TOWARDS A CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY IN ART EDUCATION

by

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B.S.Ed., Northern Illinois University, 2006

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

(Art Education)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)
August 2009

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Abstract

“The significance of relevant teachers to education lies in their belief that schools can be vehicles for social change, community building, and access to the mainstream; and that educators can take a leading role in promoting social justice”.
Beauboeuf-Lafontant (1999, p. 702)

The art classroom today is envisioned as a site for enabling social change by academics, pre-service teachers and a number of practicing teachers (Chalmers, 1996; Stuhr, 1994; Gude, 2007). As a subject in elementary and secondary schooling, art is one of the few areas that is excluded from provincial and federally mandated measures of accountability, such as standardized examinations. Theoretically, this allows an art teacher to mold his/her curriculum to address student need, enable social change and foster an atmosphere that allows for critical inquiry. Despite these perceived freedoms, many art programs are far from engendering ideas of equity (Staikidis, 2006). Art educators (Desai, 2002; Freedman, 2003) have argued that it is the teacher’s responsibility to make efforts for understanding between various (socio-cultural, economic, racial) groups in his/her classroom (Staikidis, 2006; Young, 2007).

Through a series of interviews and classroom observations, this research attempts to understand ways in which secondary art teachers arrive at a stance of culturally relevant teaching. In particular, this research explores ways in which three secondary art teachers with parallel educational philosophies, and dissimilar teaching environments enact a curriculum and pedagogy with a stance on cultural relevancy. Conse-
quently, factors contributing to culturally relevant and postcolonial pedagogies can be articulated and defined for future research.

This study explores relationships that teachers negotiate with self, students, knowledge and communities to arrive at a curriculum and pedagogy. The relationships, while being interwoven and at times inseparable, represent epistemological and ontological foundations that remain grounded in ideas of hybridity, fluidity and self-reflexivity.

Finally, this study opens a space for practitioners and researchers in the field of art education to consider the importance of inter/transdisciplinary research to move away from disciplinary limitations, and to develop modes of inquiry that are inclusive. In particular, this study aims to extend the postcolonial dialogue into art education.
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Acknowledgments

With enduring gratitude and respect, I thank my adviser, Dr. Rita Irwin, who has guided and supported my education. I owe particular thanks to committee member, Dr. Lisa Loutzenhiszer, for asking challenging questions and inspiring me to do this research. I thank Dr. Hartej Gill for serving on my thesis committee and in helping broaden my vision of education in the Canadian context, thereby enlarging the possibilities for this research study.

I would also like to recognize the willingness of Dr. Cynthia Nicol and Dr. Kit Grauer, to serve as committee members during the final month.

Special thanks are owed to the EDCP staff who have been an important part of my graduate education, in particular, Basia Zurek, for being present and providing answers to my endless questions.

I would like to acknowledge my fellow graduate students for engaging in conversations that moved this research forward and providing support throughout the process. In particular, a special thanks to Stephen Hay for editing and proofing this thesis, my roommates Lawrence Santiago, Shannon McCunne Dickerson, and Abram Dickerson, for constant feedback.
Chapter 1

Introduction

“Any given ‘culture’ is made up of things – ideas, values, objects, and practices – that are in constant flux” (Gresson, 2008, p. 71).

Embracing Gresson’s (2008) definition of culture, this thesis aims to explore secondary art teachers’ practice in relation to a stance on cultural relevancy through a decolonizing lens. Through inquiry into pedagogical practices and curricular choices, this thesis attempts to articulate pedagogical and curricular choices that empower students through an acknowledgement of lived experiences as knowledge. In light of claims of art’s ability to capture ideas, values and practices, and art’s ability to inform, inspire and influence communities of practice, this research explores a decolonizing framework for secondary art education through culturally relevant pedagogy and multiculturalism.

Figure 1.1 Altering a public space, West Side Secondary High School
Introduction

Within art, there lies a strong potential for both imagining and enacting change, for coming to terms with the hybrid nature of identity and for being able to claim (cultural) identities. The art education literature makes ample claims as to the transformative nature of art and thus art education is lauded as an ideal space for dealing with issues of identity, culture and enacting social justice (Chalmers, 1996; Stuhr, 1994).

However, despite art educators’ claims of a “direct relationship between exposure to content areas and subsequent inclusion in the K-12” (La Porte, Speirs & Young, 2007, p. 364), Kader (2005) contends that art educators often lack historical and contextual information needed to present lessons of meaningful [multi]cultural value. Kader (2005), thus maintains that art education is troubled by ineffective curriculum content and activities that attempt to present culturally diverse content only in order to satisfy state and provincial governments’ requirement for diversity. Through investigating SchoolArts magazine¹, Kader (2005) demonstrates ways in which cultural knowledges are transmitted vis-à-vis Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE), and that teachers’ reliance on instruction resources such as SchoolArts magazine determines curriculum content in art classes. Supporting Kader’s (2005) research, La Porte et al. (2008) report in Art Curriculum Influences: A National Survey that of art educators with an average five

¹ “In 2001, SchoolArts turned 100 years old. For over a century, Davis, the publishers, have been actively involved in providing ‘high quality instructional resources so that young people learn how to produce, read and interpret visual images’ (Katter, 2001, p. 1, in Kader, 2005, p. 66)”.
years of teaching experience, 38% claim being educated in DBAE and only a mere 5% perceived multiculturalism as a notable experience in their undergraduate education. K-12 art educators continue to teach a skills-based curriculum that relies on Western European art and methods (La Porte et al., 2008). Kader (2005) and La Porte et al.’s findings reflect practices in the United States, however, there are areas of overlap between the Canadian and the US art education practices. Later sections of this thesis will discuss art education practices specific to the Canadian context.

And while the operational curriculum has not changed significantly in the past decade—with issues of multiculturalism, social justice, world politics and non-western art being ranked the lowest by respondents of the national survey—student populations in North America have become increasingly diverse, especially in urban areas (Kader, 2005; La Porte et al., 2008). Although Kader (2005) and La Porte et al. (2008) write specific to the US context, Canadian scholars have also examined curricular and pedagogical concerns that result from diverse student populations and an increasingly homogenous teaching population. Solomon, Portelli, Daniel and Campbell concur that, “continued over-representation of white, female, middle class and heterosexual bodies within faculties clearly belies the increased minority representation in the schools” (2005, p. 149). Diversity in urban areas extends beyond racial and ethnic diversity into areas of hybridity that emerge due to prolonged interactions between/among culturally

2 La Porte et al. (2008), asked for participation from teachers with 0-7 years of teaching; “selection of this group was based on the assumption that they would be more likely educated in contemporary art education theory than their predecessors” (p. 359).

3 These items appear on the list of curricular contents studied during respondents’ undergraduate education as well as used in practice.
diverse groups. Diversity also includes less visible aspects, such as sexual orientation, religion and socio-economic backgrounds. Teaching a culturally diverse student population necessitates change, reflected not only in the curriculum and pedagogy but also in ideas embodied by the teacher. hooks (1994) writes:

The call for a recognition of cultural diversity, a rethinking of ways of knowing, a deconstruction of old epistemologies, and the concomitant demand that there be a transformation in our classrooms, in how we teach and what we teach, has been a necessary revolution—one that seeks to restore life to a corrupt and dying academy. (p. 30)

The class, hooks (1994) claims, is “the most radical space of possibility in the academy” (p. 12) and the potential of art education to enable change can be a reality when teachers are able to reflect their students’ culture⁴, values, ideas and beliefs in and through the curriculum and pedagogy.

Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) proposed a theoretical model that speaks to teaching that addresses student achievement, “but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate” (p.469). Situated in the critical paradigm, the theory of *culturally relevant pedagogy* relies on work by critical race theory and critical pedagogy. She writes that culturally relevant pedagogy is a “pedagogy of opposition (1992c) not unlike critical pedagogy but specifically committed to collective, not merely individual empowerment” (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 160).

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⁴ While scholars write to the importance of recognizing diversity in heterogeneous populations, it is equally important to note the importance of recognizing and honoring diversity in schools where student populations are more homogenous. Smith (1999) writes about the proliferating nature of globalization, and describes the nature of “cultural flows” that “are a part of the global landscape as a consequence of modern communications technologies, media, migration and international financial dealings” (p. 2).
Scholars in art education have yet to explicate the theoretical framework of culturally relevant pedagogy in relation to teaching and learning in art classrooms. Therefore, thoroughly examining the teaching practices of three exemplary secondary art teachers in a culturally diverse urban setting, this thesis attempts to fill gaps in the existing art education literature. This thesis uses the term ‘culturally relevant’ broadly, to encompass both the visible and the subsurface diversity in classrooms. bell hooks (1994) calls for greater, “practical discussion[s] of the ways classroom settings can be transformed so that the learning experience is inclusive” (hooks, 1994, p. 35). Through discussion and dialogue with teachers, the thesis aims to understand the motivations to teach in culturally relevant ways, the ways in which culturally relevant teaching practices are enacted in the classroom, and the critical role of the institutional context in teachers’ instructional practices.

Relation to Self

In Personal and Cultural Narratives as Inspiration, Staikidis (2006) uses the term “disengaged learning” (p. 118), to describe her experiences in secondary art classes and later in art school, articulating that her “personal and cultural history, gender, interests and passions were not reflected in the curricula” (p. 118), leading her to investigate indigenous epistemologies. In the same vein as Staikidis, a significant portion of my own art education throughout secondary and post secondary education can be illustrated as a series of Eurocentric, skills-based projects.

Before emigrating to the United States, I had lived in India, Nepal, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Living in and attending schools in these countries expanded my understanding of education, in particular arts education. While the curriculum in other
subject areas remained the same from one school to another, across countries, the art curriculum varied significantly. The visual arts classes, unlike other subject areas, often provided a learner-centered approach to teaching and learning. Students and teachers worked together to plan lessons, often including a range of region specific arts and crafts such as batik, block printing, papier-mâché, metals, in addition to the standard Eurocentric skill-based curricular activities\(^5\). The visual arts curriculum allowed for negotiations, competency in region-specific arts and a visual literacy that addressed student culture and mores. The high school curriculum I encountered in the United States provided a stark contrast to the visual arts education I had previously received. Entire projects revolved around developing particular skills such as perspective drawing, still life drawing, throwing perfectly balanced bowls, painting self portraits, and often simply copying and enlarging photographs or paintings. The university I attended, despite being a large research institution, offered an extension of my high school visual arts experience with few opportunities to fully control art production.

Upon completing a B.S.Ed degree, I took a teaching position as the 4\(^{th}\) grade dual language (English and Spanish) instructor in a school district where 70% of students came from a Latino background. This being my first insight into the inner-workings of a school, I observed the painful disconnect between academia and teacher practice. My students would often return from their visual art class with near-identical watercolors of Van Gogh’s Starry Starry Night, African masks, and color wheels. Conversations with

\(^5\) Eurocentric skill-based activities included life drawing, perspective drawing and replicating well-know paintings.
the two art teachers at the elementary school revealed several concerns: insufficient funds for art supplies and a lack of support from the administration. They spoke about the lack of mentoring and professional development opportunities for art teachers post-graduation, a lack of resources on lesson planning, and the inability to engage with academic lectures at yearly state and national conventions. The school that I taught at provided an example of what I now understand as reproduction in education. The school setting was a site of reproduction of the dominant culture, reflecting white, middle class values to its Latino students through curricula, teachers’ values (primarily Caucasian) and the suppression$^6$ of individual teacher autonomy.

Running parallel to my experience with formal education, were the Neighborhood Resource Centers (NRCs) in low-income housing projects in which I participated by starting an arts program. These NRC’s focused on after-school activities for K-8$^{th}$ grade students, homework help and a mentorship program for high school students. Through a stance on friendship, trust and respect, these centers created a positive space for students. I initially worked with students interested in art, but within weeks, I started working on large scale projects with the vast majority of students. At each of the three Neighborhood Resource Centers, the students and I, designed and painted a mural using a social activist stance toward mural making in Mexico$^7$ (McCaughan, 2002). These

$^6$ Teacher participants in the study described the suppression as being self-driven. They reflected, that even in situations where teachers do have autonomy, they feel powerless to make changes.

$^7$ The muralist created public art that emphasized the popular classes and their struggle for independence. The murals were key in representing Mexico as a mestizo nation, proud of its indigenous past and “disgusted with the slavish imitations of all things French that had characterized the Porfirio Diaz era” (McCaughan, 2002; 101).
projects drew significant support from the community and we received donations of paints, brushes, tarps and other mural painting supplies from local business and families. The process preceding the mural making included sketching excursions, hours of brainstorming and developing visual metaphors. Students debated on making the project accessible for the younger children and ways of making the few physically handicapped students feel included. In the months that we painted, I realized the potential of an art program that taught through and with the students. These experiences lay in stark contrast to the art program at the elementary school where I concurrently taught.\(^8\)

My experiences with art education across countries and cultures bear on my inquiry: to ask questions about the impact of various tensions on teacher thinking, and consequences for curricula; in particular the factors that enable and/or disallow culturally relevant teaching. Dialoguing with teachers who transgress the stereotypes and limitations placed on art teachers, serve as a model for teacher educators as well as practicing teachers. Therefore researching the factors that contribute to culturally relevant teaching, is significant given the effects of a largely homogenous teaching population and increasing heterogeneity in schools. In *The discourse of denial: how white teacher candidates construct race, racism and ‘white privilege’*, Solomon, Portelli, Daniel and Campbell (2005) discuss the similarity between Canadian and US contexts. Authors show similarities in white teachers’ construction of ‘whiteness’ and its connection to race and racism:

\(^8\) Note: Since I was a 4\(^{th}\) grade generalist teacher, in a dual-language program, I had little control over the arts education that my students were receiving. All elementary schools in the district had arts specialist who were responsible for delivering an arts curriculum.
The candidates’ formulation is left at the level of white people rather than moving to an understanding of systems of whiteness. This conflation of whiteness and white skin (Levine-Rasky, 2000a) makes it difficult for students to move beyond their feelings of anger and frustration to develop a clearer understanding of the way in which whiteness is also a constructed category, and one that comes with significant forms of capital that is seldom afforded to marginalized groups. (p.159)

Solomon et al. (2005) further,

Negating whiteness and its attendant capital is also a refusal to acknowledge how white people are implicated in relations of social domination and subordination and instances of economic exploitation. There is a continued investment in ensuring the continued invisibility of whiteness. (p. 159)

The study of teacher candidates across programs revealed ways in which white teachers remain uncritical of knowledge they impart to students and essentialize non-western voices/knowledges.

Building Upon Current Conversations in Art Education

Conversations by art educators suggest that the art classroom is a site for enabling change (Gude, 2007). These conversations take the form of articles published in scholarly journals such as Studies in Art Education and Visual Arts Research, presentations and discussions at the national convention sponsored by the National Art Education Association (NAEA) and more recently on social networking sites such as NING, Facebook and Artsonia. As a subject in K-12 education, both public and private, art is one of the few areas that is excluded from provincial and federally mandated measures of accountability, such as standardized examinations; theoretically, allowing an art teacher to mold the operational curriculum to address student need, empower students to enable social change and foster an atmosphere that allows for critical inquiry. However, despite these perceived freedoms, many art programs are far from engendering ideas of equity (Staikidis, 2006).
In *Personal and Cultural Narratives as Inspiration*, Staikidis (2006) explores the chasm between the tendencies of higher education to impart a Eurocentric skill-based curriculum that does not take into account “culturally diverse pedagogical practices” (p. 120), limiting the “development and potential of students to know their world in new ways” (p.120) and the need for a “truly multicultural education through immersion in cultures” (p. 119). Staikidis (2006) asserts “crossing cultures is critical for art educators” (p. 135). Although Staikidis does not use the term culturally relevant, she writes explicitly about the need of art curricula and pedagogical practices to become culturally relevant.

In an art classroom it is important that the teacher represent students needs, values and culture through the curriculum\(^9\). Art educators have argued that it is the teacher’s responsibility to make an efforts for understanding between various socio-cultural, economic, racial and ethnic groups in the classroom (Desai, 2002; Freedman, 2003; Staikidis, 2006; Young, 2007).

Scholars in Art Education propose various methods to create a truly multicultural classroom: 1) immersion, “in[to] cultures that they later seek to incorporate into curricula” (Staikidis, 2006, p. 119; see also Ballengee-Morris, 2002; Desai, 2000, 2002) and 2) a mentoring student-teacher relationship, whereby the teacher is able to cross cultural-borders with student input and collaboration (Garber, 1995; Staikidis, 2006). Kader (2005) and Wasson et al. (1990), on the other hand, offer pragmatic solutions for the

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\(^9\) In addition, Winner (2007) calls for art educators in helping students develop “studio habits of the mind” (p. 2), such as envisioning, critical thinking reflective self-evaluation, persistence and innovation. Winner (2007) writes that while arts instruction does not translate to higher test scores, well managed arts programs help students foster skills and mental abilities that core academic classes do not emphasize. The success of an art program relies not on the quality and quantity of materials, but pedagogically sound art teachers.
inclusion of culturally diverse art in the classroom, however, they can result in the presentation of essentialized views of multicultural art. Desai (2003) asserts the need for critical multiculturalism, placing multicultural art education into two streams - social reconstructivist (critical) multiculturalism through immersion in cultures and mainstream (essentialist) multicultural education.

Despite the variance in methods, art educators, echoing researchers in all domains of educational research, have identified the difficulties in changing teacher beliefs, attitudes and practices (La Porte et al., 2008). Hence, they have a responsibility to explore, through dialogues with practitioners, ways in which culturally relevant teaching becomes possible at the secondary level and tensions teachers’ negotiate to arrive at a stance of cultural relevancy. Through further dialogue we can also explore whether a lack of external resources (post-graduation mentoring, professional development, lesson planning resources, web based Open Education Resources) or internal beliefs\textsuperscript{10}, to be central in the presence/absence of culturally relevant teaching.

**Focus of Inquiry**

The primary purpose of this study is to explore how art teachers at the secondary level negotiate various tensions, in an attempt to profess the need for alternate pedagogies for teachers in a diverse, urban setting. Tensions, which teachers must negotiate, include the availability of resources, reallocation of teaching time, visible and hidden agenda of parents, administration and peers as well as battling intellectual he-

\textsuperscript{10} In *Cultural diversity is basically a foreign term to me: the challenges of diversity for pre-service teacher education* Thomas, Causey & Armento (1999) articulate that prior beliefs and knowledge act as “filters” through which pre-service teachers understand new information, often, making it difficult to change their beliefs about diversity and the need for cultural sensitivity.
gemony. At times, the personal ideology of the teacher collides with that of peers and administrators. Art educators have yet to extensively research the ways in which tensions are negotiated by art teachers while developing the curriculum and pedagogy for secondary art programs.

In exploring the role and scope of tensions, this study recognizes the value of investigating teachers' beliefs. Teachers' beliefs influence their perceptions and judgments, which, in turn, affect their behavior in the classroom (Parajes, 1992, p. 307); this study attempts to open spaces for secondary art teachers by dialoguing with and observing teachers. Nespor argues that;

....in spite of arguments that people's "beliefs" are important influences on the ways they conceptualize tasks and learn from experience . . . little attention has been accorded to the structure and functions of teachers' beliefs about their roles, their students, the subject matter areas they teach, and the schools they work in. (1987; in Pajares, 1992, p. 308)

Through conversations with teachers within the context of the schools they teach in, we can begin to explore the motivations that lead to (or disallow) culturally relevant teaching. While the lack of culturally relevant teaching in classrooms is a concern for academics (Ladson-Billing, 1995), the realities of teaching a highly heterogeneous student population presents innumerable concerns that dissocialized from concerns of academics, resulting in a significant gap in understanding between practitioners and academics (Thomas, Causey, Armento, 1999). Ladson-Billings (1995) acknowledges a need for collaboration between teachers and researchers to propose alternate models of peda-

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11 Chalmers writes about the backlash encountered from parents and administrators when they (Graveline and Chalmers) attempted to develop educational practices that challenged the status quo politics of "liberal" educational institutions and questioned “whether an educational movement, conceived in whiteness and led by white people of privilege can democratize itself” (Chalmers, 1996 p. 67).
gogy, and Hope (2004) calls for models of research, and inquiry that strengthen the field by building on the work of other professionals, instead of being an “attempt to correct failures caused by professionals” (p.99).

**Research Questions:**

1. What are the *tensions* that secondary art teachers negotiate when developing the curriculum and pedagogy?

2. How do secondary art teachers approach the art curriculum, their teaching and learning in relation to a framework of cultural relevancy?

3. In what ways does the educational context alter the embodiment and enactment of a framework of cultural relevancy?

**Challenges**

There are several issues that ensue during the course of a small-scale qualitative research study: 1) length of study 2) interaction with participants and negotiating boundaries, and 3) the social position of interviewer and subject. Although guarded against and not intentional, there is could be bias in observation and data interpretation.

Although Denscombe (2003/2007) recognizes the need for small-scale research projects in filling gaps in the existing literature, equipping ‘project researchers’ with guidance and “a vision of the key issues involved in social research” (p. 1); a small-scale research study does not allow the researcher time required to observe and build a rapport with the participants producing data that does not accurately represent the site and participants. Hammersley (1992) and Spradley (1979) among others, recognize the effects of interacting with people in their daily life and making connections that are personal. Developing a relationship with the research participants is built on “mutual disclo-
sure between the researched and the researcher” (Russell, 2005, p. 185) and not being able to spend an adequate amount of time at the research site can disallow the formation of personal connections, required to evoke responses. Criticisms can be made about the low number of teacher-participants in this study since this does not allow for a greater breadth and depth. While the proposed length of the study stated three months of weekly observations, the study was extended to five months due to connections I made with the participants. Having fewer participants made it possible for greater interaction and observation and this reduced the chances for inaccurate representation.

As an woman in my mid-twenties, I am also aware of my position; often being closer to the age of the students than that of teachers, while situating myself as a teacher and an artist. Burgess (1984) alludes to age as being a significant factor in educational research; I consider this a significant challenge while collecting data. The age and experience of my participants far exceeds mine as an artist, a teacher and a researcher. In addition to the disparity in ages, teacher participants in this study are Caucasian women from varying backgrounds and as such have a differing understanding of race relations, culture and identity than I do. Merriam (2001) locates the challenge between gaining access and maintaining a professional distance; “the more one is like the participants in terms of culture, gender, race, socio-economic class and so on, the more it is assumed that access will be granted, meanings shared, and validity of findings assured” (p. 406), yet the closer a researcher gets to the participants, both physically and emotional, the harder it gets to maintain a professional distance.
This is research that attempts to reconstruct insider/outsider status while “positionality, power, and knowledge construction allow[s] us to explore the dynamics of researching within or across one’s culture” (Merriam, 2001, p. 406). In this study, my position as a researcher of color studying culturally relevant pedagogy will influence the discussions and interactions with teachers who participate in my research. However, this social position will become a tool, and a lens for analyzing the data collected rather than a barrier. Bhabha (2004) recognizes that we come to an understanding of self through the other, and the dissimilarities between the social position will give way to a better understanding of ‘self’ for both the researcher and the participants.

Definitions

**Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Culturally relevant pedagogy has been described as an effective means of meeting the academic success and cultural competency of culturally diverse students (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Gay (2000) writes that culturally relevant pedagogy uses:

> The cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant to and effective [for students]…It teaches to and through strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming. (p. 29)

Although the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy is derived from the study of successful teachers of African American children, in the context of this study, the term culturally relevant will be used more broadly to reflect the needs of urban youth with varying cultural backgrounds in secondary art programs.
Multiculturalism - Canadian Context

Since this research takes place in British Columbia, Canada, it is important to note that multiculturalism in the Canadian context varies significantly from the United States. Bannerji (2000) writes:

> Whereas multiculturalism is a state initiated enterprise in Canada, with a legal and a governing apparatus consisting of legislation and official policies with appropriate administrative bureaus, in the U.S. that is not the case. (p. 538)

Ghosh (2004) further situates multiculturalism within the social-political context:

> The Multiculturalism Act of 1988\(^{12}\) call[ed] on the government to foster equality and access for all Canadians. Eight of its nine principles are concerned with equity issues. Only the last deals with culture. The change in the interpretation of multiculturalism from that of recognition of diversity to the promotion of full and equitable participation of Canadians of all origins is a crucial one. (p.552)

Provincial education ministries and school boards have reacted to this act by implementing race-relation and heritage language programs. Ghosh (2004) identifies the province of British Columbia as leading in school-multicultural reform, having, “historically, the longest record of diverse immigration in Canada” (p.555).

Multiculturalism in Education

In the educational setting, multicultural education aims to prepares all students and teachers to work actively towards an understanding of cultured views of the world, in an attempt to bridge gaps and structure equality. The multicultural education movement started in the 1970s (in the United States), focused on creating tolerance for Afri-

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\(^{12}\) According to the Alberta Online Encyclopedia, there was also an earlier federal legislation in the 1970s, during the Pierre Elliot Trudeau administration. In 1971, with considerable opposition to biculturalism, the Trudeau government retained the policy of bilingualism but also adopted a policy of multiculturalism.
American minorities and their cultures (Sleeter & Grant, 1987). The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia (2004) defines multiculturalism or cultural pluralism as:

A term describing the coexistence of many cultures in a locality, without any one culture dominating the region. By making the broadest range of human differences acceptable to the largest number of people, multiculturalism seeks to overcome racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination.

Cultural Pluralism

Brooks (2002) writes that the multicultural movement presumes that cultural pluralism and equal respect for people of varying backgrounds cannot be achieved, “if culture is considered to be merely a private affair” (p. xii). While the topic of multiculturalism and cultural pluralism remain highly contested, this research will use both interchangeably. The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia (2004) defines both terms using the same wording.

Culture

Understanding and redefining culture is an important part of this research. The focus on cultural relevance in art education begs a reexamining of how culture is understood and ways in which teachers address various cultures. In The Challenge of Cultural Heterogeneity to Education Development (LAOIII Conference preceding, 28 September), Webb (in collaboration with Julia Read, 2000) writes:

The term culture is, as we know, a contested concept, and needs explication. Culture is not genetically determined (“in one’s blood”), but is acquired knowledge, learned patterns of behavior, attitudes, values, expectations, rituals and rules, a sense of identity and of history, or to use a dictionary definition: it is “the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions and all other products of human work and thought characteristic of a community or population” (Reader’s Digest Universal Dictionary, 1988, p.382 in Webb & Read, 2000, p.1).
This broad definition of culture recognizes an understanding of culture that is hybrid; living in a diverse urban area forces a myriad of cultural artifacts to become overlaid on individuals, forcing an identity that is as diverse as the site of formation. These identities and cultures are constantly in flux. Culture therefore is a “large holistic sense of who one is, what one is, what one believes, and how one acts (Pang, 2001, p.4).”

**Diversity**

Diversity refers to cultural differences and this research will use the term diversity to refer to group differences (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997). Diversity manifests itself in both visible and invisible ways. Visible elements include racial, ethnic, gender and age differences, while invisible elements can include socio-economic, linguistic and religious differences.

**Community of Practice**

Wenger writes:

Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor: a tribe learning to survive, a band of artists seeking new forms of expression, a group of engineers working on similar problems, a clique of pupils defining their identity in the school, a network of surgeons exploring novel techniques, a gathering of first-time managers helping each other cope. In a nutshell: Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. (Wenger, 2007, Electronic Version)

For the purpose of this research, a community of practice is made up of teachers and other school personnel, whose purpose is to share knowledge and practices allowing participants to share their collective experiences in order to create an educational environment that fosters growth.
**Community of Learners**

Learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and... the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the socio-cultural practices of a community. "Legitimate peripheral participation" provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artefacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. A person’s intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a socio-cultural practice. This social process, includes, indeed it subsumes, the learning of knowledgeable skills. (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.29)

Developing a community of learners is important to the educational environment, and this research explores ways in which communities of learners have evolved. This community includes the students, teachers, parents, staff and other members of the school community. The community of learners creates an environment of reciprocity between the school and community, creating a unique learning environment reflective of the culture of the student body and the community.

**Timeline**

The study began with the acceptance of the research proposal in October 2008, followed by university ethics board approval in November, 2008 and the Vancouver School Board ethics approval in December 2008. Following ethics reviews, I worked with a Faculty member who provided recommendations and I contacted potential participants through a letter\(^\text{13}\) describing the study. Three teachers responded and became participants in the study. The fieldwork took place from January - June 2009 at two secondary schools in Vancouver, British Columbia.

\(^{13}\) Appendix II
Summary

This chapter introduced the research study and its purpose. In this first chapter, I have identified the need to engage in collaborative, reflexive research with secondary art teachers in order to understand the tensions that allow/disallow for the embodiment of culturally relevant teaching.

In the following chapters, I will do an in-depth analysis of the issues of culturally relevant pedagogy, multiculturalism and reproduction in higher education. Chapter Two will present a detailed review of the literature to ground the theoretical frameworks explicating in this study. While theories of culturally relevant teaching remain pivotal to this thesis and research, it is necessary to explore multiculturalism in art education, since multiculturalism serves as a tool for art teachers to become culturally relevant teachers. In Chapter Three, I will examine the research methodology used to explore the research questions. The following chapters, Chapter Four and Five will discuss the findings of the study and present ethnographic data analysis and discussion. The final chapter will present implications of this study and offer recommendations for future research.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Goldie (2007) writes that, “we can happily embrace the idea that what we take to be art can change across time and across cultures, whilst not embracing the idea that the concept of art changes across times and across cultures” (p. 373). While the standard of what encompasses art and artistic production has evolved significantly, the concept of art has remained the same. Visual arts\(^1\) continue to be a primarily discursive field\(^2\) with an ever-evolving role in the 21st century. Artists in the 21st century draw from various sources to produce art, including indigenous knowledges, social and political movements and personal experiences. Despite the noted use and importance of indigenous and non-western knowledge as a means to inspire production of art, these knowledges are stepped over and misrepresented in K-12 art classrooms in favor of European art knowledges (Desai, 2000).

The following review will discuss the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, multiculturalism in art education, and art and coloniality. Ladson-Billings’ (1994) work on expounding a framework of culturally relevant pedagogy, one “that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart

\(^{1}\) This speaks to contemporary art movements and materials used in art production. ‘Visual’ is not confined to two-dimensional objects.

\(^{2}\) Discursive nature of art arises due to the necessity and importance given to the process of production and the interpretation and availability of the art objects to the common public; this is most important in the postmodern understanding and production of art.
knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 18), serves as a guide for educators in other fields. Ladson-Billings (1995a), “suggest[s] that this kind of study must be replicated again and again” (p.163). In art education, a culturally relevant theory of teaching (and learning) allows for an emphasis on student culture to transcend the negative effects of popular culture to create a truly multicultural art classroom.

Art education theorists have yet to offer grounded theories of culturally relevant teaching in art. Over the past two decades, art educators have put forth varieties of multicultural art education. Delacuz (1996; in Blocker, 2004, p. 189) writes that, “[m]ulticulturalism, by definition, refuses to be just one thing”. However, multiculturalism in art education, in the last fifteen years, evolved to address the changing population in North America and serves as a vehicle for art educators to become culturally relevant pedagogues. The literature review also looks at the work of Canadian multicultural theorists; Ghosh (1996), Bannerji (2000), Irwin (1995, 1997, 1998), Chalmers (2002, 2007) and others to ground this research within the Canadian context. As discussed briefly in Chapter 1, the dissimilarity in the histories and politics driving Canadian multicultural policies and practices, from that in the United States, necessitates a detailed overview of the Canadian context. This overview will include ways in which Aboriginal groups and their practices have been excluded from multicultural policies, and the impact for art educators addressing aboriginal art and issues.

The final section of the review explores coloniality, as schools and art are implicated in the transfer of colonial ideologies. When discussing the influences on the development of culturally relevant pedagogues in secondary art programs, it becomes
necessary to recognize the effect of coloniality and to situate this research within a larger postcolonial framework. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) asserts that schools are implicated in imparting imperial views of culture through their connections to universities and other scholarly societies and, due to their reproductive nature, play an important role in the dissemination of the “domesticated versions of ‘universal’ knowledges, produced by - and at the center for - uncritical consumption” (p.65). Despite the lack of acknowledgement from art educators, the process of art making and the artist are entangled within the discourse and, consequently, the research. This era of discursive colonialism both destabilizes pre-existing notions of art and, at the same time, cements the traditional values\(^3\) of art in the society. While the concept\(^4\) of art, as discussed by Goldie (2007) has not changed, the standards shift constantly. He writes: “we can happily embrace the idea that what we take to be art can change across times and across cultures, whilst not embracing the idea that the concept of art changes across times and across cultures” (p. 373). Despite the flux, what is considered to be ‘art’ in many secondary school arts programs, depends largely on an Eurocentric model of art production. In programs where Western art is seen as superior to non-Western art, and non-Western

\(^3\) By traditional values, I mean the focus on production of art within constraints such as elements and principles of art, the emphasis on production and interpretation of works of art; emphasizing a Eurocentric skills based curriculum.

\(^4\) As an example, he writes: “consider the concept of the obscene. Some things that we do not consider obscene today — kinds of action or ways of dressing for example — would certainly have been considered obscene in the eighteenth century. But it does not follow that the concept of the obscene has changed just because the truth value of the judgment has changed. No, ‘obscene’ means what it has always meant, namely (roughly speaking) ‘that which is offensive to the accepted standard of decency or modesty’. In the eighteenth century, doing an act of some sort would have been obscene because it would have offended their standard of decency, and today doing an act of just the same sort would not be obscene because it would not offend our standard of decency. What has changed — indeed what has changed substantially and dramatically — is the standard and not the concept” (Goldie, 2007, p.374).
art and histories are essentialized, art education through schooling (K-12) is therefore largely responsible for the propagation of essentialized and often inauthentic versions of indigenous/non-western knowledges.

**Paradigm Shifts**

At the outset, it is important to acknowledge the paradigmatic shifts and inconsistencies in the literature being reviewed. The literature being reviewed falls largely into the critical (emancipatory) and deconstructivist paradigms. Lather and St. Pierre (2005) acknowledge that paradigm shifts occur “as reaction formations to the perceived inadequate explanatory power of existing paradigms” (Lather & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 164). The literature on culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural education falls within the earlier, critical paradigm. Often the authors reviewed in the following sections have evolved from a critical into a deconstructivist paradigm over the past two decades. The influence of authors working from a deconstructivist paradigm, in particular postcolonial and de-colonizing theories, is critical if educators are going to advance a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy or their multicultural art education into a deconstructivist paradigm.

Lather (2006) argues for paradigm proliferation as an ontological and historical claim, advocating education research in a way that allows researchers, “[to] develop an ability to locate themselves in the tensions that characterize fields of knowledge” (p.47). The literature review chapter in this thesis attempt to bring together literature from across paradigms in an attempt to locate the tensions experienced and negotiated by secondary art teachers.
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

In the past two decades, there have been numerous investigations to close the *achievement gap*, involving students from minority backgrounds. However, the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy as illustrated by Gloria Ladson-Billings’ continues to be the most inclusive model for addressing minority student achievement and therefore, remains pivotal to educational research. Ladson-Billings (1992) identifies the contributions of Freire (1973), Aronowitz and Giroux (1985), King (1987) and McLaren (1989) as being pivotal to her inquiry. These critical theorists, who assert the schools function in reproducing systemic inequalities, also suggest features of what successful teachers of minority and culturally diverse students must do to “emancipate, empower and transform both themselves and their students” (Ladson-Billings, 1992, p.109). The following section will cover the historical factors leading to the study, a detailed explanation on the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy and its ties with critical race theory, multiculturalism and critical pedagogy.

In *Culturally relevant teaching: The key to making multicultural education work*, Ladson-Billings (1992) presents historical factors gathered from a to the three year-long study conducted in Northern California, with exemplary teachers of African American students. A second study by Ramirez and Castañeda (1974) explained differences in school performance and learning styles between Latino and Caucasian students and showed that students from (racial, ethnic) minorities demonstrated a preference for rational styles while schools preferred and rewarded the analytic mode (Ladson-Billings, 1992). Later work by Hale-Benson (1986) and Shade (1982) applied the concept of ‘learning styles’ to the needs of low performing African American Students (in Ladson-

Ladson-Billings’ study came in the midst of academic conversations dedicated to improving minority student education, teacher education, equity and diversity. Her study challenged the notions about the “intersection of culture and teaching that rely solely on microanalytic perspective” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 465). Simply stated, culturally relevant pedagogy is a broad approach to reflexive, successful and democratic, teaching and learning practices, grounded in the ideological foundations of multicultural education (Banks, 1995).

Culturally relevant pedagogy, as conceived by Ladson-Billings (1992, 1994, 1995, 1995b) draws on cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference and learning styles of ethnically diverse students and is a pedagogy “that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 18). Ladson-Billings (in Grant, 1992) illustrates ways in which culturally relevant teaching empowers students so they are able to critically examine educational content and proc-
ess and question the role of education in creating a truly multicultural society. Ladson-Billings (1995a) defines culturally relevant teaching through three major criteria: “students must experience academic success”, “students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence”, and “students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order” (p.160).

Ladson-Billings (1994) identifies six tenets of culturally relevant teaching:

1. "Students whose educational, economic, social, political, and cultural futures are most tenuous are helped to become intellectual leaders in classrooms" (p. 117).
2. "Students are apprenticed in a learning community rather than taught in an isolated and unrelated way" (p. 117).
3. "Students' real-life experiences are legitimized as they become part of the 'official' curriculum" (p. 117).
4. "Teachers and students participate in a broad conception of literacy that incorporates both literature and oratory" (p. 117).
5. "Teachers and students engage in a collective struggle against the status quo" (p. 118).
6. "Teachers are cognizant of themselves as political beings" (p. 118).

Culturally relevant pedagogues see cultural competency and academic success as being intricately linked and encourage growth in both areas. This stance “requires teachers to help raise students’ awareness of prejudices and discrimination as well as their ability to react to and constructively cope with these negative social realities” (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Through helping students recognize, understand and critique social
inequities, teachers empower students rather than impart an uncritical acceptance of the values of dominant culture.

Education theorists have claimed that students of color often do not see their realities reflected in educational practices. In the United States, African American students often find a lack of positive reflections of minorities, and struggle with issues of self-esteem when confronted with positive images of White, dominant culture (see Ford & Dillard, 1996). Culturally relevant practices allow students from minority backgrounds to develop positive self image by allowing a re-envisioning of the world. Ladson-Billings works with teachers of successful African American students and revealed three themes relating to the link between pedagogical practices and student achievement:

1. *Conceptions of Self and others* - While the literature indicated that a teachers’ feeling of “low-status is exacerbated when teachers work with what they perceive to be low-status students” (p.478), the exemplary teachers believed that all their students were capable of academic success, saw their pedagogy as art, were active members of the community and saw teaching as giving back to the community. Other authors, Moll and Greenberg (1990) cite ways in which Latino teachers in a particular community integrated the vocations of students’ families into the ‘official’ curriculum; utilizing community resources, appreciating community members and empowering both students and their families.

2. *Social Relations* - The teachers in Ladson-Billings’ study created opportunities for social interactions that helped students achieve academic success, cultural competency and critical consciousness. The teachers maintained fluid student-teacher-
community relationships, demonstrated connectedness with all students, worked to develop a community of learners and encouraged students to work collaboratively and become responsible. As active members of the students’ community, the teachers created fluid relationships between the school and the community to ensure a strong understanding and validation of the community values, mores and group dynamics.

Gay (1993) asserts that teachers who are unable to connect students’ home and school cultures impart mainstream, Caucasian culture to students from diverse backgrounds, forcing students to spend psycho-emotional, mental resources defending themselves. Therefore it is important that the teacher is able to transcend his/her culture to recognize, understand and maintain student culture. Gay (1993) contents that students are more likely to master new learning when they are able to build upon previous learning and experiences.

In recognizing the difficulties in developing culturally relevant pedagogues, Ladson-Billings (1998) explains that the majority of teachers in U.S. Schools possess a superficial understanding of culture, leading them to follow mono-cultural textbooks and lesson guides that reflect a Caucasian, middle-class, Eurocentric ideology that diminishes the voices of students within a diverse community. An earlier study by Gay (1975) explained that middle-class Caucasian teachers find it difficult to relate to and understand culturally diverse students. A more recent study by Thomas, Causey and Armento (1999) resonates with earlier work by Gay (1975) and Ladson-Billings (1994). In Cultural diversity is basically a foreign term to me: the challenges of diversity for preservice teacher education, Thomas, Causey and Armento (1999) articulate the challenges of
diverse students who are increasingly aligned with a homogenous teacher population. The authors propose a teacher education program that collaborates with school districts, communities and post-graduation ‘follow-ups’ to help new teachers cultivate culturally relevant teaching practices.

Pang (2001) too, defines culturally relevant teaching as an approach, “to instruction that responds to the socio-cultural context and seeks to integrate cultural content of the learner in shaping an effective learning environment” (p. 192). Cultural context refers to a variety of aspects like experience, knowledge, values, mores, role-models, perspectives, events and issues that arise from/within the community. Pang emphasizes the need for a culturally literate teacher to be an accepted member of the school community; one who understands cultural elements that operate within the community and is able to respond in consonance.

3. Conceptions of Knowledge - The teachers in Ladson-Billings’ study believed that knowledge is not static, that it must be viewed critically and that all teachers have to be passionate about knowledge and learning. They also saw a need to building bridges between students’ home and school culture to facilitate learning. Assessment methods used by the teachers was multidimensional and holistic.

While it is impossible to become an expert in each students’ cultural group’s history, values, traditions, rituals, behaviors and language, teachers need to create an environment that supports students from culturally dissimilar backgrounds. A culturally relevant teachers’ ability to determine strengths and cultural competencies of students is better able to design learning experiences that capitalize on the student cultural-capital.
By involving students in curriculum planning, teachers fill the gaps in socio-cultural understanding, thereby validating students’ culture and mores. Even in settings where the student population remains homogenous, culturally relevant teachers are conscious of the pervasiveness of social inequities, negative images of cultures and histories and, strive to create classrooms that are key sites of resistance, where students can begin to see themselves and their communities in affirming ways while gaining access to mainstream codes of power (Delpit, 1988).

While a discussion of the merits of culturally relevant pedagogy should continue it is also important to articulate strategies offered by scholars to re-think teaching and learning. Howard (2003) writes that critical reflection as being the most important ‘ingredient’ in developing a culturally relevant pedagogy. He encourages teachers to reflect on the following statements: 1) frequency and types of interactions with individuals from racial backgrounds different than one’s own, 2) individuals responsible for shaping perspectives of those from culturally dissimilar backgrounds, and the impact on their opinions, 3) questioning personal prejudices again individuals from different racial backgrounds, and 4) possible negative profiling of individuals that come from racially different backgrounds (p. 198). Howard recognizes the difficulties in honest reflection but urges teachers and researchers to engage in critical reflection. In addition to the statements to aid educators reflect, Howard (2003) offers five measures to ensure ongoing reflection;

a) “ensure that teacher education faculty members are able to sufficiently address the complex nature of race, ethnicity, and culture”, b) “be aware that reflection is a never ending process.”, c) “be explicit about what to reflect about”, d)
“recognize that teaching is not a neutral act”, and “avoid reductive notions of culture”. (p. 200-201)

Other scholars offer strategies involving construction and designing cultural metaphors and multicultural representations to help bridge the gap between home culture and school culture. They contend that it is necessary to view student culture as an avenue to excite students about learning, instead of seeing diversity through a deficit model (Gay, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Scholars maintain that teachers frequently view students from diverse backgrounds as coming from a deficit model, disallowing children to incorporate prior knowledge and experiences in the classroom. Delpit (1988) argues that the beliefs in universality and merits of middle class white values lead to teachers excluding students of color (often from ‘poor’ immigrant backgrounds) from having social, political and economic opportunities.

The discussion on culture as a deficit is important in art classrooms where, by means of excluding non-Eurocentric art from the curriculum, or through presenting essentialized (and often stereotypical) views of culture, teachers communicate that non-Eurocentric arts, and the location of their creation, are not important. The following section will examine Multiculturalism in education and more specifically in art education.

**Multicultural Education**

The multicultural movement has its roots in the civil rights and early feminist movements in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, and to some extent, Canada. Initially, multicultural education was concerned with prejudice reduction in schools and providing equal opportunities for all students, particularly, students of color. In the Canadian context, a federal multiculturalism policy was adopted in 1971 to ensure equality
for all individuals, regardless of language, ethnicity, culture, race or religious affiliations (Ghosh, 1996).

While the implementation of multicultural practices differ widely, many definitions and forms of multicultural education exist in both Canadian and U.S. classrooms. Bank (2003) defines multicultural education through three criteria; an idea or concept, an educational reform, and a process. He argues that multicultural education practices aim to deal with increasing diversity within schools, and regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or class, all students should have equal opportunities for learning in/through formal education. In his earlier work, Banks (1989) imagined multicultural education in ways similar to Ladson-Billings definition of culturally relevant pedagogy. Banks (1989) acknowledges that a multicultural curriculum, that has a stance on student empowerment through recognition of student culture and student-teacher collaboration creates an education environment that is culturally responsive, allowing both student and teacher to grow; this approach helps students develop confidence, recognize their ability to influence socio-political institutions and connectedness among peers. Banks (1999) identifies the following ways in which the curriculum can become multicultural; recognition of diverse cultures and their contributions, critical pedagogy of culture and understanding of the hegemonic practices within schools and society. Gaudelius and Spiers (2002) consider the school as being reflective of the society in which children are exposed to diverse cultures, ideas and opinions. They expound on the benefits of an issues-based approach to multicultural art education where social issues such as culture, gender, race, class, religion, age, sexual orientation and ability can be utilized as a theme in art
education. Mary-Michael Billings (in Gaudelius & Spiers, 2002) challenges Gaudelius and Spiers’s claims about the ability of an issues based curriculum to become thematic. Billings argues that a thematic approach presents a subject with visual aids, while an issues based lesson presents an issue with the goal of developing a visual statement. Billings does, advocate the necessity of a curriculum that is connected to real-world issues and experiences to make learning more meaningful. Billings encourages pre-service teachers to think using an issues-oriented approach to develop a curriculum that motivates students to learn by challenging them to create visual imagery to address issues that are relevant to their lives.

However, not all theories of multiculturalism share the same stance. Multiculturalism can range from an assimilation of conservative multiculturalism, to the mainstream, pluralist view, and to critical multiculturalism, that examines power and oppression. Despite the merits the various approaches to multiculturalism, there are assumptions that need to be challenged. Most approaches assume that cultural (racial, ethnic, class, gender) identities are static; essentializing group members and engaging superficial aspects of cultural identity, whereas, culturally dissimilar group co-exist in a highly complex, fluid relationships with one another. Multicultural approaches such as pluralism, that adopt the different-but-equal stance, fail to recognize structures of power and oppression.

Responding to these assumptions, Ladson-Billings (2004) notes that while multicultural practices are rooted in traditional notions of curriculum and schooling, “its aims transcend all conventional perceptions of education” (p. 51). Ladson-Billings’ proposes a
critical multiculturalism “that relies on a deciphering knowledge seeks to push past going through the motions of multiculturalism” (p. 52). Five dimensions define this view of multiculturalism: “content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture” (Banks, 2004; in Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 52).

The above discussion has looked at multiculturalism in the larger field of education. The following section will explore ways in which art education scholars have adopted multicultural practices in art education.

Multicultural Art Education

Challenging the cannon\(^5\), art educators have begun to question assumptions related with multicultural art education. Desai (2000, 2003) asks: What/who defines art? Who is considered an artist? Whose art is value? Whose (art) histories are recognized and celebrated? In, *The origins of racism in the public school art curriculum*, Chalmers\(^6\) (1992) challenges the hegemonic, ethnocentric, racist and sexist notions within art history and art education that have remained un-questioned.

While both Desai (2000, 2003) and Chalmers (1992, 1996) trouble the cannon of ‘art’, Chalmers (1996) conceptualizes the role of multicultural art education as preparing ‘all’ students to live in an “increasingly pluralistic society” (p.5). Desai (2000) holds that the primary concern for multicultural art educators is, “to provide accurate and authentic

\(^5\) Duncum (2001) writes; “the field is usually thought to be composed of two closely related elements: a focus on ways of seeing, often referred to as "visuality"; and an expanded range of visual artifacts that lie beyond the art institution” (p. 104).

\(^6\) The 1992 article continues to be cited by art educators writing on issues of multiculturalism, cultural pluralism and race relations.
representations of the art of racially and ethnically marginalized groups in the United States and of subordinate cultures around the world” (p.114). Despite these differing streams, on a theoretical level, multicultural art education aims for social justice, equality and liberty for all students through art (Chalmers, 1996; Adejumo, 2002; Stuhr et al., 1992).

Comparative to the aforementioned discussion on the assumptions and potential pitfalls of multicultural education, multiculturalism in art education too, follows similar assumptions around cultural identities. Chalmers (1992) calls for multicultural art educators “who will develop culturally appropriate curricula materials to supplement those whose treatment of different cultural groups is limited or biased” (p. 142). Chalmers writes:

I believe that we need art educators who demonstrate respect for cultures and backgrounds different from their own and acknowledge that all groups can produce and define cultural artifacts that are “excellent” and that in all cultures “art” exists for rather similar reasons. We need art teachers who provide a classroom atmosphere in which students’ cultures are recognized, shared, and respected. (p. 142)

Echoing Chalmers, Desai (2005) calls for:

Postmodern teachers and students working collaboratively… to develop multicultural curriculum based on their local communities that is socially and culturally relevant and allows for critical inquiry. (p.303)

Chalmers (1992), Stuhr (1992) and more recently Desai (2005), while addressing social inequities and power/knowledge relationship, neglect to address hybridity and fluxus in identities of students and communities. Ladson-Billings (2004) urges scholars to respond to, “the postcolonial and multiple discourses that worldwide change demands.
Their work will have to incorporate heterogeneity, hybridity, and multiplicity and be more
tentative in its assertions” (p.63).

While theories of multicultural education, in theory offer a pluralistic approach to art
education, in order to combat prejudice and inequities among various cultural groups,
the practice of multiculturalism in art education differs significantly. It has been estab-
lished, throughout this discourse, that art education provides a medium for learning
about social issues and cultural mores. However, Kader (2005) writes that art teachers
often lack historical and contextual resources to present multiculturalism in a meaningful
way. Kader (2005) furthers that art education is troubled by ineffective content in its at-
temt to present culturally diverse content to satisfy state and provincial requirements.
Strong et al. (2002) observe that modern approaches to Western art does not allow for
an in-depth understanding of the influences that share art, requiring diversified art in-
struction to the benefit of both student and teacher.

Consequently, several art educators have written to the need for teachers to im-
merse, “in cultures they later seek to incorporate into curricula” (Staikidis, 2006, p. 119;
Ballengee-Morris, 2002; Desai, 2000; 2002; Wasson et al., 1990) and a mentoring stu-
dent/teacher relationship, whereby the teacher is able to cross cultural-borders with the
aid of students (Garber, 1995; Staikidis, 2006).

While it is understood that there exist lags between theory and practice, with fault
being assigned to teachers for being ‘behind the times’, it is important to re-asses multi-
cultural practices in higher education. A recent study by La Porte, Speirs and Young
(2008) assert that there is a direct correlation between what pre-service teachers learn
in teacher education program, and the curriculum they enact in their classrooms. In *Art curriculum influences: A national survey*, La Porte et al. (2008) report- as curricular themes- world art, politics, ecological art and the body had the lowest ranking in use and content area. Of 436 teachers, with 0-7 years of experience in teaching, 38% claim that they were educated in DBAE and only a mere 5% saw multiculturalism as a notable experience in their undergraduate education. This study speaks more to the shortcomings of art education programs that emphasize the western cannon, DBAE approach, than to teachers who are unable to incorporate contemporary theories in the K-12 curriculum.

Referring Ladson-Billings (2004):

> The new work of multicultural education must be more generative. Both scholars and classroom teachers must look for opportunities, new ways to think and learn about human diversity and social justice. They must be willing to push innovation in multicultural education. (p.63)

Scholars (see Strong, Snell and Tooke, 2002; Kader, 2005) propose teacher education and professional development dedicated to assist (art) teachers in developing effective art instruction and curriculum when presenting diverse cultures.

*Multicultural Policies and Practices in Canada*

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7 Surveys were sent to all teachers with a NAEA membership, who indicted between 0-7 years of teaching experience. There was equal representation from urban, suburban and rural areas, and the majority of survey participants were female and caucasian. The survey does not include information on whether teachers are solely from the United States, or if participants teach in other countries.

8 Samuel Hope, 2004, writes that the fate of a discipline rests in tradition and continuity of those traditions. In art education there is a tradition of teaching drawing and painting, and perhaps the idea of art education in North America rests of a Eurocentric model of teaching/learning in/through art. This is problematic for a dramatic shift in populations, since it robs all students of gaining a more holistic understanding of art.

9 Wikipedia defines the western cannon: “the historical backbone of the discipline is a celebratory chronology of beautiful creations funded by upper class men in Western Europe. Such a "canon" remains prominent, as indicated by the selection of objects present in art history textbooks” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_canon).
Canadian multiculturalism, unlike its United States counterpart was not “demanded from below” (Bannerji, 2000, p.45), instead it comes as a mandate\(^\text{10}\) from the government. The place of multiculturalism and diversity in Canada, and consequently, the research situated within the Canadian context differs significantly from the research and politics in the United States. Bannerji’s, and other Canadian theorists’ discourse on the place of multiculturalism becomes important for educators and researchers in Canada exploring the nexus of cultural relevancy, teacher beliefs and the development of curriculum and pedagogy.

Ghosh (1996) writes that multicultural education in the Canadian context should focus, not on “immigrant cultures as such, but on ethnic identity and how that merges with an overall Canadian identity” (p.4). In, *The Dark Side of The Nation*, Himani Bannerji (2000), speaks to identity and diversity in Canada. Bannerji’s work will be used to ground ideas of multiculturalism, diversity and identity in this study, since both authors share the Canadian context. In describing the *paradox of diversity*, Bannerji (2000) writes:

> [...] by obscuring or deflecting from historical and present power relations, perceptions and systematized ideologies, the deployment of diversity reduces to and manages differences as ethnic cultural issues...diversity discourse tries to set up a sphere which claims to be outside of hegemony...This is not dissonant with colonial anthropology’s way of assigning non-European cultures as special...Simultaneously as it disarticulates culture from hegemony, it reduces all political issues into cultural ones and converts culture into a private matter ”(p. 51).

\(^{10}\) The Library of Parliament (electronic version) describes the events leading to the multiculturalism act: “events and developments during the 1960s paved the way for the eventual demise of assimilation as government policy and the subsequent appearance of multiculturalism. Pressures for change stemmed from the growing assertiveness of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples, the force of Québécois nationalism, and the increasing resentment of ethnic minorities towards their place in society” (Dewing & Leman, 2006, Electronic Version/http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/PRBpubs/936-e.htm/)
In failing to address issues of power and oppression, mainstream multiculturalism has the ability to perpetuate the status-quo. Bannerji (2000) states, “speaking here of culture without addressing power relations displaces and trivializes deep contradictions. It is a reductionism that hides the social relations of domination that continually create ‘difference’ as inferior and this signifies continuing relations of antagonism” (p. 97). According to Bannerji, this can be prevented by creating counter-hegemonic, interpretative and organizational frameworks that open spaces for the recognition of real histories and social relations (Bannerji, 2000). However, Bannerji (2000) does declare that multiculturalism is ineffective, but “it can and does serve as an ideological slogan within a liberal democratic framework” (p. 73).

Ghosh (1996) on the other hand offers pragmatic ways of working with diversity in the classroom. Ghosh identifies that education in Canada is provincially, implementation and distribution of a ‘truly’ multicultural curriculum is sporadic. Ghosh asserts that while the current focus of multicultural education is on students from minority backgrounds, it should be re-envisioned as education for all students. Teachers should be developed as critical inquirers, capable of examining relations in educational practice between the dominant and the subordinate groups. Ghosh (1996) propose a redefined multicultural education that aims to “help all students develop the potential to gain knowledge and confidence in order to contribute to a democratic vision of society” (p.37). Ghosh (1996) argues the importance for educators in Canada to examine the complex process of identity formation and, “develop a harmonized Canadian identity that includes the individuality of various cultural, ethnic and social identities” (p. 8).
Ghosh’s notion of a “harmonized Canadian identity” can be criticized for promoting assimilation, the idea that lead to the development of the Multicultural Act of 1971.

**Indigenous and Aboriginal Context**

Since the research is located in British Columbia, on contested land, it is important to honor the Indigenous narrative and history of the land. Historically, multicultural policies have not reflected the rights and needs of indigenous people, but is a practice and an ideology that responds of the immigrants in Canada (Irwin, Rogers & Farrell, 1997). In *The Irrelevance of Multiculturalism*, Irwin, Rogers & Farrell write:

Multicultural policies do provide rights to the people of different ethnic origins, but they are rights within a society which is, itself, a product of immigrants and, as such, reinforces the role of the dominant society whose ideas are constructed according to linear thinking. (p. 42)

The authors claim that multicultural policies diminish the historical relationships of Aboriginal or First Nations groups and threaten their rights to property and self-governance. Multicultural policies’ emphasis on ideas of equality of opportunity regardless of race, gender, socio-economic class, can confuse equality with sameness and in the case of First Nations people, deny them of their rights and cultural heritage. In *Multiculturalism denies the realities of aboriginal art and culture*, Irwin, Rogers & Farrell (1999) assert that questions around the inclusion/exclusion of First Nations people from multicultural policies become “even more potent if we place it within the context of education, and, in particular, within the world of art and art education” (p. 49). They encourage educators to understand their responsibilities in educating students from all cultural groups, steeped in a thorough understanding of the multiplicity of multiculturalism and indigeneity.
For art educators, understanding the differences the Indigenous or the Aboriginal narrative is necessary. Aboriginal peoples understanding of art and art making varies significantly from that of other contemporary artists working within the Eurocentric traditions. Based on dialogues with Aboriginal artists Irwin et al. argue, “a purely multicultural system would deny aboriginal peoples the depth of expression necessary to sustain their cultures (1999, p. 57). Other authors concur with Irwin et.al.; Long and Dickason (1996) find the eurocentric ideals of studio production, criticism, history and aesthetics create several controversies for First Nations Artists. Specifically, these controversies include personal and cultural identity, imagery, history, individuality, modernism, and success and recognition. While these controversies can be explored in depth, for the purposes of this literature review, it is sufficient to address the disjuncture between First Nations art and artists, as well as problems of categorizing First Nations people under the multicultural policies and practices.

Art and Colonialism

Scholars across disciplines attest that education and art, among other means, has proved over time as a means to colonialis control (Ashcroft, Griffith & Tiffin, 1995; Said, 1978, 1993; Bhabha, 2004). Battiste\(^\text{11}\) (2002) and L.T. Smith\(^\text{12}\) (1999), build upon previous scholarship in postcolonial studies, reflecting on issues of identity and repre-

\(^{11}\) Battiste writes within the context of Canadian education, animating Aboriginal concerns and proposing a ‘decolonization’ of the larger education system that devalues ‘the other’. Her focus is in helping maintain aboriginal languages, identity and culture in the modern society.

\(^{12}\) LT Smith has written on Maori identities (in New Zealand) and continues to propose decolonizing methodologies.
sentation, and the colonial nature of education, calling for decolonizing education as a way to animate non-western identities. Said (1978, 1993) makes an important step forward in the literature to attempt a decolonizing of the colonial legacies, maintaining that ideological bearings of the West have permeated into the education and indoctrinated, without criticism, into institutions of higher education. The need to address coloniality within this review and research becomes increasingly important as schools become increasingly diverse, while teachers continue to be primarily white and middle class imparting ‘common-sense’ values affirming the West (see Thomas, Causey & Armento, 1999).

Smith (1999) writes that the globalization of knowledge and Western culture continues to reaffirm the “West’s view of itself as the center of legitimate knowledge, the arbiter of what counts as knowledge and the source of ‘civilized’ knowledge” (p. 64). Universities today are implicated in the historical process of imperialism, inheriting a legacy of Western knowledge (Smith, 1999). Smith asserts that, schools too are implicated in imparting imperial views of the culture through their connection to universities and other scholarly societies and due to their reproductive nature, play an important role in the dissemination of the “domesticated versions” of ‘universal’ knowledges, produced by and at the center, for “uncritical consumption” (p.65). Extending the argument further, John Willinsky (2006) writes that “the global scale of knowledge’s circulation is critical to its very claim as knowledge” (p. 54). While Willinsky situates his argument in the realm
of science, dissemination of research, and the cognitive failures¹³ that rise from the lack of circulation, it is also one that can be applied to the realm of art education and the availability and quality of publicly accessible educational resources. If circulation of knowledge is the most critical element in its claim as knowledge, then do those knowledges that are not widely circulated lose their claim? In the field of art and art education, it seems that indigenous and non-western art knowledges have lost their claim due to inadequate circulation, but also as a result of misrepresentation of indigenous knowledge by those that have the power over truth.

According to Smith (1999), non-dominant discourses/knowledges become important, only when indigenous groups make claims to them, and are then challenged by and at the center. Smith (1999) argues that subjugated knowledges, those that have been obscured or made invisible through colonization and neo-imperialism- must be restored. These knowledges do not exist independently but are understood through the discourse in the 'liminal spaces' between the colonizer and the colonized. L.T. Smith (1999) and Marie Battiste (2002) offer a discourse that straddles the emancipatory and deconstructivist paradigm.

Missing from this discourse is the impact of transculturalization. Postcolonial scholars have made an attempt address the discourse surrounding non-western knowledges to free spaces for those knowledges that have been misrepresented for centu-

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¹³ The lack of circulation as a result of social injustices such as exclusion of research conducted outside the west, by women and certain racial minorities constitute, what Willinsky describes as “cognitive failing”. These concepts are derived from Helen Longino’s work on the social dimensions of knowledge production and dissemination.
ries, at the same time, addressing the ‘liminal space’ between the binaries of ‘colonizer’ and the ‘colonized’ (Bhabha, 2004; Spivak, 1988, 19905; Said 1980, 1993). Postcolonial scholar, Mary Louis Pratt’s (1992), Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transcultural aims to fills the gap, describing the effect of the colonization from the colonized view. Pratt (1992) asserts that both the ‘native’ and the colonial narrative remain tainted by contact. These narratives are not ‘native’ or ‘genuine’ texts of self-representation; but rather a ‘hybrid’. Pratt (1992) asserts the need to move away from binaries which often give way to western authority over non-western means of knowledge and ideologies. In an effort to move away from an “European expansionist perspective”, Pratt (1992) uses the term “contact zone” to mean a point of contact between the native and colonizer. The ‘contact zone’ remains a challenge in education (and in educational-research); with métissage" comes areas of hybridity. Bhabha (1994/2007) insists that, [cultural] identities emerge in the contradictory and ambivalent third space of hybridity, writing further that all cultural identity is essentially hybrid. Hybridity becomes a site of conflict, interaction and assimilation involving all encounters - those between people, nations, histories - forcing individuals to understand the traits of the other as those that compromise the self. Bhabha (2007) insists, that the recognition of this hybrid identity ensures an understanding that cultural meaning is inseparable from its original multicultural production. These ideas however lay in juxtaposition to the dominant discourses that force individuals to compartmentalize their [cultural] identities, forcing binaries and dualisms.

14 Métissage, the confluence of cultures, meaning, ideas, mores and knowledges, both confuses and obscures that which remains beneath the surface.
The above discussion helps situate art, teaching and learning within a larger inherently complex social framework. The literature discusses themes that are currently missing from the art education literature, and attempts to bridge gaps in the existing literature. Missing from Ladson-Billings’s framework of culturally relevant pedagogy are discussions on hybridity, liminal spaces and contact zones. While the proposed framework explicates pedagogical and curricular decisions made by teachers in a predominantly African American school district, it is devoid of the the impact of popular culture, media and the impact of non-African American students in the school. Postcolonial theory, critical pedagogy and critical multicultural provide inform the gaps. These theories advance the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy by enmeshing it with deconstructivist ideologies and concerns of educators in the 21st century.

Conclusion

The review of the literature provides the framework needed to locate tensions teachers’ negotiate in order to arrive at a stance of cultural relevancy (in teaching and learning). The above review also explores multiculturalism in art education, in the larger educational context, and more specifically in the Canadian context. It is important to note that the literature from the United States lacks discussion on the place of aboriginal/Native American people and their histories. However, since this study is situated on contested First Nations land, with First Nations students attending the secondary schools where the research is conducted, this review also explores the First Nations narrative within that of the Canadian multicultural dialogue, as well as the differences in First Nations art and artist. The complex relationships between art, education and colonialism is reviewed to further ground this research. While the above review of the litera-
ture is not exhaustive, it does provide an understanding of the key concepts in the re-
search and provides an argument for the need of exploring, through dialogues with
practitioners, whether, a lack of external [re]sources (post-graduation mentoring, profes-
sional development, lesson planning resources, web based Open Education Resources)
or internal beliefs\textsuperscript{15}, to be central in the presence/absence of multicultural teaching.

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{15} Thomas, Causey & Armento (1999) articulate that prior beliefs and knowledge act as “filters” through which pre-service teachers understand new information, often, making it difficult to change their beliefs about diversity and the need for cultural sensitivity.
\end{quote}
Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, I will introduce the epistemological foundations of my methodological framework, theoretical framework, methods of data collection, and data analysis. Following this, I will outline the way in which I accessed the participants and validate the use of a qualitative research methodology and the use of ethnographic methods. I will provide an in-depth description of the participants and the educational settings in which this research takes place. Finally, I will address my conceptualization of reflexivity and its influence on the research, in particular the data analysis process.

Epistemological Foundations

My desire to engage in this project and around the particular research questions has implications for the work. My personal experiences of growing up in a family that encouraged my artistic endeavors and living in multiple countries while growing up serve as the foundation for this work. Growing up in India and the Middle-East, both societies that observe strict social-hierarchies, I discovered the rigid boundaries in identity construction. At times I fought against the pre-fabricated identity that was constructed for me; middle-class, Hindu, North Indian, female, heterosexual. Each element of this construction carried with it a set meanings and I was expected to mold my preferences to the set definition. To confuse my identity further, my parents were often spilt on their
own identities. My paternal grandparents had fled Pakistan following the partition\(^1\) from India, while my maternal grandparents relocated to New Delhi from Agra following the partition to work for the newly formed government. The British ‘Raj’ was a popular topic of conversation at our home. During my pre-adolescent years, I often fought to re-imagine my identity and place in society and art and art making became venues for me to explore, to address difference, and to push the boundaries.

The move from Qatar to the United States at fifteen caused a major disruption in my identity. While my ability to explore artistically grew by attending a high school with a strong arts program, so did the uncertainty about where I belonged. My skin color was noticeably different, and in my art education cohort at university, I was the only non-Caucasian student for two years. Over the course of ten years, I have explored my identity through my art practice, writing, community engagement, politics of migration and most recently, postcolonial theory. Coming to terms with a hybrid identity and the educational experiences that have led to this realization serve as the rationale for continuing with this research project.

The desire to look at the tensions teachers negotiate and ways in which their ideas and thinking affect curriculum and pedagogy extend from my experiences as both an artist and later, a teacher. In my own teaching practice, I have noticed the importance of teaching through the lived experiences of my students. As an artist and a teacher, I continue to see the impact of a curriculum and pedagogy that empowers stu-

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\(^1\) The ‘partition’ describes the split of Pakistan and Bangladesh (East Pakistan) from India in 1947 when Indian gained independence from the British Raj.
dents to address socio-cultural inequalities. Art making has the ability to transform student lives, but at the same time, it has the ability to perpetuate colonialism through practices that rely solely on Eurocentric notions of art and aesthetics.

Graduate education has simply given me the language to address preexisting ideas and make sense of new ones. Parr (1998) explains, “we all have prior frameworks into which we fit, examine, and make sense of new information” (p. 92). As a researcher, I must confront my own biases and investment into ‘decolonizing practices’ and the ways in which it affects my judgment. Parr states an, “application of theoretical perspectives can be experienced as either a sharpening sensitivity to research participants’ voices, or as shaping and silencing these voices” (p.87). Although, my interest in postcolonial theory and decolonizing methodologies in education is not apparent immediately, it does influence what I seek and what ‘prior frameworks’ I have used in my research.

I am also compelled to examine my class-location, able-bodiedness, sexuality, gender and ethnicity. While I identify myself as a South Asian woman, my ethnicity-neutral physical traits present challenges when working with people from a diverse range of backgrounds. Other elements of my social positionality however afford me an unearned privilege in my day-to-day life. I am not forced to question my gender or sexuality, nor am I challenged to think about my ability to physically and mentally navigate my environment with relative ease. This does not mean that these positionalities are somehow unimportant. Recognizing them allows me to recognize the intersectionalities
and shifts in the way we experience our environment and further ground me as a researcher.

**Power and Positionality**

Although Wesson (1998) writes:

All the…calls for dialogue and mutual respect between the ethnographer and her subjects cannot change the fact that socially structured inequalities do not dissolve under the influence of acknowledgement and understanding. Reflexivity is not, in itself, an equalizing act (in Loutzenheiser, 2007, p. 116-117).

I maintain that in this research, the power dynamic has been overturned. As a young researcher, I worked with two teachers that have two decades of secondary teaching experience, in addition to having taught at university teacher education programs. The third participant in the study has a vast amount of experience as an artist in residence and an elementary level teacher. Two teachers in this study have completed graduate study and one is currently enrolled in a graduate degree program. My position as a researcher provided opportunities to give voice or representation to the experiences and ideas of the participants, through the process of conducting this research, the divisions between research and participant were challenged and at time broken down. The participants called my position as a less-experienced teacher and artist into question and the reciprocal nature of this engagement lead to changes in the power and positionality. This position allowed me to be a position to engage in research that is truly reflexive and collaborative.

**Methodology**

Although the time span in which this research was conducted does not allow it to be true ethnography, following Denscombe’s (2007) *The Good Research Guide for*
Small-Scale Research Project, it can be characterized as a small-scale ethnographic inquiry. This qualitative research methodology, using ethnographic methods of interviewing, observing and investigating formal documents, allowed me to address a) the discernible elements, *tensions*, that influence the development of arts curricula at the secondary level and pedagogical choices that teachers make, b) the relationship between teachers’ ideologies and teacher practice, c) ways in which art teachers make their curriculum and instruction culturally relevant, and d) the impact of the educational context.

Woods (1996) writes that ethnography as a qualitative research methodology and the use of ethnographic methods have the ability to penetrate layers of meaning, “defining situations and grasping a sense of process”, and is therefore the most “natural methodology” for understanding teacher thinking and practice (p. 7). This allowed me to approach the research questions from multiple perspectives and form a clearer picture of the social world. When investigating teacher beliefs and art instruction in a secondary classroom, it is important for the research to blend historical, observational and interview methods (Hammersly, 1990). Ethnographic methods allows the researcher to draw out ‘local’ points of view, in this instance, experiences and beliefs of art teachers that shape their pedagogical standpoint, curricula and the overall interaction of art teachers in a high school with other members, such as administration, faculty and students.

This research focused on developing a multi-layered understanding of participants by observing their day to day interactions with members of intersecting groups, allowing the researcher to become conscious of the complex nature of meaning making.
Therefore, it is important to consider variables that come to surface through observations, conversations with teachers, students, other school faculty and use of prescribed learning outcomes (also known as IRP’s) in the development of tangible documents such as lesson plans, in the development of a holistic understanding of the variables that influence teachers. Such variables provided insights into patterns of behavior and (cultural) mores of secondary art teachers who teach in highly diverse urban settings.

Methods

**Observation**

For this study, I observed three secondary art teachers’ classrooms for 3-9 non-consecutive days. The observation times were decided upon by teacher, and consisted of observing an average of 3 blocks (90 minutes long) once a week over a period of 3-5 months. In the case of teachers’ at West Side Secondary, some observation days were split to observe both teachers for two blocks each. At the smaller secondary school, observation days and classes to observe depended on the student teacher’s schedule. Given the presence of the student teacher, I was only able to observe classes that the research participant taught. I was able to observe a total of three full days and 2-3 additional classes at this site.

Qualitative research methods rely on observing not only the verbal (language) or physical actions (behavior), but also patterns that are not visible directly (Creswell, 1998). These included curriculum choices, emotional space/tensions between a teacher and students and layout of the classroom. Spatial configuration, bulletin boards, division of class time, formality/informality of events, such as critiques, speak for the values that are important to teachers and were also observed during the course of the study.
The framework below lists possible features that provide an insight into teacher beliefs, actions and decisions. This is consistent with “A Portrait of an Effective Art Teacher”, in which Mary Stockroki writes that, “[s]ince teaching is a multi-dimensional activity, a researcher needs to consider all the factors that relate teacher behavior with the entire art learning environment” (1986, p.82). Although the entirety of this study took place within the school setting, the aim is to develop a better understanding of the tensions teachers negotiate when developing an arts curriculum and making pedagogical choices. While many tensions inherently reflect the nature of the educational setting, personal lives (and life histories) of teachers played an important role. The following table (Table 3.1) details the features I was able to observe in the various secondary school settings (adapted from Burgess, 1984):

**Table 3.1 Observable features of the school**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Features</th>
<th>Features of the School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>Layout of art classroom, teacher offices, other ‘art’ spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>Primary: Art teachers; Secondary: administration, students taking art classes, faculty, other students, custodial staff and other school personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Teaching and planning lessons, delivery of lessons, presentations, student-teacher interactions, interactions among students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objects</td>
<td>Furniture, the way the room is designed, how does this affect the student-teacher interactions. Visual culture of the school. How are ‘art’ objects placed throughout the school and in what ways does that speak to the culture of the school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts</td>
<td>Actions of individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Features</td>
<td>Features of the School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>Group critiques, final presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>The sequence of the school day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>What are the teachers (and the students) trying to accomplish?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings</td>
<td>Emotional space between teacher and student, as well as individuals emotions in the class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Elements of the research site**

For the purpose of this study, observational data was collected through field notes and other formal documents. I maintained a field notebook to record the interactions of the participants with various elements and individuals in the school setting. To document the changing nature of the school, I also used a digital camera to capture changes in the classroom and in the hallways surrounding the art classroom. The digital camera was primarily used to record installation projects and ways in which they were manipulated following the installation. Formal documents for this research included class schedules, written goals for the school year, IRP’s, letters, poetry etc. The use of formal documents provided another measure for constructing a holistic understanding of the teaching. In the case of two teacher participants, a lack of documents allowed for an understanding into their pedagogical and curricular choices.

**Interviewing**

This study employed 5-7 interviews, primarily informal, for collecting data. I had envisioned dialoguing with teachers in settings such as their office space, faculty lounge as well as during class and discussions in school hallways. The 5-7 informal interviews
took form of discussions following in-class observations to gain a greater depth of beliefs, tensions and the synthesis of both in the development of curricula and pedagogy. Over the period of the study, I was able to record 2-3 formal interviews with each teacher. The constraints on their time did not allow for the informal interviews to be recorded, as they took place spontaneously following classes, during class breaks and at lunch times.

Merriam (1988) notes:

> Interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them...This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging world view of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic. (pp. 73-74)

Kvale (2006) sees qualitative research interviews as a method for understanding and getting to know private lives and making them public through a course of discussion of a dialogue. While interviews have helped researchers to see the world from the interviewee point of view, giving voice to many and everyone, Kavle (2006) illustrates the potential of researcher dominance through interviews and the interviewer’s ability to manipulate interviews to gain their goal. Acknowledging that while the relationship between the participants and myself is not one that is equal, I aligned myself professionally with the teachers, and negotiated the responsibility of representing their thoughts and idea. Reflecting on the difficulties of insider/outsider dynamics, ethos of the interactions and upon my behavior during interviews and while participating in class, this research tried to achieve accurate representation of the participants views by constant negotiation with participants. Meaning making, for both the researcher and the participants, took place on multiple levels, and this research design acknowledges the need to
validate the multiple ‘locations’ for meaning making. On the insider-oustider paradigm,

Green, Camilli & Elmore (2006) write:

The insider-outsider paradigm is one crucial framework for approaching fieldwork and analysis. Another useful framework derives from the question. "where is culture?"; that is "where do people make meaning?" In the head. To say that cultural meaning making happens "in the head" is to recognize that people sometimes interpret situations and generate behaviors privately. (p. 287)

As a researcher, while multiple approaches to exploring teacher thinking can lead to a more holistic understanding, issues of participant-shame can distort the researchers understanding. While I did not engage in conversations that could potentially result it participant shame, it was a factor that needed consideration before entering the field.

Owens (2006) writes that, “shame is focus by the self on the self, but with the gaze of the outsider present in one’s own evaluation” (p. 1167). Explorations into pedagogy and curriculum choices are can lead participants into further self-reflection leading to shame and embarrassment. Owens (2006) write that participant shame can result in a “loss of desired social relationships”(p.1168) which works against the aims of the research. Understanding the issues at hand, I attempted to use interviewing as a joint search for knowledge. Interviews in this study provided an opportunity to articulate our understanding of various issues connected to art practice at the secondary level, share personal anecdotes and for doing member checks. It was during both formal and informal interviews that I was able to share the data and ways in which I was performing analysis on both the interview and the observations.

**Interview Protocol and Follow-up**

Questions for interviews following the classroom observations aimed to rely heavily on the day’s observations and conversation to be guided initially by questions
from myself, and deviate according to answers. All three formal interviews following ob-
servations lasted between 30 – 80 minutes and were based on mutual consent between
researcher and participant. While interviews at the beginning of the study remained for-
mal, as the study moved forward, and through developing a closer relationship with the
participants, the informal interviews (3-5) also included personal anecdotes and histo-
ries.

**Data Analysis**

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) describe data analysis as a process that involves an
ongoing, continuous engagement that begins at the moment the first data is collected.
Embracing the process, I personally transcribed the interview tapes using Trascriva.
Trascriva is a transcription software that embeds a time-stamp within the transcript, al-
lowing the user to return to a audio or video clip with ease. Using this software, I was
able to transcribe audio recordings from the interviews, and stayed continuously im-
mersed in the data. Transcribing the interviews personally also allowed to me generate
open codes and explore possibilities for new interview questions. The following section
address theoretical frameworks applied during data analysis, and the process of coding
the data.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

I relied on two theoretical frameworks to assist with the process of data analysis:
culturally relevant pedagogy and postcolonial theory. Ladson-Billings theory of a cultu-
ally relevant pedagogy is situated in the critical paradigm, and relies on critical race the-
ory and critical pedagogy to articulate a framework that addresses student achievement
and cultural competency. The use of postcolonial theory attempts to bring culturally rele-
relevant pedagogy into the deconstructivist paradigm. The arts have been implicated in the spread of colonialism through pervasive means. Contemporary means include lesson plans that essentialize non-western cultures, inappropriate appropriation of native or indigenous visual metaphors, and a heavy reliance on Western European art. The use of postcolonial theory to identify and further deconstruct teaching practices that perpetuate colonial ideologies and ways to address them can be especially useful in the field of art education.

**Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Culturally relevant pedagogy serves as the theoretical backbone of this research. Culturally relevant pedagogy was explored in-depth in the previous chapter. The following chart, adapted from Ladson-Billings (1995) article *Towards a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*, locates the characteristics of a culturally relevant pedagogue. Using the following table (Table 3.2), I will be able to narrow the codes generated during analysis, and delineate whether the teachers participating in the study are culturally relevant teachers.

**Table 3.2 Table adapted from Ladson-Billings (1995)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Areas</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Conception of self and others | • Believed that all the students were capable of academic success,  
  • Saw their pedagogy as art—unpredictable, always in the process of becoming,  
  • Saw themselves as members of the community,  
  • Saw teaching as a way to give back to the community,  
  • Believed in a Freirean notion of "teaching as mining" (1974, p. 76) or pulling knowledge out. |
| Social relations        | • Maintain fluid student-teacher relationships,  
  • Demonstrate a connectedness with all of the students,  
  • Develop a community of learners,  
  • Encourage students to learn collaboratively and be responsible for another. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Areas</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Conception of knowledge       | • Knowledge is not static; it is shared, recycled, and constructed.  

• Knowledge must be viewed critically.  

• Teachers must be passionate about knowledge and learning.  

• Teachers must scaffold, or build bridges, to facilitate learning.  

• Assessment must be multifaceted, incorporating multiple forms of excellence. |

**Postcolonial Theory**

My own epistemological foundations, the lack of discussion in the larger field of art education regarding the use of postcolonial theory and the location of key authors, namely Bannerji and Ghosh, beseech the use of postcoloniality in this research. Postcolonial theory is a contested terrain, with differing locations. Kanu (2003) articulates the place of postcolonial literature in education:

> What these locations have in common is that they signify a position against imperialism... it is the “postcolonial” as a stance against Eurocentrism, as evidenced by the dominance of Western knowledge/cultural production and dissemination, that is important here. From this stance, “postcolonial” becomes the site where a variety of assumptions accepted on individual, academic and political levels are called into question in the struggle for more democratic social relations. (p.68)

Postcolonial theory also generates spaces for a discussion on hybridity (Bhabha 1994/2007). Bhabha (1994/2007) insists that, [cultural] identities emerge in the contradictory and ambivalent third space of hybridity, writing further that all cultural identity is essentially hybrid. Hybridity becomes a site of conflict, interaction and assimilation involving all encounters - those between people, nations, histories - forcing individuals to understand the traits of the other as those that compromise the self. Recognition of this hybrid identity ensures an understanding that cultural meaning is inseparable from “its original multicultural production”. The use of postcolonial theory in this research will enable me to understand ways in which teachers understand and respond to hybridity and how they understand culture.
Coding

Following Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) guidelines for coding qualitative data, I developed open, axial and selective codes. Open coding, is the first step in analyzing data and consists of "fracturing of the data" (1990, p. 97) by examining words used by participants to describe ideas, experiences, understandings and/or meanings. This process involved a line-by-line examination of the transcripts. Charmaz (2000) contends that this process of open coding keeps the researcher close to the data, instead of imposing one’s ideas onto the data. During this process, each word, phrase and sentence is categorized and coded as a concept. During this process I generated over 100 codes.

Echoing Strauss, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) explain that, coding “is actually about going beyond thinking creatively with data, asking the questions, and generating theories and framework” (p. 30). Using axial coding, I was able to narrow the the codes into higher order categories\(^2\) used to represent theoretical constructs in order to identify relationships between and among the categories. Axial coding also surfaces the conditions that give rise to categories (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2006). Coffey and Atkinson (1996) remind researchers to “use our codings and categories to think with, and not remain anchored in the data alone” (p.49). The final level of coding, selective coding, involves "the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.116). This story line is created to

\(^2\) Higher order codes include self, community, students, colleagues, relationships, knowledge, learning, art and community of practice.
capture the essence of what happens in the research, and the story line becomes "the central phenomenon around which all the other categories are integrated" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116).

**Research Participants**

Participants in this study included three secondary art teachers in the Vancouver Metro area; in a range of art programs with a highly diverse student population that mirror the city demographics; with students from a variety of socio-economic, cultural, gender and ethnic diversity. While the commonplace understanding of culture perceives it as being a static condition, culture is in flux, and cultural variegation in schools can become a resource in obtaining multiple perspectives (Isar, 2006). The heterogeneity of the environment enabled the construction of a narrative, through conversations and observations, that speaks to multiple world views. Locations were selected based on recommendations from the Vancouver School District and the British Columbia Art Teachers Association. Following Ladson-Billings recommendations to replicated the study as often as possible, it was vital to the study that it involve well-recognized art teachers working within successful programs. Although success is inherently subjective, working with individuals that are celebrated within the community enabled me to become better aquatinted with the mores of the Vancouver art education environment.

Pajares (1992) builds on previous scholarship by Clandinin (1987; in Pajares, 1992) and Nespor (1987; in Pajares, 1992), arguing the need for academics to focus research on teacher beliefs since conversations with teachers “inform educational practice in ways that prevailing research agendas have not and cannot” (p. 329). Ladson-Billings (1995) also identifies the values of working with teachers. She maintains that
collaboration with successful teachers, those that are engaged in cultural critique and those that are able to identify “political underpinnings of the students’ community and social world” (p. 477) is crucial in development of alternate modes of teaching and learning. Teachers that acknowledge the existence of social inequities and strive to represent their students will be open to sharing their classroom as a site for research, since it benefits both the teacher and the researcher. Ladson-Billings’ identifies the need for researchers to acknowledge and problematize their social positionality. Taylor, Tisdell and Hanley (2000) assert that the positionality (social location), race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, of an educator plays an important role in the ways which they interpret theoretical frames.

Since I am interested in understanding how teachers’ develop their curriculum and pedagogical standpoint, I began with a initial (formal) interview, followed with in-class observations. Observing (and possibly participating with) teachers teach a range of art classes was useful in determining a potential connection between an art teachers area of expertise/attachment and demonstrated creativity (and cultural sensitivity) in lesson planning.

**Access and Recruiting**

As mentioned earlier, three secondary art teachers were identified as being exemplary teachers. I initially gained access through a faculty member in art education who has been heavily involved with art educators in the lower mainland and works closely with pre-service teachers and their in-school mentors. During conversations with

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3 This can include drawing, painting, printmaking, sculpture, design, multimedia and new media approaches, allowing me to observe teachers in a wide range of art making and teaching situations.
a faculty advisor, six teachers in the lower mainland were suggested as being socially conscious secondary art educators. Upon receiving approval from the university’s Behavioral Research Ethics Board\(^4\) and the Vancouver School Board, I contacted the teachers through a letter of initial contact\(^5\) that included an overview of the study and an invitation to participate in the research. The teachers were asked to respond within two weeks of having received the letter, via email, phone or a letter, indicating a desire to participate in the research. Three teachers responded and became the participants in this study.

**Participants**

**Karen, West Side Secondary School**

Karen has taught drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics and Art 8 at the secondary school for the past four years. Previous to this, she worked with a university teacher education program as an instructor and field supervisor, and has taught ten years at a secondary school in the East side of Vancouver, as well as a few years at a Catholic elementary school. Karen primarily identifies as being an artist, and as such, had pursued fine arts degrees previous to getting a B.Ed. in art education. In the mid-1990s she returned to pursue a Master of Arts degree in Art Education.

Karen identifies as a Caucasian woman, an artist and a teacher. In our conversations she also indicated her identity as a life-long learner. In the classroom, she assumes multiple roles ranging from the traditional roles of teacher and mentor, to peer

\(^4\) See Appendix A for BREB Certificate.

\(^5\) See Appendix B
and often ‘a mother’. She has been actively involved in developing the art program from one teacher in one classroom, to four instructors spread over three classrooms. In addition to her responsibilities to the art program, Karen is actively involved in various clubs, after-school programs and attends all school events including plays, concerts and social dances. Towards the end of this study, Karen was asked to step in as Vice Principal at the secondary school. In conversations following the appointment, Karen openly shared her viewpoints on the teachers at the secondary school, the school administration and provided an insight into the district politics.

**Sharon, West Side Secondary School**

After ten years of traveling throughout Asia, Europe and working in France for two years, Sharon returned to teaching in 2007. She teaches drawing, painting, sculpture and Art 8 for French Immersion students. Sharon is a practicing artist, who has spent a considerable amount of time at artist-in-residence program throughout North America and Europe, and is invested in community art programs. She teaches part-time (90%) at the secondary school and is currently pursuing a graduate degree in art education.

Like other participants in the study, Sharon is involved in the school community and has a unique insight into the school culture. Her daughter is currently enrolled in the 11th grade at the secondary school. In her capacity as a teacher, Sharon often attends club and social events sponsored by the students at the secondary school.

**Joanne, Tree Hill Secondary School**

Joanne is a textiles designer, and an artist from Australia. After meeting her partner, who is a Christian minister, Joanne relocated to Canada. Since her textiles degree
was not acknowledged in Canada, she pursed a Bachelor of Fine Arts, followed by a Bachelor of Arts in English before pursuing a B.E.d in art education. She returned for a graduate degree in the mid-1990s and has since continued to teach at both the secondary school and at the university.

Joanne is the sole art teacher at the small, liberal arts secondary school. In addition to teaching drawing, painting, sculpture and mixed-media, she also teaches drama and home economics. She’s heavily involved in after school activities and social events at the secondary school.

Research Site

McClain and Cobb (2004) assert the role of the institutional context, “in both constraining and enabling the work of teachers and school leaders” (p. 281). McClain and Cobb (2004) write that the interconnectedness between the various communities of practice within the school and the district, “constitute significant aspects of the environment for each other” (p. 281). They further that the members of various communities therefore “afford and constrain the practices developed by other communities” (p. 281). The institutional context is a small, yet significant aspect of this inquiry, since the practices of teachers are partially constituted by the institutional setting in which they act and interact.

Tree Hill Secondary School

Aims of The School

Tree Hill Secondary School is often described as being a unique, fantastic, and quirky school. Tree Hill is a small school with a tight knit community where students and teachers are on a first name basis. This school requires an admission application, fol-
allowed by interviews before students are accepted into the school. On average, there are 115 students at the secondary school and six full-time teachers. The school is noted for its cooperative atmosphere, community spirit and animated conversations. School meetings take place once a week, with the entire school community present, including students, teachers and support staff.

**Figure 3.1 West facing hallway, Tree Hill Secondary School**

The school has a strong academic focus, providing a liberal arts education supported by visual and performing arts. The curriculum and pedagogy stresses both academic achievement and social issues. Tree Hill aims to recognize the individuality and creative potentials of all its students by encouraging cooperative learning and sensitive interaction. Due to the specialized focus and a rigorous acceptance process, Tree Hill
Secondary School draws students from across the city, creating a rich mélange of cultures, interests and attitudes.

The Building

Upon entering the school, one can actualize elements that make the school ‘unique’ and ‘fantastic’. There is no signage to direct a visitor to the main office, and those that visit rely solely on students to guide them in the right direction. The entire secondary school consists of a single hallway with classrooms on both sides and lockers running the entire length of the building. The lockers, unlike those in ‘mainstream’ high schools, are covered in lyrics, paintings and other artifacts (Figure 3.1). Each locker is ‘decorated’ by its owner and the lockers do not have a lock on them.

School Culture

At any given time during the school day, students are in the hallway and between classes, talking and working with one another. At no point in the two month period I visited the schools did I see an empty hallway. In addition, the school does not use a bell-schedule, but observes a more fluid transition period between classes and classrooms. Teachers allow students to work in other teachers’ rooms. In addition to the weekly school meetings, the Tree Hill community spirit is visible bi-weekly during the lunch hour when ‘Tour D’Tree Hill’ takes place. Given the lack of a gymnasium, the entire school, teachers include, participate in jogging and/or walking around the block.

Art Classroom

Joanne’s classroom is situated close to the main entrance of the school, with the door and the surrounding wall painted on both sides. Walking into her classroom is a surreal experience for all senses. All four walls are lined with student art work (see Fig-
ure 3.3), images from magazines, vintage dresses, models and sculptures. The classroom consists of two tables that run parallel and a third table in the front of the classroom. The furniture in the classroom is heavily coated with paint, especially the tables. A sink runs the breadth of the classroom and is located at the front. The sink is filled with brushes of all sizes and containers for water and brushes⁶.

Figure 3.2 Layout of Art Classroom, Tree Hill Secondary School

⁶ See Figure 3.2 for classroom detail
The back of the classroom is covered with a black sheet. Upon further questioning, Joanne reveals the supply cupboards behind the black ‘curtain’. Between the class tables and the hidden cupboards are two tables that hold supplies and more student artwork. An extruder sits atop one table, surrounded by clay supplies and signs of recent use by a student(s).

**West Side Secondary School**

West Side Secondary School is located in a neighborhood considered as being an up-and-coming locale, drawing young professionals and families with school age children in Vancouver. Through conversations with teachers and the school Principal, I was able to understand that secondary school is noted for several district programs in-
cluding French Immersion, on-site pre-employment and Advanced Placement. In addition to a distinguished academic record, the school is well known from the sports program, in particular basketball, rugby and ice-hockey. While students attending the school reside primarily in the ‘West Side’, the district programs at the school draw students from across the city, as well as international students from Germany, Spain, Taiwan, China and Korea.

The Building

The school building is a Vancouver heritage landmark. On the outside, the building resembles many Collegiate Gothic style buildings that were popular in the 1920s. A portrait of Chief August Jack Kathsahlano, the school's namesake is visible in the main foyer. The buildings interior feature high ceilings and large windows. Unlike the Tree Hill school, West Side Secondary is built on an ‘impressive’ scale, with wide corridors lined with lockers and classrooms on all three stories. Over a period of three months, while conducting interviews and observations, I did not have an opportunity to explore the entire school building.

School Culture

West Side Secondary appears similar to other large, urban high schools. As expected in a ‘traditional’ school, some lockers along the hallways are decorated with magazine clippings and posters, however the majority of the lockers are painted blue and remain locked. Walls and cork-boards in the hallways feature advertisement by various clubs including LGBTQ, social, music-interest, sports and community-outreach. Despite the diverse student population, I observed students ‘hanging-out’ with other students from similar cultural background outside the classroom.
The school does employ a bell schedule, and while the hallways are bereft of students during class hours, they are packed full of students between class hours and during the lunch hour. Among other factors, a lack of an in-school lunch program and upper-middle class backgrounds, allow students to leave the high school during the lunch hour. Students can be seen on a busy shopping street one block north of the school, and on public transportation near the school.

Art Classroom

Figure 3.4 Clay and plaster area, West Side Secondary School

The art classroom that I observed is located on the ground level, in the south-west hallway of the school. Situated at the end of a hallway, near a side entrance and across from the music classroom, the art classroom is rarely quiet. From conversations with the
two art teachers, I was able to infer that this particular classroom has been in continuous use as an art classroom for over 30 years. The walls, tables, chairs, ceiling and other furniture are indicative of student use. Tables are covered with paint, charcoal, pieces of magazines and fabrics, as well as ceramic glazes.

The two sinks in the classroom are perpetually full of brushes, containers and spongers. The back half of the classroom is used for clay and plaster, however on multiple occasions students set-up easels to work on paintings (see Figure 3.4). The classroom layout is included on the following page. The classroom extends into the adjacent courtyard when the whether allows students to work outdoors. The following figure gives a detailed view of the classroom.
Figure 3.5 Layout of art classroom, West Side Secondary School
Conclusion

Along with a justification and outline for the research methodology, methods for data collection and data analysis employed in this research, this chapter covered my epistemological foundations of the methodological and theoretical framework. This chapter also introduced the three participants and provided an in-depth explanation of the institutional context.

Through identifying my epistemological foundations and positionalities as a researcher, this research is committed to reflexivity and collaboration. It attempts to present both a micro and a macro analytic viewpoint to arrive at ways in which teacher negotiate tensions, and how they approach their pedagogy and curriculum in relation to a framework of cultural relevancy. The following chapter will explore the results uncovered through the study.

In the following chapter, I will present a detailed review of the participants’ interests, ideas, philosophies of education and in-particular art education and the impact of their life histories. Their concept of self, others, knowledge, and social relations will be used as larger categories to further explore their beliefs and practices.
Chapter 4

Exploring Tensions

As noted in earlier chapters, this research studied three secondary art teachers in the Lower Mainland, British Columbia. Two teachers, Karen and Sharon, teach at a large comprehensive secondary school in West Side, while Joanne teaches at a smaller liberal arts and performance focused secondary school at the south end of Vancouver. These teachers were invited after consultation with a faculty member who is actively involved with practicing art teachers in the Lower Mainland and enormously active within the British Columbia Art Teachers Association (BCATA). The faculty member’s involvement with the teaching community allowed her to identify exemplary teachers who inspire and empower their students and colleagues. The teachers in this study are extremely involved members of their communities; active within the school, district and regional organizations. All three teachers self-identify as being artists and continue to have a studio practice.

At the outset, this research aimed at understanding ways in which teachers negotiated various tensions to arrive at a formal and informal curriculum, as well as a stance on pedagogy. Inquiry relating to these tensions and their impact on teaching practices arose from the understanding that despite changes in teacher education programs, there have not been significant changes in teacher practice over the past decade (Kader, 2005; La Porte, 2008). As a practicing artist and teacher, I sought to understand the various strains and stresses a secondary art teacher negotiates, instead of adopting a ‘blame the teacher’ attitude. Using a framework that generates positive spaces for
both the researcher and the participants, in the nexus of collaborative and reflexive research, this study sought to create a holistic understanding of teaching in culturally diverse, urban, secondary schools. Drawing upon the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy (hereafter CRP), and working with secondary art teachers that are seen as exemplary individuals, I explored ways in which successful art teachers negotiate tensions placed upon them. Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995, 1995a) identifies a need for collaborative, reflexive research that explores the work of successful teachers to further our understanding of a pedagogy that is responsive to the needs of students. Successful teachers are individuals that strive towards academic achievement and empower students to challenge social and political norms.

**Changing Role of The Researcher and Participants**

While the aims of the study corresponded with the methodology in place at the beginning of the study, a change in the researcher-participant relationship caused a shift in the research questions as well as the research design. Reflexivity in research calls for challenging one’s assumptions and ideas, and acknowledge the evolving nature of research. The research design created a space for participative research, despite constraints of traditional ethnographic methods. However, during the course of the study, the participative research evolved to a participant driven research.

Originally, I had proposed a fly-on-the-wall approach, however, the teachers requested participation in the form of helping students with projects, performing tasks such as loading and unloading kilns, and providing resources to aid their teaching. They guided my research by presenting details of their teaching and learning that they felt were most important, guiding observations within particular classes/blocks and drawing
my attention to particular students, school events and school staff. The informal and formal interviews served as points of intervention for teachers to challenge my ideas and data analysis methods.

In *Negotiating the swamp: the opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice*, Finlay (2002) identifies several forms of reflexivity, as it relates to participants. Finlay asks researchers “to leave room to explore the relevance of their position in producing (imperfect, partial) knowledge” (p. 227). In the case of this research study, participants were assertive and challenged the data and interpretations head-on. They seemed interested in guiding the creation of knowledge and were reflexive not only as teachers, but as co-investigators in the research. Finlay furthers (2002):

Recognizing research as a co-constituted account, adherents of participative research argue that as research participants also have the capacity to be reflexive beings, they can be co-opted into the research as co-researchers. At the very least this involves participants in a reflexive dialogue during data analysis or evaluation. Smith (1994) cites an example of how utilizing participants’ interpretations resulted in him confronting, modifying and honing his own interpretations. (p. 218)

The reflexive nature of the teacher participants, and my desire to learn from the practices of the participants led to changes that are reflected in the following two chapters. Two chapters will cover the data analysis. Chapter 4 will look at: 1) Tensions, and 2) rethinking tensions as relationships, and Chapter 5 will analyze negotiating relationships with knowledge and practice. Chapter 5 will be further divided to discuss relationships with self, students, knowledge and the community.

The first section in this chapter will address *tensions* as conceptualized in the original research proposal. The tensions teachers negotiate range from constraints on time, budgets, differing opinions of parents and school administration and personal mo-
tivations to teach a particular curriculum. Throughout the research, teachers identified with the above tensions, but located their struggle in negotiating a culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy through various relationships. Therefore, the second section of this chapter will present a re-conceptualization of tensions as relationships.

**Tensions**

Tensions arise when there are forces acting in opposition to each other. In this study, all teacher participants narrated experiences when their personal ideologies were in conflict with that of a student, parent, colleague and often, an administrator. The participants in this study come from backgrounds that are culturally dissimilar to those of their students and colleagues. Since these teacher participants have had a range of careers before teaching, their ontological and epistemological foundations vary significantly from peers who have not had other careers, specifically those who started teaching in their early 20s. Teachers in the study often saw their teaching careers as “accident” of sorts, and saw the “baggage” from other careers as a positive influence on their teaching practice.

In both the formal and informal interviews, the teachers spoke about the differences they observed and how they were able to negotiate those differences. In addition to differences in careers, tensions often arose from being raised in environments significantly different from the settings they currently teach in. All teacher participants cited having traveled widely, and often these differences led the teachers to introduce ideas

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1 Teachers in the study commented on the differences between teachers who had started a career after finishing a bachelor degree in the early 20s and those who had ‘arrived’ at the career following a series of other careers and multiple degrees.
and topics that did not appear in the traditional secondary arts curriculum. Education in
particular stood out as an element that created tensions both in and out of the class-
room.

**Education**

Educational experiences, both formal and informal, have a significant impact on
all members of society. Whether the experience is reproductive or transformative,
teachers often bear in on their experiences when developing a curricular and pedagogi-
cal framework for their own teaching practice. For teacher educators in this study, both
K-12 and post-secondary educational experiences formed an important foundation, a
well, that the teachers drew from frequently. Joanne spoke fondly about her “bizarre”
schooling experiences that continue to shape her understanding of education. As a
teacher and a textile artist, she draws on her lived experiences, and the following dia-
logue points to an educational experience that differs vastly from her students (Inter-
view, February 19th, 2009).

J² but I must admit, I did bring my school - my school life was very positive. I
have good memories from being in school. I wasn't in boarding school when I
was very young. I was in elementary that was even more bizarre. I went to a
school that was run by a Misses Woods, three ladies, three old ladies.
R like a Montessori school?
J no, it was like a private school. But three old ladies, in a big old Edwardian
house. Okay. Who. I mean, this was bizarre, in this day and age. They used to
come in and light the fires in the mornings and they had fire places in the class-
rooms.
R is this back in the 60’s?
J yeah, yeah, yeah. But Australia is a bit behind the times, you know. Okay.
But the Misses Woods, so - it was a very small school, so. But it’s good memo-
ries, so. We used to have a, we were brought tea, tea-time in the afternoon. They

² J refers to Joanne and R refers to Researcher.
served tea to all the kids. ... We broke for tea-time and the maid brought in the tea. And the kids...

R how many kids?
J well this was about....there were 8 or 9 in a class. Not very big.
R that’s very... its kind of like home-schooling then.
J it was a [inaudible] school, but it was very strict.
R with tables and chairs? And a curriculum?
J a curriculum... oh yes...But, you know it was a pleasant [inaudible] ... so I think kinda bring some of that atmosphere.
R into your own classroom?
J yeah. I think boarding school ... it was a, you know the same. It was an old school. We went in, we did school in the stables. But once again we had PE, we had log fires and stuff like that.

Throughout the course of this study, Joanne alluded to these “bizarre” experiences as forces that continue to shape her pedagogy. Positive and affirming memories of her own education are largely responsible for Joanne’s need to establish her classroom as a positive learning space for all students and other members of the school community. In her own schooling, practical skills such as etiquette training and survival skills such as growing plants, were notable experiences. I was able to observe Joanne showing students the art of sprouting and growing seeds in an Art 10\(^3\) class. In addition to growing seeds, students were observed pursing projects that were not assigned such as stitching bags and garments. In conversations with students, I understood that Joanne made herself available between classes, during prep periods and lunch breaks, and past school hours to help students with independent projects. Upon asking her, the reasons for moving beyond the curriculum to support ‘extra-curricular’ projects, she responded with:

\[\text{\ldots}\]

\(^3\) The Art 10 class is comprised of approximately 20 students that are currently in the 10th Grade. Since Tree Hill Mini is a small school with approximately 150 students, students take art classes with their peers in their grade level.
...one thing I do that other teachers don’t really do…. sometimes I have not just one project going on, whatever they want, extra projects. Like they’re all doing different things. Like these girls are doing, I know they want to make bags, right, so it’s not really in the curriculum but that’s what they want to do and at this point in their lives, that’s probably what they need to do. (Interview, February 19th, 2009)

Based on my lived experiences, conversations with art teachers and conference presentations, these curricular and pedagogical decisions are not the norm in secondary art classrooms. Despite questioning the importance of allowing students to pursue independent projects that are removed from the planned curriculum, Joanne believes that such inquiry is vital for students’ intellectual and personal growth.

Other participants referred to post-secondary educational experiences, in particular the contrast between their initial training as artists and later as pre-service teachers. Although the impact of being trained as artists will be discussed later in the chapter, it is important to note that all three teacher participants graduated with visual art degrees and pursued independent careers as artists prior to teaching. Karen, a teacher at the comprehensive secondary high school noted the impact of a studio arts background and the ways in which it allowed her to challenge ideas introduced in teacher education courses.

...yeah, I didn’t start teaching until I was 32... my um, bachelors of fine arts and I was a year at the Banff center and a year doing post grad studies at Emily Carr and so saw myself very much an artist and very confident in understanding visual art and then went into the education program at 32 and was horrified to find out what, how little they acknowledged the background, not only myself but a lot of us had, because we came with art degrees and how we had to start from, I don’t know [fades]. (Interview, February 6th, 2009).

Her background as an artist, compounded with an interest in local artists and more widely, contemporary arts, allows her to questions decisions made by peers and
by instructors in teacher education programs. Compared to most pre-service and new
teachers, Karen negotiated the differences between curriculum design in teacher educa-
tion and the realities of teaching (Interview, April 7th, 2009).

Karen: …and I did one all about, North West Coast, Inuit art and then they were
going to make clay sculptures and it was all this deep rich …
Karen: … in my first year, I did this whole big [stutter] unit on Inuit art, with clay and
then I actually got into a real classroom and looked at them and thought, this
doesn’t make any sense
Karen: I’m not doing this, why, why would I do this, as if, this is some kind of to-
kenism to say that we live in this country that is multicultural….

In conversations following this, Karen spoke about multiculturalism lessons in art
as a charade, intended to uplift teachers and teacher educators, serving little in terms of
student needs. She initially taught art at a Catholic school for a period of three to four
years, and subsequently moved to a secondary school in Vancouver ‘s Downtown
Eastside. Karen’s Catholic upbringing served as an important tool during her initial
teaching, however, at the secondary school she found difficulties in bridging the gap be-
tween her experiences and those of her students. At this time, she had recourse to her
training as an artist and began to weave local and contemporary artists into her curricu-
um. Being situated in the Downtown Eastside, she relied on a community of socially
aware artists-activists.

Sharon, another teacher at the comprehensive high school said:

well… I mean, the person brings so much of it, I think, you know a lot of it from
teaching, I have only, I had my art education, one art education class, I had my

4 K refers to Karen. S refers to Sharon.

5 The Downtown Eastside is the oldest community in Vancouver, however the area is noted for a high in-
cidence of poverty, drug use, sex trade, and crime. The area is also noted for community activism and
alternate learning spaces.
art degree, um- but so much of it is intuitive, I mean, so much of what you bring to it is intuitive…. (Interview, February 6th, 2009).

She spoke about her training as an elementary teacher. In succeeding conversations, she expanded upon the idea of ‘intuitive’; explaining that her studio arts background, artist in residence assignments around the world, and two years in France continues to guide her teaching. A rich foundation in the arts serves as a treasury, which Sharon relies on to guide her teaching philosophy and day-to-day lessons.

Other tensions that teachers in this study consider are similar to their peers and colleagues, however, teachers in this study voiced that tensions and limitations come from a lack of trust in oneself. During the process of interviews and classroom observations, it became evident that “tensions” was not a term they identified with. As a researcher, I sought for ways to understand a scenario where teacher participants did not speak about a lack of resources, time and other handicaps on their ability to teach. During the process of analyzing the data and creating categories, relationships emerged as a central theme. Following postcolonial reasoning, relationships allow this research to become complex and interconnected. The (re)generative and transformative potential of postcolonial theory through critical and reflexive work is immense. It opens spaces for rethinking and making new connections. With these ideas in mind, the following chapter will present objectives for rethinking tensions as relationships.

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6 Sharon’s time in France, following half a decade of travel, consisted of an artist-in-residence assignment and independent work as an artist.
Rethinking Tensions As Relationships

While the original research questions aimed at exploring tensions teachers negotiate to arrive at both pedagogy and curriculum, the data and the analysis forced a rethinking of the original research questions. The word *tension* suggests a negative state, where a person is stretched emotionally and mentally into multiple directions concurrently. Scholars in the fields of art education specifically and in the larger field of education, attest that teachers face innumerable pressures, or tensions, in their day-to-day teaching practice. Sharon and Karen, teachers at the comprehensive high school spoke about the dynamics of day-to-day teaching;

S  yeah! I mean if anything that, that not every kids shows up every time, things like that. In terms of my deciding if I want to do something there is not too much that, to ask kids a particular question or to solve a particular problem, there is not much that gets in the way. Time to do it. The issues of meeting every other day, meeting an hour and twenty minutes. Sometimes a kid is just getting started and then 10 minutes later the bell rings because it took them an hour to think or to be talking with friends to get an idea and they get going but its the reality of any class but I find it more in art than other subjects because yeah, because it....

K  ....But its so hard when they are all, they’re not always there and they are doing other things and their brains are in other places and the kind of energy that it takes for me to do that too. [whispering] LAZY. Teacher gets lazy. I think, oh I don’t want to do this.

S  yeah yeah yeah yeah. You have to get them to commit to doing it, which

S  I don’t know, does money get in the way too much?

K  no, I don’t ....

S  not really

K  if I can get more money then I’m fine

S  yeah

K  money is not a problem. No no.

S  space I mean, I’d definitely say space is an issue. I feel as if, we have to, I mean the size of the projects have to be limited. For one thing the space they can work and I mean, its funny....

K  I know

S  for a sculpture class, we can only make something this big, I know, sure someone can do something bigger but not everybody, we just couldn’t function
and where could we keep it all, so space is an issue…. (Interview, February 6th, 2009).

At the initial stages of the research, drawing from conversations similar to the one above and my own experiences of teaching in public schools, I proposed that teachers often negotiate multiple tensions when developing a curriculum and a stance on pedagogy. Specifically, exploring the tensions that have the greatest impact on the teaching practice of secondary art teachers in a diverse, urban setting and those that lead to a culturally relevant model of art education. Schools in urban areas such as Vancouver present a challenge given the diverse student population. Recognizing and responding to diversity in-and-through the curriculum requires an intimate understanding of cultural norms and referents, as well as an intimate understanding of “the legacy of the dominant culture” and its potential “to eliminate cultural differences, multiple literacies, and diverse communities” (Giroux, 1992, p. 15). It is not enough to simply acknowledge experiences, histories and cultures of other groups; according to Giroux (1992) teachers and students need “to engage in forms of social criticism aimed at calling into question the Eurocentric nature of the dominant curriculum” (p.15). Culturally relevant teaching in the arts offers a possibility to break free from a legacy of Eurocentrism7, and address all students despite differences in race, class, language and/or culture. Using postcolonial theory to re-read the framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy can move culturally

7 As mentioned in earlier chapters, the literature in art education suggests a heavy reliance on epistemologies of art informed by Eurocentric ideals by practicing teachers. While generalist claims about the tendencies of art education in perpetuating a legacy of Eurocentric curriculum and pedagogy can not be substantiated, practices and curriculum materials advocated through the National Art Educators Association’s annual convention and vis-a-vis popular art education magazines often present essentialized versions of non-Eurocentric cultures.
relevant pedagogy from the critical paradigm, towards a more deconstructivist para-
digm. The move from the critical to the deconstructivist can in turn allow researchers in
art education explore the possibilities of a decolonized teaching practice. Asher (2009)
writes:

In recent years, scholars….have critiqued Eurocentrism in education and spoken
to the issues of marginalization and loss of indigenous knowledge and ways of
knowing, the internalization, transmission, and reproduction of colonialist struc-
tures and practices, and the resultant contradictions and contestations in curricu-
larum frameworks and teaching practices.

In secondary art classrooms, colonial ideologies can be reproduced not only through the
reproductive nature of education, but also through art. Said’s (1978) influential text, Orientalism, and Homi Bhabha’s, Location of Culture (2004) describe ways in which colo-
nists used art to extend control over populations by forcing a binary that evinced the
West as masculine, democratic, rational and progressive while illustrating the East as female, irrational, sensual and voiceless (Gosden, 1999). These ideologies have been
passed down through various institutions (museums and higher education) into the art
classroom. Is it a coincidence that secondary art teachers rely heavily on Western
European artists? That a large majority of teachers display paintings and sculptures by
‘The Masters’? When students are exposed to a disproportionate amount of European
art, in comparison to non-Western art, the negative binaries are strengthened. In this
process, students that do not belong to the white, middle class, status-quo group, feel

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8 Bhabha extends the dialogue and expands upon the notion of the ‘east’. In his writings, Babha asserts
that the east - west binaries are not geographic, instead, coloniality pervades geographic boundaries.

9 ‘The Masters’ usually refers to a set of Western European artists, including Monet, Suerat, Klimt, Van
Gogh, Rembrandt, and Picasso.
that their histories are being ignored. Even in schools where the majority of the student population belongs to a minority group, students are exposed to a Eurocentric art curriculum. Sharon describes her early teaching experience where she did not consider the culture of her students:

….looking back on that time in Richmond, I kind of missed the boat on teaching multiculturalism to that group that was there … there were a lot of Indo-Canadians and Asian kids there and then I left teaching and was traveling in Europe and doing my own art for a number of years and then started teaching in the Francophone community here and I think there I did focus a lot on French culture, French artists and Québécois artists…. (Interview, February, 6th 2009)

Sharon’s teaching experiences following traveling show a conscious move towards a curriculum that is culturally relevant and takes students’ needs into account, and is discussed in-depth in Chapter 5.

**Conclusion**

Scholars such as Dipesh Chakrabarty, Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Trinh Minh-Ha, among others have used postcolonialism as a space for moving beyond “the negative patterns that persist after colonialism began” (Hickling-Hudson, 2004, p. 2 in Asher, 2009, p. 7). Since these patterns pervade the social, educational, material and psychic realm, a postcolonial lens provides an opportunity to identify a legacy of Eurocentrism in curriculum and teaching through bringing into question race, class, language and culture intertwined by relationships teachers have with self, students, knowledge and community. Postcolonial theory provides a way to understand the complex contemporary relationships that exist in the nexus between teaching and art.

Relying on postcolonial scholars and using postcolonial theory as an analytic tool produced categories that challenged the assumptions about the nature of tensions.
Through a process of open, selective and axial coding, *relationships* emerged as a continuous theme throughout the interviews and observations. Teacher participants acknowledged constraints on their teaching such as budgets, space and time. However, it was through *negotiating relationships* with self, students, the larger school community and with knowledge, teachers constructed a curriculum and a pedagogy that empowered students to challenge norms. In describing ways in which they approached their teaching practice, all three participants spoke about these relationships.

Relationships present both a challenge by creating tensions and a sense of belonging and connectedness. Given that the participants saw tensions and limitations emerging from a lack of trust in oneself, reframing tensions as relationship casts the inquiry in a positive light and the participants were more comfortable with this language of relationships. This research study sees relationships as fluid and changing. The following chapter will analyze the various relationships teachers negotiate and the impact on their teaching and focus on ways in which the teacher participants have re-imagined the roles of students, self, communities and knowledge. Perhaps it is in this re-imagining and questioning of traditional roles and identities that the teachers break away from prescribed roles.
Chapter 5

Negotiating Relationships with Self, Students, Knowledge and Community

Revising Research Questions

Following the discussion in the previous chapter in regards to the changing role of the researcher and the participants, it is imperative to revise the research questions. New questions came about through negotiating a changing/evolving relationship between the teacher participants and me. These questions are:

1. In what ways do secondary art teachers negotiate relationships with self, students, knowledge and communities?
2. In what ways does negotiating relationships lead to/disallow culturally relevant teaching?
3. What are the elements of a culturally relevant secondary art teacher? Does the institutional context alter the embodiment and enactment of a framework of cultural relevancy?

Introduction

Distilled from the interview and observation data, I have identified four relationships that the teacher participants referred to: relationships with self, students, school and the larger community, and with knowledge. This chapter addresses in detail the ways in which teachers negotiate various relationships to arrive at a culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy through a postcolonial lens. This research explores culturally relevant teaching specific to secondary art programs in diverse, urban schools and at-
tempts to address ways in which teacher participants in this study have begun to break out of a cycle of re-circulating and transmitting colonial educational structures and practices.

**Relationship With Self**

**Social Positionality**

Awareness of social positionality and its effect on students and colleagues is crucial in transcending the effects of coloniality (Martin & Van Gunten, 2002). Hence, from the outset, understanding the participants’ relationship with themselves was important. Establishing the ways in which each teacher visualized herself played an important role in coming to an understanding of other relationships. Descriptions of participants’ social locations serve as the axis in understanding other relationships.

In conversations with the teacher participants, we discovered overlaps in experiences with faculty; interest in social theory and the overall graduate school experience, as well as the ubiquitous challenge of teaching a highly diverse group of students. The areas of overlap furthered a collaborative and reflexive relationship whereby, through conversations and discussions, we engaged in questioning our locations and the potential impact on students. In these conversations, it became clear, that the participants themselves had reflected on their social location and approached their teaching with the knowledge that they belonged to a racially privileged and class dominant group. All three women identify as heterosexual women and acknowledge their racially privileged and class dominant backgrounds. Karen identifies as being Canadian, Joanne identifies as being Australian, and Sharon points to a mixed identity as a result of being raised in
Washington (United States) and for the past two decades, living in British Columbia (Canada). Although the participants come from class and race dominant backgrounds, they are somewhat disadvantaged because of gender and over the course of the study speak about ways in which their gender has played into career choices. Participants in the study “arrived” at their teaching career in part due to their gender. Joanne, a textile designer from Australia, married a priest and moved to Canada, and spent many years living in semi-rural areas in Saskatchewan. Upon moving to Canada, she discovered that Canadian universities and other secondary institutions did not recognize her degree. While living in the Prairies, she pursued a Fine Arts and English degree, in part to avoid boredom and to engage in intellectual conversations. She came to the conclusion that with a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Bachelor of Arts degrees, she was not employable and went into a teacher certification program with the idea that she would be able to work while her own children were attending school.

so I went and did that…. but I didn’t really think about teaching before that….I did my practicum and I quite liked it. So I’d already been teaching in North Ireland college and doing some, all the secondary stuff before that, right. So it was like going into that [inaudible]. And that’s why I started teaching. It was more like an accident, more just like fell into it, rather than … think about it.

Joanne has—in addition to teaching art in elementary and more recently in secondary schools—maintained an active studio practice and continues to teach textiles at the University. She shares her experiences with both teacher candidates as well as students in the fine arts degree programs.

Sharon narrated a similar experience. After finding little employment with a B.F.A., she enrolled in the elementary teacher education program at UBC. Her initial teaching experience was as a substitute teacher or a teacher-on-call, furthering, “I
worked as a substitute teacher because I had a young child and I wanted that flexibility” (Interview, February 6th, 2009). She then traveled with her partner and supported his career for a decade while pursuing her own studio practice. Returning to Vancouver, Sharon enrolled in the graduate program to consciously improve her teaching.

....I think the desire to go back to do my masters and doing my masters are kind of … or the reason I went to go do my masters is because I want to, wanted to change the way I teach, so I, yeah, I’m changing the way I teach. But I’m not changing the way I teach because of the courses I’m taking, but it’s informing the kinds of decision I make…. 

Sharon currently teaches on a part-time basis, so she is able to take care of her younger child who is now in elementary school, since her partner’s work at an architecture firm does not allow for flexibility. The above excerpt highlights a career choice that Sharon made, in part due to her gender. This passage also highlights a motivation to move towards a teaching practice that empowers students to create art that is meaningful, that speak to their lived experiences, ideas and interests. For Sharon, art that is meaningful at the secondary level is contingent on two factors; an ability to conceptually and critically examine the idea, as well as the skills to render the ideas into a finished product. Following an observation on March 27th, 2009, she added that in order for students to be successful as artists, the art teacher must be well informed and interested in the arts.

Returning to the earlier discussion on gender, it can be noted that the participants have taken advantage of their disadvantaged position. All participants spoke about the sacrifices they made and ways in which their careers either suffered or stagnated, due to the location as mother or wife. For Joanne, not having a recognized university degree
initially\(^1\) and caring for eight children prevented her from full time employment. Instead, she pursued several creative degrees before teacher education. In an informal interview, she divulged that although the bachelor degrees in Canada followed “a one class at a time” process, she found immense satisfaction from being in intellectual spaces that forced her to explore via creative means. Her classes, often unplanned and chaotic, reveal a holistic approach to teaching art, through immersion in cultures, combining music, literature and cuisine, among other ingredients.

Sharon’s leave from teaching to support her partner through a decade of globe-trotting became a positive experience that opened her horizons and enabled her to pursue an artistic career—an opportunity that she would not likely have had, had she remained in the public school system. Over ten years, she traveled and worked with artists around the world, which led her to question the legitimacy of her education in the arts and in education. In the final interview, reflecting aloud, she questioned her motivations for consenting to renounce a comfortable life to lead one that was chaotic. Despite the gains, she commented that she once again has a young child to care for, reflecting that her current part-time teaching status is not vastly different from the one she left a decade ago. Her partner on the other hand, enjoys a successful career as an architect.

Karen’s partner is also an architect and has had a steady career for several decades. Karen on the other hand, has worked on several degrees and a range of teaching positions ranging from secondary art to adjunct faculty at a university. She, too, went

\(^1\) Refer back to the first section—Joanne’s textile degree from Australia was not recognized by Canadian institutions.
into teaching to accommodate the care of two young children. Questioning the gendered reasons for joining the teaching profession, Karen left her first teaching position at a Catholic school for one that was significantly more challenging in the Downtown Eastside. After a decade at the secondary school, through ‘fights’ with the administration concerning international students, budgets and a slew of social issues, she stepped down from the position to work at the university level. From conversations and observing interactions with colleagues, it is evident that Karen thoughtfully considers the implications of her gender in her teaching practice and life choices. Towards the end of the study, Karen assumed the school’s Vice Principal position, when the administrator stepped down from this position two months prior to the school year ending. As a senior teacher in the school, she discovered that none of the female staff had been asked to step in and a retired male teacher was being considered for the position. She approached the principal with the concern and was offered the position. During the final interview, she spoke vehemently in opposition to the “boys club” at the administrative level across the district and the need for female teachers to assume administrative roles. At the time of the final interview, Karen had been in the Vice Principal position for a week, and reflected on ways in which administration receives unconditional respect from most (male) staff members.

One’s social location, and within it gender, is both contested and critical, and serves to define other social relations. The above discussion highlights the teachers’ positionality and the impact of gender on their lives and teaching practice. Asking teachers about the way their gender plays into their larger social positionality resulted in
anecdotes on their life history, encompassing education, career, marriage, child rearing and teaching practice. Gender is both contested and critical, and serves to define other social relations. Overcoming the constraints of one’s gender is difficult at the best of times, but teachers in the study reveal that it is important to question the norms, reflect out-loud and rethink the possibilities for new teachers. In particular, they stressed that while constraints such as the task of child rearing often falls on women, the years away from the career can prove to be powerful and positively influence future decisions. Instead of viewing their lives through a deficit model, they remained enthusiastic about their lives and the decision to pursue a teaching career. The following section analyzes other aspects of the teachers’ social positionality and its impact on students and colleagues.

**Impact of Social Position**

As mentioned in the earlier section, social positionality affects the teachers’ decision making at multiple levels. Their social location enables them to come to a better understanding of cultures and the hybridity that occurs within diverse, urban populations, to pursue graduate studies to improve their teaching and transcend the damaging effects of Eurocentric legacies that persist despite interventions\(^2\), and to challenge students and colleagues to question norms.

In Sharon’s case, the strong belief in who should teach art played a central role in taking on additional classes during the 2008-2009 school year. When asked to take on

\(^{2}\) Interventions can be seen as development of postcolonial theory, decolonizing methodologies and changes in teacher certification programs to address the pervasive nature of Eurocentric ideas.
extra art classes earlier in the year, she communicated a hesitance to the principal, nevertheless acquiesced in teaching additional courses upon discovering that a social studies teacher had been offered the position. Conversely, she rejected an offer to teach history, admitting she lacked the experience, interest and did not want to deliver lessons directly from a textbook. Although she believes strongly in exploring new ideas and perspectives, her interest centers within the visual arts. Within the arts however, Sharon seemed to be aware of programs and resources in the Vancouver Metro Area and is actively involved in the arts community. Similar to other participants in the study, she also has a studio practices and often worked beside students. (This pedagogical strategy will be discussed later in the chapter).

On the other hand, the drive to inquire and practice life long learning prompted Joanne to consider teaching non-art classes. Apart from teaching art from 8th through the 12th grade, she now teaches home economics, textiles and drama. She draws on her boarding and other secondary school experiences, as well as assistance from other teachers to teach both the drama and the home economics classes. In the course of the study, I was not able to observe the drama class, but on several occasions spoke to students who were working on projects from the drama class, including a small group who worked on elaborate time-period costumes during their open periods. She teaches drama in part to maintain a full-time position and takes great interest in planning a curriculum despite having to teach it in a classroom better suited to for visual art. When asked, she said “yes [laughs] well we push the tables back sometimes, sometimes we do things like…. we do more stuff for the stage stuff, we make props and we do history
of film which is kind of really interesting. They really enjoy that.” Past explorations can be found in the hallways and inside the classroom.

**Figure 5.1 Student project from textile, Tree Hill Secondary School**

Since textiles is a passion for Joanne, she teaches her secondary students much the same as the post-secondary students (see Figure 5.1 as example of secondary student project). In fact, her curriculum in both classes is nearly identical. The year begins with skills-based projects and in the second half, once students have acquired the nec-

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3 I was unable to observe whether this was true. In several conversation Joanne declared that her secondary school students produce more creative results than her post-secondary students. She says that the post-secondary students are too concerned with grades and don’t like risks.
ecessary skills in material handling; they have an opportunity to pursue independent projects.

Teaching a variety of subjects allows Joanne to explore new ideas and continuously renew her curriculum. A desire to renew and re-learn is also seen in the pursuit of graduate degrees. The choice to undertake graduate study, especially a research and thesis-based M.A., in spite of full teaching loads is commendable. For both Joanne and Karen, working through a graduate degree allowed them to find justification for their perspectives in regards to teaching and to better articulate their ideas. Classes affected their teaching:

J yes, I think I have. I think I definitely use more emphasis on the question. Okay. More on the question, that I think I did before.
R so an idea...
J actually I had...what it did was gel all the things I had been thinking about and gave me a reason [inaudible] articulate what I wanted to do [earlier].
R okay
J for sure.
R what did you do for your thesis...
J I did art-based, so a studio based, it was like a show. And I did, mostly looked at knitting and I looked at my own history and how it had influenced me. Right. And how I had bought things from my past into my teaching.

Mentioned throughout the chapter, Joanne drew from her past experiences and even prior to attending graduate school, was aware of her history, positionality and its impact on her teaching practice. Karen too, was aware of her positionality and its role, and in her thesis research explored secondary students’ understanding of popular culture. A teacher with a significant amount of experience, she understood that students had greater visual literacy than given credit for and were not only proficient at understanding visuals, but also critiquing popular visual culture. The research provided legitimacy to preexisting beliefs. Furthermore, taking classes “one at a time” allowed her to absorb
and implement new ideas in her class. Like Joanne, she began to use questions to guide her taught curriculum, and I was able to observe Karen present assignments in terms of a question. Using questions to drive the art making, they asked students to draw from their lived experiences and ideas, and students’ cultural understanding were reflected in the final piece. Instead of presenting essentialized versions of cultural knowledge, they asked students to share their ideas and belief with the class. It also enabled the teachers to gain a more authentic insight into students’ culture.

Sharon, who began graduate study a year and a half ago, did so to change her practice. Traveling broadened her perspective, and while she accepted that there are multiple ways of knowing, she was at loss to transform ideas into practice. Reflecting on her teaching following teacher certification and the motivation to return to school, she said:

….. because I did feel like, maybe its more the DBAE kind of approach that I was using before and you know I had good art classes. And I think my kids came, they worked hard, they learnt how to do stuff, um, we had a good time and I think that the kids liked being in the art room and it was good experiences, but in the end of it, I kept saying, why are we doing this, what does this all mean, or these great paintings they’d make and they wouldn’t want to bring them home and they’d just leave them there and I said this means nothing to you? Does it? you just did it because I asked you to do it and you spent time doing it? But I wanted it to mean more than that, so that (…). You know I wanted to change so I went back to school. (Interview, February 6th, 2009)

After a handful of courses, she feels that her practice has improved significantly.

Courses do not always provide ways of translating theory into practice, however, Sharon attempts to bring theory into her own classroom as often as possible. Illustrating

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4 Culture once again refers to a broader range encompassing racial, ethnic, gender, language, religious, to name a few.
this is a lesson that I observed on spaces. Applying the theory of space-based education and its impact on learning and art making, Sharon asked students to design a space. Preceding this activity, she asked students to think about the various spaces they occupy, actions within spaces, rules created for particular spaces and how they would like to transform or re-envision a particular space. Sharon asked each student to write out a proposal and create a three-dimensional model of the space. Students had full control over materials and sizes, and boundaries were self defined. In the end, students commented on school, home and community spaces and this inquiry resulted in designed spaces falling into a broad spectrum, from realistic to abstract, functional and fantasy.

In addition to bringing theory into the classrooms and exploring new curricular and pedagogical strategies, the self-reflexive nature of the participants was evidenced in semesterly self-evaluations. The teachers evaluated their teaching, and shared the evaluation with students. Students were in turn asked to reflect on their learning in relation to the teacher. The process ended with one-on-ones with each student whereby they were able to reflect on the teaching and their learning, ways they could’ve performed better in-class, what they gained from the class and changes in their overall impression of art and art making. As a student myself, I could not recount a time when teacher or a professor shared a self-evaluation of his/her teaching and asked the class to reflect on ways the teaching could be improved or altered.

Given the participants’ critical nature, they occasionally evaluated the actions and decisions made by colleagues and the effects on the larger student and school commu-
nities. These moments provided an opportunity to observe overlaps and intersections in their various relationships. Karen describes several incidences where she invited her colleagues to question the way they understood aboriginal rights and histories. Karen’s classroom is located across from a school store where books, stationary and snacks can be purchased. The school store is called the ‘Haidaway’, a play on the Haida, referring to a group of aboriginal people located approximately 3,000 kilometers north from Vancouver. She considered the school as being pro-native, but was critical of teachers’ lack of understanding of aboriginal people, their histories, and contemporary politics.

K  Do you know what was more terrifying about that?
R  What?
K  …its that there were no teachers that knew that that was an appropriation. So the teacher who taught next door to me, when I first came here and I said something about the Haidaway, and I said, ‘why did you call this the Haidaway’, and he said, ‘well because you know we...of Chief Khathasalano’. I said, ‘explain that one to me. I don't get it, I'm not with you’. ‘Oh yea, you know Chief Khathasalano’, he's Haida. [laughs] ‘Dan’, how long have you lived in BC and you think that Chief Khathasalano is Haida? Its coast Salish, Musqueum. The Haida are 3000 kilometers north on the coast of Queen Charlottes’. (Interview April 2009)

Karen, the most vocal participant in the study, often shared instances where she challenged both students and colleagues to revisit their ideas. Joanne, on the other hand had few criticisms of her colleagues, recognizing their positive characteristics. In this case, the institutional context becomes important. The school’s teachers mirrored the name, Tree Hill, and all six teachers were, from Joanne’s perspective, exceptional edu-

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5 The Haida territories are comprised of the archipelago of the Queen Charlotte Islands, known in the Haida language as Haida Gwaii and the southern half of Prince of Wales Island.

6 Name changed from the original transcript.
cators. Sharon, a new teacher at the secondary school, choose not to comment on her colleagues.

**Negotiating and Performing Identities**

Although all teachers saw themselves performing multiple roles, assuming various identities of teacher, artist, researcher, student, mother/guardian and mentor, Karen and Joanne were particularly vocal about the ever changing roles of an art teacher. Gender seemed to play into the pedagogical choices the teacher participants made during the course of the study. Although there are no male participants in this study to provide comparison, teachers often self-identified as playing a maternal role for students. Karen and Joanne openly referred to themselves as being “a mother” to certain students and I was able to observe numerous instances where they consoled students on non-art or school related issues.

In the classroom, the ‘mother’ part of their identities revealed itself in a crisis. A scenario that unfolded during an observation illustrated this: towards the end of ceramics class. 3-4 male students who had been unruly were given the task of extruding used clay and these students started a clay fight in the presence of the teacher. The teacher asked the students to put an end to the clay fight and momentarily left the classroom. The students immediately returned to flinging wet clay at one another and also other classmates. As the researcher, and an adult in the classroom, I asked the students to stop and questioned Karen about the incident later in the day. She referred to her upbringing with five brother and being tolerant of unruly students, adding that its important to “pick your battles”, and “yelling at students” as being “completely ineffective”. During a visit later in the week, I noticed that clay had been removed by the students who had
initiated the clay fight from all the furniture, equipment, walls and ceilings. Joanne had a similar take on unruly students and worked with students to understand the underlying cause of their misbehavior. She credited raising eight children and experiences in developing strategies for behavior challenged students.

Sharon, who had returned to teaching after a decade’s break was more comfortable with performing the roles of teacher, artist and mentor. Over a period of three months, in observations and conversations, I noticed Sharon becoming more comfortable with assuming more intimate roles. She acknowledged that a lack of comfort came from taking over Karen’s classes.

yeah, well, I mean it was a number of things going on in that first term, one just getting to know all these kids … know it all, because they are grade 10, 11, and 12, I knew a couple in the grade 10\(^7\), but otherwise I didn’t know those students….I’ve been teaching grade 8’s, kinda this idea of teaching the senior art class, its more, is it different? Should what I do with them be different from what I do with the grade 8’s? And then dealing with my own, in a way a lack of self confidence thinking stepping into her [Karen’s] shoes here. This real feeling that these kids probably signed up for this class cause they thought she [Karen] would be teaching it and here I am coming in and feeling nervous about that, so I have had to get comfortable with them…. I never go into a class like I know it all but it was just different with this group than it is with my other group because I thought I was stepping into, ah, into someone else’s shoes and are they going to be disappointed. I have a lot to live up to, with all these kinds of feelings and kinda not knowing what their abilities were in terms of technique and what they could actually do and um, but then, but coming back second term and feeling that we know each other a bit and I know what we’ve been through in the first project and we struggled with, its a lot better and I feel a lot more confident in just telling them…. (Interview, February 6\(^{th}\), 2009)

\(^7\) Sharon is familiar with students in the Grade 10 class since her daughter is in Grade 10. Being familiar with students outside the school context places her in an interesting position in the class and is something she has referred to in conversations.
Although some students are in both Sharon and Karen’s classes, students behave very differently in the two teachers’ classes. Pedagogically, Sharon is different from the other participants. In each of Sharon’s classes that I observed, she started the class with getting all students together and setting the agenda for the week, or an assignment, or simply laying out goals for a particular day. She expressed the need to ‘model’ behavior that she expected of her students. Following this reasoning, she worked with students on developing a studio practice by first organizing thoughts, doing preliminary research and sketches, and then delving into making art. Pedagogically, Sharon practiced an artist/mentor relationship whereby she worked alongside students to model technique and assisted individual students who required help. She opened spaces for students to explore their ideas, through a variety of materials, accommodating special requests for materials and spaces but ‘checked-in’ with each student at bi-weekly intervals.8

On the surface, negotiating and transitioning from one identity to another appeared to be fluid. However, for the participants, the tasks of providing what individual students require on a particular day was exhausting. I asked the participants why they chose to play multiple roles and expressed that recognizing and responding to students’ needs is the key to ‘good teaching’. Joanne responded with: “I do think about what each individual kid wants and needs and I can kinda keep that as a, as a plateau at the back of my mind…”(Interview, February 9th, 2009). Karen described that being an effective teacher required work at multiple levels. Following the clay fight, she announced that

8 Students had any given class either two or three times a week, depending on the block schedule. Sharon spoke to every student during the longer blocks periods two times a week.
she could take the “easy way” by planning lessons and asking all students to follow the same path or the “difficult way”, where she needed to be acutely aware of individual needs. Responding to students resulted in artist and creative exploration that were meaningful to students.

**Students**

*Student Culture*

In order to analyze the relationships the teacher participants have with their students, there needs to be a clear understanding of the student population in the two schools. Students at the comprehensive high school primarily come from a middle to an upper-middle class background, with many students coming from an even higher socio-economic background. Karen explains that while the high school is known primarily for being a sports or a ‘jock’ secondary school, it has the largest French Immersion program in the school district.

….the biggest portion of the school is made up of French Immersion. So they're in a population of 1600, there are 600 of those kids are French Immersion. Those are kids and parents who have self selected to be here and so they draw from all over the district. (Interview, April 7th, 2009)

Although the French Immersion program draws students from across the district, both art teachers describe the students in the program as upper-middle class, and primarily Caucasian. Parents and guardians of the students have professional backgrounds and are heavily invested in students’ academic and extracurricular lives. The secondary school also has a disproportionately large number of international students who live with a local guardian or home-stay parents. Karen describes a scenario where a student was left with older siblings or guardians while her parents lived overseas:
I didn't know Tina was an international student, her English is amazing. I thought she was born and raised here. And she's one that ...grade 10 and my 11 and 12 classes. One of my most brilliant students, so driven but at the same time so normal. Just a kid, right? I asked her about it. She said, 'well, it's what my family wanted, the only way we were going to get into a big American university. That's just what we do'. That's just what they do.....its a really difficult situation. We have an international counselor who tries to support them. Make sure that all of that is there and available and she'll report if she feels that a student is on their own. (Interview, April 2009)

Other minority groups are those students that live in the upscale neighborhood but belong to single parents or fall in the lower socio-economic bracket. Through the course of the research study, there were several students in both teachers’ classes that seemed segregated from the rest of the class. I was able to inquire about the students and also spoke to the students during class hours. A few students had been displaced following the parents’ separation and one student who stood out in the grade 10 ceramics class was a refuge from Eastern Europe whose family had moved to British Columbia in the middle of the school year.

The population at the secondary school is extremely heterogenous. While a significant percentage of the population is Caucasian, students come from a myriad of social, cultural, linguistic, gender and economic backgrounds. Karen mentions that while it’s easy to put the students in categories like ‘white’, ‘asian’, ‘punk’ and ‘goth’, it’s beneficial to see the differences among groups. Illustrating her point, during several classes, Karen pointed out the differences among Asian students; some were international and
self-segregated by language, others from dissimilar\textsuperscript{9} ethnic backgrounds but born and raised in Canada and some with mixed parentage\textsuperscript{10}.

Students at the school, despite the heterogeneity, possess a sense of entitlement that sets the school apart from others in the district.

The kids here are to a certain extent, I see them as being treated more adult-like. And I think from my perspective, its more in terms of, professional parents …. And so what we have a reputation for is kids with a sense of entitlement. I also see it in a positive spin, kids with a strong sense of self, kids who are very confident, kids who really are sure of themselves. They say, “Ms Karen, I'm going to get a cup of coffee at Starbucks”, which is another layer of culture at [West Side]. We're right here on Broadway\textsuperscript{11} and this stream of Broadway restaurants and coffee shops and the beach and this whole this, so its very fluid between that street and this school.

Although the school is seen as a ‘problem’ school for teachers on call (TOC’s), the sense of self also allows students to, while maintaining an unreal sense of the world, reach out to the larger community. I was able to observe a student culture that was unlike my experiences as a secondary school student and a high school teacher. Students openly participated in LGBTQ organizations that were supported by the school and parents. Over the course of three months, I witnessed planning for several charity events.

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{9} Karen remarked that while teachers like to ‘lump’ Asian students into one category, she felt that in order to make headway with the students, especially international students, it was important to identify their backgrounds. In her classes she had students from Korea, Taiwan and various parts of China, who had distinct mannerisms.

\textsuperscript{10} Between Sharon and Karen’s classes, there were multiple students who had mixed parentage. One student in particular had a Japanese mother and East Indian father, and was able to transition easily between various groups of students. Since he worked with Karen on a project for the new school building, I had a significant amount of contact with him.

\textsuperscript{11} The school is ¼ kilometer away from a busy street that has a variety of restaurants and shops. When visiting the secondary school, students can be observed at the restaurants, in the grocery store and also in clothing stores. During the school lunch, there is a visible flow of students between the school building and the commercial street.
You know, they always have a cause. Tonight there is the fundraiser for school in Africa for "Free the Children". There is the Amnesty international club, there is they ...excuses...how many other clubs are there, that are all about saving the world. They do tend to look at the world as out there though, not ...their world. (Karen, Interview, March 2009)

On the other hand, Tree Hill secondary school is the inverse of West Side Secondary in many ways. To begin, students at this secondary school go through a rigorous entrance process and the secondary school itself caters to 150 students. Tree Hill has a focus on the liberal arts, as well as the visual and performing arts. The school is an intimate setting, with little administrative oversight, allowing teachers full autonomy over their courses and time.

Figure 5.2 Student designed lockers, Tree Hill Secondary School
Joanne describes the students and the atmosphere:

they are open. The trust is because people let... one of the mission statements, that trust and safe environment and all of those things are important. Right. They want to belong, it’s kind of like a family. They want to belong, so they don’t want to do things that would jeopardize that, right. So there is a trust between them, each other and the staff. (Interview, February, 2009)

The trust is displayed in many ways, one of it being open lockers and classrooms.

Books and clothing can be observed overflowing out of the lockers (Figure 5.2). Given the constraints of a small building, students are allowed to work outside the classroom, spilling into the hallway and empty classrooms. The bell schedule is much softer with students coming in and out of the classroom at various times during the day. At first, it was difficult to differentiate between students that belonged in the class during a certain hours and those that did not. Moreover, although the school had a scheduled lunch hour, the art classroom was full of students during the lunch hour, between classes and after school. The fluid and spontaneous nature of the school, especially in the art classroom allows Joanne to teach specific to students needs.

…. I wanna know about them first, what they want, what they need and a…. I'll change things mid-class, mid-lesson if its not what is working for that class right there and each group is different, and each group has a different dynamic, right. (Interview, February, 2009)

I was able to observe this scenario in one of her senior classes. The group dynamic inclined towards being recalcitrant and Joanne stopped students mid-class and brought together the entire class to work on a group activity that forced them to collaborate and communicate.

Unlike the comprehensive secondary school, students at Tree Hill are a more cohesive group. Despite the visible cultural diversity within the relatively small student
population, the class (socio-economic) differences are not transparent. Different from my own experiences of social cliques at secondary school, students at Tree Hill did not demonstrate clique behaviors. There are multiple students of mixed ethnic backgrounds, however the large majority of students are either first generation immigrants or have immigrated to Canada in the past decade.

The relationships between student and teacher in both schools are partly a manifestation of the school and student culture. The following section examines ways in which art teachers in the two schools visualize their students. Though the teacher participants do not use academic vocabulary during conversations and interviews, a postcolonial lens allows for a reading that indicates a transgression from conventional student-teacher relationships. It can be argued that critical pedagogy, an important element of culturally relevant pedagogy, can explain the teaching practices of the participants in this study. A postcolonial lens, however, is helpful in analyzing the ways in which the participants understand concepts of hybridity and borderlands.

Redefining ‘Student’

Teachers in this study stood out in two ways: their conceptualization of students’ roles, and re-defining what urban meant in regards to their students. Although the teacher participants have a clear understanding of the roles\textsuperscript{12}, they attempt to blur the boundaries between student and teacher, pushing students to become critical inquirers.

\textsuperscript{12} Individuals are indoctrinated into the roles of a teacher at an early age. On average, over a period of two decades of being a student, first at the primary, then secondary and often at the post-secondary levels, ideas of who teachers are and what they do is cemented. Although, there is a tendency to think about teachers’ cognition, students, too, are implicated in the process of developing an understanding of teaching through the experience of being students. This affects the ways in which they respond to teachers. Teacher educators write that reversing the cognitive blocks are the most difficult, yet crucial in changing teaching practice.
and forcing them to pursue independent projects. Karen defines her work as a
deschooling of sorts. Taking an art class is mandatory in the comprehensive high
school\textsuperscript{13}, and not all students are interested in being in the course. Karen and Sharon’s
deschooling challenge of teaching in a large secondary school is working with students who, 1) rea-
locate class time to work on homework from core areas (English, Mathematics, Sci-
ence), and those who 2) expect a scenario where they are told what to do for a ‘grade’.  
Karen describes speaks about the difficulties in moving away from the traditional stu-
dent-teacher roles, whereby the teacher directs all activity. She says:

> so they’ll pull it [homework] out... I’m trying to teach and the way I’m trying to get
them to think about creating art and making art themselves, meaningful art rubs
up against their 11 or 12 years of teaching. It says “do this, get a mark, do this
get a mark, do this get a mark, do this get a mark, do this get a mark… added up
and I get an A at the end. Its not really, they don’t learn anything, but I’ve learnt
how to do these things, so I get a mark”. (Interview, February 6\textsuperscript{th}, 2009)

Both Karen and Sharon, force students to move away from a model where they are
more concerned with getting an ‘A’ in the class by following a series of prescribed pro-
jects. The first week that I spent at the school coincided with the last week of the winter
term and therefore students were lined up outside the teachers’ office demanding to
know their grade. Without submitting to revealing a letter grade, Karen put the onus on
the students and dialogued about their performance in the class.

Joanne has fewer struggles in this area. The institutional context forces the stu-
dents and the teachers to move away from a centralized model of teaching and learn-
ing, to a more distributed model, allowing teachers to relinquish some control and em-

\textsuperscript{13} While art is not mandatory for graduation at the district level, according to the teachers, all students are
asked to take an art class (visual, music or drama).
powering students to assume control and responsibility. Students at Tree Hill, similar to their peers at West Side Secondary, are required to take art; unlike their peers, students at this school take art at every grade level, in addition to drama and home economics.

**Conceptualizing Student**

In conceptualizing students, the word urban appeared often in discussion. Within the academic literature, scholars critique teachers and administration who use the term urban as being synonymous with marginalized, poverty-stricken, broken families, non-White, and minorities. Teacher educators saw minorities through a deficit model (Watson, Charner-Laird, Kirkpatrick, Szczesiul & Gordon, 2006).

….many teachers leave teacher education programs with “limited and distorted understandings. . . about inequity and cultural diversity” (King et al., 1997, p. 158), what Joyce King (1991) has termed dysconsciousness: “an uncritical habit of mind (including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs) that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given” (p. 135). (in Watson et al., 2006, p. 396)

The review of literature by Watson et al. suggests that even those educators who are committed to education equity often do not critically examine the implications of their knowledge of diversity and consequences of their actions. In heterogeneous areas, dysconsciousness is problematic for both student and teacher.

However, as mentioned in the earlier section, individuals in the study are conscious of their social location and its impact on the student population. They characterize urban youth through positive tenets. Aside from Sharon, other participants have taught a range of school within Vancouver, including schools in the Downtown Eastside. Recalling experiences of teaching in schools with smaller budgets and the majority of students on meal-assistance, teachers characterized their students as being empow-
ered students who were aware of their realities. Instead of seeing their socio-economic status or their racial and ethnic backgrounds as an obstruction, they drew on students’ varied and rich live experiences. The student diversity gave teachers an opportunity to discuss social issues, politics, culture, diversity, and hybridity, resulting in students’ expressing their ideas and beliefs unquestioned. Far from being problematic these teachers saw ‘urban youth’ as a challenging group that forced teachers to maintain fluid relationships with knowledge, and question their curriculum and pedagogy.

In Karen’s teaching in the Downtown Eastside, where she worked with the largest number of disenfranchised youth, she saw her students as being in the borderlands, eager to learn, relearn and move forward. By believing in every student’s potential and pushing students to become artists, she created spaces for artistic inquiry, creativity and ownership. Teacher participants all saw a need to develop students as artists. As much as possible, the teachers in the study urged students to consider independent projects. Sharon says that her “focus has been more on trying to pose problems that will try to get them to think about art issues, which then brings in culture, society, politics and their self-identity”. They see overlaps in issues of identity and culture, and rather than relying on multiculturalism to talk about social issues, they rely on students themselves. Both Karen and Sharon admit that in their early teaching experiences, they did employ ‘multicultural’ lesson plans. Having gone through the same teacher education program, both teachers at the comprehensive secondary school found similarities in their early teaching experience. Karen recalls that the methods acquired in a teacher education program led to boredom for herself and ‘spoon-feeding’ for the students. The result was pieces of
art that were identical from one student to another, and her background as an artist conflicted with her teaching practice. Drawing on experiences of a post-secondary fine arts education, both teachers reassessed their practice, and began to approach students as artists.

By employing independent, self-directed projects, they force students to explore issues of culture and identity that they were most interested in. They spoke about overlaps in student cultures, and the blurred divisions between various cultures. Diversity is seen as an area of overlap, collision and convergence. Living in Vancouver—a town that has a large immigrant population, coastal aboriginal people and individuals of European descent—creates an atmosphere where culture is not homogenous. Teachers recognize that through a process of being in contact with culturally dissimilar groups, students absorb ideas, values and material interests from a variety of groups. This creates an identity that is truly hybrid.

K ....from the outside they all say, aw, they are all Chinese kids or they are all white kids, but there is diversity within as you guys (…) K ....Anyways, so I, oh, over the course of the 10 years I came to the point where doing more and more independent projects as the year went on, they would be more and more immersed in what they were interested in and that's where those, those interests in ethnicity came out because it came from them and in identity and in all those things we wanted to cover. So I was always so thrilled when they would say, oh is it okay if I do. And they would, is it ok if I do this thing about Chinese opera masks ... yeah! That'd be cool! Rather than me standing in front of the class saying, we're all going to do Chinese S (silent) yes K opera masks, it all kinda came, so I had some, lots of success there talking about culture as opposed to multicultural ... that there is culture and we all have culture and it comes in different forms and there is pop culture and there is your culture and there is my culture and there is the culture of the World of Warcraft ....so (Interview, May 21st, 2009)
Assessment was another area where the participants forced students to think like artists. Joanne asked students to keep journals to record their ideas and development of a particular project. Since Karen and Sharon teach at a much larger secondary school, they employed a rubric (Table 5.1) and required a short-answer style explanation of each of the categories. At the end of each unity, they conferenced with students about their projects using the rubrics.

Table 5.1 Independent Project Assessment Rubric, West Side Secondary School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self Assessment of Independent Project</th>
<th>Due by June 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Please circle the descriptions that apply to you in each of the 5 categories ☐ Please explain, give evidence, describe on back</td>
<td>NAME:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent Term 3: %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Little Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposal</td>
<td>- Thoughtful</td>
<td>- Some thought</td>
<td>- Little thought or not done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Comprehensive</td>
<td>- Some complexity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Complete on time</td>
<td>- Mostly complete</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Complex</td>
<td>- On time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studio Practice</td>
<td>- Consistent and appropriate use of studio/class time every class, all class and beyond</td>
<td>- Less than consistent use of class time</td>
<td>- No much art making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Evidence of artistic growth</td>
<td>- Mostly appropriate use of class-time toward making art</td>
<td>- Consistently late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>- Evidence of exploration in relation to proposal</td>
<td>- Some evidence of exploration</td>
<td>- Unexcused absences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Focused</td>
<td>- Some experimentation</td>
<td>- Leaving class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Numerous examples, sketches, research</td>
<td>- Mostly purposeful</td>
<td>- Card &amp; other games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Evidence of artistic growth</td>
<td>- Some examples of sketches, research</td>
<td>- Using art class as study or homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product</td>
<td>- Complete</td>
<td>- Mostly complete</td>
<td>- No evidence of growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Evidence of excellence in relation to your proposal and process</td>
<td>- Evidence of satisfactory work in relation to process</td>
<td>- No exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Actively critiquing progress with teacher and peers</td>
<td>- Some evidence of critiquing</td>
<td>- Little evidence of work done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Exemplary work done on time</td>
<td>- Satisfactory work</td>
<td>- No evidence of growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Final self-assessment thoughtful, complete</td>
<td>- Satisfactory self-assessment</td>
<td>- Not presented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Little evidence of finished product</td>
<td>- Derivative, easy images</td>
<td>- No self assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the other hand, the participants sometimes employed more informal techniques to get students to think creatively, and as artists. Towards the end of the study, the weather in Vancouver turned from rain to sunshine, and I walked into the classroom in between periods to find that all the students were outdoors. Karen was in her office waiting for students to filter in. When the bell rang, announcing the commencement of the period, she walked around the classroom and then the courtyard to check on her students. She then orientated me on rules for working outdoors.

Working outdoors warranted space for students to work on larger sculptural projects and large-scale drawings and paintings. In an earlier conversation, Sharon had indicated that one of the constraints on her ability to teach and allow students to explore fully was the classroom space. The classroom, with three working tables and an area for ceramics was not adequate for 25-30 students. Working outdoors, in both secondary schools, was an indication of trust between the teacher and the student. In West Side, Karen remarked, that students were more independent than their peers in other parts of the City and capable of working unassisted. In addition to opening the courtyard as a workspace, Karen has also developed a self-guided museum tour for students in the upper grade levels.

Because of who these kids are, and I've just started experimenting with this year and I do self-guided field trips. I don't need to take these guys as a group anywhere. On their own. They can go on their own, together…. But they have to, pick out where there's work, pick out the gallery, the VAG, center A - wherever they're going to go has to be researched, why do they want to go there and which artist they want to see they should look them all up. They have to go through the process of taking themselves to the gallery, and making sense of that. (Interview, April 7th, 2009)
In my observations, this relationship requires forbearance on the part of the teacher and student. In order for students to pursue independent projects off-campus, they have to follow rules set in place by Karen (and the school administration) and on Karen’s part, recognizing students’ independence and developing projects of this nature requires utmost confidence in a students’ ability to follow guidelines. As mentioned earlier, the trust between students and teacher at Tree Hill also allows for a similar relationship. Students often go on field trips during the day to restaurants, bazaars, galleries and museums.

Relationships with students, much like teachers’ relationship with self and knowledge, appeared to be in constant metamorphosis. At times, participants’ identities were more focused on teacher and artist/mentor, and at other times, more intimate and playful. Karen, who prepared students’ Advance Placement portfolios, saw many students as artists and her peers. She commented on tensions arising between her colleagues and their students when a student surpasses the teacher in skill and ideas. Far from being tense, these moments presented Karen with an opportunity to revisit her studio practice and feel a sense of accomplishment. Relationships with students overlapped with their understanding of knowledge - having multiple origins and ways of knowing. The following section explores relationships with knowledge in greater detail.

Knowledge

Martin and Van Gunten (2002) write:

Comprehending the construction of knowledge from multiple positions is essential to understanding how to create equitable and culturally representative pedagogical strategies. (p. 46)
In the postcolonial realm and outside, definitions of knowledge is contested. Knowledge, according to postcolonial scholars, is generated through a series of powerful social relationships that preserve and protect the interests of the dominant group. Despite the disputes over postcolonial understandings and interpretations of knowledge, and the questions over whether or not it is independent of Western domination, postcoloniality offers ways to resist forms of control, “no matter how hidden or subtle they might be” (Viruru, 2005, p. 9). This section examines ways in which the teacher participants in the study characterize knowledges and their relationship with knowledge.

Figure 5.3 North wall of art classroom, Tree Hill Secondary School

Since the study is concerned with secondary art teachers, it is crucial to explore teachers’ understanding of epistemologies of art. A postcolonial epistemology of art dis-
associates itself from a modernist and a postmodernist paradigm, ‘a trap’ that Hickling-Hudson identifies as a continuous push towards a Eurocentric perspective (Hickling-Hudson, 1998). Teachers believe that knowledge is fluid and changing, and assert a need for professionals to familiarize themselves with developments in the field. All teachers in the study identified in being interested in artists and art production, especially with local contemporary artists.

**Utilizing Contemporary Artists As a Resource**

Figure 5.4 Examples of student work, sketches for ‘Transformations’ assignment, West Side Secondary School

Teachers in the study show a preference towards postcolonial and contemporary art and artists. McCarthy and Dimitriadis define postcolonial art through two tenets:
Firstly, we want to highlight postcolonial art’s vigorous challenge of hegemonic forms of representation in Western models of classical realism and technologies of truth.

Secondly, the work of art in the postcolonial imagination effectively rewrites the narrative of modernity and modernization in which a binary logic attempts to exhaust the field of the West and empire by creating oppositions of ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’, ‘developed’ and ‘underdeveloped’, and ‘civilized’ and ‘primitive’. (2000, p. 61)

Karen, in particular spoke about ways in which contemporary artists (Figure 5.4), working across medium, allow her to investigate a range of social issues with her student. In the following conversation with her colleague, Sharon, she also describes her growth as an art teacher.

K: I’ve been teaching for 19 years now, I guess I took 2 years to go to SFU, but involved in, but I still struggle with all of those questions and trying to do it, but …[stutter] about, 12, 14 years, 14 years ago I gave a presentation at one of our local conferences and my answer to, and then curriculum was brand new given the context of multiculturalism, blah blah blah, my answer to it was, if we focus on Canadian contemporary artists we would answer all the questions, we would, we would meet all of those things. We can talk about First Nations people, we can talk about ethnicity, we can talk about identity, we can talk about all of those things that are embodied in contemporary art and with Canadian artists and we’d have it done.
S: check it off
K: that’s easier said than done, obviously and like, Sharon and I can both show them lots of stuff and say look at this, look at this and they … so, that’s where I stand, start with that, with me you really, trying to keep abreast of what’s happening in the art world, um, a little less in the art education world, since I’ve finished my masters. (Interview, February, 2009)

The above excerpt is from the first interview I had with Karen and Shannon. While observing both teachers at the comprehensive high school, I was able to observe references to multiple contemporary artists. Unlike many art classrooms that have posters of

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14 These sketches are inspired by examples presented in class. One student drew inspiration from Damien Hirst, an artist who explores issues of physical hybridity.
‘The Masters\textsuperscript{15}, the art classroom at the comprehensive high school has student work and images of contemporary artists on the walls. Karen spoke about art teachers reliance on box-sets of reproductions by the Masters and challenges the charade of using ‘multicultural’ artists that come in box-sets: “so that’s why I think we kid ourselves, we think if we and that’s where a lot of teachers say they’ll get a set of images from…. we need to have a set that have some culture in it too”.

\textbf{Adding to The Cannon, Challenging Norms}

Teachers in the study questioned their education and the conventional image of an art teacher. Karen in particular was vocal about the misgivings of teacher education programs.

\ldots\ldots I remember when I was going through art education and the big project that everyone one did was put up a map. and every kid would pin where they were from and we would look at the cultures of those worlds. Its a good place to start and then it always became this cliché, superficial kind of thing, which I think is what, unfortunately a lot of education falls into that. Here’s an activity, let’s all put up the pins, Oh, see where we’re all from. See we recognize that. (Interview, April 7\textsuperscript{th}, 2009)

Joanne too challenges the role of an art teacher. In art, drama and home economics classes, she devises field trips to capture a holistic sense of the culture of place they study. One lesson revolved around block prints, in particular East Indian block prints. Parallel to curricular choices made by other art teachers, the lesson covered the history of block printing, contemporary counterparts, guest lecturers and an opportunity for students to design blocks. Unlike most art teachers, Joanne’s students visited East Indian

\textsuperscript{15} The Masters include Monet, van Gogh, Renoir, Cezanne, Pissarro, Klimt, Rembrandt and other European painters. It is common to see reproductions of famous works by these artists in teachers’ classrooms, often as visual aids and examples of elements and principles of art.
restaurants and shopping centers, among other local establishments, to help students form a more complete picture of East Indian block printing. Students discussed the usefulness of blocks at the time of invention and discovered contemporary usages. In addition to helping students experience multiple aspects of a culture, Joanne defies other norms:

J: …I really believe they need to learn how to survive. In this world, on all levels. So I’m teaching them things, like I’m drawing from the start, like I learnt when I was a kid and I’ve taught them how to can and I’ve taught them how to preserve. I’m teaching them how to grow things. Seeds. Stuff like that. Just basic survival things. Just so, little things.

R: in Home Economics?

J: no, with everything. We’ll plant seeds and we’ll grow things, grow herbs, talk about stuff like that. (Interview, February, 2009)

Karen on the other hand, has an activist sense. Heavily involved with the art teachers association, Karen asserted a need for art teachers to become familiar with artists working outside the traditional roles. She described the challenges in coordinating a professional development day (pro-d day) with multiple teachers in the district who did not share her viewpoint. Karen planned a trip to galleries and a cultural arts center in an area which is viewed as being drug-riddled and unsafe. She says that for teachers in the school district, “seeing art that is already cleaned up, in a cleaned up part of town, that’s putting it out there already….”, and the possibility of going to an area characterized as being unsafe makes her colleagues feel uneasy. However, Karen and Sharon both question whether it is the artists or the location that makes their colleagues uncomfortable. They believe that the reluctance is related to their conception of art, the production as well as the presentation. Art in the Downtown Eastside challenges their epistemological foundations.
for some people that is still a struggle, they will be, they would say, no no
I'm cool with multiculturalism, yeah yeah....
if you're not living it then you're just not seeing it, right? (Interview, May, 2009)

Challenging colleagues who teach in “cleaned up part(s) of town” to rethink the concept of multiculturalism, prompted Karen to defend the need for the professional development day to take place in the Downtown Eastside. Karen and Sharon both saw multiculturalism as a coming together of cultures, creating areas of hybridity and overlap that was reflected in the students and their art. Multiculturalism was not an opportunity to present essentialized, uncritical examples of non-Western cultures, but one to openly and critically address similarities and negotiate differences.

Joanne declared “well, I rarely use the European artists as an example of anything”. Instead, Joanne too, focuses on a variety of contemporary artists, arts history as well as practical lessons. The walls in Joanne’s classroom are covered with student art projects, both in-progress and installation pieces worked on by students in previous years. She doesn’t rely solely on contemporary Canadian art, but artists and art forms from around the world, crediting her travel and experiences from living in multiple countries.

....back of my mind. I know what they’re supposed to know, I know they’re supposed to know elements and principles of design, I know they’re supposed to know all that stuff. So I add that stuff in all the time. What’s more important is uh... is that they have a love of art, right. And they understand how to express themselves through that is way more important. And its their individuality and I give them a chance to express themselves, their own selves, right. And I’ll follow any path they want to go down, right. (Interview, February 2009)
Students’ Lived Experiences As Knowledge

During an informal interview, following a textiles class, Joanne described the pleasures of teaching a heterogeneous group where students’ cultural knowledges influence on their ideas and art making.

I don’t think I do it consciously, because you see, the difference with me is that I am an immigrant too, so I sorta see us all in the same level. I bring my Australian background to what I teach and sometimes quite … they’ll know things that are my culture to the classroom.

Joanne’s relationship with knowledge, interweaves with her relationships with her students. Honoring multiple ways of knowing and being in the world, Joanne works to create an environment that allows each student to explore, understand and address issues of identity. In the above interview, Joanne maintains that she will follow along with students’ needs and during the observations she did respond to student needs. On a daily basis, Joanne assisted students in pursuing projects that she had not assigned in class and allowed students to address assignments with great flexibility. A project that I was able to observe in its entirety asked, “Who do I think my grandparents were?” Realizing that the majority of students in grade 10 class had either never met their grandparents or were not well acquainted with the grandparents, she asked students to explore family archives, speak to parents and relatives, and construct an identity for their grandparents. Similar to projects that I had seen and spoken to Joanne about, this assignment involved producing a piece of art that answered the above question. Joanne explained that culture was an important aspect of her teaching, however it was rarely an explicit aspect of the lesson. She said, “I give them questions and they bring me their answer with their art piece and that of course, a lot of them will do, look for their own cultures to
Throughout the assignments, students interlaced historical details, family histories, and knowledges passed down through generations to create a piece of work that addressed the question.

….I got everything from umm photographs to quilts to games that were played with them as little kids, like Chinese games that they played with, made from sticks. I got some really interesting ones with, a girl did a picture of her grandmother house…. a picture of her grandmothers house in China and a picture of a house here in Canada - and then blend together. (Interview, February 2009)

Since I had observed students using a variety of materials, some using canvas and paints, others sculptural materials and a handful of students working in textiles, halfway through the assignment, I asked Joanne about the open ended nature of these assignments. From a curricular point of view, allowing students to explore a question in the medium of their choosing allowed students to improve skill and technique in that medium, and provided a strong incentive for students to explore and be creative. From a pedagogical viewpoint, Joanne was able to accommodate 16 students that were not experienced or comfortable with traditional mediums such as drawing and painting. By working in a medium students were both familiar and comfortable in, they were able to creatively address an intimate question. The assignments were graded on the basis of the exploration, entries in the visual journals and the final piece.

16 Students in Joanne’s classroom come from across the school district and often come from immigrant families. In her classes, a large majority of the students were first generation immigrants with strong roots in their parents’ place of birth. Her students often took language, dance, culture and crafts classes with their community to reproduce traditional and ethnic values.
Relationship With Communities

We can give voice to the subjugated knowledges of oppressed peoples by providing structures that allow the oppressed to speak for themselves. In this way insurrections of subjugated knowledges provide not only new forms of critique, solidarity, and struggle but also a deeper identification with the victimized. (McLaren and da Silva, 1993, p. 74)

In the study, the participants identified several communities that they deemed important to their practice: school community, community of practice, and the larger district community. Broadening notions of ‘the other’ was an important aspect of the teachers’ work and relationships in the community. Paramount to effective teaching was living and belonging to the community. Throughout the discussion, all participants spoke about the importance of being a “part of the community” through their involvement in student organizations, connections with parents, awareness of the interests of the community and living in “the neighborhood”. Joanne was the only participant who did not live in the same location as the students but on a boat in the harbor. Sharon, whose daughter attends the secondary school, lives at a short distance from the secondary school. Karen also lives in Vancouver, but in the Downtown Eastside. The importance of community was present over two decades ago when she first started teaching, and her children were of school going age. She said:

We lived there for 7 years. And my mother, and my in-laws were determined that we were going to send our kids to the private Catholic school in the neighborhood before Emma [her daughter] started school and they, my mother in-law...she said but no-way she was having her daughters go to the public school given the neighborhood we lived in. And Bruce [her partner] and I just said, “we're part of the community, this is our community”....We figured that our for ourselves right from the beginning that community is where its at. And there was a teacher that,

17 The harbor is located centrally, close to downtown Vancouver.
Mrs. Graham, who'd been teaching in that school for 35 years. She was astounding. Her thing was all about community too. She had seen that community change over the 35 years. The field trips that my kids did with Mrs. Graham were to Mandeep’s Grandma’s garden to see what kind of vegetables Mandeep’s Grandma was growing. Then they would do one to the Mack’s backyard…. And then would go to the Macks’ garden and look at what the Macks grew and talk about differences and same and all that. (Interview, April 2009)

Although Karen does not live in the neighborhood she teaches in now, being a part of the school community is important. Both Joanne and Karen have seen Vancouver evolve over the past two-three decades and keep abreast of the changes. Their involvement in the community is not limited to the knowledge of student and parents, but also histories of the communities they teach in and the effects of change. They are critical of teachers who work in Vancouver schools and make no effort to belong, choosing instead to live in the suburbs. In conversations, being physically close to the school is optimal, however, a teacher can belong to his/her community without living in the neighborhood.

The following sections will discuss the teachers’ relationships with their school community, community of practice and ways in which they work to broaden the notion of ‘other’ in all community engagements and relationships.

**Secondary School Community**

Acutely aware that social stratification within the school and power relations between administration and staff have negative consequences--not only on the staff morale but affecting students negatively (as a result of low teacher morale)-- they pushed administrators for greater autonomy. Joanne recognizes that Tree Hill has the least amount of interference from an administrator or lead teacher in the district. Karen and Sharon on the other hand, work harder to negotiate boundaries with the administration
and other teachers. Despite the “school politics” Karen has been largely responsible for developing the arts program from one classroom and 3-4 courses into the program it is today, with four art teachers in as many classrooms. She came to the high school after teaching and consulting at a university’s teacher education program.

So, when I came here four years ago, I took over for a woman who had been teaching in this school for 27 years. In that 27 years, occasionally the program grew to a little bit beyond her to where someone had to pick an Art 8 class or an Art 9 class, but not very often. It was really, there was one person teaching out of this room. And there wasn't too much art beyond that.

….part of it too is that I, I allowed it to. The previous art teacher said she…would never let it grow beyond 2 blocks because it was too much work, it was too messy. She didn't want to …so there were lots of times she was also teaching English or doing the yearbook or doing other things to fill up her load.

So, you know for me, I don't care. We didn't have as many ceramics courses as kids want. So the art program has really taken off here. I think it was ripe for it because umm... French Immersion kids and parents in the cliché are, tend to be professionally educated. Have lots of degrees themselves and really value the arts, really value the arts. (Interview, May 21\(^{st}\), 2009)

Karen attributes the growth and the success of the program to timing, environment and parental involvement, factors that were present five years ago, when she first joined the high school. Both during interviews, and informal conversations in and after class, Karen disclosed that she reacted to the student need, and offered to teach more courses because she felt that all students had the right to take a wide range of art courses. Sharon, made similar choice on a smaller scale when she added additional classes to her part-time load upon discovering that they would be taught by a history teacher.

\(^{18}\) She implies that she does not mind the mess or the work.
Despite the provincial governments’ reduction of the required number of classes in the arts to graduate from secondary school, the program grew four fold under Karen’s supervision. Working with the administration and the district to make place for two full-time and one part-time position was a challenge, but once the courses were in place, the students were only too eager to join. She remarks that since the high school draws from an upper middle class base, and students are interested in attending an arts college or university, having a larger program helps student get closer to that aim. During the spring term, she had representatives (student and staff) from two post-secondary institutions come speak to senior level students who are interested in pursuing a fine arts degree. She also introduced me to her classes as an artist, researcher and teacher, and urged students to speak to me about my art practice and research. By inviting students to speak to me, I was able to learn far more about students and their relationships than if I had relied solely on observing. These relationships with the school community were immensely useful as a researcher.

Joanne too introduced me to her classes as an artist, teacher and a researcher. Since the school is significantly smaller, she introduced me to individual students and her student teacher. Once again, I was able to develop a better understanding of the participants through their students, student teacher and a few colleagues. Students at both schools were open about their impressions of the teachers, staff, the school at-
mosphere, politics, families, and communities. They seemed very interested in talking about their projects, the material choices and often asked for my participation\textsuperscript{19}.

Over the course of three months, students sought my advice on a range of topics from their assignments, university admission in the United States, music and ideas for independent projects. From these conversations, I gathered that both Karen and Sharon, at the comprehensive high school, were involved in multiple after-school activities and present at the vast majority of school functions, especially if a student in their classes was performing or participating. From the students’ perspective, the teachers’ involvement showed that they cared about individual students and it motivated them to work harder in art class. Students at Tree Hill belong to a much smaller community it is strengthened by time and continuity. Joanne describes:

….if I have them in grade eight, by grade 12 I know them pretty well and I know pretty much all of their good points and I know all of their points that need working on and um…. how is it different? It’s different because you do know them well, in a big school kids get missed. I can spend the time with kids because they have the freedom to come in and out all of the time … like this. I can watch and see where they … I’m more of a facilitator than I am a straight up teacher. (Interview, February, 2009)

All three participants appeared to be \textit{popular} with students and the majority of their colleagues but often disagreed with the school administrator. Over a course of three months, I observed few disagreements between students and the participants. However, the principal at the comprehensive high school stopped into see Karen concerning her projects on several occasions. The participants at the comprehensive high

\textsuperscript{19} A group of female students in Joanne’s textile and drama classes often asked me to model their creations. Students in both classes would ask for help in mixing paints, centering clay on wheels, taking photographs of their projects and model drawing or painting techniques.
school felt that a truly authentic art curriculum required flexibility in order to have students work on installation pieces and also work off-campus. The vice-principal questioned Karen’s decision to develop independent gallery/museum tours for senior classes. She countered with stating that if students are adept at using public transportation to attend school and leaving mid-class to “hang out on Broadway”, they are capable of going to the galleries and museums in Vancouver.

On another occasion, both Karen and Sharon came under criticism for installation projects. The projects involved using colored electrical tape on walls, ceilings, elevators and floors to alter a public space (see Figure 5.5 and Figure 5.6). The pieces were de-
signed to be interactive and alterable, installed during a single class period (lasting an hour and half). Students prepared for this ‘quick installation’ by preparing sketches, approximating amount of tape needed and talking through their ideas with the teachers’ and other students. The vice-principal permitted teachers’ to have installations up for one week. I observed the process, the critique and reactions/interactions of both students and staff at the high school. This project gave the entire school community an opportunity to enter the conversation on contemporary art and signs.

Figure 5.6 Installation Project (unaltered) West Side Secondary School

Involving the larger community to collaborate and talk about art seemed to be an important aspect of relationships. Using contemporary art and issues, the participants forced the community (staff, colleagues and parents) to reconsider their ideas and per-
spectives. By inviting postcolonial contemporary artists, elders and activists into the school, they attempted to bridge the gap between students and the school, and the larger community. Karen, spearheaded several projects including a collaboration with an aboriginal artist for the new school, guest lectures and installation projects with local artists, and, on a daily basis, helping their community question the norms. Recognizing the upper-middle class upbringing of her students and their attitude towards material goods, she brought in a guest lecturer:

….last year I had an industrial designer from Emily Carr20 who came in to talk to the industrial design and environmental issues of design, in terms of how much stuff we make in the world. And Louise’s stuff is all about sustainable design. So she asked them - how many of you have had iPods, how many of you are on your second iPod, how many on your third iPod, and then we went through cell phones and then extrapolates on the board. 30 kids, you had on average had 2 ipods and 2 cell phones, so 30 times 4 is 120 pieces of electronic stuff that have no where to live right now. They’re floating around your house. And times that by the number of kids in the school. Imagine that pile of dead, electronics. And they all ...but they all see themselves as being environmentalist. (Interview, May 21st, 2009)

This caused a stir among her students, their peers and the staff and led to students devising a recycling program for unused electronics. The conversation about sustainability was extended from recycling paper, plastics and metals to electronics, vehicles, and clothing. She could then talk about art making with the context of sustainability and ask students to question their practices. One year, on the first day of class, she told students that the only supplies she had were black tempera paint and a few rolls of paper.

20 Emily Carr University of Art and Design (formerly the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design) is a public post-secondary University located on Granville Island in Vancouver, BC, Canada. It is named for Canadian artist Emily Carr.
....I said, "here you go, that's all the paper I have left and black tempera paint
and you're going to use your hands, don't worry guys, that's all we've got, we've
got no budget - until you pay your fees this is it". My stupid sense of humor. We
got beautiful drawings from that first day ...

The work that came about on the first day was creative, and imaginative; an activity that
got students to discuss sustainability. The reminders of this activity are presented on the
walls around the classroom.

**Relationship With The Community of Practice**

The relationship with the community of practice, their colleagues, is challenging
for Joanne and Karen. Both teachers criticized art teachers in the district who are not
engaged with the students and/or the school community. Karen spoke about colleagues
who have set notions of art and art making; "you know we have, a lot of my colleagues
that think that, art kinda ended with Gordon Smith\(^{21}\) or that if you're not teaching about
impressionism then you're not teaching them anything about art. Or if you're not teach-
ing them just how to draw" (Interview, May 21\(^{st}\). 2009). When asked what makes an ef-
fective teacher, one who is able to respond to students’ needs, she replied with a num-
ber of characteristics such as attentive, an artist, reflexive, and aware of the commu-
nity’s interests. She pointed out the traits of an ineffective teacher;

I think its the teachers who don't look outside their curriculum, don't look outside
of "what I have to teach today" in order to get to the end of the year. So they have
narrowed their focus to, this is the day I'm teaching this unit on this concept.
right? And they don't really know who the students are, they don't know the
community. They get in the car and go back to Surrey\(^{22}\) and this is, that's where
begins and ends. They don't take part in the school community and not....you

\(^{21}\) Gordon Smith is prominent Canadian painter, printmaker, sculptor, and teacher living in Vancouver, British Columbia.

\(^{22}\) Suburb of Vancouver.
don't have to live in [West Side] to be part of a community but… (Interview, May 21st, 2009)

According to Karen and Joanne, the large majority of the teaching community fits the above scenario. Given these diverging viewpoints, relationships with colleagues are strained at times. Both teachers speak highly of some colleagues in the district, and have shared stories about others whose teaching methods are questionable. Karen’s favorite teaching anecdote is about a retired secondary art teacher in the district, whose lessons revolved solely around cats (Interview, February 6th, 2009).

K there was a retired teacher from Van Tech and she’s hilarious….And she used to get the kids to do cats, she had cat images, from a thousand years of cat calendars.

S um-hm

K every kind of fluffy cat you can imagine. And those kids came out of Francis’s class and they knew how to use charcoal and chalk pastel like nobody ever knew how to use chalk pastel and they knew how to use water color like nobody ever knew and they were all of cats.

S yea

K and I’d say, don’t, why, why don’t you let them choose their own things? And she said, its not about choice. I love cats! And it’s my classroom, and I love cats and I used to think its a nightmare. But kids loved her and they did her cat paintings and cat pastels and she was so funny, she ruled with an iron fist.

Upon being prompted by Sharon’s questions about the teacher, Karen confesses that she is on good terms with “Francis”, but would never work with someone whose perspective differs great from her own. In many ways, the teachers in the study do not ‘fit’ in their communities of practice.

Wenger describes a community of practices as “groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly”. Since the community of practice affects students’ long-term education needs, it’s important to strengthen and revitalize the community of practice through introducing
new theoretical perspectives and questioning hegemonic beliefs. Through self and
group reflexivity, the community of practice can succeed at developing students as life

To strengthen their community of practice, teachers rely on regional conferences
and university connections to introduce new ideas. Karen, is active in the British Colum-
bia Art Teachers Association, and the school district, taking the onus to organize pro-
fessional development days and speaking at the BCATA conference. Joanne teaches
textiles at the University of British Columbia and works with teacher candidates (pre-
service teachers). In her textiles class, she works with teachers on developing an un-
derstanding of textiles as art, skills and transferability to elementary and secondary
school. In addition to technique, she also puts forth various theories of art education,
and implores students to consider them in regards to their practice. During the study, I
observed Joanne helping her student teacher through both the theoretical and practical
aspects of teaching art.

Another way in which they maintain ties to the university is through inviting re-
searchers to participate in their classroom. Teachers felt that collaborations with re-
searchers were beneficial to their practice, and gave the opportunity to pass on new
knowledges to their colleagues. All three participants were eager to learn about the
theoretical framework of this study and its possible implications on their teaching. They
shared that while postcoloniality is not a term they would use, postcolonial and culturally
relevant pedagogies reflected their own teaching practice. Just as I was eager to under-
stand their practice, they were eager to learn more about postcolonial theory.
The participants acknowledged that collaboration are important in translating theory into practice, with both theory and practice simultaneously informing the other. The theory-practice exchange makes it possible to revise, refine and reshape teaching practice. The following section will discuss the impact of practice-theory in teachers’ understanding of the ‘other’ and ways in which they challenge their communities to broaden perspectives.

**Redefining Notions of ‘Other’ Within The School and District community**

The participants have worked vehemently to change conceptions of the ‘other’ in the community, specifically those of aboriginal peoples, their stories and histories. McLaren and da Silva (1993) write about the importance of stories, and situate storytelling within the context of postcolonial pedagogy. They see postcolonial pedagogy as a “pedagogy of anti-imperialism that attempts to challenge the very categories through which the history and narratives of the colonized have been written” (p. 86). Karen’s work in getting the secondary school community to acknowledge the place of aboriginal people within the school is important. She questions the appropriation of Haida in Haidaway, the name of the school yearbook and the school store. In her teaching, she asks students to contemplate the usage of native\(^{23}\) and/or indigenous imagery. This code emerged early in the study when I witnessed both Karen and Sharon question students’ appropriation of aboriginal/native imagery. A student planning to paint a Cree headdress onto a canvas was stopped by Karen and was asked to consider why she was using a Cree symbol. Since the Cree are the largest group of indigenous people in the United

\(^{23}\) Referring to aboriginal but also the vast majority of non-European art and craft.
States and Canada, they are often the metonym for all indigenous/aboriginal peoples and the student was using a stereotyped image for a project. Following this conversation, Karen asked the student to research the backgrounds of groups she wanted to use in the project and the significance of the groups to the project. There were similar incidences in Sharon’s and Joanne’s art classes. At the beginning of the senior final project, Sharon spent a considerable section of the class addressing appropriation and asked students to complicate the issue of appropriating imagery. While students responded with the problematic nature of appropriating non-Western imagery, Sharon contented that Western and popular culture should also be “borrowed” with caution.

In addition to addressing students, Karen made efforts to affect the school by starting a campaign to change the names of the yearbook and the school store:

So we had a first nations support worker who came and talked to my classes last year about appropriation….Kids were incensed to find about that weren't allowed to call it the Haidaway. And Jamie said I'm not telling you can't call it the Haidaway, but you need to be aware of what that mean and where that's from and Bill Reid was Haida and he's not Coast Salish and that pole was danced here by the Musqueam people and was accepted. Do you know what that means? And that's really significant. And you need to be conscious of that. You can't just be appropriating things. (Interview, May 21st, 2009)

The campaigning to change the name of the yearbook and store also brought forward other issues within the school. Built on native land, the school’s administration was reluctant to bring in a community Elder to bless the new school project. Upon Karen’s insistence, an Elder was asked to bless the start of the Envisioning Day. 24

24 Since the secondary school building is seismically unsafe, a new school building is going to be built over the coming 3-5 years. A number of staff and administrators, including Karen, are on a committee that will decide on the logistics of where the building will be built, the architect and other issues.
Joanne, too, makes storytelling an important part of her curriculum. Her own method of staying connected with the community is slightly unconventional.

I spend most of my time on the ferry...going back and forth to Gabriel. [laughs] So I have a lot of time to think and sometimes things just ... I get ideas or I read something, I read a question or I read [inaudible], I see something in a magazine or something. I hear, often, OFTEN, my projects come from overhearing people talking on the bus or on the ferry and I listen to the conversations ...happens lots of times. I listen to their conversations.

She also listens intently to students’ conversations for ideas and inspiration. Students’ and teachers’ histories at Tree Hill are told frequently. The school has a large number of non-Canadian teachers, as well as students who are recent immigrants, and their stories are highlighted in various ways. During her graduate degree, Joanne inquired through a/r/tography, both a research methodology and a stance on pedagogy, and this stance is visible in her teaching. Her students’ work reflects Joanne’s understanding of the interconnectedness of visual and written works to create meaning. Joanne’s students often weave in poetry or narratives within the art, and these stories are then shared with the community through parent nights and a school-wide arts show.

Sharon, a new secondary art teacher seeks other ways to address the problematic binaries of self/other. Her interest lies in utilizing district grants to work with exemplary teachers and develop a mentorship program, whereby novice teachers pair with experienced teachers and strengthen their community collectively. Sharon’s methods of

\[25\text{ An island off the coast of Vancouver where she has a permanent residence with her husband.}\]

\[26\text{ A/r/tography, as conceptualized by Irwin (2004), places importance on the mergence of knowing, doing and making, in creating métissage. Irwin (2004) writes that, “a/r/tography as métissage is a way for those of us living in the borderlands to creatively engage with self and others as we re-imagine our life histories in and through time” (p.10).}\]
discussing problematic issues are through reflection and problem posing, since she is uncomfortable with a confrontationist attitude. In her teaching, she asks students to ponder problems and through research arrive at various understandings, a style that differs significantly from her colleagues’.

**Conclusion**

This chapter analyzed the participants’ relationships with their communities, self and knowledge. The relationships teachers engage in are interconnected and woven together and the process of undoing knots unveiled the complexity of the relationships while developing a closer understanding of each of the four relationships. A relationship that is not considered in-depth here is that of the researcher and the participants. My relationship with the participant also evolved from a researcher to a colleague. As the study moved forth, we were able to relate better with each other and develop a level of comfort that allowed for a candid exchange. The participants challenged my researcher identity and in conversations, I was forced to move beyond the data, to contemplate teaching situations. Just as I showed a keen interest in their pedagogical and curricular strategies, they listened intently to my interest in social theory.

As a consequence of the interaction, the teachers integrated new ideas into the practice and I was able to observe relationships evolve. Over a period of five months, the circular relationship became stronger and while the data collected through observations and conversations remained crucial in developing this thesis, witnessing changes in practice demonstrated the affect of collaborative research. Karen’s understanding of knowledge as changing really comes through during the final interview. At the time of
this interview, Karen had taken a temporary position as the school’s vice-principal for the final six weeks of the school year. During this interview, I inquired about her interest in participating in a research study, given the constraints on her time. Karen replied:

….when you had in your letter about post-colonial thing, I was trying, kinda wrapping my head around what does that mean exactly….When we talked before I was so focused on contemporary art practice and I make an assumption that that is so inclusive. So I don't have to worry about all that other stuff which is not, which of course is not true. Because contemporary art practice is not the answer to everything in the classroom. That was part of it, and I also think any time there could be other people there to see the back and forth because I don't see that as my classroom. (Interview, May 21st, 2009)

She sees her classroom as being “open”, since it fosters growth. Others in the study voiced similar thoughts and opened their classroom for observations. Earlier in the thesis, I voiced a concern in regards to being a young researcher whose social location conflicted with that of the research participants; however, the experience of working with the participants proved to be less complicated.

Given the positive, affirming nature of this study, it was not without challenges and limitations. With the data collected in this study, we can begin to answer some questions in interesting and complex ways, and further contemplate others. The following chapter presents a discussion on some challenges and limitations of working with the participants, implications of the study for future research, as well as possible advancement to art education and recommendations for teacher education and professional development.
Chapter 6
Implications and Recommendations

Introduction

This final chapter considers, in a broad sense, the implications and recommendations for future research. Specifically, this chapter brings together the theory and the data to answer research questions that are restated in the earlier chapter.

1. In what ways do secondary art teachers negotiate relationships with self, students, knowledge and communities?

2. In what ways does negotiating relationships lead to/disallow culturally relevant teaching?

3. What are the elements of a culturally relevant secondary art teacher? Does the institutional context alter the embodiment and enactment of a framework of cultural relevancy?

The data analysis chapters present an in-depth discussion of relationships that teachers negotiate. In this study, tensions faced by the participants are comparable to those that their colleagues negotiate, such as time, reallocation of art time for extra curricular or testing, budgets, space and professional development. However, the way in which the teachers in the study stand apart is in their conceptualization of tensions as relationships. This conceptualization allows the teacher and the researcher to move away from negative characteristics of tensions, to a more positive domain of relationships.

Participants do not explicitly view their teaching as being culturally relevant or postcolonial. Having said that, through conversations, discussion and observations, it
becomes clear that the participants in the study are culturally relevant pedagogues with elements of postcoloniality in their practice. Growley (1998) writes that, “it is amid the tensions of desire, conflicted histories, popular understandings, and hybrid lives that teachers and educators struggle to design a postcolonial pedagogy” (p. 297). This study, and the interactions of researcher and participants can be seen as an example of a struggle to arrive a postcolonial pedagogy or a decolonizing pedagogy for art education. Before discussing the implications of the tensions and relationships negotiated between the researcher and participant, this chapter discusses challenges, caveats of sorts, that need to be considered.

Ways in which teachers plan their curriculum and approach it pedagogical, varies among the participants and creates challenges for the researcher. This chapter will first consider the challenges of working with the participants and its implications for the study, consider the conditions for the presence and absence of culturally relevant teaching and finally, put forward recommendations for the field of art teacher education.

**Challenges**

A research collaboration with exemplary art teachers has significant consequences, the most important being a transfer of knowledge between the researcher and the participants. This transfer does not come without challenges. Just as teachers negotiate their relationships, in this study relationships are also negotiated between the teachers and the researcher. When discussing the role of reflexivity in relationships between participants and the researcher Finlay (2002) writes:

*A particular strength with this account is the recognition of multiple, shifting researcher–participant positions. The task of deconstructing the author’s authority, however, carries associated costs. (p. 222)*
The shifting research-participant positions created challenges in gathering data and also in deconstructing the data. Challenges include navigating teachers’ schedules (a lack of time), evolving pedagogy and lack of planning.

**Time**

As a researcher working in a large comprehensive school, working with teachers to develop a schedule of visits and interviews proved to be extremely difficult. During the initial interview, both teachers choose to meet together and I discovered that Karen often took over during the conversation leaving little room for Sharon. Following this, I attempted to interview and talk with teachers individually to allow Sharon an opportunity to talk without interruptions. Both Karen and Sharon are involved in after school activities and meetings, making it difficult to meet for an extended period of time. As the study evolved, the interviews and discussions become spontaneous, and as the researcher, I was prepared to have a discussion at the end of each class or day to accommodate the teachers.

At the Tree Hill, the challenge revolved around Joanne and her student teachers’ schedule. Since the student teacher showed a great amount of discomfort in being observed, I was only able to observe the classes that were explicitly taught by Joanne. This meant visiting the school 2-3 times a week to observe one or two classes and having exchanges at the university or through email. On average, I was able to have one conversation with Joanne every week. Given the constraints on her time, Joanne decided to opt out of the study after two months, during which time I had observed her classroom on three non-consecutive days and had two formal interviews. Her interview
and observations in that time were deemed significant and are therefore included in the thesis.

An area that teachers’ lack of time created difficulties for the data analysis was in doing member checks. Throughout the study, my intentions lay in providing copies of transcripts and data analysis to the participants, however, due to constraints on time, teachers were not interested in ‘additional’ reading. Instead, member checks took place informally during conversations and interviews. Finaly (2002) challenges this view, “pre-occupations with egalitarianism can divert attention away from other, possibly more pertinent, issues and can result, paradoxically, in a strategy which lays claim to more authority” (p. 222). In the case of this research, ‘other issues’ can be seen as the change in power and positionality between researcher-participants.

Evolving Pedagogy

Both Joanne and Karen’s pedagogical choices did not fall into a pattern, and in my field notes I found each observation was a unique experience. In the study, Sharon was the only participant whose pedagogical actions fell in a pattern. Sharon, while following a decentralized pedagogy, incorporated two elements into every class. As mentioned in the earlier chapters, she always started with having a plenary meeting with the entire class, and throughout the class, spoke to individual students in regards to their projects. More specific to each project or assignment, she adopted a variety of roles, co-
teaching with students, asking students to lead a conversation, finishing some projects
with a critique\(^1\) and others with group assessments.

Going into Joanne and Karen’s classes, I was not able to predict how the class
would unwrap. Both teachers had similar styles with highly de-centralized classes and
mobile students. In some classes, I was able to determine which students were “in-
class” during a particular period or block, and in others, I was unable to differentiate \textit{visitors} from students. At Tree Hill, this proved to be a real challenge; given the lack of a
bell schedule and the close knit school environment, both students and teachers
streamed in and out of the various classrooms throughout the day. In Joanne’s class,
the students gathered solely for an end critique. Similarly in Karen’s class, there
seemed to be few moments where the class gathered as a group. Group critiques were
an exception. In addition to movement in the art classroom, teachers’ roles changed
frequently. With any given student, the participants performed several roles (teacher,
mentor, artist, mother/guardian, and friend, to name a few) throughout the study.

Despite the differences in pedagogy, teachers in the study self-identify as critical
pedagogues. As critical pedagogues (Giroux, 1991), the participants attempted to create
new forms of knowledge by breaking down discipline boundaries and creating spaces
for students to create interdisciplinary knowledge. They constantly challenged
hegemonic beliefs, raising questions about the relationships between the center of

\(^{1}\) In my observations, almost every project ended with a form of critique - group, class or individual. For
installations the entire class traveled together to look at pieces, at other times, students displayed their
work on a flat surface along with an artist’s statement. No two critiques were the same in a three to five
month period.
power in schools and those on the margins. The previous chapter explores the ways in which the participants worked to reclaim power and identity, particularly around the issues of race, gender, class and ethnicity. As artists, they rejected the distinction between high and popular art, and culture, to make the curriculum responsive to the needs and experiences of the students’ lived histories. All participants were also concerned with the use of language and importance of language in defining cultural (teaching) practices.

**Chaos and Creativity**

Creativity and critical exploration were of primary concern, however, both Karen and Joanne’s (Figure 6.2) classrooms were disorganized. Both teachers were teaching in rooms that had been art classrooms for over three decades, and it was evident that each teacher had added his/her materials. Since Sharon taught in several classrooms, with a cart, this was not applicable to her.

*Figure 6.1 Classroom, Tree Hill Secondary School*
Evident from the images, the classrooms were in constant chaos and as a researcher; I found it difficult to navigate the classroom. I asked the participants if classroom organization is important, and both teachers agreed that their time would be better spent with students instead of arranging and re-arranging materials, but the years of use made it difficult to organize the materials. In one interview, Sharon commented that she would like to work in a classroom that was organized, and Karen agreed, adding that she is looking forward to a bigger art room in the new school.

In my observations, the lack of organization also transferred onto curriculum planning. Once again, Sharon was the only teacher in the study who was able to contribute lesson plans, assignment sheets and other curriculum planning documents. As a researcher, I had anticipated teachers’ having a record of lessons, student submissions and other documents, however, two teachers in the study kept no record of the lessons they had taught. On one hand, this resulted in few repeats, but also made it difficult to research past assignments. Upon asking, both Karen and Joanne revealed lesson planning is hinged on their understanding of the students, and lessons are planned spontaneously to accommodate the needs of the student. Over a period of three to five months, I observed many lessons and work from previous semesters and years in the classroom. This, in addition to conversation with senior students, allowed me to piece together an understanding of curricular choices the teachers made. Despite the chaos, students’ projects showed creativity and imagination.

**Implications**

Since we have an understanding of the data and also the challenges to collecting this data, this section explores the conditions that allow/disallow culturally relevant
teaching. The data point for four conditions that enable teachers to become culturally relevant educators: self conception as artists and teacher, belonging to a community, self reflexivity, graduate education and the institutional context. The following sub-sections will explore these conditions in detail.

**Artist-Teacher**

In *Art for Our Sake*, Winner and Hetland (2007) summarize their findings that are published in detail in *Studio Thinking: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education* (Winner & Hetland, 2007a). The authors contend that in order for art education to be beneficial, teachers need to teach and think like artists. The participants in a yearlong study included five teachers who are practicing artists and students in two Boston-area high schools. The researchers concluded that artist-teachers were successful in developing eight key areas. These areas include artistic craft, persistence, expression, home-school connections, observing, envisioning, innovation/exploration and reflection.

1) **Artistic Craft**: this is the development of skills such as the ability to draw, paint, sculpt etc. 2) **Persistence**: researchers write that students who are asked to work on projects over a sustained period of time, and expected to find meaningful ways of problem solving and “persevere through frustration” show this studio habit. 3) **Expression**: when students are urged to move beyond skill-based creation (artistic craft) to art making that stands for emotion, atmosphere and incorporates their own lived experiences. 4) **Home-School connections**: teachers in this study encourage this studio habit by encouraging students to thinking outside their ‘small’ worlds and situate themselves in a larger global context. To allow for this level of inquiry, teachers lead students to contemporary art galleries, museums and other venues for creative/performative arts. The connection is also
cemented by teachers’ being practicing artist and developing a relationship with students that encourages them to become artists. 5) Observing: students are trained to look, which the researchers assert is “a task far more complex than one might think”. Since seeing is framed by expectation, researchers argue that observing in arts allows students to see more accurately. An example of this is in observing faces. While most people ‘see’ eyes being at the top of the head, those trained in observing will notice that eyes are in-fact in the middle of the face, dividing the face in half. 6) Envisioning: researchers see this as the formation of mental images to guide actions and solve problems. An example of this in ways teachers encourage students to see ‘color’ or ‘move’ objects around a page without using physical tools. 7) Innovation/exploration: art teachers in the study place a high value on innovative thinking and thinking ‘outside-the-box’. Teacher encourage students to experiment and take risks, instead of teaching a set curriculum that does not allow for creative play. 8) Reflection/self-evaluation: critiques, among other means provide both formal and informal ways for students to reflect on their art and art making. Asking students to critically reflect on the process and the product allows for critical reflection. In the study, teachers repeatedly asked students to ‘step-back’ and reflect/judge their work.

There is a significant correlation between Winner and Hetland’s (2007) findings and those from this research. While this research involved fewer participants, in vastly different environments, over a significantly shorter time frame, teachers in the study encouraged the ‘8 studio habits of the mind’. This comes about as a direct result of teachers’ background as artist. When I brought up the ‘studio habits’ and detailed the various
habits, the participants were visibly interested. The teachers said that the study attaches academic vocabulary to their ideas and practice, further legitimizing their practice. I shared a copy of the article with Karen, who promptly said that research of this nature “makes me happy”. It always gives the teachers and opportunity to present such research to administrator and seek greater autonomy.

**Belonging To A Community**

Presented in the previous chapter, teachers’ sense of community is pivotal to their experience of teaching. Teachers valued relationships with students, colleagues, administrators, parents and other members in the community such as artists and museum/gallery educators. By being active members in the community, students are encouraged to venture outside the school and into the larger community. West Side Secondary School also has an activist stance due to past teachers. ‘Raul’, an ex-teacher, was often recalled by students and other teachers at the school.

And that, his teaching in this school over the last 25 years has, you see that in these kids... Tonight there is the fundraiser for school in Africa for "Free the Children". There’s the Amnesty international club, there is they ...excuses...how many other clubs are there, that are all about saving the world. They do tend to look at the world as out there though, not ...their world...I had one student last year who did a whole project on the people that are homeless in the West Sideneighborhood, he did a lovely project, a lovely little disturbing project where he asked them to write their ideas of home, what home meant to them and then he had them in their own handwriting, had these published with the help of his mom. It was these little books of poems that he then sold to help raise money for the program that Kits community center that gives breakfast and showers to the homeless. (Interview, May 21\textsuperscript{st}, 2009)

Karen’s projects often ask students to broaden their perspectives and use their community as a resource. This includes working with local artists, visiting museums/galleries and showcasing their own work through art exhibitions and other outlets.
Joanne’s involvement in the community was through teaching and collaborations at the university level. In addition to teaching at Tree Hill and creating opportunities for students to explore their communities, she also works with pre-service educators in developing a better understanding of the communities they will teach in. Joanne also uses community resources and builds strong ties with artists, teaches and researchers to inform both her teaching and studio practice.

Reflexivity

As discussed throughout the thesis, reflexivity is pivotal to culturally relevant teaching. The data analysis chapters focus more directly on teachers’ self-reflexive nature. ‘Reflecting’ calls for analytic, critical and evaluative thinking and ‘reflexing’ points to an ability to project future actions. Combining the two, “reflexivity becomes a process of analytic, critical, evaluative monitoring of the actions of self and others in order to or not to, modify ongoing actions. Reflexivity becomes the critical analytic interpretive and evaluative process between stimulus (receiving an image of our actions) and response (projecting future actions)” (Lisle, 2000, n. p.).

Teachers in the study are not only self-reflexive, they ask students to become reflexive. Gooding-Brown (2000) writes about the benefits of promoting self-reflexive behavior:

Through reflexive discussion, students begin to glimpse the constructedness of the world and themselves. This is where the model leaves the artwork and concentrates on the students and their experiences…. Students can be encouraged at this point to think about change and the possibility of choice in positioning because of an understanding, albeit immature, of how interpretations are constituted by one’s particular positioning in all discourses. (p. 43)
In an art classroom, as discussed by Winner and Hetland (2007), reflexivity can lead to critical exploration and creative problem solving.

**Graduate Education**

A common thread running among all participants is interest in graduate education. Karen and Joanne had completed a Master of Arts degree prior to this study, and Sharon was enrolled in a graduate program during the study. All three participants undertook graduate courses at the University of British Columbia’s Art Education program with the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy. Similarities in teaching philosophies can be linked the philosophies of faculty members at the university. While educators call for teachers to engage in professional development, graduate coursework demands teachers’ to become critical inquirers. For participants in the study, graduate schooling served as a means to legitimize their perspectives and develop as researchers to continue to engage with higher education.

**Institutional Context**

McClain and Cobb (2004) write about the “importance of the institutional setting in both constraining and enabling the work of teachers and school leaders” (p.281). Institutional contexts play a significant role in determining instruction practices. At Tree Hill, lack of administration provides teachers’ full autonomy over curricular choices. All teachers at this secondary school work from a de-centralized stance on teaching and learning, and students have independence over classes and projects. Joanne spoke frequently about the claustrophobic nature of large high schools, and the lack of creativity in some art programs. Her students experience freedom to pursue their ideas unabated, in an environment where they are supported.
Karen and Sharon teach in a large comprehensive high school where all 1600 students are required to take art. Divided between four teachers, the number of student-teacher ratio, overwhelms both the teacher and the student. Despite the participants efforts to make their teaching culturally relevant and respond to student needs, they acknowledge that some students fall by the wayside. Teaching in this environment does not allow every student the time, space, materials and one-on-one attention from the teacher to focus on developing an art practice. Students that are unambiguous about their interest in art receive the most attention and help from teachers. Karen sees the importance in working with students that are interested in undertake post-secondary education in the fine arts.

An important consideration for art educators is to develop strong communities of practice to support teachers that work in such environments. Collaboration between researchers/university and teaching communities can be particularly helpful for practicing teachers and teacher educators. Taking into account the data and the implications of this study following section will make recommendations for future research and teacher educators.

**Recommendations**

This research revealed the importance of collaborative, interdisciplinary research. Although this study relies on the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy to understand relationships secondary art teachers negotiate to develop a curriculum and pedagogy with a stance of culturally relevant teaching, it also makes visible the importance of a postcolonial lens in understanding the work of teachers in diverse, urban areas. Radhakrishnan urges individuals to think of "postcoloniality as everyone's concern, its
ethicopolitical authority a matter of general concern and awareness and not the mere
resentment of a ghetto" (1996, 178) and Amitava Kumar, suggests the need for post-
coloniality to move beyond academia and into purposeful engagements with "groups,
organizations, or peoples united in struggles outside the walls of the academy" (1995,
232).

Given the theoretical lens, this section makes three recommendations: concep-
tions of knowledge and teacher as researcher, self-driven art practice and interdiscipli-
narity. Sharing the data analysis with participants lead to the development of the rec-
ommendations. Developing teachers as artists and researchers was a primary concern.
Both the participants and I saw the interconnectedness between research, epistemolo-
gies and interdisciplinarity, as well as studio practice and the ‘studio habits of the mind’.
Traveling and broadening horizons was also seen as an important component of the
participants experiences, but all participants concluded that crossing oceans does not
guarantee border-crossing. Several art educators have written called for teachers to
immerse themselves, “in cultures they later seek to incorporate into curricula” (Wasson
et al., 1990; Staikidis, 2006, p. 119; Ballengee-Morris, 2002; Desai, 2000; Desai 2002).
However, the participants contend that a knowledge sharing relationship between stu-
dent and teacher, whereby the teacher is able to cross cultural-borders with the aid of
students is equally effective (Garber, 1995; Staikidis, 2006).

Both approaches catapult pre-service and in-service teachers to challenge their
conceptions of knowledge and ways of knowing. This extends to their relationship with
art and art knowledges, as well as histories of students and communities. Shifting epis-
temological foundations are a sign of inquiry and reflexivity. Graduate education, a condition for culturally relevant teaching and in particular postcolonial pedagogies, serves as a tool for teachers to become researchers and question their epistemological foundations. In art education, teachers that are critical of representations of art and history, can transcend the overpowering Eurocentric biases to include non-Western and indigenous art/histories in the curriculum.

The participants, aware of their ontological foundations, stress the importance of marrying disciplines. They form their perspectives via looking outside the field of art education, into visual and fine arts, sociology, new methods of inquiry such as a/r/tography and awareness of their communities. They contend that while graduate education can shake one’s epistemological foundation, culturally relevant practices are dependent in large part, on a teachers’ awareness of his/her community. The recommendations for teacher educators, through collaboration with the participants, are as follows:

1. **Art Practice**: Stress development of secondary art teachers as artists, and make visible the importance of ongoing studio-based inquiry. A studio practice continuously challenges a teachers skills, creativity and enhances overall instructional practices.

2. **Research and Knowledge**: Develop means for teachers to engage with social theory research and ways to collaborate with researchers. Research through collaboration or action-research forces reflexivity and strengthens the community of practice. An emphasis on research gives way to a relationship with knowledge that is evolving. Ac-
knowledging multiple ways of knowing leads to accepting student diversity and seeing the diverse student bodies as tools for teaching and learning.

3. **Interdisciplinarity, transgressing discipline boundaries:** Finally, a belief that scholarship in art education be focused on a holistic and more realistic theory of teaching a diverse population. Sharon in particular described being bombarded with theoretical perspectives such as Visual Culture, Discipline Based Art Education and others, and following the first year of graduate coursework came to an understanding that theoretic battles do not aid teachers. She and others would like to see the development of a perspective that takes into account the tensions and relationships teachers negotiate. While relationships evolve and differ, interdisciplinarity allows teachers and researchers to move away from disciplinary limitations to develop modes of inquiry that are inclusive.

**Conclusion**

This study began with intentions to understanding tensions teachers negotiate. Through the process of observing, interviewing and negotiating relationships with the participants, the research moved into the direction of explicating a culturally relevant pedagogy for secondary art educators through a postcolonial lens. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) asserts that, schools are implicated in imparting imperial views of the culture through their connection to universities and other scholarly societies and due to their reproductive nature, play an important role in the dissemination of the “domesticated versions” of ‘universal’ knowledges, produced by and at the center, for “uncritical consumption” (p.65). Education through schooling (K-12) is therefore largely responsible for the expropriation of indigenous/non-western knowledges.
This research presents ways in which culturally relevant teaching in art education can allow for a decolonizing practice through an emphasis on reflexivity, relationships with knowledge, engagement with art making and awareness of the community. Teachers in this study saw hybridity as an important element of urban teaching, furthering the necessity of academics to speak to multiethnic concerns. Hybridity becomes a site of conflict, interaction and assimilation involving all encounters - those between people, nations, histories - forcing individuals to understand the traits of the other as those that compromise the self. Recognition of this hybrid identity ensures an understanding that cultural meaning is inseparable from “its original multicultural production”. The challenge in decolonizing education largely is in coming to terms with our hybrid identities, and making visible the traces and traits of the Other in ourselves.

These ideas lay in juxtaposition to the dominant discourse that forces individuals to compartmentalize their [cultural] identities, forcing binaries and dualisms. Teacher participants in this study make visible ways of transgressing hegemonic beliefs. And while the study does not answer the original research questions, it has answered the questions that came about through reflexivity and evolving participative research. The study has generated questions for future inquiry into culturally relevant teaching practice in secondary art programs, and the relationship of Culturally relevant pedagogy to post-coloniality.
Bibliography


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Gaudelius, Y., & Speirs, P. (2002). *Contemporary issues in art education* Upper-Saddle River,


Appendices

Appendix A

Behavioral Research Ethics Board, Certificate of Approval

The University of British Columbia
Office of Research Services
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - FULL BOARD**

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<th>INSTITUTION / DEPARTMENT:</th>
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<td>UBC/Education/Curriculum Studies</td>
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Other locations where the research will be conducted:
High school art classrooms in Vancouver. General high school settings (teacher offices, corridors, break rooms) Other places may be determined provided there is mutual consent.

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| PROJECT TITLE: | A Study of Teacher Thinking on the Development of Curriculum and Pedagogical Choices in Secondary Art Classrooms |
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The application for ethical review and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board and signed electronically by one of the following:

Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Chair
Dr. Ken Craig, Chair
Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair
Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair
Dr. Daniel Salhani, Associate Chair
Appendix B

Initial Letter of Contact

November 20th, 2009

Addressee Name
Title
Company Name
Vancouver, BC

Dear Teacher,

I’m writing on behalf of the principal investigator, Dr. Rita Irwin, about a research project that we will begin in November, 2008, titled: A Study of Teacher Thinking on the Development of Curriculum and Pedagogical Choices in Secondary Art Classrooms. Conversations with Dr. Kit Grauer (Associate Professor, Art Education) and your involvement with BC Art Teachers Association, leads us to believe that you will be interested in participating in this study.

This study aims to learn how teachers make choices regarding the visual-fine arts curriculum and pedagogy in high school art classes. Through this project we hope to collect information on various elements that contribute to the development of curriculum in high school art programs.

We would like to invite your participation in this study. Information regarding the study are enclosed within. Should you have questions regarding the study, please contact Aparna Rae via phone (1-604-916-6072) or email (aparna.rae@gmail.com)

Thank You.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Rita Irwin & Aparna Rae

Principal Investigator: Dr. Rita Irwin
Associate Dean of Teacher Education
Faculty of Education
University of British Columbia

Co-Investigator: Aparna Rae
MA Student, Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy, Faculty of Education
University of British Columbia
CONSENT FORM

A Study of Teacher Thinking on the Development of Curriculum and Pedagogical Choices in Secondary Art Classrooms

Investigators:
Principal Investigator: Dr. Rita Irwin
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University of British Columbia
T 1-604-822-1216
rita.irwin@ubc.ca

Co-Investigator: Aparna Rae
MA Student, Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy, Faculty of Education
University of British Columbia
T 1-604-916-6072
aparna.rae@gmail.com

Purpose of the Study
We are conducting this study to learn how teachers make choices regarding the visual-fine arts curriculum and pedagogy in high school art classes. By exploring the various elements that contribute to a teachers’ curriculum and pedagogy and ways in which they are negotiated, we can begin to understand ways in which an arts’ program takes shape at the secondary level. Investigating and understanding these negotiations can lead to better availability of teaching resources, restructuring of philosophies in academia and a push for interdisciplinarity in the larger field of art education.

This is a study intended to meet the requirements of the co-investigator’s M.A. thesis.

Project Procedures
Aparna Rae, co-investigator, will interview and observe teacher participants. The study will begin with an interview lasting approximately one-hour, to understand the participants viewpoints on teaching and learning. Following the interview, the co-investigator will observe the teacher participant in his/her classroom. Subsequent to the initial interview, the co-investigator will observe the teacher in his/her classroom, provided there is mutual consent, for up to 3-5 nonconsecutive days. The teacher will be asked to spend approximately 1 hour, for a follow up interview following the observation of teaching. The times and dates for the follow-up interview will be mutually decided upon. The approximate time commitment for teacher participants is 5-7 hours for interviews and 3-5 non-consecutive teaching days for in-class observations, over a 12 week period. The number of observations, interviews and types of interactions in the classroom setting will be mutually decided upon during the initial interview.

Participants will be recorded using a digital voice recorder during one-on-one interviews. There will be no recording in the classroom during observation.
Remuneration, Compensation and Media Rights
There is no remuneration or compensation available for participation in this study. However, teachers participating in this study may gain a new understanding of present theories in art education that can be integrated into their teaching and learning. This can lead to a potential rise in critical inquiry among students. Digital audio recordings produced in this study is owned by the principal and co-investigators, however, the transcripts and analysis of the interviews will be shared with the participants.

Upon completion, a copy of the co-investigators thesis will be available to participants and appropriate school administrators for review.

Confidentiality and Limits of Confidentiality
Throughout this research study and afterwards, the investigators will take the following precautions to preserve the confidentiality of teacher participants.  
1. All digital files will be saved on an encrypted external hard drive.  
2. Raw data, documents and other data resulting from the study will be available only to investigators and members of the co-investigators committee.  
3. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants. Participants will be asked to choose a pseudonym. Should the participant request his/her name to be revealed in any publications resulting from the study, the researcher will honor the request.

Contact:
If you have questions or desire further information about this study, you may contact Aparna Rae by phone at (604) 916-6072 or by email at Aparna.rae@gmail.com. If you have concerns about your rights as a research participant you may contact the Research Subject Information line in the UBC Office of Research Services at the University of British Columbia at (604) 822-8598.

Consent:
Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardy to your relationship to UBC or the Vancouver School Board. Please indicated your participation by completing the consent form.

Thank You.
Please check the box to the left indicating your decision.
☐ I CONSENT to participating in *A Study of Teacher Thinking on the Development of Curriculum and Pedagogical Choices in Secondary Art Classrooms* as described in the above form.
☐ I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form for my own files.

Name (please print):
Organization:
Signature:
Date:

DETACH THIS COPY & RETURN TO CO-INVESTIGATOR

Please check the box to the left indicating your decision.
☐ I CONSENT to participating in *A Study of Teacher Thinking on the Development of Curriculum and Pedagogical Choices in Secondary Art Classrooms* as described in the above form.
☐ I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form for my own files.

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