JAfL
Journal of Art for Life

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

Journal of Art for Life

The faculty at the Florida State University Department of Art Education is proud to present a new academic journal, *Journal of Art for Life*, which is dedicated to the premise that art is life-enhancing. Art for Life is the philosophy which guides our three graduate programs: art education, art therapy, and arts administration and is based on the tenets put forth in the book, Art for Life, written by Tom Anderson and Melody Milbrandt. The power of art for social justice and societal change is not only infused in our philosophy, but is the overarching theme that pervades our curriculum and coursework. To this end, the mission of the journal is:

    •The *Journal of Art* for Life is a national, refereed journal focused on art education, art therapy, and arts administration in authentic, real-world contexts toward the goal of social progress through the arts. The journal is based on the instrumentalist premise that art has the power and potential to reflect and enhance the conditions of human experience. Through scholarly articles, the journal is an instrument for communicating the avenues by which the various forms of art intertwine and impact society and social justice.
    •The journal accepts articles that are theoretical, research-based, and those that address the practical applications of art for life in educational, therapeutic, and other institutional contexts, including museums.

We seek social criticism related to art and art education; inquiry into potential areas of exploration regarding art in society, especially focused on social justice and other crucial issues; psychological perspectives, including therapeutic programs which emphasize arts interventions; and investigations into possible roles for arts institutions as cultural organizations that benefit people's lives. We also seek practical applications, strategies, and position papers about art and its relationship to the enhancement of life for individuals and the societies in which we live, in art education, art therapy and arts administration contexts.

In furtherance of this mission, we welcome manuscripts on the topics outlined above. If you are interested in submitting a manuscript, please see the back inside cover for submission details or visit our website at http://arted.fsu.edu/Journal-of-Art-for-Life. The journal will be published in biannually and will be available in both electronic and hard copy formats. If you have questions, please contact the editorial staff. We look forward to hearing from you and serving you through a journal that will inspire your creativity and challenge your beliefs.

Journal of Art for Life

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Welcome Address

Marcia L. Rosal
Florida State University

On behalf of the faculty at the Florida State University Department of Art Education, I am pleased to welcome readers to the inaugural issue of the Journal of Art for Life. The birth of the journal marks a milestone for the programs in our department: Art Education, Arts Administration, and Art Therapy. These programs have functioned under one administrative unit for over 10 years and yet it has taken the faculty this span of time to comprehend how these programs are linked theoretically and philosophically and to create a integrated identity. Thanks to the guidance of Tom Anderson, the art for life philosophy has become focus of our work and our values. Often we are asked to explain this philosophy. At the root of our work is the notion that art is not solely for its own sake (although this is a perfectly sound notion); we believe that art is the cornerstone of exploring and building one's self as a member of a community. Art illuminates how a person lives in the world. We teach that art can be used to critically analyze, re-construct, and improve our world and its people. We nurture professionals who are willing to question and critique society and to uncover unjust and oppressive aspects of our world. By exploring the cultures in which we live, we find that the world is not always moral. Therefore the art for life philosophy begs a commitment to social justice and a commitment to using art to shed light on injustices.

As the mission of the journal states, we believe there is power in the arts that can lead to the betterment of the human experience. The five entries that follow further clarify the mission of the journal. Tom Anderson's editorial sets the tone for the inaugural issue and Melody Milbrandt's article deepens the concept of art for life. Jeff and Monica Broome's article provides an example of how the art for life model can be translated into the curriculum. Vanada presents a strong argument for the arts in education from a policy perspective. Finally, Alders explores how art has mitigated social stratification in Mexican-American cultures.

I invite comments on our first issue of the Journal of Art for Life. I also invite you to submit manuscripts which highlight your thinking about art and social justice issues. Please e-mail me at mrosal@fsu.edu with your thoughts and ideas. Enjoy!

Rosal /*Welcome Note*

GUEST EDITORIAL

Tom Anderson

Jessie Lovano-Kerr Professor of Art Education
Florida State University

Art for Life:
The Underpinnings

For thousands of years, even before Plato, art and aesthetic experience have been tied to the realm of the sensuous and affective. Romantic philosophers aren't alone in this. Empiricists, pragmatists, and even poststructuralists such as Lyotard, as well as Asian and African and indigenous cultures everywhere connect the aesthetic intrinsically to the life of the emotions, of intuition, of the spirit. Which begs the question: what is the role for the affective and intuitive in human life? Surely from an etiological point of view the realm of the affective intuition is useful and instrumentally valuable; otherwise evolution would have selected against it, so our current affective capacities would not exist. There must be something then about the affective realm, and the arts that serve and personify that realm, is an essential contributor to human wellbeing.

Looking at the history of art, it's pretty clear that art has evolved as a partner to ritual. Our rituals, whatever they are—a Greek chorus, a Gelede dance, a baptism, a funeral, a rap concert, or a gallery opening—focus us on ideas and values that we hold dear. In this enterprise, masks and rhythm sticks, baptismal fountains and stained glass windows, organ music and portraits of the deceased, light shows and gold grills, and even abstract painting—cause us to pay attention to those things that matter for the group. Dissanayake (1988) argued very convincingly, in fact, that art's very reason for being is to draw our attention to those things that really count to us as social beings: that is, the values, mores, sensibilities and ways of doing and being. Langer's (1980) position was that art allows us to objectify our subjective realities, giving them aesthetic form, thus making them available for focused consideration and reflection. Taken together, these positions suggest that we make things of beauty to call attention to qualities, beliefs, and mores that count for us as a group, as a team, as a religion, as a society. The survival function of these creations is pretty obvious. It takes a team working together to create civilization—any civilization. Our ability to work as a group, dependent on collective understandings and beliefs is what makes us the dominant species on the planet (Dissanayake, 1988). And the arts are central to constructing these understandings and values. Art is central to constructing community.

As far as we know, art has been central to this community-making function from the beginning of human consciousness. It helped tribal cultures recognize their group's ways of being and believing

that cemented common purpose first for survival and then for conquest. Common purpose through symbolic identification gave tribal and national societies the solidarity necessary for the group to survive and prosper. That has been a good thing. But it also led to ethnocentrism, hierarchy, and ultimately social injustice.

Today, we can't afford a narrow tribal focus. The world is too small, too connected. Attitudes and actions are universal in their potential consequences. So our sense of community must take the next evolutionary step. In addition to being pipe fitters, Catholics, politicians, African Americans, feminists, Harley riders, non-smokers or whatever, we must become members of the bigger collective. We must strive to be our brothers' and our sisters' keepers. Or if we don't embrace our differences at least we need to tolerate them.

> *Just maybe the world can be saved through art...*

We must become globally tribal as well as locally identified. Our tribe must include all people rather than just people who look like us or who live close to us. With advanced technologies such automobiles, synthesized chemicals, and nuclear armaments that threaten our global environment, an immense human population that strains the world's resources, and increasing global technological and economic interdependence, we can no longer afford to be ethnocentric or culturally myopic. We must recognize unmitigated tribal loyalty as a hindrance to survival rather than a survival strategy. We have reached a point of interdependence where everyone, everywhere, either will or will not survive and prosper, together. Our ability to cooperate in groups must undergo a transformation from the immediate group to the group known as humankind. And art can and should continue to be a central player in this attempt to construct a global community.

The *Journal of Art for Life*, as I See It

In this context, I see the role of the *Journal of Art for Life* as being an instrument for presenting the simple idea that art should be about something that counts towards making our lives better, and that we can and should engage in art education and art therapy that is pivotal in making the world a better place. This assumes that art has both intrinsic quality as aesthetic form and extrinsic value as a form of communication that tells something about the nature of the human experience, both as it is and as it might be. My hope is that the *Journal of Art for Life* will frame art education, art therapy, and arts administration as instruments for social awareness and social reconstruction. In practical terms, I expect we will encourage the examination of multiple philosophical systems or narratives, and vigorously embrace the idea of cultural and individual plurality in making and receiving meaning in art and visual culture. There needs to be a place for educators, therapists, and administrators to explore both theoretical and practical ideas of moral and social import through art. I anticipate reading such discourse in future issues of this journal, in the hope that it may give readers a reference for making sound choices in a world of competing ideologies, claims, and interests. I expect that this and future issues will provide a forum that embraces

content and concepts that address how community life can be structured for equality and justice through art and education as well as arts administration and art therapy.

> ## *My hope is that the Journal of Art for Life will contribute to the wellbeing of not just the art community...*

This assumes that the aesthetic, which lies at art's heart, can and should be used for therapeutic, administrative, and educational purposes to promote equity and social justice with the goal of developing a global community and that moves beyond traditionally narrow disciplinary confines. If the central concern is to integrate art with human concerns, inquiry may be best centered on significant human *themes* across disciplines and media, leading where ideas and spirit and intuition take one. So I think it would be rare that we would be interested in papers that explore narrow disciplinary confines of media, composition, or other technical qualities of art for their own sake. Instead I hope that through critically examining art works in their authentic cultural contexts, writers and readers may gain access to attitudes, mores, and cultural understandings of themselves as cultural beings. Toward the purpose of exploring social justice in art education, arts administration and art therapy contexts, I encourage submissions that explore real-world issues that address real problems with significance beyond the classroom. This orientation, we believe, allows for explorations that become a passage for personal transformation and social reconstruction.

In the end I'm making the claim that the world can become a better place through art. In fact I could almost be persuaded to make one of those sweeping claims that professors try to dissuade in their students' writing. It goes like this: Just maybe, the world can be saved through art. Is that too grandiose claim to make? Probably so. But what if I reverse the question and ask if not through art, then through what? Certainly our ancestors understood that our most important values, traditions, and beliefs were to be carried on the elegant wings of aesthetic form. Are we not equal to that same wisdom today? It is the arts that provide the holistic, metaphorical quality of understanding necessary for social fullness and cultural health. Through the arts we develop the unifying sensibility and the direction, in short, the ability to use our many other gifts and tools with elegance and wisdom. Let us repeat then, if the world isn't to be saved through art then through what? My hope is that the *Journal of Art for Life* will contribute to the wellbeing of not just the art community, but of the entire community, and to the cause of social justice through art.

Postscript
Finally, on a personal note, when Melody Milbrandt and I began the journey of developing the art for life paradigm we had no idea that it would engage so much of our life energy and so much of our time. We also had no idea what impact, if any, it would have in the world of art education. In spite of that, Melody and I worked on our vision for eight years from conception to publication, wrestling with the meanings and significance of every chapter,

revising the framework when necessary to reflect our changing vision of the project, and testing every idea. It was an immense emotional and physical effort and sometimes we wondered if it was worth it, but we carried on. The generous feedback of others, in particular our reviewers at McGraw-Hill, was especially valuable in keeping us going at certain points as was the support and encouragement of our families.

I am also particularly grateful to my department chair, David Gussak, who had the vision to center *art for life* as the guiding paradigm for art education, arts administration and art therapy programs at Florida State University, and I am appreciative of senior editor, Marcia Rosal, for her dedication to this project and her willingness to let me have a word in this forum. Finally, I am particularly gratified that Melody Milbrandt, my partner in the art for life paradigm, has agreed to provide the lead article for this, the first issue of the *Journal of Art for Life*. There couldn't be a more fitting lead author and I personally am honored that we are able to feature her contribution. I look forward to your contributions and insights over what I expect will be a long life of this new venue for social justice in art education, art therapy, and arts administration:
Journal of Art for Life.

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Understanding the Role of Art in Social Movements and Transformation

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Abstract

According to Reed (2005) the arts func-
tion as cultural forms within social
movements to transform society in
numerous ways. These functions are
to: encourage social change; empower
and deepen commitment; inform larger
society about social issues, harmonize
social activists within the movement;
inform internally to express or reinforce
values and ideas; inform externally as
a more effective way to communicate
movement ideals to people outside
the movement; enact movement goals
directly historicize to invent, tell and
retell the history of the movement; set
a new emotional tone; critique move-
ment ideology; and provide elements
of pleasure and aesthetic joy. In the first
part of this paper an examination of
how the arts as cultural forms contrib-
ute specifically to contemporary social
transformation will be discussed. In the
second part of this paper an example
of personal and social transforma-
tion will be illuminate these concepts.

As a society, we need individuals with the will and passion to purposefully critique the actions and assumptions of society in works of art.

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A wide range of art educators including Eisner (2004), Greene (2000), Carroll (2006) have referred to the personal and social transformative power of the arts. While the sanctioned purposes of art have been hotly debated during every period of history one cannot deny that works of art can have an instrumental social function. In traditional societies the arts serve to solidify and codify social order through the intentional repeated use of imagery and ritual (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). In contemporary democratic societies the arts not only function to maintain social traditions and describe the world, but also often explore issues of social justice, identity and freedom. Most artists and scholars agree that the arts alone cannot change society; but the arts give voice and form to individual and collective needs that motivate and sustain social movements. As movements evolve within contemporary society the arts play vital roles. The purpose of this article is to better understand specific instrumentalist functions of the arts in social movements and consequently how society is transformed. An example of personal and parallel social transformation in the art education classroom will be discussed.

According to American studies scholar, T.V. Reed (2005), all of the arts function within social movements as socially transformative cultural forms. According to *Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary* (2010) activism is "a doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue." Reed suggests at least ten overlapping, intersecting, functions of the arts within social movements. These functions serve within to encourage activists by empowering and deepening commitment, and harmonizing agendas of activists to reinforce group values and ideas. The arts are also used to communicate the issues and ideals of the movement beyond the activist group. Through re-presenting the history of an issue, the arts may establish or revise an emotional tone or a public perception. Along with critiquing issues of social justice within society, the arts may also be used to critique movement ideology, keeping the movement grounded and true to its purpose. Finally, the arts provide elements of pleasure and aesthetic joy, important for activists to recharge and rejuvenate their energy and efforts to continue their work in a social movement.

In the first part of this paper I use Reed's (2005) framework for the function of the arts in social movements to examine how the visual arts, as cultural forms, specifically contribute to contemporary social transformation. Artwork by a variety of

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contemporary artists provide examples of each instrumental purpose. The examples provided are not unique or exclusive depictions of specific social functions, but illustrate the multiplicity of functions and purposes of art in social movements and transformation. In the second part of this paper I describe the interaction of pre-service art teacher educators with high school students during an art lesson, and creation of a mural and installation relating to relevant issues, resulting in personal and social transformation within both groups.

Functions of the Arts as Cultural Forms for Transforming Society

Within social movements informal networks of activists evolve and from these networks values, objects, stories, rituals or events, roles and leaders emerge (Lofland, 1995). Art can be used to reinforce values of the group, raise questions about current social conditions, and construct an image of social change. Visual images can inspire and create a source of identity with the cause. Perhaps the best known example, the civil-rights era anthem, *We Shall Overcome*, became a kind of "litany against fear" (Payne, 1995, p. 263). The song's powerful connotations of freedom and justice now belong to the world; it has been sung by Germans at the fall of the Berlin Wall and at Tiananmen Square by Chinese protesters.

Visual artists utilize codes and conventions of their time that communicate more than verbal text. During periods of social unrest the arts can set an emotional tone and move activist participants or their au-

dience from fear to calm resolve, or from indifference to action. In *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* (1972), Alison Saar transformed a familiar long exploited derogatory image of a subservient black woman, Aunt Jemima, by juxtaposing the image with objects of empowerment. The empowered Aunt Jemima holds a rifle in one hand, a grenade in the other and is overlaid with the image of the black power fist. While Saar's image denoted the demands of the Civil Rights movement for political, economic, and social equity for African Americans it simultaneously acknowledges the historically close bond of the stereotypical "mammy" figure by the inclusion of a small background photograph of the Aunt Jemima image with a white child. Another layer of meaning seems to be rejecting the use of Aunt Jemima as a well known popular commercial icon, further complicating the associations and emotions experienced by viewers. T*he Liberation of Aunt Jemima* launched Alison Saar's career as an artist, as it portrayed a new vision of African-American women late in the Civil Rights movement.

Art as Empowerment

Even in cases of extreme deprivation and oppression people have shown an amazing capacity to resist dominating forces. Resistance often takes the form of folktales, theater, jokes, folk art and songs (Scott, 1992). These hidden social transcripts have cultural impact and become a force within any movement. As resistance becomes more overt the arts offer a means to solidify and take responsibility for enacting social change.

From the early 1970's through 1989

General Augusto Pinochet began a repressive regime in Chile and attempted to silence all opposition. During his reign of terror any person perceived as a dissident was abducted from his or her home and never seen again. Nearly 10,000 people disappeared. The mothers of these victims used their traditional roles as mothers to protest the regime by organizing sewing workshops to create arpilleras, a traditional Chilean tapestry, to tell their stories of government violence and atrocities and to call for justice. The Catholic Church supported the women by helping them smuggle the arpilleras out of Chile to exhibitions and sales. The work of the mothers brought international attention to the human right abuses in Chile (Agosin, 1989). The images not only served to tell the world of the atrocities but also gave an unexpected voice and power to the grief stricken mothers.

A similar movement occurred in Argentina, where the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo wore white handkerchiefs as scarves on their head, with their child's name embroidered onto the white material (Bonner, 2007). The Argentina mothers organized weekly silent marches around Buenos Aires's Plaza de Mayo to call attention to the atrocities of the government. The emblem of the white scarf is still used today in Argentina as a symbol of resistance and solidarity in activist art.

Constructing art forms empowers artists to feel their own commitment to a movement or ideology more deeply. Artists like Jacob Lawrence often did an extraordinary amount of research before beginning historical paintings like the migration series (Mattson, 2010). Lawrence found primary and secondary accounts of the early 20th century movement of African-Americans to northern cities and created artworks that deconstructed his contemporaries' idyllic view of the migration. Lawrence's paintings correlated with the Negro History movement that produced Harlem's Schomburg Collection of resources and became historical narratives and secondary historical sources.

The arts express the values and message to social movement opponents and undecided bystanders. Artistic forms often speak across boundaries of age, class, region and even ideology. Public muralist, Judith Baca, directed community youth in painting the *Great Wall*. The groups of Asian American, Native American, African American, Anglo, and Chicano youth studied and painted scenes of revisionist history of Los Angeles. The mural stories weave together stories of race, gender and class with humor and authenticity. "The entire story of multiple intersections, and the power system at its core, must be addressed if a radically democratic, truly multicultural society is to become more than a glittering promise" (Reed, 2005, p. 128). Many in Chicano communities continue to strive to maintain their identity while engaging in larger social networks that support equity in economic, cultural and political power.

Enacting Movement Goals

The arts not only can support activist goals, sometimes they directly achieve the goals and purposes of a movement, as

eco-activist art helps restore an ecosystem. Artist, Lynne Hull, (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005) constructs habitats for animals endangered by human's destruction of the environment. Her work directly addresses an environmental concern and is used to inform others.

Today film and digital images are increasingly popular media for presenting convincing arguments for change. While not presenting himself as an artist, Al Gore combined his Power Point presentation of ecological disaster with images of melting glaciers and scenes of New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, to convey his concern for the environment in the film documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth* (David, Bender, Burns, Chilcott, & Guggenheim, 2006). Visualization of the impact of human systems on the environment was presented as a persuasive argument for changing our individual and collective ecological footprint (Mirzoeff, 2009). While not taking direct action on the environment Gore's work has been highly effective in curtailing industrial practices impacting global warming. While Gore has talked about the dangers of global warming for many years his film seems to have best conveyed the seriousness of the issue and moves people to action.

Feminist artists such as the Guerilla Girls also used direct resistance tactics to anonymously raise awareness of museum biased practices (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). The performance tactics eventually had a direct impact on targeted museums and galleries resulting in exhibitions by women and artists of diverse racial and ethnic heritage. Artists today continue to use guerilla tactics to break through the clutter of media noise and routines to make a visual statement of resistance.

History and Identity

Artists often invent, tell, and retell histories, some autobiographical, that attempt to depict historical stereotypes or assumptions have shaped collective memory and identity (Desai & Hamlin, 2010). Unlike texts seeking to objectively portray historical accounts, contemporary artists often use imagery to convince and persuade. Contemporary artists challenge and reframe our understanding of history by depicting individual stories that disrupt and discredit the grand narrative by revealing its omissions and biases. Images by artists like Kara Walker represent the untold oppressed stories of slaves that challenge the popular narrative of the genteel South (Mattson, 2010). Ironically, to depict kitsch parodies of historical romantic vignettes, Walker cuts large black paper silhouettes; a method previously associated with genteel portraits and romanticized landscapes. "Walker's works are controversial among viewers of all races and have provoked debate about how to represent the history of slavery in the United States" (Robertson & McDaniel, 2005, p. 57). Walker's work tells stories about slavery in the anti-bellum South that range from humorous to outrageous and sad. Walker suggests that some images irritate serious social re-constructivists, who do not appreciate her humor, and she questions the responsibility and ability of artists to deal with issues of social justice alone (Walker, 2010).

The work of Brazilian artist, Adriana Varejao, re-tells the story of Portuguese colonization of Brazil, often using the metaphor of cannibalism as a cultural allegory to depict the Brazilian absorption of a foreign culture while maintaining their own (Robertson & McDaniel, 2005). The violent imagery used by Varejao reveals that the absorption of culture was not without pain and struggle. Contemporary artists' re-constructions of history often challenge us to a better understanding of the present. The re-telling of history through presenting multiple viewpoints is critical for revising the historical record, but more importantly for the construction of identity today. Reed (2005) insists that while identities are not "frozen forms," they all are "collective and that social movements are among the key forces transforming/creating new cultural identities" (p. 308). He continues:

> The move from print to broadcast media to networked computing and other new media has shaped identity generally and movement identities specifically. Alongside and entwined with new media, movements have been major forces in the creation of the contemporary emphasis on identities….The inherent paradox is that "identity politics" can exist only when identities are in question. Identity becomes an issue only when it is no longer presumed, taken for granted. (Reed, 2005, p. 309)

Another author, Sidney Tarrow (1997) argues that social movements will continue to play an important role in defining collective identities. While identity is an increasingly fluid and varied concept social movements are likely to continue as a source of identity.

Setting an Emotional Tone

Art works have been created with the intent of establishing, rejuvenating or diffusing an emotional tone within a social movement. One of the most powerful and emotional visual reminders of the AIDS pandemic is the AIDS Memorial Quilt. Today there are more than 44,000 three-by-six-foot panels have been sewn together into a commemorative community art-work, with each panel designed to honor the memory of a loved one who lost their life to AIDS (The History of the AIDS Quilt, Names Project Memorial Foundation, The AIDS Memorial Quilt). The Memorial Quilt has

> redefined the tradition of quilt-making in response to contemporary circumstances. A memorial, a tool for education and a work of art, the Quilt is a unique creation, an uncommon and uplifting response to the tragic loss of human life. …. The Quilt was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 and remains the largest community art project in the world. (p. 1)

Art works have also been created with the intent of bringing a sense of closure to old wounds and discord, thus commemorating the event. Among the most well-known examples of contemporary commemorative art are the Vietnam War Memorial by Maya Lin and the Civil Rights Memorial by the same artist (Storr, 2001). Both were in-

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tended to honor those who gave their lives to their country's greater good, but the racial heritage of Lin sparked controversy. Maya Lin's work was challenged when citizens became aware that an unknown Asian artist was creating a memorial to an American war in Asia. By the time Lin was commissioned to create the Civil Rights Memorial she was a well-known sculptor, but some critics still felt that a black artist should have been selected to construct the Montgomery memorial. Once viewed by the public each commemorative artwork evoked strong emotion and healing for the audience, raising the message above its contextual detractors and serving to harmonize social tension and national conflict.

Critiquing Social Movements

The arts often challenge dominant ideas, values, and tactics of a society and also social movements, and their tendencies toward dogma, by evoking emotions and meanings not easily reduced to narrow ideological terms. Artists explore the tensions and boundaries of public and private space. Jenny Holzer recently created a series entitled, Redaction Paintings, in which she presents individual pages of declassified documents.

> The process of redaction allows the government to withhold details of documents that: have been placed in the public record according to the Freedom of Information Act assed by Congress in 1966. Holzer's use of these documents is a very self-conscious act of further publicizing and dissemination information that has been requested by citizens and

independent groups, often against the desires of the government. As an artist Holzer has asserted a right that all citizens have, and re-imagined these documents in a truly public way." (Desai, Hamline & Mattson, 2010, p. 105-106)

Holzer raises issues about the image of our country abroad and the Constitutional right of all Americans to access information about our government and the right to free speech. In a similar vein, *The Freedom of Expression National Monument* by Erika Rothenberg, John Malpede, and Laurie Hawkinson was constructed in Foley Square in New York City from August 17- November 13, 2004. The traditional concept of monument was re-conceptualized to a participatory space for people to verbalize their concerns about the government by speaking into a large red microphone. The art work both depicts and attempts to address the "real divide that many people feel from the systems of power and decision making in the United States" (Desai, Hamlin & Mattson, 2010, p. 102.) While a number of individuals expressed strong opinions and concerns, the reality of their voices actually impacting change illustrates the contradictions of the democratic ideals presented in the Bill of Rights, and the realities of the process of a representative democracy (Desai, Hamlin & Mattson, 2010).

Diffusion and Defusion

The power of these functions of activist art can be further distilled into two

primary roles of art in social movements and on society; diffusion and defusion (Reed, 2005). Through engagement of our emotions, activist art can communicate, support and extend the message of the social movements across society. Certainly not every contemporary artist uses their artwork as an avenue for activism, but the art work of many contemporary artists does serve to critique, defuse and diffuse the message of social movements. The voice of the artist becomes a catalyst for exploration of issues within society that can open avenues for dialogue and a diffusion of ideas in a non-violent manner that supports and encourages engagement in democratic ideals and processes.

Once symbols and images used in social movements, such as peace symbols or Afro hairstyles, are seen as unthreatening they became appropriated and defused in the larger society. While the original context of the symbol is lost the movement becomes further embedded within our collective history and culture. Cultural movements have the most impact when they are diffused into larger society in a less overtly ideological way, but lose their impetus when symbols of change are defused indiscriminately (Reed, 2005). Thus defusion and diffusion of imagery and symbols not only communicates across society during a social movement, but through time. The meaning and power of images and symbols of one generation may radically evolve and change as new generations view the images in the context of different experiences, environments, and values.

Creating Activist Art in the Art Classroom

Each semester I ask my art education methods students to work in small groups to create an installation that persuasively comments on a social issue of their choice. Last year instead of asking students to select their own topic for a small group installation everyone in the class addressed the same issue. This change came because of a topic that arose during a special service project.

Our pre-service art education class partnered with a high school in the metro Atlanta area with a school population that is 85% Latino. I worked with a faculty member designated as the Freshman Team Leader to develop a project for a group of 70 students who seemed "at-risk" for dropping out of school based on their attendance record and grades. Many of the students we worked with came from homes where only Spanish is spoken; in their high schools gangs are predominant and students routinely drop out of school at age 16.

For part of the project the art education students led at-risk students in the creation of a collaborative woven mural. For the mural imagery the high school students were asked to visualize and paint their goals for the future. The high school students also toured Georgia State University and attended a ropes challenge course facilitated by GSU faculty designed to build trust and camaraderie.

During the course of the project the GSU students discovered that in the state of Georgia each institution of higher

The Georgia State University Ropes Challenge Course is designed to promote trust and team work among participants.

The freshmen high school students who participated in the program were considered "at risk" and some were known to be members of rival gangs.

education can decide who they admit, but even if admitted undocumented students are charged out of state tuition and denied financial aid. Denying access to financial aid prohibits most undocumented students from entering Georgia colleges and universities. Our small partnering high school has a total school population of around 800 students; 500 of those students are undocumented residents. The longer we worked at the school the more stories of heartbreak and frustration we heard from not only students, but also from teachers and administrators. One particularly touching story was about Anita, who wants to be an art teacher. She is president of her senior class and the art honor society in her school. She is at the top of her class with a 3.9 grade point average and she works part time to contribute to her family's income. Anita can't afford to go to school

in Georgia because of the current laws that prohibit her from receiving financial aid. She's very unsure of her future. This is a very demoralizing situation throughout this school and community that wastes human potential and ultimately erodes society.

After working with the high school students, researching and discussing the issue, GSU pre-service teachers constructed installations around the topic of undocumented immigrants' access to higher education. This was an emotionally charged and complex topic for most students to address. Students discussed their ideas within small groups and developed cohesive statements for their installations. Based on their discussion, two student groups constructed installations that addressed the injustice of an educational system that claims to prepare all students to realize their dreams and then blocks their access to that system. In one installation the false promises for education and a bright future were illustrated by hanging a carrot and over an enlarged inauthentic high school diploma that blocked access to further education. In another installation art education students raised the questions "What does it mean to be an American?" "What are the most important attributes that define being an American?" and "What are the responsibilities of the ruling majority in a democracy?" This was an interactive installation that invited viewers to contribute comments by writing on a large wall space. The invitation to respond provoked a lot of discussion in the hallway and written comments from participants.

These classroom experiences may be
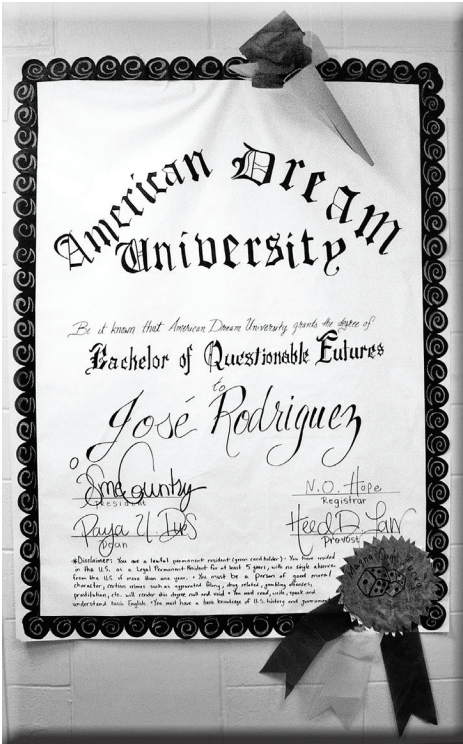
One installations questioned the validity of a high school diploma for students who may have grown up in the United States as undocumented immigrants.

Even when students earn a high school diploma they may not have access to the further education needed to achieve their dreams.

perceived as activist art, or perhaps transformational activism. The term "transformational activism" suggests that people need to transform on the inside as well on the outside in order to create any meaningful change in the world (Scott, 1992). As I listened to Georgia State pre-service teachers share their ideas and attitudes about this aspect of illegal immigration I noticed changes in their comments and discussion. The impatience and initial anger surround-

ing the immigration topic gradually defused as students discussed the controversial topic and constructed a work of art. As the students found ways to resolve differences in opinions within small working groups they created a message that was diffused to a larger audience. The artistic process allowed the students to take a stand on an issue and have a voice, individually empowering, and collectively expressing their concerns. This process eventually elicited more questions about the issue. Although a solution to the immigration issue was not found, and little consensus within the large group was reached, the difficulty of grappling with complex social realities demonstrated the multi-layered nature of contemporary issues that require a citizenry willing to move past initial responses to solve problems. Students began to understand why some contemporary art simply raises questions or communicates ambiguity. Answers or solutions are not always immediately found. Based on their comments many of the students will continue to investigate the complexities of the immigration issue.

As previously mentioned, during the GSU mural project the high school students also changed, becoming more open to discussing their problems and considering ways that they could better support each other in reaching their goals to stay in school. Transformational politics guide participants to look inwardly to define their view of true power (Scott, 1992). Developing deep connections to others taps a new sense of belonging and trust. This supports power structures that are not over some-

one, but rather power to unleash collective creativity in constructing or re-conceptualizing society. Transformational activism supports looking for common values among members and then negotiating relationships that are productive and satisfying to all. In the process one or both parties may find their inner landscape and paradigms changing (Kriesberg, 1992).

During the final phase of the project Georgia State art education pre-service teachers worked with high school students to create a woven painted mural. Each student painted their goals on a strip of heavy paper.

The strips were then woven together to symbolize the importance of each individual's contributions and support to the overall success of the group.

Conclusion

Sustainability of the democratic process is based on the ability of individuals to develop their voice, exercise their liberties in responsible ways, and routinely adapt to changing leadership in policies and government. Thinking critically about the arts and their historic contexts may provide students with "a way to practice the arts of *consideration and taking a stand*...the arts are the foundation of democratic citizenship and personal development" (Mattson, 2010, p. 18). The challenges of living peaceably in a diverse community require opening the minds of residents to new ideas, diverse cultural practices, and the re-constructed historical perspectives that can ultimately build more productive social relationships, including the democratic practice (Giroux, 2003). Social movements alter cultural codes that bring about social change. While the arts transmit traditional cultural mores important for maintaining social order, they are also an essential component of social movements that call for personal and collective social transformation. Paradoxically, while works of art can be put to political ends aesthetic texts cannot be reduced to only political meanings. If arts are to critique and transcend ideology the conflict between politics and art must not be solved (Reed, 2005).

As a society we need individuals with the will and passion to purposefully critique the actions and assumptions of society in works of art. Facilitating change within society is an ongoing function of the arts, through works of literature, music, and the visual arts, including digital media. Looking and thinking critically about contemporary visual art prepares students to become more thoughtful of the messages communicated and the power of those images to shape a socially just and equitable society. As students understand the relationship of the arts to contemporary social movements they may better understand how imagery

can signal the need for social change or justice and motivate personal and collective trans-formation in ways that maintain social stability by defusing conflict and diffusing multiple perspectives.

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Milbrandt/*Understanding the Role of Art*

An Integrated and Collaborative Approach to Art for Life:

The Impact of Environmental Forces on our Lives

Art, both in and outside of the classroom, is seen as a way to communicate personal meaning, as well as the human experience itself.

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Authors' Note

The unit described in this article was originally created and implemented in 2007, two years after the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in the United States. The recent earthquakes in Haiti and Chile have given us cause to revisit the material, and the ideas put forth within the unit may be relevant to students and teachers who share concerns over such catastrophes to human life caused by natural forces.

Abstract

While the *Art for Lif*e model of authentic visual arts instruction is receiving continued attention from higher educators working in preservice preparation programs, it has yet to be determined how such a program may work in public school classrooms. This article details the collaboration between a fifth grade teacher and a professor of art education as they create and co-teach an *Art for Life* inspired instructional unit with specific emphasis placed on the interdisciplinary possibilities provided by the approach. The resulting thematic unit concentrates on the impact of environmental forces on our lives, and integrates the subject areas of visual art, science, and language arts within its curricular framework. The article concludes with a discussion of the successes and failures of the instructional unit and offers suggestions to those who may be interested in exploring an integrated approach to the *Art for Life model.*

Keywords: arts integration, interdisciplinary instruction, instructional collaboration, Art for Life.

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S ince the publication of Anderson and Milbrandt's book, Art for Life (2005), we have taught in and near three large universities in three different states where the text was used by art education professors involved in preservice teacher preparation. Additionally, we discussed the use of the text with numerous other art educators at state and national conferences. As the growing use of Art for Life as a higher education text became apparent to us, we also wondered about the model's implementation in K-12 classrooms. The purpose of this article is to describe our efforts in creating and instructing an Art for Life inspired unit in a fifth grade classroom in a public elementary school in Georgia. Our particular approach emphasized instructional collaboration and interdisciplinary opportunities provided by the model as we co-taught many aspects of the unit as an elementary education generalist working alongside a professor of art education.

Background

Art for Life (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005) presented a holistic, authentic approach to teaching art that focuses on thematic instruction with connections made to real life rather than creating art for its own sake. Art, both in and outside of the classroom, is seen as a way to communicate personal meaning, as well as the human experience itself. The model advocates thematic instruction, or the organization of educational units around central issues of human significance, as a method for connecting learning to real world problems. In *Art for Life,* such themes are often introduced through the presentation of visual artwork that addresses these real life concerns.

Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) discussed the curricular structure of *Art for Life* as a comprehensive approach that includes objectives in the traditional disciplines of art production, art history, art criticism, and aesthetics, but also incorporates visual culture studies, modern technology, and creative self-expression. The various components of *Art for Life* are rarely addressed as individual disciplines introduced separately; a cross-disciplinary approach is more appropriate as each discipline is just as likely to offer authentic contributions to the real-life themes explored in instruction.

While *Art for Life* is presented as model of art education, and visual art is at its heart, its interdisciplinary nature allows for the integration of other subject areas in exploring chosen themes of interest. Real life experiences, unlike traditional schooling, are not fragmented into distinct areas of subject area concentration (Dewey,

1916/1997) and the possibilities for integration of various subject areas into the *Art for Life* model was an approach that we were interested in exploring through our collaborative efforts as a fifth grade generalist working in tandem with an art educator.

Integrated Instruction

The connection of subject areas in a seamless interdisciplinary fashion is not new and the origins of the idea can be traced back to the early 19th century (Parsons, 2004). These ideas had blossomed by the early 20th century and the call for an integrated approach to education could be heard clearly in the work of Dewey (1916/1997) and other prominent progressive strands of education (Stankiewicz, 2001). In Efland's discussion of the history of art education (1990), he presents Winslow's book, *The Integrated School Art Program* (1939), as one of the first publications to concentrate primarily on the visual arts as an appropriate subject area to connect with other disciplines. Other notable efforts in integrated arts instruction during this era include the Owatonna Project initiated in 1931 (Efland, 1990) and the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education introduced by Loris Malaguzzi in the aftermath of World War II in Italy (Gardner, 2000; Hinckle, 1991).

While the roots of integrated arts instruction can be traced back to over 100 years ago, there has been no loss of interest in the topic during the 21st century. The National Art Education Association released two books on the subject of interdisciplinary art education during a two-year time span in 2005 and 2006 (Stokrocki, 2005; Taylor, Carpenter, Ballengee-Morris, & Sessions, 2006) and numerous other publications have appeared on the topic in the recent decade (Burnaford, Aprill, & Weiss, 2001; Daniel, Stuhr, & Ballengee-Morris, 2006; Goldberg, 2006; Parsons, 2004; Smilan & Miraglia, 2009).

Considering the sustained interest in this topic over a significant period of time, it is natural that a number of different versions of integrated arts instruction have developed over the years (Mishook & Kornhaber, 2006; Parsons, 2004). Eisner (2002) categorized these various integrated arts approaches into four distinct categories. The first of these approaches involves the use of visual art to help students understand a particular historical time period, such as using examples of photographs, music, clothing, and architecture to enhance student understanding of a specific era. The goal of a second approach is to assist students in making comparisons and contrasts between different types of visual and performing arts, such as recognizing how rhythm and repetition are both similar and different when used in music versus a painting. A third version of integrated arts involves creative problem solving where students are given an open-ended task, such as designing a playground, that naturally requires the use of multiple disciplines in order to solve the problem at hand.

A final approach utilizes a universal theme or big idea (Walker, 2001) of relevance to students' lives as the central focus for instruction, with the

incorporation of a variety of academic areas, both in the arts and other subjects, to enhance the unit through authentic and meaningful connections (Eisner, 2002). It is this last approach that seemed to have the best fit with the goals of *Art for Life* and best suited our goals in implementing an integrated co-taught *Art for Life* inspired lesson at the elementary level. As an art education professor and a supporter of arts instruction, it was also important to us that our integrated approach placed the visual arts in a co-equal role (Bresler, 1995) to the other subject areas involved in thematic instruction, rather than a subservient role.

The Instructional Unit

One of us (Monica) was working as a fifth grade teacher at a public elementary school in Georgia and the other (Jeff) was working as a visiting professor of art education at a nearby large state university when we began to plan the unit. We have been married for over 10 years and had worked together previously at another elementary school where Jeff was the art specialist. We found that the congruency in our educational philosophies, as well as our knowledge of each other's strengths and weaknesses in subject area familiarity, and ability to cooperate, collaborate, and compromise with each other offered us advantages in planning an instructional unit together. As a married couple, we also had the luxury of doing a great deal of instructional planning at our own home at our own leisure. Burnaford, Aprill, and Weiss (2001) offered a number of suggestions in

finding collaborative co-teaching partners interested in arts integration, and we will revisit some of these strategies in the conclusion of this article as we acknowledge that our own educational partnership is unique in nature.

Since the integrated *Art for Life* unit would take place in Monica's classroom, it is relevant to note that she had worked with the same basic core of students the year before, as she had volunteered to *loop* (Ball, Grant, & Johnson, 2006), or stay with her students, for a prescribed period of years in order to establish a continuity of caring (Noddings, 1996). The relationships between students and their teacher had been built upon from the previous year, and classroom routines and expectations had been established and practiced over consecutive years. Most of the students had met Jeff previously during his informal visits to the class for school functions, and nearly all were aware that he was an art education professor at the nearby university.

While the school was situated approximately six miles from the large university, its location was in a smaller rural incorporated municipality with a population of around 1,100. In terms of school demographics, approximately half of the students were African American, slightly less than 30% were Hispanic, approximately18% were White, and the remaining smaller percentages were comprised of multiracial groups, Asian Americans, and Native Americans (greatschools, 2007). During the year that we implemented our integrated unit, the school received Title

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One status from the federal government for its high percentage of economically disadvantaged students. The fifth grade class that we worked with had 28 students.

We brainstormed the broader framework for most of the instructional unit during the public school preplanning period in the summer of 2007. Believing in the *Art for Life* position that learning can be more meaningful when it is connected to real life themes of concern for students, our planning logically began with the selection of an appropriate instructional theme. We briefly considered the option of directly involving students in the selection of their own topic of thematic instruction when they returned to school in the fall, a strategy that we consider viable and is supported by others (Kasten & Lolli, 1998; Ostrow, 1995). However, we put this idea aside when we considered this approach would not allow for collaborative planning to begin until the fall semester was already underway when our professional schedules would were filled with other instructional and service responsibilities.

Instead we decided to trust our judgment as experienced educators, Monica's knowledge of her students' interests from the previous year, and suggestions in literature regarding the creation of teacher-directed instructional themes as an equally suitable option (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Coyne, 2000; Baskwill, 1988), and selected a relevant unit of instruction when the convenience of our summer schedule allowed more opportunities for focused planning. In this process, we considered local concerns, prominent national events in recent years, the role art could play in authentically exploring such themes, and how such issues might relate to the framework established by state educational standards (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Burnaford et al., 2001). In the end, we selected a theme entitled, *The Impact of Environmental Forces on our Lives.* We made our selection based on the concern over the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina just two years earlier, the drought and water restrictions facing the state of Georgia, and the connection to Georgia Performance Standards for earth science in fifth grade that related to the destructive forces of nature (Georgia Department of Education, 2008).

Among the key concepts of our unit was that natural disasters are real events that impact real lives in very real ways (not as glamorized in action-adventure disaster movies) and, as such, the resulting devastation to humankind should be a concern to all, even if the event is not directly local. Art and other subject areas can be used to explore how others have faced and depicted natural disasters, to personally reflect on such experiences, and to uncover understandings of the inner workings of environmental forces. Although we planned the unit as a team, we relied on each other's specific subject area knowledge, and on resources that we created and used in the past (Lancaster et al., 2001). By the end of the brainstorming sessions, we had a suitable framework for integrating the subject areas of visual art, science, and language arts into a nine-

The Natural Disasters Classroom Wall Map

agreed that Jeff would visit the fifth grade classroom as a guest co-instructor once a week to help facilitate art instruction.

While it was our intention to avoid obvious subject area delineation when introducing the instructional unit, such distinctions were useful in organizing the report of our experiences and have been used as part of the framework below. The details of the activities included within the unit are presented with interwoven entries from our own reflective journals that we both kept throughout the experience.

Introducing the Unit

The first day of the instructional unit started with a discussion of current events that involved natural disasters and included the projection of real life images from both a recent earthquake in Indonesia and a flood in central Sudan. Monica facilitated a whole group conversation where students shared personal experiences related to natural disasters or their own remembrances of such disasters in the news. Not surprisingly, Hurricane Katrina was a frequent topic of discussion while other students' comments had to be redirected toward disasters caused by environmental forces, rather than by humans or malfunctioning machines. The discussion led the class to develop a working definition for natural disasters and students agreed that they would keep journals of such catastrophic events detailed in the news and that they would chart new disasters on the classroom world map.

Integrating Science

For the first of several ongoing assignments involved in our instructional unit, Monica divided the class up into cooperative groups each consisting of four students. She randomly assigned each group a natural disaster (tornado, earthquake, hurricane, tsunami, flood, wild fire, or blizzard) to research with the ultimate goal of uncovering five designated key points about the disaster to share through an open-ended project presented to their classmates.

As a major component of the project, students detailed one significant historical occurrence of their designated disaster and reflected on the impact that it had for the people and communities of that time period. The manner in which students could share information about their disaster was open-ended, but several suggested methods included a variety of visual and performing art forms such as (a) informational skits, (b) poster presentations, (c) performed television commercials, (d) performed radio shows, or (e) group created newspapers, magazines, books, or comic books.

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Along with the presentation, each team also created and performed a visual simulation of the destructive forces of their designated natural disaster at work. As a collaborative group, each team drew a blueprint of how their simulation might be performed and were required to pretest their simulation in advance of the presentation date. If the pretest was unsuccessful, groups revised their blueprints and tried again until the results were satisfactory.

Integrating Language Arts

Students could choose between two different designated texts, or focus novels, to serve as the centerpiece for their language arts instruction. The use of two texts allowed Monica to differentiate her instruction (Tomlinson, 2001) by student readiness levels in reading, and also offered students an alternative book to explore based on their interests or as an extension activity if they completed all work related to their first choice. Many of the students chose *Earthquake at Dawn* (Gregory, 1992), a work of historical fiction based on the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. Notably to art educators, the book contains historic photographs of the quake taken by an emerging photographer of the era, Edith Irvine, and offers a partially fictionalized account of her firsthand experiences on that fateful day. Many other students chose a work of non-fiction, *Earthquake*, by Christopher Lampton (1991) as their focus novel instead.

Regardless of their book selection, students kept a literature log to reflect on their daily reading and also to respond to

Students worked collaboratively at a computer laptop station as they researched their assigned natural disaster in preparation for an informative group project to be presented to their classmates.

predetermined comprehension questions. Students also met periodically in small cooperative groups to discuss their readings and were given individualized tasks to perform prior to these meetings so that each student would have something unique to bring to the conversation. In brief, these tasks asked students to either (a) make connections between the text and outside events, (b) offer a summary of a recent reading, (c) illustrate a passage from the story and use the image as a catalyst for discussion, (d) identify new, unusual, or exciting words introduced in the text and discuss their meaning, or (e) select a dynamic passage from the book to use as a read-aloud opportunity and to spark further discussion about effective writing.

Integrating Visual Art

The unit was underway by the time Jeff made his first visit to the classroom as a visiting co-instructor and art specialist. The activities began with the projection of

a series of visual artwork onto the classroom whiteboard, with each image containing an artist's depiction of a particular type of natural disaster. Image by image, students identified the natural disasters in the art historical examples and we wrote their responses on posted chart paper as the activity progressed.

While many other images could have been displayed, we made our selections based on the portrayal of a variety of natural disasters and also as an attempt to select a variety of artists that were diverse in their gender and ethnicity. Our selections included the following: John Steuart Curry's *Tornado Over Kansas*, Katsushika Hokusai's *The Great Wave of Kanagawa*, Edith Irvine's *Brewery?* (earthquake), Charles Deas' *Praire Fire*, Winslow Homer's *The Gulf Stream* (water spout), and selections from Kara Walker's post-Hurricane Katrina installation, *After the Deluge*. After the students identified these disasters, we asked them to name other types not represented in the art historical images and we wrote these examples on the chart paper as well.

Having completed this extensive list, we asked the students to review the artwork again and search for other imagery, aside from the disasters, that was included in every single art historical example. After some investigation, several students commented that every image depicted at least one person within its composition. In response, we projected the images yet again and, for each image, asked the students to consider the emotions that the people in the artwork might be experiencing. On a separate sheet of posted chart paper, we recorded the emotions described by the students: fear, sadness, bravery, despair, thoughtfulness, and relief.

For each emotion listed, we countered with an adapted line of questioning recommended by Barrett (1997) and asked students to describe the visual evidence in the artwork that allowed them to interpret the feelings of the figures in each image. We paraphrased and charted the students' answers to this line of inquiry as well and generated a list of responses that noted

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the artists' depiction of facial expression, pose of figures, emotional use of color, and other setting-specific context clues to portray the intended feeling.

Near the conclusion of this session, we discussed how students could use the information gleaned from our analysis of the art historical images to create their own visual depictions of natural disasters. We provided students with a planning sheet that included a series of questions to help them focus on the parameters of an upcoming two-dimensional art project. These parameters included the following requirements: (a) each student's artwork will depict a natural disaster, (b) the artwork will include at least one human, (c) the student will consciously select the emotion(s) he or she wishes to portray in his or her figure(s), and (d) the student will consciously select and use the artistic technique(s) or method(s) that he or she feels is most appropriate to portray such emotion(s). The planning sheet also included several small boxes for students to use in creating thumbnail sketches in preparation for their larger final image. We also informed students that they would be given a small sample of two-dimensional media (pencils, markers, crayons, and watercolor paint) to chose from for their final project, and we asked them to consider which choice(s) might be best used to accomplish the goals stated above.

The passage below is excerpted from Jeff's reflective journal and illustrates his thoughts on the introductory art session with the fifth grade class.

Overall, I thought the introduction went extraordinarily well! The students were really enthusiastic and our discussion was quite lively. Unlike many other classes I've seen in different contexts, we certainly didn't have to pull any teeth to get students to talk about the unit. I could be wrong, but I think all the foundation that Monica put into introducing this theme and the research that the kids are doing played a big part in their involvement today. They were already knowledgeable and enthusiastic about natural disasters prior to my arrival, and I think this made them more invested in the project and more secure in answering questions.

Of course, I shouldn't overlook the greater possibility that the students' interest and enthusiasm is inherent in the theme itself. No matter how much you prepare students for a topic, it doesn't mean that they are going to care about it. I think the focus on themes that are relevant to students' lives and interests might be one of the most compelling aspects of the "Art for Life" model. Education, like art, should be about things that count in life.

The project. Throughout the instructional unit, students continued to work on their science simulations, explored their focus novels, and worked on their art projects, with special time reserved specifically for the latter activity during, but not limited to, Jeff's weekly visits

to the class. Students presented their planning sheets to us and discussed their intended choice of two-dimensional media before beginning work on larger sheets of paper for their final projects. Several students asked about the possibility of including more than one disaster in their image and justified their plan through information gathered during their ongoing research projects. It is not unusual for one disaster to lead to others, such as an earthquake that leads to tidal waves and

After preliminary planning, students worked on their natural disaster images in their fifth grade classroom and were given several choices of two-dimensional media to best portray intended emotions in their figures and the disaster itself.

fires, or a hurricane that produces tornados in its destructive path. Monica reflected on our subsequent decision to allow students to include more than one disaster in their artwork in her reflective journal.

> *It seemed like a good idea at the time, because it came about from some students' investigations and discoveries in other areas of our instructional unit. But our good intentions also sort of opened up Pandora's Box as there*

were then several other students who combined natural disasters in a sort of absurd fashion straight from your typical Hollywood disaster movie. This was the exact sort of unrealistic portrayal of these situations . . . divorced from the reality and tragedy of such events for real people . . . that we were hoping to avoid. Fortunately, it was only a handful of students who took such liberties with the parameters of the project. In hindsight, I think it was the right decision to allow the combination of disasters in certain instances, but we should have required students to justify the reasons for the combination and only allowed it on a case-by-case basis.

The students worked diligently on their artwork for several weeks and the results displayed a wide variety of natural disasters and ways to portray human emotions in the face of such disasters (see Figures 5 and 6). As the projects neared completion, Jeff took time in his journal to reflect on the students' art.

> *Overall the students worked really hard on their artwork and I'm very pleased with the results. In terms of the parameters and objectives that we set at the outset of the project, I think every student has met or will meet our goals. I think an overlooked and important aspect to instruction based on real life themes is that you don't have to be the "most talented" or technically precise artist in the class to have created a successful and meaningful*

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project. Take Cindy [a pseudonym], for instance . . . In terms of technical skill, she is not nearly as advanced as many of her peers. In the beginning of the project she was afraid to take the risk of moving beyond stick figures in order to show emotion in her people. She worked so hard in drawing a person as best as she could. But in the end, an open-ended thematic approach allowed her to address the assignment at her own readiness level and she was still able to meet all of the parameters of the project . . . she had a disaster, and a human figure that was clearly showing emotion through pose and facial expression . . . and Cindy managed to create a work of art that portrayed the reality of the situation more accurately than some of her peers that went off on fantastical tangents.

It's those tangents that always seem to create minor sticking points in thematically orientated art projects. There is always that sort of song-and-dance that we do with some students in almost negotiating (Hafeli, 2000) what imagery students prefer to draw and what imagery we as teachers see as appropriate for a designated theme [citation not included in original journal entry]. Some of the boys were absolutely focused on making low-rider trucks and cars as points of visual emphasis as families sped away from erupting volcanoes or as cars were tossed about in a tornado . . . and there was no convincing Willy [a pseudonym] not to include those cool

surfer dudes in his tsunami image. Those instances were in the minority, but as a teacher I always dwell on future improvements.

Writing about art. Once we identified a few students who were nearly finished with their project, we introduced the next stage of our unit that required students to craft a written story about their completed work of art. Monica introduced the activity and discussed how each work of art only represented a snapshot of a much larger story that was most likely missing a beginning and an ending. She provided a graphic organizer sheet to help students brainstorm the missing pieces to their stories in terms of the problems, actions, and results surrounding the imagery in their artwork. Students completed both the graphic organizer sheet and a rough draft of their narrative, while constantly referring to the details in their own art, before completing their final story. An excerpt from one of the completed stories is presented below.

It came out of nowhere. Boom!!! People ran screaming and people tried to get to safety. But the Brown family had no idea until Susan, their 4-year old daughter, told them that she heard some screaming. They looked out the door when Jacob, their younger son, said, "Run! Tornado!" "Where is a safe place?" asked Kim, the mother. "I know," said Jim, the father. "The basement!"
They ran to safety, so they

thought. Susan felt the storm get-
ting stronger! The family was scared!
They could still hear the loud shriek of
the townspeople.

Thankfully the storm went away
after awhile. The Brown family ran
out of the house and thought they
were going to get in their truck,
but the tornado took it, so they just
walked to town. Half of the town was
gone, and even the mayor was killed
by the dreadful tornado. The towns-
people were glad the storm was over,
but the Browns were very sad because
they loved the mayor like a brother...

Many of the students' stories, like the
one above, presented another opportunity
to consider whether or not our instruction-
al unit was effective in portraying natural
disasters as real events that impact the
lives of real people, and that these occur-
rences deserve our attention, compassion,
and action even when they take place in far
away locations. For Monica, one of these
culminating stories, in particular, gave her a
moment to reflect on the overall effective-
ness of our integrated approach to Art for
Life. In her journal she wrote:

Our integrated arts approach
to this unit seemed to help in a lot of
unexpected ways. Carl [a pseudonym],
for instance, has been a reluctant
writer since I had him in class last
year. I tried to get him to write about
anything that he might be interested
in, and nothing would work. When he
started his natural disaster drawing, he
really took his time with it and added

Fifth grade student's depiction of a
tornado disaster

lots of details. The drawing became
like an ongoing story to him. When he
finished his art project, he was excited
to write down the story that he had
been creating in his head and on paper
all along. He felt really proud of both
his artwork and his story! As a result
of that, he entered his story in a district
writing contest and won with his entry
from our unit. What a way to break
the old "writers block" that all of us
have experienced! He gained his self-
esteem and motivation as a writer and
has continued on that path ever since
our unit concluded.

Conclusions

Our goal for this project was to corrob-
oratively create and instruct an integrated
Art for Life inspired unit suitable for an
elementary classroom, and also to docu-
ment our efforts, successes, and failures
along the way. For the most part, we feel
as if the unit was successful in depicting *Art
for Life* as an educational model that can
be easily adapted and expanded to sustain

Broome & Broome/ *An Integrated Approach to Art for Life*

an integrated approach to thematic instruction. The emphasis on real life issues at the heart of *Art for Life* readily opens the model up for cross-curricular connections to other subject areas that have relevance to carefully selected themes. In the case of our unit and its focus on the impact of environmental forces on our lives, the theme lent itself to natural and unforced connections to the subject areas of science, language arts, and the visual arts. We felt as if the chosen theme was relevant and timely to our students' lives and, for the most part, sustained their interest and provided meaningful educational opportunities throughout the lesson. We hope the unit's activities allowed students to understand and feel compassion for those who have had their lives altered by natural disasters and also to gain some respect for the reality of such forces of nature.

While our efforts may have been successful in showing the interdisciplinary possibilities offered by *Art for Life,* our own execution of our approach still shows room for some improvement. There were moments in the unit where students slipped into creating fantastical depictions of natural disasters, falling short of our intentions for students to grasp the reality of such environmentally caused catastrophes. While few challenging lessons are rarely ever always successful, and students often tend to negotiate what they prefer to depict with the expectations of teachers' assignments (Hafeli, 2000), we still see where this shortcoming in our achieving our overall objectives could have been

Fifth grade student's depiction of a volcano disaster

avoided with both minor and major adjustments on our part.

On the smaller scale, we opened the door for the creation of some of these unrealistic portrayals of natural disasters by universally allowing all students to combine multiple environmental forces in their art, instead of only on a case-by-case basis. On the larger scale, and in retrospect, we both feel as if we missed a major opportunity to crystallize the big ideas behind our instructional unit by not including a community service component that allowed for meaningful outreach to survivors and victims of actual natural disasters.

In consideration of this oversight, and for those who might be interested in designing an integrated *Art for Life* unit, we highly suggest the allowance of significant

and ample time to plan such units in advance. We worked on creating our instructional unit throughout the summer months, yet there are still significant aspects that we would change to our overall unit design.

For those who wish to try our collaborative approach to co-teaching an integrated *Art for Life unit*, we suggest taking time to find interested colleagues with whom you share similar educational philosophies and with whom you work well. We acknowledge that, as a married couple who has worked together at the same school site in the past, we find instructional collaboration to be enjoyable and found it relatively easy to make instructional plans during our own personal time and within the comfort of our own home. If you are seeking an interdisciplinary instructional partner for the first time, Burnaford et al. (2001) provide examples of successful arts integration partnerships and offer suggestions for those interested in identifying colleagues and building teams for the purpose of creating such interdisciplinary units of inquiry. Among many rec-ommendations, it is suggested that potential partners spend significant time planning together and exploring compatibility in curricular goals, teaching styles, personalities, schedule, and overall flexible nature. Once suitable co-teaching partnerships have been identified and formed, sample planning forms are provided to assist in the development of thematic approaches to instruction. Most importantly, the authors suggest that "all you need is one other person who shares your vision" (p. 159) in order to establish a foundation that could lead to meaningful arts integration.

For elementary art educators who are interested in using such an integrated ap-proach on their own without a collaborator, we urge you to integrate other subjects on a much smaller scale than was described in this article. Time constraints for most elemen-tary art educators do not realistically allow for the full range of subject area integration depicted here without sacrificing valuable time devoted to their own curriculum. Finally, we remind classroom generalists who wish to try this integrated approach on their own, that the visual arts lie at the center of Art for Life and that the model would be incomplete without the incorporation of authentic visual arts education at the core of instruction.

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A Balancing Act:
Intelligence, Equity, and the Arts in Education

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Yet the inalienable and civil right for every child to learn- and to do so in a quality manner- stands in tension with whether these ideals can exist without access to a balanced education, including the arts.

Abstract

This article expands on social justice in education through the lens of equal access to the arts. Claims for an equitable and quality education stand in tension with whether such ideals can exist without access to a balanced education, including the arts. It sheds light on educational practices and policy decisions that, if transformed, hold power for cutting through pluralistic lines toward success for all students. The arts are essential partners in a quality and socially just education, for morally practical reasons involving learning capacity, equal access, and overall well-being. Although recognized as essential to a quality 21st century education, the arts remain on the margins of educational and academic policy, leading to the need for balanced thinking and learning approaches. In actuality, to not consider the implications of educational decisions affecting the rights of the future leaders of our society for a quality education, including the arts, is a social injustice (Bumgarner, 2007; Gadsden, 2009). Narrow definitions of intelligence as well as inequitable subsets of valued skills serve as witness to how power plays a role in establishing curricular content in schools. Evidence is given for the cognitive, social, and dispositional capacity-building role of the arts in learning.

Keywords: arts education, arts in learning, capacity, successful intelligence, equity, social justice, creativity, critical thinking, brain research, neuroscience, equal access, critical pedagogy, whole-brained

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Vanada/ated *A Balancing Act*

*It is often easier to become outraged by injustice half a world away
than oppression and discrimination half a block from home.*
- Carl T. Rowan

A recent visit to the *Brown v. Board of Education* national historic site in Topeka, Kansas served as a stark reminder of the 50 years that have passed since this U.S. Supreme Court landmark case. The halls of the old Monroe School portray the excruciatingly slow progress of eradicating faulty societal norms and discrimination in this country. Equal access has not led to equal achievement levels for all students, however, especially for students of color. Ongoing rhetoric such as that promulgated by national policy statements (U.S. Department of Education, 2009a), have not led to realizations that all can learn and that a college education will assure the American Dream.

Cycles of poverty in the U.S. indiscriminately affect the achievement and potential of our young, with over 40 percent of minorities living in poverty in the U.S. compared to 14 percent of white children (Portes, 2007). Each day more than 7,000 students drop out, totaling about 1.3 million students each year (Ruppert, 2009). In 2007, only 58 percent of Hispanic, 55

percent of black and 51 percent of American Indian students completed high school (College Board Advocacy, 2008). These issues point to forms of inequities which negatively affect students' rights to a quality education.

Meanwhile, the arts in education have been cited in several national studies over the past decade as a major reason for students staying in school, improving truancy, and deterring delinquent behavior while also increasing overall academic performance (Center for Arts Education, 2009). A two-year study in New York City public schools released in 2009 reported that schools with the highest graduation rates correspondingly offered the most access to arts education, while those with lower graduation rates offered less access to arts classes and resources. Unequal access to the arts based on socioeconomic background, race, and ethnicity were also reported (Center for Arts Education, 2009).

In the discussion to follow, the arts are considered to be essential partners in a student's inalienable right to a quality education, for morally practical reasons involving learning capacity, improvement of general cognition, and overall well-being. Also purported is the need for more balanced pedagogical and curricular approaches in schools, without which an

equitable and sufficient education still lies outside our grasp.

Issues of Disparity in Curriculum

The U.S. Secretary of Education has promoted that a quality education for all is "a fight for social justice", an "economic imperative and a moral imperative... the civil rights issue of our generation" (U.S. Department of Education, 2009b, p. 6). W.E.B. DuBois commented centuries before, that "Of all the civil rights... the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental" (in U.S. Department of Education, 2009a). Yet the inalienable and civil right for every child to learn—and to do so in a quality manner—stands in tension with whether these ideals can exist without access to a balanced education, including the arts.

Intelligence has been narrowly defined by scores on tests that primarily measure memory-based and analytical skills, leaving out the full balance of cognitive abilities that students possess. By focusing solely on closing achievement gaps within a few subjects, education has "run the risk of substituting one form of inequality for another, ultimately denying our most vulnerable students the full liberal arts curriculum our most privileged youth receive as a matter of course" (von Zastrow, 2004, p. 11).

Education policy has also looked to the wrong subjects to foster the kinds of intelligence that our students need most. Past efforts to highlight science and math education have not made our students significantly better at thinking, caused higher test scores, or positioned our nation in a more competitive light. In 2006, U.S. students scored lowest on problem-solving in the International PISA test (Program in International Student Assessment); out of 40 countries U.S. ranked 35th in math and 31st in science (Darling-Hammond, 2008) indicating that a more-of-the-same, industrial-type education and increasing the number of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) graduates has not prepared our students for the balance of synthetic, creative, and culturally competent thinking needed for the 21st century. Compared to other high-performing countries, the U.S. has failed to foster a nation of inquiring minds with the higher order thinking and performance skills necessary to deep understanding (Darling-Hammond, 2008). These are capacities fostered through (but not exclusive to) the arts and humanities, yet school leaders and policy makers have failed to seriously consider their merits (Ferrero, 2007; Nelson, 2009; Ruppert, 2009).

Quality, 21st century art programs have the potential for producing "tenacious, team-oriented problem-solvers who are confident and able to think creatively" (The U.S. Dept of Education, 2009a, p. 1). The arts in education hold an essential key for educating 21st century problem-solvers and innovators (Ruppert, 2009; Shauck, 2009). Quality art programs teach students how to think and creatively solve complex problems, look at multiple viewpoints of an argument, and reflect on and revise their own views (Ferrero, 2007). If learning in the arts can deliver these

claims and prepare students with the kinds of expanded abilities and habits of mind needed for success in 21st century life, then education in and with the arts cannot be ignored.

Narrowing of Intelligence and Curriculum

Not only has a political and corporate agenda favored a narrow definition of what constitutes academic achievement and intelligence, equally the types of thinking that are valued fit into a small category (Eisner, 2002). The skill sets which are tested, funded, and esteemed are primarily analytical and memory-based skills, serving as a witness to how power plays a role in establishing curricular content in schools (Ferrero, 2007; Noddings, 1997, 2007). Delpit (2006) blamed the imbalance in content knowledge, including access to subjects known for building creative and critical thinking for all students, on policy-driven determinations for testing.

Increased emphasis on mandated testing has led to a growing bipartisan discontent with curriculum narrowing and desensitization toward a 21st century imperative for developing balanced intelligence (Gardner, 2007, Sternberg, Torff & Grigorenko, 1998). Chapman's research (2004) exposed that 82 percent of parents in public schools and 80 percent of the general public were concerned that an intense focus on more tested subjects had meant less time for art, music, history, and other subjects. Sternberg (2006) also stated that the "increasingly massive and far-reaching use of standardized tests has been one of the most effective, if uninten-tional, vehicles this country has created for suppressing creativity" (p. 47).

Despite the inclusion of the arts as one of the core academic subjects in national education goals (U. S. Department of Education, 2009c), the core has narrowed primarily to tested content areas; the arts being one of its inadvertent victims (Chapman, 2004). In 2004, the Academic Atrophy survey revealed that the arts, foreign language, and elementary social studies suffered drastic cutbacks because of high-stakes testing mandates, with the greatest erosion occurring in schools with high minority populations; 36 percent reported decreases in arts education (Chapman, 2004; von Zastrow, 2004).

School leaders often fail to recognize higher-level thinking in the arts and their impact on cognitive and affective growth, as well as the empowerment and success they provide to a broader diversity of students—not just the privileged or talented (Nelson, 2009). Continued inequalities in access to the arts for our most marginalized students also lead to more limited development of higher-order thinking skills as developed in those classes (Delpit, 2006).

Kozol (2005) claimed it is the shame of our nation that current high-stakes tests have narrowed the aims of education for the poor and minorities—those who may benefit most from a more balanced, liberal arts curriculum. The lack of equity in curriculum and content knowledge for minorities has led to "important questions of educational equity" (NASBE, 2003, p. 9). Delpit (2006) believes that it provides

tragic evidence of the existence of a culture of power.

Minority and low-income students have less access to arts instruction and are less likely to have highly qualified arts instructors (Ruppert, 2009). The arts are often cut back during school hours in classrooms with a high percentage of at-risk students to make room for more remedial classes, further perpetuating achievement gaps (Delpit, 2006; von Zastrow, 2004). These same students generally lack the resources to engage in the arts outside of school, creating a further opportunity gap (Ruppert, 2009). When denied the right to a well-rounded education including the arts, high-poverty students lose out on the important educational advantages realized by their more privileged counterparts (von Zastrow, 2004).

As a matter of social justice, we must be concerned when students are denied access to learning in and through the arts as a part of a balanced curriculum simply because of their socioeconomic status or their testing ability. Freedom and choice should not only be for those who can afford them (Apple, 1993). Empirical research surrounding these issues and the return investment of an education in and through the arts must be considered.

The Role of the Arts in Equitable Education

The arts have been found to influence the cognitive and affective growth of a broad diversity of students (Sternberg 2008). Howard Gardner (2007) asserted that the arts develop particular cognitive abilities that enable students to think in synthetic and symbolic ways, and to omit the arts from the curriculum would be shortchanging the mind. While some art education researchers report that arts-rich environments have little causal effect on academic achievement (Winner & Hetland, 2000), other cognitive scientists are finding new evidence linking the two (Posner, Rothbart, Sheese & Kieras, 2008).

Recent research findings in cognitive neuroscience support longstanding correlations between the arts and cognitive development and subsequent improved academic achievement, due in large part to connections between sustained and focused attention in the arts and improved overall thinking (Perkins, 2001; Posner et al. 2008). A three-year study by seven leading U.S. universities regarding "Learning, Arts, and the Brain" investigated whether the arts attracted smart people or whether arts training makes people smarter (Dana, 2008). Neuroimaging studies of students' anterior cingulated cortex (ACC) revealed that sustained attention in arts activities strengthens the brain's attention networks and leads to improved general cognitive capacity and transference (Gazzaniga, 2008; Posner et al. 2008). Another team in the study—Winner, Schlaug, and colleagues (in Posner et al. 2009)—found evidence of near transfer through improved motor and auditory skills of students who received music training. Previous research had found evidence of significant far transfer to improved overall IQ after a one-year music program.

Posner and his colleagues' work

(2008, 2009) in this area focused on executive attention networks: neural pathways in the brain dedicated to attention and control of one's emotions and thoughts. Training in the arts appears to improve cognition by strengthening these networks through the intense focus required during arts activities, driven also by motivation and related to self-regulation of cognition and emotion.

Arts training influences cognition, in part because learning an art form involves resolving a conflict or solving a problem (Posner, 2009). In his study arts students were engaged in conflict-related tasks that required choice among competing possible responses. Examples of conflict-related tasks in the arts are numerous, such as choosing the correct note to play in music or the most appropriate colors, media, or themes for the communication of a particular emotion or thought in the visual arts. This implies that the incorporation of choice, a level of autonomy, and self-direction are important in arts environments.

Brain research in the arts adds to former studies that investigated the impact of the arts on learning, which indicated that the arts reach marginalized students, enhance learning environments, and provide greater academic and personal success regardless of students' color or socioeconomic status (Fiske, 1999). Students who studied the arts, particularly those from low income situations, were found to score higher on standardized tests (i.e. SAT), and have better attendance rates in schools than their peers who did not have access to the arts (Fiske, 1999). Students involved in arts programs also show stronger self-efficacy and self-agency, dispositions which will equip them for success in life and work (Education Week, 2007; Gude, 2009; Shauck, 2009).

Despite these findings, the status of the arts status remains on the fringes at the policy level in budget and curricular priorities (Gadsden, 2008). A pervasive attitude persists—as evidenced in public opinion, education policy, distribution of funds, and subsequent cuts in arts programs in schools—that the arts do not constitute serious, academic study. In general, visual arts programs are not considered for their ability to increase students' capacities to learn, improve overall cognition, or better equip students for academic success.

Questioning these inequities brings us face to face with controversial issues of justice in the uniformity versus diversity debate. Is equality of instruction synonymous with equity of educational opportunity for all? Is the purpose of public schooling to create *a melting po*t or a *salad bowl* (Guild, 2001, p. 3)?

The Inequality of Equal Treatment

It is a moral imperative for education to recognize a multiplicity of human capacities and interests (Gardner, 1961; Noddings, 1997). In order to develop each person's highest learning capacity, considerations must be made for individual learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and personal interests, while not failing at necessary high standards regarding

what all students can learn and do (Delpit, 2006; Guild, 2001; Resnick, 1999). Equal consideration must be given for challenge to high-performing students as well as advancement of all students' analytical, creative, and practical powers. This is an education that truly promotes equity through diversity in the broadest sense. As Thomas Jefferson once said, "There is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequal people." Noddings (1997) added:

> Must we declare everyone equal in all things in order to cherish each child and nurture his growth? By trying so hard to pretend that all children are equal in all things, we destroy the very possibility of promoting their real, unique talents. (p. 27)

Research has shown that teaching to a balance of student's intelligences increases individual student performance (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2004), in large part because learners do not fit a single mold. A key problem for policy and practice is how to accommodate for differences while maintaining a deep concern for improving student achievement. Pat Guild (2001) provided some necessary clarification at this point:

> Attention to diversity does not mean 'anything goes.' Honoring diversity does not imply a lack of clear beliefs and strong values. There are indeed some absolutes in education. Every learner benefits from an outstanding teacher and an engaging learning experience... Every student should

have an opportunity to reach his or her individual potential. Every student should master specific basic skills. The challenge is to identify what should be the same in schools and what should be different. We need appropriate uniform standards but not standardization. (p. 1)

In order to make the "all can learn" slogan a reality, policy makers must be willing to make decisions from a "deeply-rooted desire to want to change schooling and society for the better" (Koschoreck, 2006, p. 10). In these issues, Rawls' theory of justice (1971) would suggest the need for a collective intent toward addressing inequities that hinder students from taking hold of their full capacity to learn. Critical questions must be asked, such as: How is curriculum narrowing, unfair testing, and inconsideration of personal and cultural learning differences creating social injustices? In what ways does inaccessibility to a balanced curriculum hinder students' full learning capacity?

Aims for 21st Century Education: Capacity and the Whole Child

Philosophies and research underlying the belief systems that all can learn and ideals that human potential should and can be cultivated, force additional questions as to the aim of 21st century education, what it means to be an educated citizen in today's world, and what constitutes intelligence. The current narrow characterizations of student development and success as based on mathematical and

analytical indicators alone (Gardner, 1999) are pressured to give way to more balanced definitions of intelligence. Academic achievement can no longer be defined by proficiency in producing a right answer (Gadsden, 2008).

An approach focused on individual potential and balance professes that perhaps our society does not need to make its children first in the world in mathematics and science. Some argue that to cultivate a more well-rounded and caring citizenry would come closer to a "morally defensible mission for schools in the 21st century" (Noddings, 1997, p. 27). In policy and practice, a broader conceptualization of accountability would allow for definitions of achievement and student success that go beyond academic standing to include students' social, emotional, and spiritual development (Claxton, 2007; Guild, 2001; Rendón, 2006). Policy priorities aligning with aims for education which view students as human capital alone must be transformed in order to realize the true potential and capacities for students' learning and success in life.

Centuries ago, Pestalozzi (1894) claimed that education systems were responsible for balancing the three major dimensions of human nature: body, mind, and heart toward the realization of one's individual potential. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD, 2007) also called for educating the whole child. ASCD's platform builds on cognitive science research that views students as whole human beings—body, mind, and spirit—with expandable and

various ways of demonstrating their knowledge (Gardner, 2007; Sternberg, 1997). Rather than narrowing the curriculum and testing only a few subjects, it is asserted that the achievement gap could be lessened through improved curricular equity and balance, including an education in the arts.

Instructional leaders have been challenged to publicly promote the arts for their contribution to the success of the whole child (Nelson (2009). Proactive support for the arts in practice and policy requires educational leaders to rethink the concept of how time is spent in schools and the true aims of education.

Aims for Balance in Education

While knowledge proficiency in reading and writing are needed for success in life, Sternberg and Grigorenko (2004) asserted that schools test for the wrong intelligences, and the ones which are tested do not matter most for success in life. Resnick (1999) believed that a "persistent belief in the importance of inherited aptitude" have hindered achievement for more students (Resnick, 1999, p. 38), as evidenced in agendas of research, policy, and practice. Research regarding the nature of intelligence and learning that acknowledges the social and emotional aspects of learning and understanding must be considered (Bransford et al. 2000).

Research indicates that individual student potential could be better realized with the provision of a balanced curriculum and pedagogies that addresses students' needs to think critically, cre-

atively, and in practical ways and with wisdom (Gardner, 2007; Sternberg et al. 2004). Balanced education environments have been shown to benefit a larger percentage of children, enabling them to learn better, perform better on tests, and thereby demonstrate their capabilities. Sternberg's research (2008) revealed that many students "actually have abilities that, under traditional systems of testing and instruction, remain hidden and ultimately go to waste" (p. 288).

In the search for a more meaningful and equitable education, even 50 years ago, art education was thought to "become the catalyst for change, in which the individual and his creative potentialities are placed above subject matter and in which the child's inner equilibrium may be considered as important as scientific achievements" (Lowenfeld, 1957, p. 11). Equitable access to a rigorous, well-rounded, curriculum that provides multiple ways for students to succeed is the right of every student. It is crucial for policymakers and educational leaders to reconsider the role of the arts in increased capacities to learn as well as current definitions of intelligent behavior. As Gadsden (2008) commented,

> To the degree that the questions are posed about the effects of the arts on student achievement, they may need to be reconceptualized and rewritten to ask what constitutes a well-educated student, a successful learning and teaching experience, successful schooling, or educational success." (p. 34)

Expanded Definitions of Intelligence

Old paradigms of intelligence continue to dictate current models of education. Individual, discriminate subjects learned in a linear fashion stand in obvious dichotomy to research indicating that learning is a complex, interdisciplinary process (Bransford et al., 2000). Cognitive science research, including neuroscience, continues to confirm that cognitive ability is expandable and integrative (Caine & Caine, 1997; Gardner, 2007; Gazzaniga, 2008; Perkins; 2001; Sternberg, 2008).

Intelligence and the capacity to learn are not fixed entities that fall along a bell curve as some have claimed in the name of racial prejudice (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). Rather, one's intelligence continually adapts to new information and expands as one learns and grows; it is shaped by a synthesis of one's experiences and new information (Gardner, 2007). Critical and creative thought work in tandem, possessing integrated and synergistic properties (Paul & Elder, 2006).

Sternberg (1997) defined intelligence as the critical, creative, and practical skills and dispositions required for achieving personal goals within one's sociocultural context by capitalizing on their strengths and compensating for, or correcting, their weaknesses. Abilities are not fixed; they can be adapted, shaped, or selected from various combinations of one's analytical, creative, and social/emotional skill sets. Sternberg's theory of successful intelligence (1997) says that it is not enough to memorize and analyze ideas; students also need creative abilities to generate good

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ideas, and the practical and positive social skills to persuade others of their value and follow them through with wisdom. Sternberg believes that those who are successfully intelligent use their "intelligence, creativity and knowledge in combination for a common good" (Sternberg, 2004, para. 7).

Cognitive science research identifies that intelligent thinking is accompanied by the inclination or disposition to use one's skills. Dispositions are the attitudes, motivations, and habits of mind that work together with cognitive ability to assure one's quality of thinking (Perkins & Ritchhart, 2004; Ritchhart, 2002). Belief systems also come into play. Aptitude is no longer considered equal to cognitive abilities alone; people's intellectual capacity and development also includes motivational and affective facets (Perkins & Ritchhart, 2004; Posner et al. 2008). Dai and Sternberg (2004) asserted that an education which does not take into account these personal factors is an incomplete education. Since study in the arts is strongly linked to motivation, affective development, as well as improved cognition, it can be projected that learning without the arts in an incomplete education as well (Posner et al. 2008).

Balance in the Arts

This paper espouses the need for a balanced view of art education and curriculum for the building of all students' learning capacities. The arts can no longer be known as only "right-brained"; they require whole-brained intelligence. As revealed through brain research and neuroimaging, right/left brain thinking should be replaced by the knowledge that all of the brain is activated, developed, and utilized in all arts processes—more than can be said for some sciences (Jensen, 2001).

Infusion of best practice research toward the development of balanced thinking and overall cognitive development in the arts is necessary (Darby & Catterall, 1994; Luftig, 2000). Today's art programs must cultivate balanced thinking (analytical, creative, and practical with wisdom) and deep cognitive engagement (Dai et al. 2004; Jensen, 2001; Perkins, 2001).

Craft, Gardner, and Claxton (2007) called for an education in the arts which enables students to creatively think for themselves and synthesize problem solving with creativity and quality craftsmanship, while not apart from wisdom. Inquiry-based approaches in art and design education have been found to enhancing a balance of students' thinking in areas of creative problem-solving, justifying choices with reasoning, and making connections, taking advantage of the arts' whole-brained capacities (Burnette, 2005; Burnette & Norman, 1997; Marshall, 2005). This shift in focus from product to thinking does not need to diminish the value of skill and craftsmanship, but rather provides deeper avenues for engagement and meaning.

Critical Pedagogy in Art Education

In the pursuit of a equitable and balanced education, perhaps one of the strongest assets inherent in the arts are

their potential for opening up possibilities for understanding other students' points of view and connections between individual lives and larger social issues (Gnezda, 2009). It is not enough, according to Gude (2007), to pass on historical or technical knowledge in the arts; art curricula must also include "a wide range of technical, theoretical, and cultural perspectives" toward the development of community and shared meaning (p. 14). Domain knowledge in visual arts is essential for high levels of critical and creative thinking (Bransford et al. 2000), but it should not stop there. Exploring alternative points of view and focusing more on inquiry and "authentic topics for artmaking" (Gnezda, 2009, p. 49) rather than the media and

> *... it is a moral imperative for student success in the 21st century to provide balanced and equitable learning environments with the arts at their core.*

methods, may encourage deeper learning.

For students marginalized by narrow definitions of intelligence, the arts can serve as a voice for social justice (Gadsden, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2006). In this immigrant nation, filled with rich histories, stories, and myths, the arts build critical skills as citizens of a participatory democracy (Gude, 2007). Student's individual cultures are elevated without promoting color blindness (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings,

2006; Lindsey, Robins & Terrell, 2003).

Delpit (2006) however, warned against shallow multicultural education experiences which can promote stereotypes and generalize cultures and backgrounds. Instead, art and design classrooms in which students critically question issues, social conditions, cultural attitudes, belief, and values offer opportunities for nurturing aesthetic abilities and invite personal and social awareness (Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002).

Critical pedagogies (Freire, 1973) call for teachers to be co-learners and co-inquirers toward the construction of knowledge and force shifts in teacher/student roles: students become co-investigators, seekers, and problem-solvers and teachers become facilitators and guides (Dewey, 1910; Bransford et al. 2000). Students learn to think for themselves and greater autonomy and individual choice leads to greater self-determination and more meaningful, personal, and permanent learning (Dewey, 1916; Resnick, 1999). Arts education has long been known for such relevant and active approaches to learning (Dewey, 1910; Eisner, 2002; Gardner, 2007; Lowenfeld, 1957).

Critical Cultures of Inquiry

Cultures of equity promote an engaged, democratic community of learners who do not "shy away from social issues or difficult questions" and make a commitment to listen with understanding and empathy (Perry, 2000, p. 182). Art education serves as an agent of social change as students discuss, analyze, create artworks,

and confront social issues with critical knowledge and a democratic point of view.

Twenty-first century students must be encouraged—not just allowed—to think critically about modern life issues in an open exchange of ideas and values and to "learn to love the questions" (Greene, 2001, p. 2). Nel Noddings (1997) asserted that an education that "stands the best chance of achieving a meaningful equality" is one that is organized around students' "broad talents and interests, augmented and filled out by serious inquiry into common human problems" (p. 29).

Inquiry-based, thinking approaches to study in the arts invite a critical theory perspective and synergistic, critical, creative, and practical ways of thinking (Walker, 2001). Student voice is honored rather than "silencing" (Fine & Weis, 2003). An education in the arts that incorporates cultural, ethnic, and inter-cultural inquiries allows students to develop a more critical lens in a world where only one correct solution to problems rarely exists.

Conclusion

This paper has reported on disturbing effects of educational practices and policy decisions involving unequal access in curriculum and narrow definitions of intelligence. A broader reform agenda is needed that values all students' balanced thinking skills—one that cuts across ethnic, cultural, or socioeconomic lines toward the greater realization of their success in life and learning.

It is proposed that a just and equitable education cannot exist apart from the infusion of more balanced teaching and learning environments that validate students' individual and unique abilities and dispositions (Sternberg, 2008). The arts in education are considered as key and equitable contributors to students' balanced and expanding capacities to learn, beyond the current narrowly tested subset of their overall potential. As an issue of social justice, static and passive views of intelligence are challenged to give way to flexible and expandable epistemologies that address one's whole being—mind, body, and spirit (Gadsden, 2008). At a deeper level, it requires that surface level reform efforts be replaced with transformed cultures of learning that value multiple and engaging pathways to student success, especially for those students marginalized by narrow definitions of intelligence.

A strong research base now indicates that a sufficient 21st century education cannot be provided apart from addressing students' synthetic, higher-order capacities in pedagogical practice and policy (Darling-Hammond, 2008; Gardner, 2007; Sternberg, 2008). More of the same in educational practice will not produce the kind of minds for the future that our children will need for success in life and work (Gardner, 2007). As a nation, closing the achievement gap is not success enough if our most disadvantaged students do not have access to an education that does not exclude the arts as a basic domain of human experience, inquiry, and literacy.

The arts are promoted for their ability to build critical cultures of thinking and to affirm students' cultural, ethnic, and inter-

cultural proficiencies (Nelson, 2009; Lindsey et al. 2006). The arts in learning continue to hold promising potential in this aim, requiring informed leaders who can reframe and align educational policy with practice toward sustainable goals. It is also projected that the arts' status in the education community (Luftig, 2000) may be bolstered through alignment with best practice research and purposeful development of students' critical, creative, and practical capacities as wise citizens in a democratic society (Dewey, 1916; Sternberg, 2008).

Not only do our children deserve a "radically new way of approaching learning" (Fullan, 2001, p. 269), it is a moral imperative for student success in the 21st century to provide balanced and equitable learning environments with the arts at their core. To do less, is a social injustice.

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Moving beyond the Stratification
of Mexican Identity through Art

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Abstract

The determination of societal worth among Mexicans in Mexico and the United States has traditionally been decided by color (e.g. skin tone, hair texture, eye color). Such social stratification negatively affects education and healthcare access and has been correlated to increased delinquency rates as well as to violent crime. These issues raise significant social justice concerns. Art in Mexican societies is used as a way to challenge as well as to instate concepts relating to identity and socially ascribed roles. Although issues of stratification still abound, this paper will present an overview of the use of art within Mexican societies as a method of identity-affirmation and identity-reconstruction. Examples will be provided as to the role of art in informing community members of social injustices, implementing visual literacy, and in re-constructing visual associations affiliated with identity. The potential of art education to increase social interaction, facilitate assimilation, and enhance cross-cultural understanding will also be mentioned.

Keywords: social justice, Mexican-American, stratification, identity, visual literacy, cultural resources, indigenous, art education, metaphor, mestizo.

All of society suffers as a result of extreme stratification, even those on "top."

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Art in Mexican societies is a method of addressing stratification through identity-affirmation and identity-reconstruction. This article examines Mexican art that affirms identity on both a national and individual level. Based on historical examples and references to Aztec pre/ post-colonial-era work, NeoMexicanismo, Post NeoMexicanismo, and Cholo Art, implicatons for artists and art educators working in this environment, art should be included as an important aspect of the curriculum when they serve a high percentage of contemporary Mexican-American youth.

The basis of this perspective rests upon research illustrating ways that art is employed by disadvantaged members of society as well as how art corresponds with cultural and social interaction. Art is an essential aspect in the daily life of many stratified populations and is a substitute for the more intellectualized verbal expressions used by privileged classes (Farkas & Beron, 2004). Stratification is correlated with levels of vocabulary comprehension and usage; whereas, those of lower socioeconomic classes show more limited verbal ability (Farkas & Beron, 2004). Since culture is transmitted through social interaction (Jameson, 2006), when verbal interaction is limited, art serves a distinct role in transmitting cultural identity (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005).

Images are rich with concepts not easily reduced to words (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Arnheim, 2004). Cumulatively, art images are said to embody the core aspects of a culture (Prosser, 1998), and if viewed and evaluated individually, images are provide specific information about human existence (Prosser, 1998). Art images culturally interpret rather than reflect the objects which are being represented (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). Circumstances and relationships in an environment are elucidated by artists and presented in a personalized and reconstructed reality; objects depicted in art take on an identity unique to both the culture and the artist (Davies, 2008; Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005).

Social Stratification

The word stratification pertains to a layering effect of sediment occurring in nature. Stratification also has a sociological connotation and refers to the hierarchical positioning of classes of individuals based on socioeconomic factors; the lower the socioeconomic level, the greater the likelihood that the individual will be a social outcast (Verdugo, 2009). Stratification causes serious impediments as it influences an individual's eligibility for social rewards such as education and healthcare (Verdugo, 2009). Interestingly, research

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indicates that in locations characterized by a juxtaposition of culture and genetic composition, such as borderlands (e.g. United States and Mexico), cultural identity and monetary wealth are continually negotiated and there is a struggle to maintain social powers (Kofoed, 2009). Although stratification is not a new phenomenon and can be predicted based upon factors such as cultural juxtaposition and socioeconomic polarization, it does inhibit a society.

Mexicans, both within the United States as immigrants and within their country of origin, have experienced a system of stratification in which many fall short and are ineligible for social rewards (Massey, 2009). Color (e.g. skin tone, hair texture, eye color) denotes worth within Mexican society, and ironically, Mexico consists mostly of individuals with indigenous-derived, dark skin who are viewed as being below lighter-skinned Mexicans of European origin (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2008). Worth assignment based on genetic ancestry not only limits the likelihood of social unity but also allows elite minority whites to obtain positions of leadership in Mexican society, falsely representing the Mexican majority (Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2008). Due to stratification, Mexican identity is marked by the experience of being an oppressed majority.

Negative Effects

Stratification perpetuates inequality and injustice and creates a vulnerable population (Grodsky, Warren & Felts, 2008). By negatively affecting education and healthcare access, stratification stimulates factors which increase crime rates (Farkas

& Beron, 2004; Hackman & Farah, 2009). All of society suffers as a result of extreme stratification, even those on *top.*

Symbolic interactionist theorists have emphasized the role that identity and self-concept play in behavior, and definitions of self have been found to be a predictor of crime (Blumer, 1969; Brownfield & Thompson, 2005). This is because self-concept is heavily influenced by factors such as social interaction (Bernburg, Krohn & Rivera, 2006). Social rejection causes an impaired self-concept and leads to internal questioning such as, "Who am I?" An example of this is: "Who am I? Mofo, I'm a gangsta." Poor self-concept inevitably affect behavior and interactions (Bernburg et al. 2006). Social problems, peer group rejection, and low socioeconomic status (all of which coincide with stratification) have been found to correlate with increased rates of delinquent behavior and violence (Shaffer & Steiner, 2006).

Individuals exhibiting delinquent behavior and violence are excluded from enjoying social rewards, creating a cycle of socially deviant behavior and the experience of social rejection (Rebellon, 2006). Recidivism studies reveal that individuals incarcerated once in their lifetime are more likely to be incarcerated multiple times (Bernburg et al. 2006). In the United States Hispanic re-incarceration levels are higher than that of inmates of other ethnicities (McGovern, Demuth & Jacoby, 2009). A growing body of research suggests that Hispanic defendants are perceived as a greater threat and are "blameworthy." As a result, US residing Hispanic

defendants experience harsher penal outcomes (McGovern et al. 2009).

Important to consider is how social stigma affects stratified members. Recent literature suggests that pain resulting from physical harm and pain that results from social rejection affect neural circuitry and computational processes in the same way (Eisenberger & Lieberman, 2004). The brain interprets both experiences similarly. Being socially rejected and being considered an out-group member triggers a neural alarm system similar to that of being punched or physically assaulted. Many individuals experiencing such neurological responses go into a fight or flight response. Humans may be wired to react vehemently to rejection. Cardiovascular system response intensifies, breathing rate increases, and heart rate quickens in a response similar to a threat state (Eisenberger & Lieberman, 2004). Individuals responding to environmental cues while in a threat state tend to make decisions impulsively, and the behavior that results may be interpreted as deviant and worthy of imprisonment (Rebellon, 2006).

Effect of Stratification among Latinos

Mexicans have a long history of experiencing varying forms of social stratification, and of being labeled an out-group (Massey, 2009). Within the United States, Latino men are nearly four times more likely than white men to be imprisoned for delinquency-related infractions (McGovern et al. 2009). On average, Latinos have lower levels of formal education and lower literacy rates than individuals from other ethnic groups (Verdugo, 2009). Addition-

ally, social and economic factors often limit the likelihood of social acceptance of native Mexicans by members of less stratified groups; one third of US Latino adults speaks English poorly or not at all (Pew Hispanic Center, 2005; Grodsky et al. 2008; Verdugo, 2009). Additionally, millions of people from Mexico still speak the original native languages (e.g. Mixtec, Tzotzil, Zapotec, Maya, Triqui, and Nahuatl) rather than Spanish. Thus it is not guaranteed that Mexicans in the US and/or Mexico will have access to services delivered in Spanish at social service agencies and in the public schools (Lockhart, 2004).

There is a strong correlation between socioeconomic status and genetic heritage in Mexico (Farkas, & Beron, 2004; Hackman, & Farah, 2009). Today's Mexican population is composed primarily (60%) of "mestizos" or individuals of mixed-blood resulting from a combination of both indigenous and European Spanish ancestry (Loaeza, 2004). Today, native-born Mexicans are directly linked to an indigenous history. However, many Mexicans would rather forget this or deny it all together instead referring to themselves as *Hispanos* or Spanish Americans (Gonzales, 2006).

Racism in Mexico abounds as a result of Mexico's colonial past (Chorba, 2007; Loaeza, 2004). People of Indian descent (30% of Mexico's total population) often bear the brunt of racism and often live in poverty, while lighter-skinned, Spanish-descendent Mexicans (9% of Mexico's total population) live a more comfortable lifestyle in the higher socioeconomic classes in Mexico (Chorba, 2007; Loaeza, 2004).

Art in Mexican Societies

Whether poor or rich, privileged or underprivileged, all societies have strong artistic aspects in their culture. Art serves a distinct social role (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). Although issues of stratification related to Mexican identity have not been eliminated by the arts, for Mexican societies, art has served and continues to serve the role of ameliorating some of the negative effects of stratification (Chorba, 2007). Art within Mexican societies, both in the US and in Mexico, is used as a way to overturn previous social systems and to promote an establishment of a new identity (Craig & Paraiso, 2009; Reyes, 2006; Alba & Islam, 2009). In some contexts, art has transferred cultural knowledge between stratified groups heightening the degree of understanding and socialization (Kofoed, 2009; Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005).

Indigenous Artwork

Since the times of the Aztec and Mayan empires in Mexico, art has been used as a means to elevate members of society as well as to denote power and hierarchy (Sanchez, 2005). Supernatural themes and ritualized roles differentiated rulers from commoners (Sanchez, 2005). Pre-Colonial artwork played a decisive role in the success of the Spanish conquest of Mexico as linguistic, ethnic, and social barriers limited verbal interactions between the conquerors and the conquered (Gruzinski, 1995). Through artwork, imagery, and symbolic ritual, indigenous nobles became cultural brokers between the indigenous and the Spaniards during the conquest (Carruthers, 2001).

In the colonial period in Mexico, visual art was used to negotiate new bilateral relationships and identities (Franquiz, & Brochin-Ceballos, 2006; Kofoed, 2009; Gruzinski, 1995). The Pre-Colonial designs and techniques used by the artisan class native to Mexico were linked to pre-Hispanic religious practices and were contrary to Christian mores (Peterson, 1992). Consequently, native artisans were persecuted until new crafts and techniques were introduced to Mexico from Europe and taught to the indigenous and mestizo people (Carruthers, 2001). Natives learned about Spanish cultural while integrating new techniques and led to cultural pacifism as polarization decreased and the members of the indigenous population began to mix with the Spaniards culturally (Gruzinski, 1995). For several hundred years, Mexican fine arts embodied imitations of European traditions (Carruthers, 2001). As a result, art served as a means of propagating knowledge of the Spanish culture and hierarchy (Gruzinski, 1995).

Role of Public Art

Since the early 1990's, the concept of *Mexicanness* has being debated among Mexican artists. According to Chorba (2007), Mexicans illustrate what it means to be Mexican using metaphors related to the cultural phenomenon of blending, which first began in the 16th Century during the colonial period. In Mexican society, individuals have communicated with one another using art as a means to visually code complex social concepts in elaborate metaphors. Jose Clemente Orozco's five fresco murals of 1931-1932 at New York's

New School for Social Research are a great example of this. In his work, Orozco glorifies those bringing reform to the indigenous and mixed peasants of his state (Goldman, 1995).

Another example of this can be noted in the work of Yolanda López (1978) who explored and sifted through native imagery in order to present the concept of *Mexican* in a rejuvenated and modern way. Lopez addressed the widespread sentiment that Mexicans had been stripped of their history, language, identity and pride and she worked towards reestablishing a connection to Mexico's ancestry in order to make sense of current political and social struggles. *Portrait of the Artist as the Virgin of Guadalupe* (1978), the work is full of indigenous colonial-era symbology while powerfully challenging oppressive roles encountered by Mexican immigrants in the US and Mexico (Sorell & Keller, 2004).

Among Mexicans

In Mexico art is employed as a way to fulfill social functions publicly. Art images have been used as a means of rebuilding identity and addressing the development of a new cultural phenomenon as a result of colonization. Art images are used as a means to portray shared community traits, to promote a sense of belonging, and to reconstruct the metaphor of mestizaje or mixed-bloodedness in an attempt to unify the nation (Chorba, 2007). Otherness and racial inequality have been and still are among the most widespread depictions of Mexican culture (Craig, & Paraiso, 2009; Franquiz, & Brochin-Ceballos, 2006; Kofoed, 2009). Art is used to create images


*Portrait of the Artist
as the
Virgin of Guadalupe* (1978)

of a cohesive people with a shared identity fitting for a collectivistic culture (Chorba, 2007).

The reason behind why Mexico's public art centers around the idea of *Mexicanness* or *Mexicanidad* is linked to its history (Craig & Paraiso, 2009; Franquiz, & Brochin-Ceballos, 2006; Kofoed, 2009). The concept of what is Mexican is often confused by the fact that people in power do not have physically traits similar to or behave similar to the vast majority of Mexicans. In the 1990s, the Mexican government made overt attempts to officially address issues of stratification as a result of the country's controversial and contrasting ethnic and cultural make-up (Chorba,
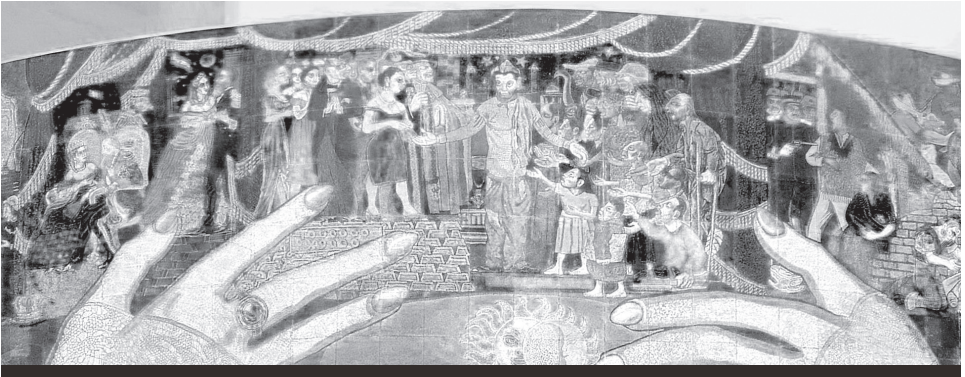
Mural del Teatro de los Insurgentes (1951) by Diego Rivera

2007). Nationalism was at an all-time low (Craig & Paraiso, 2009) and many people were not proud to be Mexican because they felt rejected for truly being Mexican. Even the word Mexican is rooted in the language of the Aztec people, Nahuatl (Aguilar-Moreno, 2006). However, those in leadership positions in Mexico often do not share the knowledge of Aztec ancestry with the Mexican majority (Bonilla-Silva, & Dietrich, 2008).

During the 1990s, government representatives of Mexico supported the notion of Neoculturation, or the creation of a new culture based on the fact that most Mexicans were of mixed race (Chorba, 2007). Neoculturation coincided with the artistic movement known as Neo-mexicanismo. This genre of artists wanted to rebuild the idea of Mexicanness by reformulating interpretations of Mexican history and social identity (Ohio Arts Council, 2009). The movement attempted to define the essence of Mexicanness through the use of native, religious and historical symbols in ways that

reflected the ideals and values of the majority of Mexicans (Ohio Arts Council, 2009).

Identity Reaffirmation

Using art to redefine the idea of Mexicanness through public reinterpretation can be noted in the work of the Neo-Mexicansimo artist, Diego Rivera. In one of his most famous murals he depicts the *Pelado* of Mexico (Goldstein, Le Blanc, Quiñones, Zinsli, DeRosa, 2009). Pelado literally means having been peeled or stripped as in being stripped of rights or dignity. This word was used in reference to the majority of Mexicans. In the 1950's, during the Mexican Revolution, Mestizos and indigenous Mexicans (nearly 90% of the population), were considered, the Pelado (Martinez, 1960). They did not hold any political or economic power and they were impoverished.

Rivera's Mural del Teatro de los Insurgentes (1951) in Mexico City, focused on tensions surrounding the conceptualization of Mexican identity. The Pelado was depicted in a state of Christ-like divinity, physically placed in a self-sacrificing position between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie (Goldstein et al. 2009). The

mural portrayed a renewed interpretation of Mexicanness and illustrated a revolutionized role in society for Pelados. The mural portrayed the Pelados as the heart and soul of Mexico rather than a shameful inferior breed (Chorba, 2007; Goldstein et al. 2009).

This was not the only mural of its type. During the Mexican Revolution, the sense of self, place, and community among the majority of Mexicans (e.g. mestizos and indigenous) was greatly influenced by artistic depictions. Public murals communicated and promoted the revolutionary ideals that served to benefit the majority denigrated segment of Mexican society. Such ideals included public education for all, a concept that was new at the time (Folgarait, 1998). Through public art, the Pelados were elevated to a state of being worthy of education, healthcare, adequate income, and respect in which they were equal to those around them. Through art, the community draped itself in colorful, motivational symbolism for the well-being of the stratified majority (Goldstein et al. 2009).

Current Use of Art

The use of murals as a public means to proclaim equality and to promote communication about Mexicanness spread to the United States as immigration increased. Art is being used as a tool to bring about change in response to imposed otherness and racial inequality (Reyes, 2006). Research is documenting identity shifts among the Mexican-American population that parallel the European and indigenous blending that occurred in Mexico (Alba & Islam, 2009). Latino murals addressing this

can be viewed in urban areas across the United States and have appeared on walls, street signs, buildings, and even on cars throughout the US. This Mexican-American public art is commonly referred to as Cholo art (Reyes, 2006). Cholo is a term that has been applied to individuals of mixed-blood ancestry, and is rooted in a Nahuatl term similar to the word, *mutt* (Vigil, 1988). This term was used for indigenous Mexicans in a derogatory manner by Spaniards. Today this term is used by Mexican-American youth in a reference similar to *brother* or *nigga* and denotes pride in their cultural heritage (Reyes, 2006).

The art of the Cholos permeates the areas in which they reside. Art is created on used Chevrolets and other *low-rider* cars. Such depictions are done in a style of elaborate, airbrushed murals, which personalize the vehicles and illustrate stories about culture, ethnicity, and social struggles (Bright, 1997; Craig & Paraiso, 2009). As a result, low-rider vehicles and low-riding are said to be symbols of the Mexican-American culture. These symbols are descended from ancient customs of gathering in the *el centro* (the center of town) to display clothing and other items of social status for courtship purposes; such customs are said to have influenced the beginning of cruising, which began in the post WWII era (Penland, 2003).

Post Neo-Mexicanismo

Rodriguez and Amorales (2009) wrote that Post Neo-Mexicanismo is the predominate artistic movement of the day and Mexicanness is still its central focus. However, the

style has changed to embrace technological advances and reflects the modernity of a global economy. In Post Neo-Mexicanismo art, the indigenous Mexican ancestry of the past is visually united with European influences through the use of new mediums and methods. Another aim of Post Neo-Mexicanismo art is to redefine acceptable Mexican artistic depictions in an effort to disinherit previous conceptualization of Mexicanness and to reinstate cultural pride (Rodrigues, & Amorales, 2009).

The most famous Post Neo-Mexicanismo artist is Carlos Amorales (Merrier, 2006). Amorales explores the concept of identity construction and his work has served as a reflection of Mexico's subcultures, social conditions, and has thematic qualities relating to the obstruction of identity (Rodrigues, & Amorales, 2009). In the recent (2008) exhibition, Esculptura Social (Social Sculpture), 20 Post Neo-Mexicanismo artists, including Amorales, addressed Mexican identity, community dynamics, and explored new conceptual approaches to art media. Among Amorales' most famous works is the 1995, Lucha Libre (Free Fight), which illustrated Mexico's well-known masked wrestling matches. He wanted to explore Mexican masculinity and demonstrate what a male needs to possess in order to be "righteous enough to be a super-hero, and cool enough to be a Mexican" (Merrier, 2006, p. 16).

Overcoming Stratification

In the US and in Mexico access to ideas and processes that would allow for a restructuring of social systems is largely dependent upon education. Among economically disadvantaged segments of the population, education levels are inferior and individuals often experience reading levels that are lower than that of other more privileged groups (Bonilla-Silva, & Dietrich, 2008). The majority of Mexicans are considered economically disadvantaged. Hispanic-Americans residing within the US have dramatically lower levels of formal education and lower English literacy rates than individuals from other ethnic groups (Pew Hispanic Center, 2005; Grodsky et al. 2008; Verdugo, 2009). Part of the reason education levels are lower is a result of language barriers which make access to education difficult.

Ideology through Visual Literacy

Visual literacy plays a role in the transference of information (Arnheim, 2004). Artistic expression is considered a central component of cultural identity (Jameson, 2006), and works of art often reflect social norms as well as distinct perceptions of the world (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Ameri, 2007; Arnheim, 2004). Art is listed as one of the principle elements involved in an internalization of cultural idiosyncrasies (Jameson, 2006). For these reasons, visual literacy serves the function of illuminating culture (Franquiz & Brochin-Ceballos, 2006; Pauwels, 2008).

Complex concepts can be conveyed through images. Before the 21st Century, the term literate referred to a person's ability to read and write, and the label literate separated the educated from the uneducated. Literacy required fluency in a native tongue. Now the concept of literacy

includes the ability to integrate sensory input, as well as the ability to categorically sort and interpret the content of multiple images simultaneously (Chauvin, 2003). Visual literacy is the process of learning from sensory information (Pauwels, 2008). A person who is visually literate compares new input with what is already stored in the brain (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Schunk, 2007). The art of Mexico provides a means for increasing visual literacy for its people.

Mexican-Americans and Art Education

For many Mexican-Americans, success in school is unlikely because they have not had the opportunity to become members of the social community (Reyes, 2006). What surprises many researchers is that Mexican-Americans are unlike any other immigrant group in that they preserve their original culture (Verdugo, 2009). Many do not integrate into mainstream society and many aspects of their homeland culture remain intact (Pew Hispanic Center, 2005). Lazear (2005) found two reasons for this: (1) many Mexicans live in highly concentrated and often mono-linguistic, Spanish speaking communities and (2) immigration policy provides a majority of visas for those Mexicans entering on the basis of family ties, rather than for employment.

Closed communities and lack of employment pursuits lead to segmented assimilation (Li, 2007). Segmented assimilation refers to a situation where social barriers (e.g. stratification, poor schools, and limited employment opportunities) can lead to downward mobility and increased stratification. Research demonstrates that Mexican-Americans are considered among the most vulnerable to downward assimilation (Li, 2007).

The creation of artwork has been correlated with increased social interaction, facilitated assimilation, and enhanced cross-cultural understanding.

Art education can assist in improving the academic performance of Mexican-Americans (Reyes, 2006; Craig & Paraiso, 2009; Matute-Bianchi, 1991; Cowan, 1999). Research indicates that the creation of artwork provides an opportunity for Mexican-American students to express identity and to escape negative social realities (Rubinstein-Avila, 2006). As one Mexican-American put it, "We are a fusion of races...our [art] can embrace all the characteristics inherent in our cultures," (Perez, 2005, p. 12). Mexican-Americans who maintain their identity as Mexicanos perform better academically than students who do not (Matute-Bianchi, 1991).

Aspects of Mexican-American and Cholo culture (e.g. low-rider vehicles, tattooed depictions of stylized crucifixes, bandanas worn with khaki pants and oversized white shirts) are associated with resistance to assimilation and even gang affiliation (Craig & Paraiso, 2009). Often Latino children have strong family ties and

religious and culturally imbued ways of life. Yet the media can portray these children poorly, influencing teachers and peer groups (Brownfield & Thompson, 2005). Such negative perceptions play an influential role in increased dropout rates among Latino youth (Wayman, 2002). Research confirms that school administrators and teachers who lack familiarity with Latino culture misinterpret Latino youth art as gang membership imagery, viewing Latino students' art as *gang-tagging*, violent, and inappropriate for the classroom (Reyes, 2006; Craig & Paraiso, 2009). Therefore, students are often prevented from using art as a means of literacy.

In two recent publications, *Diaspora and the Art of the Barrio* (Craig & Paraiso, 2009) and *Drawn into the Community: Re-considering the Artwork of Latino Adolescents* (Cowan, 1999), the use of art in the schools was found to enhance the academic performance of Mexican Americans. These authors established that when Mexican-American children were allowed to create art in the classroom, they communicated more readily with other children. Free artistic expression promotes the development of a unique sense of self, creating a non-threatening environment for communication in the classroom. Craig and Paraiso reported that teachers learned about the students' feelings of dislocation and concerns over cultural identity from their artwork. This led to better interactions and communication patters between student and teacher.

Conclusion

Mexicans, both in the US and in Mexico, have experienced oppression as a result of stratification. Since stratification negatively affects access to education, it is correlated with increased rates of delinquency. Art is used as a way to challenge the status quo and to promote cultural integration and identity-affirmation. Mexican images tell stories about culture, ethnicity and social struggles. Creation of artwork has been correlated with increased social interaction, facilitated assimilation, and enhanced cross-cultural understanding. Today, art and the use of art in education is crucial for the contemporary generation of Mexican-American youth. Through art-making, these students can explore and illustrate highly valued familial and cultural heritage. Because the role of art is vital for coping with personal and social issues, and can mitigate the negative effects of stratification, it is a moral imperative of schools districts to include art as an important aspect of the curriculum when they serve a high percentage of Mexican-American students.

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