the “salad bowl” imagery, one in which many cultures exist together while retaining their own identities. Teacher K stressed independence and individuality, and Teacher H said that American culture exists as a composite of the retelling of diverse individual experiences. Teacher N said that the definition of the culture is ever changing because the United States continues to evolve.

**Cultural Contexts of Objects and Artifacts**

7. To what extent do teachers establish a cultural framework for the objects and artifacts they present to their students?
All participants agreed that teachers should place objects and artifacts in their cultural context when presenting them in visual art classes. They believe that learning about the culture in which an object was produced is important to understanding the object. Teachers A and L stated that students need to understand the significance of the object’s role in the original culture. Teacher L pointed out that the cultural framework is of particular importance when the object being studied has sacred or ceremonial importance within the culture. In such situations, communicating contextual information is essential to fostering respect for cultural artifacts. Thus, the participants’ position is consistent with the standards for presenting cultural artifacts expressed in *Art Standards: Early Childhood and Middle Childhood* (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2000) and *Art Standards: Early Adolescence Through Young Adulthood* (National Board for professional Teaching Standards, 2001). Teacher H expressed concern that the limited number of contact hours in elementary art programs diminishes teachers’ attempts to effectively build the cultural context. She proposed that a culture should be studied as a school-wide or grade-level unit so that students could be immersed in all aspects of the culture.

The participants typically open their presentation of a cultural artifact or object with class discussion or teacher lecture to place the object in its cultural context. Seventy-one percent of the participants said that they approach the object from its purpose within the target culture. Teachers F, G, L, M, and N prefer to begin with questions exploring the function of an artifact to pique
student interest. Teacher A often invites students to create stories about an object’s function and then asks questions to challenge their interpretations. Teachers I and J allow students to touch and examine authentic objects or reproductions while they discuss elements of its cultural context. If they cannot obtain an authentic object, those teachers use pictures and illustrations as examples. Teachers C, H, and J also provide copious examples through slides, posters, and reproductions. Teacher M traced the process that she follows, moving from showing slides of a culture’s art, to discussing the culture’s values and symbols, to assigning a reading about the culture, and finally to a culminating studio activity.

The participants were asked to give examples of the questions they use to guide students’ observations of a cultural artifact. The majority of the examples given by 57%, or eight participants (Teachers A, D, F, H, J, K, M, and N), are questions related to the object’s function. Other questions given as examples by Teachers A, D, H, and N also relate to the cultural context of the object. Twenty-one percent, or three participants, Teachers B, D, and I, ask questions that deal with formal aspects of an object, such as color, pattern, texture, and shape. Freedman (1994) counseled against focusing on the technical or formal attributes of objects due to her concern that culturally disparate objects might be incorrectly linked by similarities in their formal characteristics, a concern shared by Delacruz (1994) in her examination of commercial art education products. Three participants (21%) did not provide examples of questions that they use in exploring a cultural object.
**Teacher Training**

8. What are the sources for teachers’ knowledge of multicultural art education?

The bulk of the participants’ training to become visual art teachers occurred during their pre-service university experience, but for 64%, multicultural art education was not a significant part of their undergraduate degree program. Teachers B, C, D, E, F, H, J, L, and M indicated that they were not well prepared by their university teacher education programs to teach multicultural art education. For those teachers, the colleges or universities where they earned their undergraduate degrees failed to reflect the criteria recommended in the *Standards for Art Teacher Preparation* (Henry, et al., 1999) in this regard. Thirty-six percent, or five teachers, said that their university experience prepared them well for teaching multicultural content. Within this group, Teacher A attributed his knowledge of multicultural art to his program of study as an undergraduate studio art major and art history minor, rather than as an art education major. Teacher I stressed that most of her training in multicultural art education has come from coursework in her master’s degree program. For veteran teachers who earned their undergraduate degrees prior to 1990, multicultural art education had not yet emerged as a topic of study for pre-service teacher candidates at the time they completed their undergraduate degrees.

All the participants have sought sources of information about multicultural content outside the university setting. Twelve participants, or 86%, have learned about multicultural art education by reading books,
magazines, and scholarly journals, and continue to consult them regularly. Thirteen participants, or 93%, said they use the Internet to mine information on multicultural topics. Five participants, or 36%, said that the opportunity to travel has not only enriched their knowledge of the world’s art forms, but has deepened their commitment to teaching multicultural art. The length of their travel experiences ranged from one or two weeks spent touring or performing missions work in cultures outside the United States to semester-long study abroad programs. Four participants (29%) said that they have access to knowledgeable representatives of the cultures that they present to their students. Teachers A, E, G, F, and N (36%) gained valuable information and resources in a staff development workshop series organized and presented during the 2002-2003 academic year by the school district’s elementary visual art teachers. During the year-long workshop, teachers met monthly to share effective lesson plans with their colleagues.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2001, 2000) set benchmarks for presenting authentic information about art forms and the cultures in which they were produced:

Accomplished teachers research concepts and topics they wish to explore with their students to make sure the learning experiences selected are authentic to the traditions of the culture being considered and relevant to students. (p. 28, p. 24)

The participants are conscious of the need to verify the truthfulness of information about multicultural art that they impart to their students. Eighty-
six percent, or 12 teachers, said that they research the authenticity of concepts and examples attributed to a culture before teaching about them. Teachers G and J, the two participants, or 14%, who said they do not research the legitimacy of their information, explained that they do not have time to do so. They both added that they believe their reliance on sources that they trust lessens the likelihood that they will transmit incorrect information.

**Cultural Contexts of Teachers and Learners**

9. What has been the impact of teaching multicultural content on teachers’ own perspectives and practices?

Eighty-six percent, or 12 participants, indicated that teaching multicultural content has altered their personal attitudes and opinions. Fourteen percent, Teachers L and N, indicated that the experience has not changed their perspectives. Teacher L explained that she feels that her long exposure to the concepts of multicultural art education has made her alert to presenting bias-free instruction.

Each participant stated that he or she has been enriched in some way by the experience of teaching multicultural content. Teachers E, H, I, and K (29%) noted their personal growth in knowledge of cultures and artists. Teacher E said that her enjoyment of teaching has increased alongside her knowledge of multicultural art. Teachers B, C, G, and I (29%) have gained understanding of and empathy for the perspectives of the non-Western artists and cultures they have explored with their students. Teachers F and N (14%) have become more attuned to the presence of diversity among students they teach. The ability to recognize and respect students’ culturally based views and values is
emphasized in the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards’ *Art Standards: Early Childhood and Middle Childhood* (2000) and *Art Standards: Early Adolescence Through Young Adulthood* (2001). Desai (2000) reminded teachers that divergent aesthetic principles are reflected not only in the production of art objects but in students’ culturally-based responses to them as well. Teachers A, D, J, L and M (36%) have profited from the opportunity to teach multicultural art education by identifying and confronting their own biases. As a result, they recognize the impact of their personal perspectives on their students, and they attempt to communicate instruction in a bias-free atmosphere.

All participants were asked to describe the demographic makeup of their schools’ student populations. While Teachers A and F (14%) made generalized statements about their schools’ populations, twelve participants, or 86%, used percentages to estimate the representation of several racial and ethnic groups in their schools. A comparison of the teachers’ estimates with the school district’s January 2004 *Student Ethnic Summary Report* (----- School System, 2004 [The school district gave permission to conduct this dissertation study on the condition that its name not be used.]) showed that their assessments of their schools’ ethnic demographics were realistic. In most cases, their estimates varied from the statistical data by less than five percentage points. To inform themselves about the cultural makeup of the student population, Teachers C, D, F, I, L, and M said they refer to statistical data and records furnished by the school district. Teachers E, G, I, J, K, and N observe students
for clues to their ethnicity. Teachers A, B, G, H, I, L, and M engage their students in conversation to discover information about their cultural backgrounds.

Sixty-four percent of the participants indicated that they plan their instruction to reflect the demographic makeup of their classes. To varying degrees, they incorporate instructional units that cover the ethnic and cultural groups in their school. Teachers D and H said that they have not tailored their instruction to reflect cultures in their classrooms because they have always incorporated multicultural issues in their teaching. Thus, they consider a broader cultural spectrum that the one they find in their student body when planning instruction. Including Teachers D and H, 36%, or five participants said they do not reflect the cultures represented in their classrooms when planning lessons and units. Two of the members of that group, Teachers B and G, explained that the difficulty of serving two elementary schools this year, and the resulting lack of time for adequate planning have prevented them from always preparing activities based on their students’ cultural heritages.

The statements of several study participants suggest that they have made sincere and sustained efforts to reflect the growing diversity of their community in their instructional content. However, those same statements reveal some important issues that should be discussed here. Several teachers referred to teaching “African units” or conducting studio activities to produce “African” objects. By using the term “African” to refer to the content they teach, the teachers have generalized the artistic production of the diverse
cultures of the continent of Africa into one overarching culture. This practice reflects the error of homogenization (Garber, 1995) in which several distinct cultures are lumped together into a general, indistinct group. The cultural distinctions among the groups or among individuals in the groups are erased. According to Chanda (1992), such incorrect generalizations concerning the art and cultures of Africa tend to “perpetuate prejudiced attitudes toward works of art from non-Western cultures” (p. 56).

Sometimes, participants said that they had chosen “African content to build a connection to their African American students. While those attempts to make content culturally relevant to students are commendable, they expose another flaw in the teachers’ comprehension of multicultural art education. Hicks (1994) warned that linking African American students to Africa on the assumption that they will demonstrate an affinity for African art forms exhibits a “pedagogy of erasure” (p. 151) in which the American contexts of their cultural identities are ignored. As a result, the students may be inaccurately viewed by their classmates as essentially African rather than African American.

**Additional Responses Related to Teaching Multicultural Art Education at the Elementary Level**

During the analysis of the data, some information became apparent that was not anticipated in the research questions or the design of the interview instrument. This information concerns the configuration of the instructional delivery system at the elementary level. As explained earlier in this dissertation, the school district reduced by half the number of elementary art
and music specialist positions for the 2003-2004 academic year. Prior to the cutback, students in grades K-5 received year-long instruction in both art and music, and each elementary art specialist served one school. Because of the reduction in elementary fine arts teaching staff, each elementary art specialist now teaches at two schools, alternating between the two schools every nine weeks. Thus, their instructional time has been effectively cut in half. Among the participants in the study, this change in instructional format has had an impact which should be noted here.

Of the seven participants who teach at the elementary level, six said that their assignment to two schools has interfered with their ability to deal effectively with multicultural content. Teachers F, H, K, and L indicated that the shortened schedule they must now follow forces them to introduce less multicultural content than they would like and does not allow them to explore multicultural topics in great depth. Teachers B, F, and G said that although they have discovered cultural and ethnic differences in the populations of their two schools, they do not have adequate time to differentiate their lesson plans according to the demographic makeup of each school.

**Analysis of Basic Research Questions**

1. Do teachers believe that studying multicultural content in visual art classes contributes to greater tolerance of diversity?

   The participants in the study believe that multicultural content in visual art classes contributes to greater tolerance of diversity. They reject the use of Western standards for learning about non-Western art forms, but they do not agree on the appropriateness of the Western-based DBAE model for teaching
about multicultural art. Teachers who use that model for presenting non-Western art supplement it with other resources.

2. What approaches do teachers use when teaching multicultural content?

The participants are aware of the danger of exoticizing a culture by dealing only with superficial elements of the culture. To reduce the sense of “otherness” of the culture’s practices, they emphasize its commonalities with their students’ culture alongside its unique features. The participants are also concerned about practices which trivialize multicultural art forms and techniques. However, they acknowledge that limitations of money and access to authentic materials sometimes make the substitution of improvised materials and simplified processes necessary. To minimize the problem of trivializing, they supplement multicultural studio production activities with resources which demonstrate the use of authentic materials and processes.

3. What are teachers’ perceptions of the resources available to them for teaching multicultural content?

The participants do not find their textbooks and curriculum to be particularly helpful as resources because of the token representation of multicultural art they contain. However, teachers have seen some improvements in the coverage of multicultural art education in newer textbooks and supplementary materials over the past decade. They are able to find resources to fill gaps in the multicultural content of their adopted textbooks.
4. What role do social issues play in teachers’ classroom instruction?

Topics dealing with bias, racism, and other social issues are appropriate for the visual art classroom, and the participants do not shy away from confronting them. They encounter little or no resistance to teaching about multicultural social issues. However, teachers do not make social issues the main focus of their instruction, and more often, they address them in response to students’ statements or behavior, rather than as part of a planned instructional component. Studio production continues to be the element around which many teachers build their art program.

5. What principles guide teachers’ approaches to aesthetics?

The participants believe that there is no universal aesthetic model that can be applied to all art forms. They recognize that students’ aesthetic and artistic responses are influenced by their cultural backgrounds. Despite this awareness, only half of the teachers vary their approach to aesthetics to reflect their students’ culturally based preferences. Some teachers merely acknowledge such cultural differences by assuring students that “there are no right or wrong answers” when they participate in group critiques or written responses.

6. What are teachers’ perceptions of the relationship of Western artistic traditions to the contemporary cultural makeup of the United States?

The participants agree that no cultural, national, or racial group produces art that is superior to that produced by any other group. As a result, they believe that Western artistic traditions are not sufficiently broad to aid in understanding the many art forms produced in the multicultural makeup of
the United States. While some teachers agree that the cultural history of the United States has been dominated by Western traditions, they share no single definition to explain the makeup of contemporary American culture. Some teachers suggest that the definition of American culture is not static, but, due to growing diversity, evolves continually.

7. To what extent do teachers establish a cultural framework for the objects and artifacts they present to their students?

The participants try to preserve the cultural context of an object or artifact when presenting it to their students. They believe that knowing the context is essential to understanding the object. To begin a presentation of a cultural object or artifact they draw their students’ attention to its original function rather than its formal aspects. They stress the use of visual resources in the form of slides, posters, reproductions, and videos to supplement their presentation and to help situate the object in its culture.

8. What are the sources for teachers’ knowledge of multicultural art education?

The participants do not feel that their undergraduate art education teacher training programs prepared them adequately in the area of multicultural art education. They have tried to correct this deficit in their preparation by availing themselves of staff development opportunities and independent research in books, journals, and on the Internet. Some of the participants have consulted knowledgeable colleagues and representatives of other cultures. Others have attained personal contact with cultures through travel.
9. What has been the impact of teaching multicultural content on teachers’ own perspectives and practices?

The participants say that they have benefited from the experience of teaching multicultural content. They have re-evaluated some of their opinions and have become attentive to their own biases. Some of the participants discussed how they have developed empathy for the members of the cultures about which they have taught, while others have become more aware of the diversity of the students in their classroom.

The participants are able to accurately estimate their school’s ethnic demographic makeup. They utilize statistical data, observation, and conversations with students to inform themselves about the cultural backgrounds of their students. Most of the teachers consider the cultural makeup of their student population when planning instructional activities and try to reflect that makeup when they choose multicultural content. However, several teachers do not plan multicultural units with their school demographics in mind. Inadequate time for planning is the main reason that these teachers give for not reflecting the student population when preparing multicultural lessons. Participants who teach elementary visual art contend with an additional impediment to reflecting the diversity of their classrooms in their choice of multicultural topics. They indicated that being required to teach large numbers of students in a nine-week session does not allow them adequate time to plan instruction that reflects the cultural backgrounds of their students.
CHAPTER VI
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

This dissertation studied the perspectives and practices of K-12 visual art teachers regarding multicultural art education. Attention was paid to those teachers’ perceptions in relation to the positions on multicultural art education espoused by writers in the professional literature of art education. The study sought to shed light on seven topics in multicultural art education as practiced by K-12 visual art teachers in a suburban school district located near a major metropolitan area. The research questions were drawn from the areas of: 1) curriculum, content, and resources, 2) art education, political action, and social reform, 3) aesthetics, 4) Western and non-Western artistic traditions, 5) the cultural contexts of objects and artifacts, 6) teacher training, and 7) cultural contexts of teachers and learners. The nine basic research questions are: 1) Do teachers believe that studying multicultural content in visual art classes contributes to greater tolerance of diversity?, 2) What approaches do teachers use when teaching multicultural content?, 3) What are teachers’ perceptions of the resources available to them for teaching multicultural content?, 4) What role do social issues play in teachers’ classroom instruction?, 5) What principles guide teachers’ approaches to aesthetics?, 6)
What are teachers’ perceptions of the relationship of Western artistic traditions to the contemporary cultural makeup of the United States?, 7) To what extent do teachers establish a cultural framework for the objects and artifacts they present to their students?, 8) What are the sources for teachers’ knowledge of multicultural art education?, and 9) What has been the impact of teaching multicultural content on teachers’ own perceptions and perspectives?

Selecting a single school district allowed the influence of factors such as variations in funding and curriculum to be minimized. The sample population of fourteen K-12 art teachers was selected from among those employed in the school district in 2003. A survey instrument was mailed to all the visual art teachers in the school district. The participants who indicated on the survey that they teach multicultural content became the sample population.

A qualitative case study research design allowed for the collection of data using an open-ended interview instrument. Each subject participated in a face-to-face interview which was digitally recorded to insure accurate reporting and interpretation of the participants’ responses.

The data gleaned from the interviews were transcribed and summarized for each participant. Then a cross-case summary of the data was made according to the nine basic research questions. New information that came to light during the interview process was added at the end of the summary. The data was then compared to the professional literature on multicultural art education to determine areas of congruence and incongruence between multicultural art education theory and teachers’ perspectives and practices.
Discussion

In many respects, the participants in this study expressed perspectives on multicultural art education that are consistent with the positions taken by writers and multicultural art education theorists in the professional literature of art education. The following passages discuss both the topics on which the participants agree with the literature and those for which the participants’ opinions or experiences do not support those articulated in the literature.

Curriculum, Content, and Resources

The participants’ perspectives were consistent with the literature regarding the fostering of tolerance for diversity through the study of other cultures and the rejection of Western aesthetic standards for learning about non-Western art. They are alert to practices which exoticize or trivialize cultures, and they take measures to avoid those practices or minimize their interference with the authentic representation of multicultural art in their classrooms. They agreed that textbooks give token representation to multicultural arts, although they have seen improvements in the materials available to them.

The participants disagreed with the literature regarding the role of Discipline Based Art Education in multicultural art education. While half of the participants rejected DBAE as an instructional model for teaching about non-Western art, the remaining participants were not ready to drop it from their repertoire of skills for teaching about multicultural art forms. They also disagreed with Chalmers’ (1992a) proposition that teachers should not conduct
multicultural studio experiences that resort to improvised household materials. They prefer instead to adapt materials and processes for classroom use when necessary and reinforce students’ understanding of authentic art forms and techniques through supplementary examples and illustrations.

**Art Education, Political Action, and Social Issues**

The participants unanimously support the presence of social issues in visual art curriculum. They do not hesitate to confront issues involving bias and racism in their classrooms. However, most of their involvement with social issues takes place in response to students’ actions and statements in class rather than as part of their lesson plans.

Unlike Gallucci’s (1996) speculation that teachers are impeded from incorporating social issues in art instruction by fear of censorship, resistance and censorship have not prevented the participants from integrating multicultural content involving political or social issues. They are not willing, however, to center their instruction on social issues as proposed in art education literature.

**Aesthetics**

The participants generally agreed with the literature that there is no universal set of aesthetic principles that can be applied to all art objects or artifacts from all cultures. They also acknowledge that cultural background influences student artistic and aesthetic preferences. They agree with the Standards for Art Teacher Preparation (Henry, 1999) that teachers should be sensitive to those culturally-based differences. Despite this awareness, only
half the participants vary instructional activities involving aesthetics accordingly.

**Western and Non-Western Artistic Traditions**

The participants do not believe in a hierarchical system of valuing art forms. They agreed with Stinespring and Kennedy (1995) that no racial, cultural, or national group’s art is superior or inferior to another’s. A majority of participants agreed that Western traditions and values in art are inadequate to serve the contemporary multicultural makeup of the United States.

**Cultural Contexts of Objects and Artifacts**

According to *Art Standards: Early Adolescence Through Young Adulthood* (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2001) and *Art Standards: Early Childhood and Middle Childhood* (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2000), accomplished teachers help their students learn about the roles and purposes of objects within the cultures where they were produced. All participants in this study place value on establishing cultural frameworks for the objects and artifacts they present to their students. Most participants begin an exploration of an object with questions that relate to its function in the culture, but a few teachers begin with questions that draw students’ attention to the object’s formal properties. Freedman (1994b) cautioned that focusing on the technical and formal aspects of objects may cause students to assume incorrectly that objects with different functions in different cultures are similar.
**Teacher Training**

Most teachers said that they were not well prepared to teach multicultural content by their university art education teacher training program. This apparent insufficiency in their education is perhaps not surprising when one considers that many of the participants earned their undergraduate degrees before 1990, when multicultural art education was just beginning to receive attention in professional art education journals. Although specific knowledge of multicultural art education was not part of their training, the participants who identified a gap in their training and actively and independently sought to rectify it demonstrate a deep commitment to their mission as teachers. They have made up for the deficit by researching multicultural topics that they wish to present to their students. Their efforts to verify the authenticity of the information they transmit are in harmony with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards criteria for accomplished visual art teachers.

**Cultural Contexts of Teachers and Learners**

Wasson, Stuhr, and Petrovich-Mwaniki (1990) emphasized the importance of teachers’ sensitivity to their own cultural and social biases. Most participants indicated that the experience of teaching multicultural content has transformed some of their perspectives. Some have, in fact, examined their own biases and others have become more attentive to the cultural backgrounds of their students. They are able to accurately describe the general cultural demographics of their student populations. Many
participants plan instruction to reflect the cultural makeup of the students they teach.

**Implications of the Study**

When investigation of multicultural art education as the subject for this study began, it was noted that, despite the number of books and articles devoted to the topic, very little investigation had been done into actual classroom practices involving multicultural content. The review of multicultural art education literature confirmed that it is composed almost entirely of articles and books dealing with advocacy issues rather than qualitative investigation of multicultural curriculum or instructional practices. The findings of this study present a picture of multicultural art education as it is practiced in one school district. Therefore, further sampling of K-12 visual art teachers across the United States would add to the knowledge base that was established by this study.

**Implications for Teacher Training Programs**

The results of this study suggest some implications for teacher preparation programs. The study participants who completed their teaching certification within the past decade were generally satisfied with their university training in the area of multicultural art education. However, art teacher education programs can further assist pre-service candidates by helping them translate multicultural art education theory into the reality of classroom practice. For example, based on the experiences of the study participants, art teacher candidates need to know that it is not always possible
to preserve the authenticity of materials and processes when students participate in multicultural studio production activities. They need to be prepared, as the participants in this study were, to take measures to acquaint students with culturally authentic media and procedures upon which the studio activity is based. They need training to develop an awareness that people who share a geographic area or a language represent many distinct cultures. Art teacher candidates also need to develop skills which will assist them in discovering the influence of culture on individual students’ aesthetic preference and artistic response. They must recognize that each student may represent multiple cultural groups. They will need strategies for planning and implementing instruction which accommodate and utilize those culturally-based perspectives.

Implications for Art Teachers

Certainly, veteran art teachers who completed their training before multicultural topics became a regular part of teacher education programs must make a commitment to ferret out the information that will allow them to do an effective job of communicating multicultural content. The resources which aided the study participants should prove useful to other teachers as well. Participants who increased their command of multicultural art topics participated in inservice staff development activities, developed a personal library of books and professional journals to use as resources, and located dependable sources of authentic cultural information on the Internet.
The review of literature for this study identified guidelines of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) which relate to multicultural content. Because NBPTS standards have become nationally recognized benchmarks for accomplished teachers, their importance to teachers’ professional development cannot be understated. In many states, opportunities for advancement or salary increases are tied to attainment of national teaching certification administered by NBPTS. Teachers who wish to earn national certification need to demonstrate their ability to provide culturally authentic learning experiences and preserve the cultural contexts of objects and artifacts that they present to their students.

Implications for the Profession of Art Education

The aspect of multicultural art education that produced the broadest gap between theorists and the practitioners is the role of social issues in visual art curriculum and instruction. The participants in this study did not feel compelled to direct their instructional activities toward a prime goal of using art to confront and repair societal ills, as urged by the social reconstructionist views of a number of authors. Along with their expressed preference for emphasizing other dimensions of visual art such as studio production and creative expression, practicing teachers face the fact that crossing the line that delineates the comfort zone of community standards holds the potential to impact their job security. The reality of this situation calls for a dialogue between art education theorists and classroom teachers to establish a point of
consensus or compromise that will define the extent to which social issues will influence art instruction.

**Charge to the Art Education Profession**

The responses of the participants in this study indicate that some have not progressed beyond what Banks (1989) and Sleeter and Grant (1987) described as an additive approach to presenting multicultural content. They have grafted multicultural lessons and units onto their existing art curriculum, but they may not reflect accurately the perspectives, priorities, or issues of the cultures being presented in their classrooms. Occasionally, they engage in practices that, rather than fostering understanding and respect, may trivialize non-Western cultures in the eyes of their students.

Such mistakes are not intentional, however. On the contrary, the teachers who participated in the study have demonstrated their beliefs that multicultural art education can help students make sense of their world and help teachers understand the perspectives of the members of a diverse student body. Teachers who are hampered in their efforts to build such insights are simply inadequately trained in effective practices for multicultural art education. Veteran teachers who completed their preparation to teach art before multicultural art education began to receive attention in the late 1980s are at a particular disadvantage. Their efforts to research and incorporate multicultural content have been, as Teacher C described, “an independent quest.” What, then, do teachers need in order to become effective practitioners of multicultural art education? The responsibility for this change must be
borne by teacher preparation programs, professional associations, and the
teachers themselves.

The first charge to professionals – teachers, theorists, researchers, pre-
service educators, supervisors, and advocates – is to do no harm. The literature
of multicultural art education expresses a deep and continuing concern over
the danger of misappropriation of objects from non-Western cultures. Teachers
cannot be expected to choose exemplars appropriately without guidelines to
follow. The art education community must develop and disseminate a
document which addresses this issue and provides guidelines for authentic
instruction. Such a document could, for example, identify objects and art
forms too sacred to be reproduced or, in some cultures, even discussed. This
document would be a growing and ever evolving database. As the largest
professional organization for art teachers, the National Art Education
Association is the logical body to organize this project. With the current speed
of communication of data and the resources of the National Art Education
Association, this task is not Herculean.

Pre-service university education for future art teachers must continue to
address the methodology of multicultural art education. Many beginning art
teachers now exit their undergraduate training with an understanding of the
perspectives and art forms of many cultures. Higher education professionals
should augment the curriculum they already use to prepare new teachers by
promoting the concept of cultural exploration. In addition to teaching
multicultural content, university programs should present techniques for
addressing the process of incorporating cultural understanding into the curriculum. They should demonstrate strategies and resources teachers can use to identify the cultural backgrounds of their student populations, establish connections to the cultures in their communities, and locate authentic and reliable sources of information on cultures and their art forms. This approach will give beginning teachers the foundation they need to independently investigate the specific cultures they will encounter in their classrooms.

Unlike the participants who were engaged in graduate study or those who had completed their teaching certification within the past decade, veteran art teachers interviewed for the study noted their lack of training in multicultural content. State professional art education associations must respond to the changing demographics within their states and lead in the development of workshops and presentations addressing multicultural art education topics. Training for veteran teachers must be made available to answer inadequacies in their preparation for multicultural art education. Along with participating in these workshops, teachers must make a personal commitment to independently investigate cultures and to share their knowledge with their colleagues. The remarks of several study participants about the success of their year-long workshop sharing multicultural art lesson plans reflects the effectiveness of collegial learning.

Art education professionals must recognize that there is neither a definitive list of “must-do” cultures, nor a requisite or appropriate number of cultures to be studied in the art classroom. It is not reasonable to expect
teachers to become familiar with a broad host of the world’s cultures. Above all, teachers must avoid the temptation to “cover” an ambitious quota of cultures per month or semester or year. Such an approach can only give students a superficial conglomeration of disconnected art experiences. Some teachers have been tempted to approach multicultural art education as a crowded, whirlwind tour of the world. When multicultural content is presented in this way, students cannot attain a meaningful understanding of the cultures they “visit”. Authentic, deep knowledge of only a few cultures is far more meaningful than a haphazard collection of superficial generalizations about many cultures.

There are two critical steps which all art educators must take before they present multicultural content to their students. Teachers who wish to become effective practitioners of multicultural art education should begin by identifying their own biases. The confrontation and analysis of their own prejudices prepares teachers to develop strategies to deal with student or community intolerance that may surface in the course of classroom interaction.

The second prerequisite to becoming a teacher of multicultural content is an awareness of the connotations of terminology and definitions from which one can select to refer to members of various cultural groups. Teachers may be aware of certain terms that have a pejorative context and therefore should be avoided, but must also understand that the lexicon of multicultural education continues to evolve. Some teachers are uncertain as to which terms are currently acceptable. For those individuals, the Southern Poverty Law Center

Before introducing multicultural content, art teachers should become familiar with the cultural backgrounds of their students. Teachers are cautioned against making assumptions about students’ ethnicity based only on their names or physical appearance. They can begin instead with an examination of the demographic data which schools regularly collect and report to government agencies. However, the richest and most useful information comes from the students themselves. The participants in this study observed that students are eager to share information about their families and their traditions.

The most important cultures to be explored in the art classroom are those that are present in the school community. A prime aim of multicultural art education is to foster empathy and respect for all cultures and to help students recognize and overcome intolerance. Therefore, by selecting to study the cultures represented in the local community, teachers provide instruction that is immediately relevant to their students’ lives and experiences. Even in homogeneous communities, there is a high likelihood that students will encounter cultures different from their own. In these settings, teachers should
begin by researching the cultural makeup of surrounding communities with which their students will likely come in contact.

A community-based approach to multicultural content requires teachers to redefine their role in the classroom. The teacher becomes a facilitator rather than the knowledgeable expert. Students who have first-hand knowledge of the culture become peer instructors. Those students, who may have been marginalized in other situations by the dominant culture, garner the additional benefit of seeing their culture and their knowledge of it valued in the art classroom.

Trusted sources, correct facts, and authentic art experiences are all essential to a successful multicultural art education program. A community-based approach provides teachers with a wealth of resources for multicultural content. Participants in this study found that their students’ parents enthusiastically offered both authentic cultural artifacts and anecdotal information to be shared in the classroom. The availability of representatives of the culture in the community is particularly useful to teachers who do not already possess extensive knowledge of multicultural content.

Teachers must also establish strong links to the community in order to identify and access local resources for multicultural art education. Some of the teachers who participated in this study have successfully tapped those resources by utilizing school newsletters, calendars, bulletin boards and displays, parent conferences, open houses, and PTA programs to communicate with their students’ families.
Teachers must understand the importance of preserving the cultural context of any object or art form. Doing so requires thoughtful, attentive preparation on the teacher’s part in order to minimize trivializing of the object or art form. The teacher must begin by establishing an authentic cultural framework. While food, ceremonial or folk costumes, and celebrations may indeed be part of the culture, presenting only these surface aspects as curiosities or peculiarities distorts and misleads students’ understanding. Teachers should seek out members of the culture in their community who can accurately communicate the character of their culture to students. If such individuals cannot be found, teachers can utilize authentic videos, music, websites, photos, slides, posters, information from consular agencies, and current events to build students’ contextual knowledge.

Art educators who teach their students about a culture’s objects or artifacts and then direct them to complete imitative art “projects” are guilty of trivializing the culture. They must realize that it is not possible for students to make “Yoruba” masks or “Inuit” totem poles if they are not members of a Yoruba or Inuit culture. Only natives of the culture have the social, psychological, historical, aesthetic, and spiritual knowledge to create culturally authentic objects and art forms. Multicultural art experiences which shift the focus of a lesson or unit to making a take-home product miss the point of multicultural art education’s mission to foster respect and empathy for the world’s cultures. Teachers should instead focus some effort on helping their
students understand the perspectives of the culture and how those perspectives have influenced the objects and art forms they study.

Another caveat regarding studio production experiences emerges from the fact that it is sometimes impossible to obtain materials that are authentic to artistic production in the culture being studied. Some teachers give in to the temptation to alter art processes by substituting readily available commercially produced materials. Unless teachers exercise caution when substituting materials, this practice risks trivializing the art forms and objects of a culture. First, it deprives students of the opportunity to experience processes authentic to the culture. Additionally, it may engender confusion for students whose resulting outcomes are likely to have more in common with trinkets produced for tourist trade than with genuine objects and artifacts. Teachers must clearly communicate to students the differences between their studio experiences and the production of authentic art forms from the culture by providing copious visual examples of original art forms and artifacts and by giving verbal prompts. For example, a teacher might ask students to respond questions such as, “How would your object have been different if you had been able to use authentic materials?”

Teachers need to be aware that a sensitive and authentic approach to teaching about the art forms of non-Western cultures does not require that students generate a product. There may be times when teachers wish to involve students in processes such as mixing clay or gathering plants for dyes. These experiences can be useful in helping students understand production
techniques utilized in a culture, but they do not require the creation of an imitative product in order to be meaningful.

A more legitimate approach to engaging students in studio experiences in response to investigating cultures involves social issues. The challenges and issues faced by a culture should be addressed in the classroom as an important part of the cultural context of the art forms and artifacts being studied. Rather than having students imitate art forms, teachers should consider allowing students to use their own imagery and techniques to respond to those challenges and issues.

Social issues, such as human rights, poverty, hunger, the environment, and personal responsibility, can be an excellent catalyst for introspective exploration. However, each teacher must determine the community reaction, administrative support, and his or her personal level of commitment to raising social concerns in the classroom. The responses of the study participants indicate that they feel most successful addressing issues of discrimination or bias when they do so in response to student comments or behavior.

The majority of multicultural art education theorists whose writing was consulted for this study call for an art education aimed at social reconstruction. This stance reflects deep and sincere convictions on their part. However, the presence of social issues in the subject matter of the art classroom is a topic which produced dramatic differences of opinion between the study participants and the writers of multicultural art education literature. The truth is that real teachers in real classrooms are held accountable for what
they teach by their administrators and their community. Most of the teachers in this study have met little or no resistance to their presentation of social issues. At the same time, though, they believe that too much variance from community standards could ultimately jeopardize their job security. They are caught in the difficulty of striking a balance between showing their students the power of art to change society and risking repercussions from a community that may be unwilling to change. A community-based approach to multicultural art education offers teachers a strategy for addressing this dilemma. First of all, because teachers go outside the school setting to seek out knowledgeable individuals, they become more intimately acquainted with the community they serve and can form partnerships within it. Also, because those knowledgeable individuals may be members of groups that have been marginalized by the dominant culture of the community, their presence in the classroom can help redefine the makeup of the community and give voice to their issues, perspectives, and priorities.

Finally, teachers and multicultural art education theorists must continue to narrow the gap between the ivory tower and the classroom. Teachers must understand that multicultural art education is more than cultures long ago and far away; it not only influences what they teach all learners, but how they reach all learners. To continue their efforts to reach every child, teachers need to understand the role of cultural influences on student learning.

At the same time, multicultural art education theorists are impassioned advocates for authentic and respectful representation of cultures in art
classrooms. They provide valuable guidance for the development of appropriate instructional practices. Their criticism of inauthentic teaching of multicultural content is certainly understandable. However, those proponents should be reminded that many art teachers are venturing into unfamiliar material and methodology when they begin to explore multicultural art education. If their errors are met with disdain, some teachers may become discouraged in their attempts to present multicultural content. Through patient understanding and recognition of the parameters within which teachers must work, multicultural art education advocates can provide teachers the guidance they need to create classrooms in which empathy, sensitivity, and respect are guiding principles which can reach across the curriculum to inspire and transform learning communities.
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APPENDIX A

1992 ART EDUCATOR SURVEY
ART EDUCATOR SURVEY (1992)

The following information is being gathered as data on current curriculum practices in visual art. Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated. All information will be kept individually confidential.

1. Please estimate the percentage of instructional time you devote to these areas.
   
   _____% studio production
   
   _____% art history
   
   _____% aesthetics
   
   _____% criticism

2. In the first column below list the percentage of time each culture and/or art movement is represented in the content of your art lessons. In the second column please list how those percentages would change if you had adequate resources to teach the content of your own choosing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CULTURE/MOVEMENT</th>
<th>CURRENT PERCENTAGE</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE WITH RESOURCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Traditional Western</td>
<td>_____%</td>
<td>_____%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Feminist Art</td>
<td>_____%</td>
<td>_____%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. African</td>
<td>_____%</td>
<td>_____%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. African-American</td>
<td>_____%</td>
<td>_____%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Folk, Visionary, Outsider</td>
<td>_____%</td>
<td>_____%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Asian</td>
<td>_____%</td>
<td>_____%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Hispanic</td>
<td>_____%</td>
<td>_____%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Native American</td>
<td>_____%</td>
<td>_____%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Near/Middle Eastern</td>
<td>_____%</td>
<td>_____%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Pre-Columbian</td>
<td>_____%</td>
<td>_____%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Do you feel that too much emphasis is put on the study of Western art? Please explain.
4. Do you feel that too much emphasis is put on the study of Non-Western art? Please explain.

5. Grade levels you teach: _____k-5_____6-8 _____9-12

6. Number of years of teaching experience: _____1-5 _____6 or more

7. Highest degree earned
   _____ Bachelor
   _____ Master
   _____ Specialist
   _____ other: ____________________
APPENDIX B

2003 ART EDUCATOR SURVEY
2003 ART EDUCATOR SURVEY

The following information is being gathered as data on current curriculum practices in visual art. Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

1. In the blanks below, list the percentage of time each culture and/or art movement is represented in the content of your art lessons. Please feel free to add any content you teach that is not listed here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture/Movement</th>
<th>Percentage of Instructional Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Folk, Visionary, Outsider</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near/Middle Eastern</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Western</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please list all with percentages for each)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. When you teach content from any of the cultures listed above, how would you characterize the art forms that you present: are they primarily historical or contemporary, or do you present both historical and contemporary art forms from the culture?

3. Do you feel that too much emphasis is put on the study of Western art? Please explain.
4. Do you feel that too much emphasis is put on the study of Non-Western art? Please explain.

5. Grade levels you teach: ______k-5 ______6-8 ______9-12

6. Number of years of teaching experience: ______1-5 ______6 or more

7. Highest degree earned
   ______ Bachelor
   ______ Master
   ______ Specialist
   ______ other: ___________________

I may have some follow-up questions to ask you. If you are willing to give some additional information, please list your contact information below.

Name ________________________________

School (Fall 2003)________________________

Work Phone ______________________________

Home Phone ______________________________

e-mail _________________________________
APPENDIX C

PHASE ONE COVER LETTER AND CONSENT FORM
September 11, 2003

Name
Address
City, State

Dear ________:

I am seeking your assistance for a dissertation study examining k-12 visual art teachers’ perceptions of multicultural art education and their classroom practices with multicultural content. If you agree to participate, you will complete a seven-item survey about multicultural art education.

The completion of the survey should require 10-20 minutes of your time and your responses will be kept strictly confidential. No identifying references to the participants, their schools, or the school system will appear in the dissertation. Once you have completed and returned the survey, I may contact you for a follow-up interview which should last approximately 45-60 minutes.

Enclosed with this letter you will find an Informed Consent Form and the Art Educator Survey. If you agree to participate, please read and sign the consent form, complete the survey, and return both items in the self-addressed stamped envelope. If you cannot participate, please return the form marked “unable to participate.”

I appreciate your consideration of this request. I hope to receive your reply by September 12, 2003.

Sincerely,

Dan DeFoor
Art Teacher, Alexander High School
Ed.D. Candidate at the University of Georgia, Lamar Dodd School of Art
Informed Consent Form

I agree to take part in a research study titled “Diversity at Hand: A Study of Teacher Perceptions of Multicultural Art Education Principles and Practices,” which is being conducted by Herbert Daniel DeFoor, Lamar Dodd School of Art, University of Georgia, 770-948-8009 under the direction of Dr. Carole Henry, Lamar Dodd School of Art, 706-542-1631. I do not have to take part in this study; I can stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have information related to me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

1. PURPOSE
   The purpose of the study is to gather information on current practices in art education by surveying and interviewing K-12 teachers about issues related to the topic of multicultural art education.

2. BENEFITS
   Through my participation in this study, I may be afforded an opportunity to reflect on my teaching practices, my philosophy of art education, and my knowledge of the topic of multicultural art education.

3. PROCEDURES
   If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:
   
   • I will complete a survey consisting of seven questions/items. This activity should require approximately ten to twenty minutes.
   • I may be contacted by the researcher to participate in an individual interview. The interview will last approximately forty-five to sixty minutes and will be held at a time and place that are convenient to me. The researcher will make an audio recording of the interview for data collection purposes.

4. DISCOMFORTS OR STRESSES
   No discomforts or stresses are expected.

5. RISKS
   No risks are expected.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY
   Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with me will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with my permission or as required by law. If information about me is published, it will be written in a way that I cannot be recognized. Any documents and tape recordings generated as part of this study will be retained by the researcher in a secure location for a period of three years, at which time they will be destroyed.
7. FURTHER QUESTIONS
The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at 770-948-8009.

8. FINAL AGREEMENT & CONSENT FORM COPY
I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Herbert Daniel DeFoor _____________________ __________
Name of Researcher Signature Date

770-948-8009 dandefoor@juno.com
Telephone E-mail

__________________ _____________________ __________
Name of Participant Signature Date

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to Chris A. Joseph, Ph.D. Human Subjects Office, University of Georgia, 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu.
APPENDIX D

PHASE TWO LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS AND REQUEST TO SCHEDULE AN INTERVIEW
Dear _____:

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the study titled “Multiculturalism at Hand: Teacher Perceptions of Multicultural Art Education Principles and Practices” to provide descriptive information on k-12 visual art teachers’ perceptions of multicultural art education and their classroom practices with multicultural content. Based on responses to the initial survey, I wish to obtain further descriptive information about multicultural art education.

I would like to gather this information by conducting an interview with you. The interview should require approximately 45 minutes to complete. If you agree to participate in this phase of the study, please sign the enclosed form and provide contact information so I may arrange the interview for a time that is convenient to you. The interview will be held in strict confidence, and all participants will be identified only as “Teacher A,” “Teacher B,” etc. Any references to your school or your school system will be removed as well. If you cannot participate, please return the form marked “unable to participate.” I look forward to your response.

I appreciate your consideration of this request. I hope to receive your reply by December 17, 2003.

Sincerely,

Dan DeFoor
Art Teacher, Alexander High School
Ed.D. Candidate at the University of Georgia, Lamar Dodd School of Art
Name: __________________________________________

School Phone: ____________________________________

Home or Mobile Phone: ____________________________

☐ Yes, I am willing to be interviewed for the study “Multiculturalism at Hand: Teacher Perceptions of Multicultural Art Education Principles and Practices.”

These dates / times are best for me:

____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________

I am not available to be interviewed for these dates / times:

____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________

☐ I am unable to participate.
Please return this form to Dan DeFoor, Alexander High School. If you prefer, you can phone me with this information at 770-651-6052 or 770-948-809, or e-mail me at dandefoor@juno.com.
APPENDIX E

PHASE FOUR INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT
Script for Interview Instrument

Interviewer: I am going to show you some statements on the topic of multicultural art education from various sources in the field of art education. I will ask you if you agree or disagree with each statement. In some cases, I will also ask you some follow-up questions.

Curriculum, Content, and Resources

A. We should be suspicious of … programs that assess and judge all art using only Western aesthetic tenets. (Chalmers, 1992)

Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please explain why.

B. [D]ividing the [National] Standards [for Visual Arts Education] into disciplines – art, music, dance, and theater – and dividing visual art into the … disciplines of production, criticism, art history, and aesthetics is quintessentially Western in conception and structure. This selects against the nature, forms, and structure of the arts from many of the world’s non-Western cultures, in which the arts are connective and integrative rather than disciplinarily distinct. (Anderson, 1996)

1. Do you agree or disagree that the Western based concepts of Discipline Based Art Education were inadequate for understanding the art of non-Western cultures?

2. Simply put, do you believe that the Discipline Based Art Education model worked for teaching and learning about the art forms of all cultures?

C. [T]he broad categories of multicultural and cross cultural arts are absent or given token representation in most art education textbooks and state curriculum guidelines. (Blandy and Congdon, 1989, in Hamblen, 1990)

1. Considering the texts and curriculum guidelines available to you, do you agree with this statement?

2. This statement was made in 1989. As you have watched changes in curriculum and resources over the past decade, has this situation improved, deteriorated, or stayed the same?

3. Are there any materials or resources you have found to be particularly useful for multicultural content? If so, give examples.

D. [S]tudying even just one other culture leads to greater tolerance of diversity because “the decentralization of one’s own culture as right’ will have a transferability to learning about other cultures and cultural artifacts.” (Davenport, 2000)
Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please explain why.

E. [One] error is to “exoticize” a culture or people, for in “exoticizing” we make that culture or people “other” than ourselves….Focusing on food and clothing in a multicultural unit turns attention to color and taste differences. If we go no further, we are making superficial differentiations based on the look or taste of something. This is one of the most common errors…in teaching diversity at the elementary school level. (Garber, 1995)

Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please explain why.

F. [imitative multicultural art lessons using inauthentic household materials] [T]he stated outcomes may be laudable, but in the process of translating them into classroom “activities”, the art form or technique being studied becomes trivialized…. (Chalmers, 1992)

1. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please explain why.

2. Are you able to present multicultural studio experiences that preserve the authenticity of the art from being studied? Why or why not?

3. Is the multicultural studio activity still worth doing if you must use household materials?

Art Education, Political Action, and Social Reform

G. Accomplished teachers are alert to stereotypical, racist, sexist, and ethnocentric content in written resources, works of art, current events, and in the play, language, and social interactions of students. (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2001)

1. Is there a place for issues involving bias, prejudice, discrimination, and racism in your classroom instruction?

2. If so, how do you address them? Please give examples.

3. Are these topics desirable for art class content? If you agree with this statement, are there any impediments which hamper you from addressing these issues?

H. Bringing works of art that deal with social issues into the art classroom is one way of making visible to our students some of the social issues and concerns of our world. (Taylor, 2002)

Do you agree or disagree that visual arts instruction should address social issues? Please explain why.
I. Art education should be centered on contemporary social issues and not individualized art-making activities. (Delacruz, 1996)

1. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please explain why.

2. What is the appropriate role of social issues in the art classroom?

3. What is the appropriate role of studio production in the art classroom?

J. Some school teachers have expressed an understandable concern that the current emphasis on such emotionally charged issues as multiculturalism, feminism, and ecological consciousness-raising puts them under pressure to politicize their art classrooms beyond the tolerance of local school authorities and home communities. (Gallucci, 1996)

1. Have you experienced any resistance to or censorship of multicultural issues and content in your classroom?

2. If you have experienced resistance or censorship, has it come from administrators, students, parents, the community, or from some other source?

Aesthetics

K. Consider these statements which reflect two opposing views of aesthetics:

- All art can be understood through certain analytical (Western) aesthetic models. (Freedman, 1994)

- [E]ach art form has its own internal aesthetic which must be evaluated from within its own set of standards. There is, therefore, no one universal aesthetic which applies to all art forms. (Hart, 1991)

Which statement most closely reflects your own philosophy of aesthetics? Please explain your choice.

L. Critical differences in perceptions and expectations across cultures do exist…. (Morain, 1986)

Art teacher candidates…are sensitive to differences in artistic and aesthetic responses of students to works of art and to the varying artistic and aesthetic values of different cultures. (Henry, 1999)

1. Do you agree or disagree? Please explain why.
2. **How do you approach aesthetics in your classroom? Do you vary your approach according to the cultures represented in your classroom?**

3. **What kinds of activities involving aesthetics do your students engage in?**

**Western and Non-Western Artistic Traditions**

M. No racial, cultural, or national group makes art that is superior to another’s. (Stinespring and Kennedy, 1995)

*Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Please explain why.*

N. I believe the traditionalist notion that the Western canon is sufficiently broad and multifaceted to serve a multicultural, multilingual, multi-ethnic United States is myopic. (Anderson, 1996)

American culture is not synonymous with Western traditions and Western values. (Sahasrabudhe, 1992)

*1. Do you agree or disagree? Please explain why.*

*2. What comprises American culture?*

**Cultural Contexts of Objects and Artifacts**

O. [Teachers] know that sometimes authentic objects that are made for specific ritual or ceremonial functions in one society might be perceived as objects of art or teaching tools by those outside the culture. In helping students examine the roles and purposes of art artifacts, and artists in diverse cultures, accomplished teachers generate learning experiences that foster respect for the customs of others. (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2001 and 2000)

*Can you effectively present a cultural artifact in a visual art class without placing the object within its cultural framework? Should you?*

*Is it important to learn about the culture in which an art object was produced to learn about the object itself?*

P. [T]he technical and formal attributes of artifacts are often focused upon in art curriculum, making vitally different cultural artifacts appear to be similar. (Freedman, 1994)

*1. Describe your typical approach to presenting a cultural artifact or object to your*
students.

2. What techniques do you use to lead students through an exploration of the object?

3. Do you ask questions to guide students’ observations? If so, give examples.

Teacher Training

Q. Teacher education programs in the visual arts provide …

(d) experiences which train students to engage in inquiry in the history of art, acquire knowledge of the context in which works of art have been created, and foster respect for all forms of art. Students are introduced to artists and artifacts from a variety of cultures, periods, places and styles….

(e) a knowledge of the cultural context surrounding major artistic styles and historical periods of the development of art from a global perspective. This knowledge includes those political, economic and social issues surrounding the emergence of traditional and contemporary art forms….

(f) a knowledge of traditional and contemporary artists representative of diversity in regard to gender and ethnicity…. (Henry, 1999)

1. Do you feel that you have been well prepared to teach multicultural content? If so, did that preparation come from your university art education teacher training experience?

2. Please describe your university experience regarding your preparation to teach multicultural content.

3. Please describe any other sources for your knowledge of multicultural art education outside your university experience.

R. Accomplished teachers research concepts and topics they wish to explore with their students to make sure the learning experiences selected are authentic to the traditions of the culture being considered and relevant to students. (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2001 and 2000)

1. Do you research the authenticity of concepts and examples attributed to a culture before presenting multicultural content in your classroom?

2. Where do you go to find the information you need to present multicultural content?
Cultural Contexts of Teachers and Learners

S. We acknowledge teaching as cultural and social intervention and therefore, in any teaching endeavor, it is imperative that teachers not only confront, but also consistently be aware of their own cultural and social biases. (Stinespring, 2001)

1. How has the experience of presenting multicultural content affected you as the teacher?

2. Have you had experiences in teaching multicultural content which have caused you to adjust or realign your own attitudes and opinions?

T. Teachers understand the importance of respecting cultural values and norms that students bring from home. They know that there are contrasting cultural views of some art concepts and that not all cultures share the same aesthetic. (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 2001 and 2000)

1. Describe briefly the demographic makeup of your student population.

2. Have you planned instruction to reflect this makeup?

3. How do you inform yourself about the cultural makeup of your student population?