AFRICAN-CENTRED MULTICULTURAL ART EDUCATION: AN ALTERNATIVE CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a contribution to the debate over the centrality or marginality of race and ethnicity in the production and dissemination of knowledge. It calls for more broad-based knowledge and values that represent ethno-cultural diversity in Canada, with special reference to Black/African-Canadians. The study describes the development and implementation of an African-centred Art and Cultural Education Program (AACEP) as an alternative curriculum and pedagogy. The AACEP was developed in response to historical experiences of Black/African-Canadians and research data that revealed systemic exclusion of their artistic and cultural perspectives from mainstream curricula and general school organization. Three major questions relevant to art education, critical multicultural education and the educational experience of Black/African-Canadians in Vancouver, British Columbia are considered: in what ways do school curricula, textbooks and general school organization affect Black/African-Canadian children's participation in visual art and general education; how do Black/African-Canadian students react to a community-based African-centred art and cultural education program; and what impact do the African-centred art and cultural learning experiences have on students in a multi-ethnic public elementary school.

Data was generated through the implementation of the AACEP at the Multicultural Family Centre (MFC) and an east Vancouver public school. The MFC is a community-based social service provider whose range of services includes a program that fosters positive cultural awareness and increased self-esteem among Black youths in Vancouver. Evidence is based on two years of participatory observation at the MFC and on a two-week art and cultural education workshop. Data was also obtained through interviews with Black/African-Canadian students and parents, MFC's cross-cultural facilitators, students from the east Vancouver school, an art teacher, and the school principal. The study is grounded in Africentric theory, critical education theory and ethnographic research.

In response to the first primary question, this study identified seven issues that emerged from participants' perceptions of the education system and its effects on Black/African-Canadian learners. These factors include curricula deficiency, racism and institutional barriers, lack of relevant art and

cultural education models, inadequate background preparation of teachers and exclusionary teacher recruitment practices, lack of positive role models, inadequate family and community support and inadequate attention to gender issues. Second, findings from this investigation suggest that culturally relevant curriculum can provide effective means of inducing positive attitudinal change and increased self-confidence among Black/African-Canadian students. This became evident through a review of students' knowledge and views about the program, as well as their attitudes toward their own cultures and other cultural groups. In response to the third primary research question, this study concludes that positive inter-personal and inter-ethnic attitudes could be induced through multicultural art education that focuses on cross-cultural similarities. It was also revealed that the issue of inclusive schooling transcends the calls for curricula and pedagogic reforms. It has socio-economic and political dimensions that raise wider public policy questions.

Several conclusions and recommendations are made about multicultural education as it relates to art education, the education of Black African-Canadians, and community-based education programs: 1) incorporation of the experiences and perspectives of Black/African-Canadians and people of colour into mainstream curricula would be valuable for expanded knowledge and multicultural literacy of all students; 2) multicultural art education provides a viable force for ethnic minority students to identify with their cultural heritages and develop their self-esteem; 3) community-centred education processes can provide important resources to facilitate multicultural art education programs in local public schools; and 4) multicultural education must move beyond cosmetic "relevance" to making curriculum and pedagogy genuinely transformative. A recommendation is made for further in-depth research of ethnic groups of students from real-life situations in community-based ethnic settings, and their interactions with school contexts, to build holistic theories of multicultural education.

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I am dedicating this dissertation to my parents, especially to the memory of my mother, and to my beloved wife, Gifty Adu-Poku, for her unconditional loyalty and encouragement. Without her support, I could not have completed this dissertation. To my children, Edmond, Ivan and Kwabena, I am thankful for their affection, patience and the positive social experience they added to my studies.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION
Statement of the Problem

Despite efforts toward inclusive education, recent studies reveal a disturbing trend of cultural exclusion, racism and other discriminatory practices in multi-ethnic Canadian classrooms (Alladin, 1996; Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC), 1994; Dei, 1996; Hamilton, 1997, Kinsella, 1994). While the need for effective multicultural education pedagogy intensifies, Eurocentrism in art education and concerted attacks on multiculturalism (e.g., Bissoondath, 1994; McCarthy & Crichlow, 1993) are inhibiting potentially effective approaches to educational equity in Canada. The debate over content in art education in Canada and the United States is well documented in the literature of the last three decades. This debate is centred primarily on the concerns for more broad-based knowledge and values that represent ethno-cultural diversity in Canadian/American society. Some art educators (Blandy & Congdon, 1987; Chalmers, 1978; Feldman, 1982; Hamblen, 1987; McFee & Degge, 1977) argue that students need tools to recognize, appreciate and cope with the plethora of cultural forms and expressions that a multicultural society generates. Art education involves both the education of artists and education of people about art and its relationship to society. The study of art as a social phenomenon has become the driving force of the notable works of these scholars.

Recent statistics in Canada (Statistics Canada, 1996) project that Blacks, third largest visible minority group in Canada in 1991, are expected to become the second largest group by 2016. Of this, a significant proportion is expected to originate from Continental Africa. Visible minorities will account for one in five Canadians, doubling from 10% in 1991 to 20% in 2016. As Table 1.1 shows, a total of 4,971,090 immigrants lived in Canada by the 1996 Census, out of which some 1,611,795 (or 32.5%) were from Asian-Pacific countries. In total 1,027,220 (or 20.7%) immigrants came from Central and South America, Africa and the Caribbean. Given the changing face of Canada, and the increasing ethno-cultural diversity in its classrooms, there is the need to re-examine school curricula, textbooks and teaching methodologies to meet the needs of ethnic minorities that form the mosaic of Canadian society.

Table 1.1

Immigrants Population* to Canada by Region of Birth Showing Periods of Immigration, 1996						
Region	Total	Before '61	1961-'70	1971-'80	1981-'90	1991-'96**
Africa	229,305	4,945	25,685	58,150	64,265	76,200
USA	244,695	45,050	50,200	74,015	46,407	29,025
C'tral & S. America	273,815	6,370	17,410	67,470	106,320	76,335
Caribbean	279,405	8,390	45,270	96,025	72,405	57,313
UK	655,535	265,580	168,140	132,950	63,445	25,420
Other N & W. Europe	514,320	284,205	90,495	59,850	48,095	31,705
Eastern Europe	445,385	175,430	40,855	32,280	111,370	87,900
S. Europe	714,383	228,145	244,380	131,620	57,785	52,455
W. Asia & M. East	210,855	4,975	15,165	30,980	77,685	82,050
Eastern Asia	589,415	20,555	38,865	104,940	172,715	252,340
S.E. Asia	408,980	2,485	14,040	111,700	162,490	118,265
Southern Asia	353,520	4,565	28,875	80,755	99,270	140,055
Oceanea & Others	49,025	4,250	9,240	15,420	10,240	9,875
Total	4,971,090	1,054,945	788,590	996,155	1,092,400	1,039,000

* Non-permanent residents are not included.
** Includes first five months of 1996.
Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census *National Table*

Multicultural education, however, should neither be conceptualized as a demographic issue nor as a field focusing solely on people of colour. Its importance is grounded on the fact that the field explores broader issues of educational and social significance in relation to ethnicity, race, class, gender and exceptionality and the interaction of these variables (Banks, 1993; Grant & Sleeter, 1993). In this study, my interest was situated mainly in the area of multicultural art education and the dynamics of race and ethnicity. Notwithstanding, the study was inextricably interwoven with the embedded inequalities that flow from gender disparities.

The goal of this study was to present an African-centred approach to art and multicultural education as an alternative curriculum and pedagogy. Race plays a significant mediating force in schooling in North America. For Black/African-Canadian youths, research has repeatedly indicated their educational disadvantage in multicultural Canadian society. Children whose ethnic and cultural histories do not coincide with the Eurocentric, middle-class and mainstream standard are often mis-educated or are culturally excluded from full participation in education. Studies by the Black Learners Advisory Council (BLAC, 1994), the Canadian Alliance of Black Educators (CABE, 1992) and the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning (RCOL, 1994) highlight an alarming "dropout" rate in their discussions about "crises among Black youths" with respect to "education and achievement." Textbooks, art curricula, classroom practices and the structural processes of schooling have become targets of multicultural education reform efforts. Many educators (Banks, 1995; DePillars, 1990; Grant, 1992; Nieto, 1996; Parry, 1974; Pieterse, 1992) charge that the portrayal of Blacks and other people of colour in reading materials, historical textbooks and in Western popular culture has been biased, racist, inaccurate and destructive to the welfare of students of colour. Art history and art education have also been neglectful of the artistic traditions of minority students, as well as the diverse cultural, ethnic, contextual and historical content that contribute to a more accurate and comprehensive art education for all students (Banks, 1993, 1992; Chalmers, 1987, 1996; DePillars, 1990; Fehr, 1993; McFee & Degge, 1980). Since decisions about content inclusion and exclusion are crucial to what students would have the opportunity to learn, it is important that educators continually examine the content and form of instructional materials.

The foundations of art history, art education, art museum education and the entire art establishment are replete with Eurocentrism and patriarchal attitudes, values and ideals. For nearly two decades since Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) was introduced in North America (Greer, 1984), art educators reiterate that its Eurocentric content and formalist methodologies continue to reinforce elitism, gender bias, ethno-cultural stereotypes and the notion of the "universality of art" (Chalmers, 1996; Collins & Sandell, 1988, 1992; Fehr, 1993; Garber, 1995; Hagaman, 1990; Hicks, 1992; Zimmerman, 1990). As an approach to art curriculum, DBAE embraces the four domains of art study. It focuses on the development of abilities of students and teachers: 1) to make art (production); 2) to interpret and analyze art (criticism); 3) to know art's role in the past and contemporary culture (history); and 4) to discuss questions about the nature of art and make informed judgements about it (aesthetics). As an outgrowth of the aesthetic education movement, DBAE initially embraced the elitist and Eurocentric male discourse of art hierarchies (high-art/low-art, or men's art/women's art). Until the emergence of postmodernism, feminism and the multicultural movement, curricula in art history and art education were hardly challenged for their inherent ethnocentrism and for silencing multiple voices and perspectives.

DePillars (1990) addresses Eurocentrism in art education by asking whether educational institutions are ready for multiculturalism. His question is grounded on a review of art historical texts (e.g., Gardner, 1959; Janson, 1971) and art curricula which, he maintains, have systematically mis-educated future art educators through the omission and distortion of facts regarding the art and civilization of non-European populations and their descendants in the diaspora. Despite repeated theoretical pronouncements from leading art educators aimed at broadening the curriculum, art education remains primarily Eurocentric, revealing hypocrisy and prejudice of educators. Like DePillars, Ransaw (1990) reviews the depiction of Black people in the past 300 years of paintings by European masters. She notes that, generally, Blacks were never depicted in a respectful manner; they were either ignored, depicted as kind and gentle servants or, as threatening to the Whites. DePillars (1990) asserts that "the dis-Africanization of history and culture . . . is the antithesis of multiculturalism" (p. 121).

Multiculturalists assert that education, to have integrity, must begin with the proposition that all humans have contributed to world development and the flow of knowledge and information and that most

human achievements are the result of mutually interactive international efforts (Asante, 1991). For the sake of equity in education, multiculturalists reiterate the need for inclusive and comprehensive curricula that would mutually benefit all shades of students represented in our classrooms. In order to prevent the psychological and cultural dislocation of ethnic minorities, the educational systems in Canada should address the oppressive aspects of school curricula. The infusion of multiculturalism in art curricula will enable art teachers to connect with all students and provide students the opportunity to express themselves in their own unique ways.

In the United States, Dobbs (1989) explains that the reluctance to address the philosophical bias in curriculum choices stems from the training, experiences, values and backgrounds of professionals in the art disciplines, which have largely been shaped by Eurocentric and modernist perspectives. Most of Canada's teaching force is also caught up in the same dilemmas leading to the victimization of Black/African-Canadians and other visible minorities. This situation does not only undermine attempts to reconceptualize curricula and teacher education toward a multicultural agenda, but also makes it difficult for many art educators to cease viewing European culture and art as universal, and to consider the possibilities of other artistic traditions, cultural realities or, indeed, shared realities. Besides, those art educators who are genuinely interested in infusing multicultural objectives into the art curriculum may not have a clear understanding of multicultural education: how it is defined; how it is being practised; its possible sources of content and pedagogy; its tension points and places; its effects on students' attitudes and self-concepts; and what such an infusion means for a curriculum field. These questions and analyses present a great challenge to educators who are ideologically predisposed to particular cultural traditions and/or who are generally unprepared to work in such tension-ridden and contested terrain. A clear understanding of multicultural education issues is particularly important to consider in art education because most art teachers have substantial, if not total, autonomy in the areas of curriculum planning and implementation. Multicultural education calls for a thorough examination of existing curricula in order to ensure that information and perspectives not considered in the past will indeed be considered. Included in this call is the demand for reforms in teacher education programs to ensure that future teachers are fully equipped with the necessary tools to function in multicultural educational settings. Daniel (1996) questions

the effectiveness of school curricula and pedagogy that assume that cultural harmony can be achieved by avoiding discussions about diversity and difference. Daniel suggests that it is imperative for educators to strive for balanced curricula in a multicultural environment in order to achieve a more inclusive education. This study raises critical curricula issues that would challenge art educators, teachers, teacher educators, school boards and decision makers to move beyond their comfort zones in order to tackle the issue of multiculturalism in education.

Critics contend that the disciplines of art education must not simply be modified to include minorities and feminist concerns, but must be re-constructed to provide epistemological equality within art (Collins & Sandell, 1992; Hagaman, 1990; Hicks, 1992; hooks, 1990; Huber, 1987; Garber, 1990, 1995). This implies that art educators must scrutinize the grounds of knowledge claims in the art of diverse cultures, focusing particularly on historical accounts of imbalances and how and why they were created. While such insightful criticisms have helped to bring the issues of cultural diversity in art to the forefront, they fall short of informing educational practitioners, particularly teachers and community-based educators, in very practical terms, about how to deal specifically with the increasing ethno-cultural diversity in Canadian classrooms and with the educational problems and issues encountered by children of African descent living in multiethnic/multiracial Canada.

Liberal multiculturalism or "uncritical" multiculturalism focuses on equal opportunity by masking existing unequal playing fields or structural inequities. They avoid sensitive issues or the forces that continue to create and perpetuate social inequities. Culture is presented in the abstract, divorced from the history and socio-economic realities that shape our identity and behaviour. Critical multiculturalism, on the other hand, focuses on collective experience of marginalized groups. It empowers schools and students to address issues of racism and the imbalance of power in the production, distribution and dissemination of knowledge. It provides a scaffold for the full expression of all forms of artistic talents. It requires teachers and educators who will seek the appropriate centrality for Black/African immigrant students in the classroom and "rupture the established concepts, paradigms and content of the conventional school curriculum" (Dei, 1996, p. 103) that sustain educational inequity and Black students' underachievement. This research will assist teachers not only to create environments that will foster positive inter-group

attitudes but also materials that could close the cultural and information gaps in order to assist children of African parentage or ancestry to locate their identity and space within a multicultural Canadian society. It aims at helping art educators to integrate the artistic, historical and cultural knowledge of Black/African-Canadians who have been left in the margins of the visual arts curricula.

For many Canadians, research in terms of race is still largely an unsettling issue. Yet much of the available research data demonstrates significant differences that Black/African-Canadians and other minority youths experience in Canadian education systems (Alladin, 1995; BLAC, 1994; Brathwaite, 1989; Carby, 1986; Cheng, 1995; Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac & Zine, 1997). Raising alarm about the oppressive aspects of school curricula and historical inequity in Canadian education systems does not nullify the positive changes that have taken place in ethnic and race relations in this country during the last four decades. Instead, it is intended to show that while much has been achieved, more remains to be done (given the existing "vertical mosaic"[1] in Canada) in order to achieve educational equity. It must be acknowledged that there are many people in the Euro-Canadian American educational systems that are doing their utmost, in various capacities, to promote inclusive education and educational equity. Despite progress in the educational systems and in race relations, institutional and structural discrimination has persisted. The slogan, "celebrating diversity" often glosses over the realities of a "vertical mosaic" behind a rhetorical smokescreen and a facade of good intensions. The areas in education that critically need reform to reflect Canada's multicultural policy include the issues of curricula choices, pedagogy, teacher recruitment, teacher education and representation in school textbooks. However, many educators and administrators have shown persistent resistance to change. It must be made clear that any criticism in this study is directed, for the most part, at the educational systems and social practices and not at the purposeful intent of specific individuals. My objective is not to blame, but rather to achieve a holistic understanding of Black/African-Canadian artistic and educational experience in order to recommend appropriate alternatives that would meet students' needs.

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[1]This term is often traced to John Porter who applied it in the argument that ethnic/racial affiliation and immigration are important determinant of social class in Canada, and that visible minorities tend to be at the lower ranks regardless of their educational training and qualifications. See Porter, J. (1965). Vertical Mosaic. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Multicultural education, in this study is conceptualized to encompass *anti-racist education* and *critical pedagogy*. This concept is represented in Nieto's (1996) *Affirming Diversity*:

> It entails a direct challenge to the societal power structure that has historically subordinated certain groups and rationalized the educational failure of these groups as being the result of their inherent deficiencies. Multicultural education as conceptualized here challenges all educators to make the schools a force for social justice in our society. (p. xvi)

Viewed in these terms, the construct is rescued from the perception that it concerns itself only with the production of the passive consciousness of culture divorced from societal power relations. From the right, critics of Canadian multiculturalism argue that the legitimization of cultures and traditions other than those of the dominant group constitutes a real threat to national unity (e.g., Bissoondath, 1994; Porter, 1972) and this is mitigated by a plea for "Canadianism," a version of the "melting pot" idea. This argument however, is grounded on an illusive assumption that Canada has been historically and sociologically united. The fact that the nation was already sharply divided along the lines of class, gender and ethnicity (i.e., English, French, East Europeans, Asians, First Nations and Blacks) before the advent of multiculturalism is conveniently ignored. Also ignored are: the contradiction between our national democratic ideology and the pervasive inequities in the distribution of knowledge, power and social justice; the failure of the educational systems to equitably educate children across race, ethnic, class and gender lines; and the fact that multiculturalism offers a more realistic and egalitarian vision of social relations. In fact, Canadian multiculturalism seeks ways to unite the country based on mutual respect for the cultural agency of all its peoples. Therefore, what is disuniting Canada is exclusion and hate, not multiculturalism. The incisive analyses of both Chalmers' (1996) *Celebrating Pluralism* and Nieto's (1996) *Affirming Diversity* make very clear that monocultural education ill prepares students to function in a democratic/pluralistic society and in an employment market that is increasingly oriented toward cultural diversity. Supporters of multicultural education argue that "multicultural literacy" (the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to function in a diverse world) is essential for students to operate effectively in the "global village" during this new century. Baldwin (1986) therefore argues that multiculturalism cannot be reduced to an exclusive "otherness" that references "minorities" as either a problem to be resolved, through benevolent assimilation, or as a threat to be policed and eliminated.

This study addresses multicultural education from a critical perspective with emphasis on "Africentricity."[2] It engenders the understanding of African art and culture from an African-centred perspective. Africentricity means placing African ideals at the centre of our approach to problem solving and any analysis that involves African culture and behaviours (Asante, 1987). The underlying assumption in this study is that students of African descent are placed in a stronger position to learn if they are situated at the centre rather than at the margins of school curricula and pedagogy. In other words, children of African descent cannot truly know their potentialities if they continue to exist in a borrowed space; they must gain their own cultural spaces, in order to achieve the necessary transformation to participate fully in a multicultural society. Africentricity is grounded on the assumption that there are multiple centres of culture, knowledge and history and that no single group can claim a centre stage except in the context of incomplete description. The Africentric theory posits that all reality is in unity, and that each group or culture constitutes its own centre, but these "polycentres" coalesce to form a whole. A holistic education connects and builds on these multiple-centres of knowledge. Africentrists locate students within the context of their own cultural references so that they can relate socially and psychologically to school curricula and other cultural perspectives. A person educated in a truly centric fashion comes to view all groups' contributions as significant and useful for understanding our world. It must be stressed, however, that non-hegemonic discourses (such as African-centred, Asia-centred and critical pedagogies) do not necessarily represent a dichotomy between Eurocentric and alternative worldviews. African-centred ideas and tenets are not novel or distinct to African culture and the theoretical discourse. Africentric paradigm emphasizes interdependency and a holistic approach to studying phenomena. Africentricity represents a range of beliefs rather than a fixed ideology. By emphasizing its liberatory character and inclusive models, this study attempts to avoid the tendency of the concept becoming dogmatic and limiting.

A knowledge of African art and cultural heritage is essential not only for raising the cultural awareness of Black students, but also for the promotion of cultural understanding and positive inter-group

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[2] Although the term "Afrocentricity" has been used by many Black scholars including Asante (1988), who is credited for developing the Afrocentric paradigm, I view the term "Africentricity" as a more explicit concept that does not repeat the "Afro" prefix which has generated quite a lot of discussion among Americans of African descent.

relations among students of diverse backgrounds. It is undeniable that culture is dynamic and that people must be open to new possibilities of dynamism, moving and flowing. Yet, it is also important that people move and flow from some base rather than float in the air (Asante, 1998). It is my conviction that the educational systems can respond effectively to the diversity within and among all social groups if there is *a priori* understanding of the impact of structural processes of education on various groups. Also, many art teachers may be in a better position to respond positively to multicultural education if they are exposed to alternative models, or have personal experiences in multicultural curricula and pedagogy. Teachers and students, who already have the understanding and experience of multicultural education, represent the vanguard of a new paradigm. They can bring colleagues and students into action with multicultural education, so that changes in beliefs, ideology and motivations can follow.

Defining the Research Questions

The journey to my dissertation research began through my volunteer experience as an African art instructor to some high schools and community groups in New Brunswick and British Columbia as well as through the expertise I have acquired in multicultural education research as a doctoral student. Despite efforts toward inclusive education, personal experience and current research reveal a disturbing trend of cultural exclusion and other discriminatory practices in multi-ethnic Canadian classrooms (Dei, 1996; Hamilton, 1997). While several reports have been produced on ethnic minorities, there remains a dearth of research on the education of African-Canadians in British Columbia leaving no research underpinnings for meaningful policy formulation. My dissertation aims at bridging these gaps, while promoting inter-group harmony among students of diverse cultural backgrounds and collaboration between family, community and school. In Vancouver, I have had a long-term voluntary experience with African-Canadian children at the Multicultural Family Centre (MFC) located in the heart of east Vancouver. The MFC is a community-based social service provider with a wide range of programs, support and services aimed at improving access to health care and social services for immigrant and refugee communities in Vancouver and its surrounding districts. The Centre's services to the African community include the African children's program which fosters positive cultural identity and increase self-confidence in academic and social

abilities among Black children and youths. After working with the children and youths for some time, I began to identify with their problems and concerns, particularly with regard to the conflicts of values that some of them experience between the home and school cultures. I also became concerned about the cultural discontinuity and marginalization of the children's cultural heritage in school. Following this, I expressed to the MFC staff and the members of my dissertation committee a desire to conduct a study about the African children's art and cultural activities at the MFC and their educational realities in the public school classroom. The parents, the MFC staff and members of my committee responded favourably to my proposal by providing insightful suggestions, which helped in the formulation of this research. I became committed to learning how to facilitate a collaborative research process with the school, the home and the Black/African-Canadian community. My research questions and objectives thus evolved through my encounter with the African-Canadian community at the MFC.

Purpose of the Study

My study develops and implements a community-based model of an African-centred multicultural art education as an alternative curriculum and pedagogy. It has two main purposes. Firstly, as a backdrop to the development of the curriculum, I identify and examine the cultural and educational barriers to Black/African-Canadian students' participation and attainment in education and their implications for multicultural education policy in Canada, with special reference to Vancouver. A major reason why multicultural education has been criticized as the production of passive consciousness of culture (Banks, 1992; Giroux, 1993; Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1996) and subject to different interpretations is that the construct has not been adequately grounded in a causal analysis of school failure among subordinated group students (Nieto, 1996). Understanding the socio-political realities of Black/African-Canadian children's educational experience in multiethnic/multiracial Canada is therefore crucial for any effective educational policies sympathetic to their needs.

Secondly, I investigate the effects of a collaborative "African-centred" multicultural art curriculum on: (1) Black students' attitudes and self-concepts as they unfold at the MFC and (2) inter-group relations among students of diverse backgrounds in a multi-ethnic elementary school art classroom in east

Vancouver, British Columbia. This multidisciplinary curriculum unit integrates hands-on art activities with knowledge of Africa's geography, Oral Tradition and history. This is accomplished through deliberations with my network of participants - an art teacher, African-Canadian parents from the MFC and two MFC Cross-cultural Facilitators serving as an advisory team. As part of the study, I document the process of doing community-based participatory research as it unfolds with the curriculum advisory team. Community-based participatory research suggests a way in which communities without socio-political power can use research to support their struggle for self-determination by gaining control of information that can influence decisions regarding their lives (Bopp & Bopp, 1985; Stull & Schensul, 1987). An African-centred approach to multicultural art curriculum is among many possible ways to illustrate multicentric education (Dei, 1996). A collaborative approach to a multicultural art curriculum with an infusion of Africentricity demonstrates a practical example of an inclusive education that transforms, rather than provides an appendage to, the curriculum. Primary issues include the conceptualization of multicultural education and Africentricity as relevant educational philosophies and pedagogies. Africentric methodology or *Africology*, particularly as described by Asante (1990), best serves this research. This methodology promises to deliver voices that have been previously shut out of normative educational research. Africology eclectically embraces liberationist tenets of critical ethnography and feminist research. It enables me to situate African art and culture at the centre rather than the periphery of multicultural education research.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify and examine the artistic, cultural and educational experience of Black/African-Canadian children in Greater Vancouver, Canada.

2. Evaluate the impact of an African-centred multicultural art program on Black/African-Canadian learners.

3. Identify ways by which the Black community can work with schools to broaden the curricula to embrace multicultural art education, with particular reference to Africentric art and culture.

4.   Foster understanding of African art and culture and, thereby, promote healthy inter-group relations among students of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

5.   Document the process of doing community-based participatory research, including its strengths and obstacles.

Research Questions

The following questions were addressed in the study:

1.   In what ways do school curricula, textbooks and the general school organization influence Black/African-Canadian children's participation and attainment in art and education?

2.   What content and teaching methodology is appropriate for an African-centred multicultural art curriculum?

3.   How do Black/African-Canadian children react to the African Art and Cultural Education Project at the Multicultural Family Centre?

4.   What is the impact of an African-centred multicultural art program on children at a multi-ethnic elementary school in Vancouver, British Columbia?

5.   What is the process and nature of doing community-based participatory research as it unfolds with teachers, parents, African community members and MFC facilitators?

Significance of the Study

Multicultural education in the past has often been superficial and has presented culture as divorced from societal power relations; this has continued to reinforce ethno-cultural stereotypes. Advocates of multicultural and anti-racism education (Dei, 1996; Stuhr, Petrovich-Mwaniki & Wasson, 1992) demand that art educators look beyond the celebration of heroes and holidays and develop curriculum and readings to transform, rather than add on to, the curriculum. This research is significant in that it provides an example of how educators can integrate the art, literature, history, culture, language, resistance and philosophy of the peoples who have been left in the margins of the curriculum. I emphasize

"polycentrism" as an inclusive ideology that connects African knowledge with other forms of knowledge to achieve cultural pluralism and effective multiculturalism. This is based on the assumption that there are multiple centres of culture and knowledge that are relevant to multicultural education. The curriculum model presented in this study allows Black/African-Canadians to respond to the cultural and artistic needs of their children that are being neglected in the formal school system. It looks beyond current curriculum practices with their top-down approach, to suggest an exciting and innovative grassroots model of partnership among the community, family and school in the delivery of multicultural education. Research on education systems that marginalize subordinate groups demonstrates that changes rarely come from within, without the support of external forces (BLAC, 1994). This explains the critical importance of a bottom-up approach to dealing with issues affecting the needs of the Black/African-Canadian community. The active and direct involvement of those most concerned with the education of Black learners (i.e., parents, the community, teachers and Black/African-Canadian students) is a key to successful implementation of any program directed to their needs. Top-down policy that dictates classroom action is perceived as a challenge to teachers' personal sensibilities and an affront to their professional autonomy (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1994; Troyna, 1993). The research provides an opportunity for understanding: (1) how parents, the community and the school can collectively mediate against the conflicts of values or cultural maladjustment experienced by some Black/African-Canadian children as they strive to situate their identities within home and school cultures; (2) how identity-based knowledge is constructed, disseminated and how it affects Black students, as well as the cross-cultural learning of non-African students; and (3) the effectiveness of collaboration as a pragmatic approach to multicultural education and research. Collaboration in multicultural education enables parents and other stakeholders to have some input regarding what their children/students learn. By having a choice, parents become more committed to the school than they would be had the school and curriculum been assigned. This study fosters cultural understanding among students of diverse ethnic backgrounds, thereby promoting healthy inter-group relations. These insights present serious implications not only for art education but also for multicultural education as a whole. This research is a wake-up call for schools and educators to re-examine current approaches to multicultural education and to be receptive to alternative non-hegemonic approaches, both

within and beyond academia, that may contribute to a more comprehensive and equitable education. As this study extends the debate over the centrality or marginality of ethnicity in the production and dissemination of knowledge, my findings will enable a re-examination of assumptions in provincial and district multicultural education policies. Therefore, it is hoped that the study will be useful to relevant branches of the ministries responsible for Multiculturalism and Education and Training (e.g., multicultural and immigrant service organizations, curriculum and policy development, community and education outreach and anti-racism) and school boards in British Columbia.

Definition of Terms

Black: In this study, "Black" refers to dark-skinned and mulatto people of African descent. Obviously some African immigrants (e.g., White South Africans, Indo-Ugandan, Indo-Tanzanians; and North African Arabs) do not fall into this category; also, African-Canadians are not always immigrants in the very modern use of the term since some have long historical roots in Canada. Because of the disparaging connotation often associated with the term "Black," some authors try to avoid its use and use terms such as Afro-Canadians or African-Canadians. Ethnic identity politics in places such as United States and Canada has resulted in many scholars with ancestry in Africa preferring to be called African-Americans and African-Canadians respectively instead of "Blacks." Historically in the United States, people of African descent have been referred to, over the years, as Negroes, Afro-Americans, Blacks and African-Americans. While "Black" may be, admittedly, distasteful in some of its English and other language usage, we cannot shy away from it, for as far as Black/Africans are concerned; skin colour overrides most attributes of their human individuality in Canadian society.

Culture: Culture can be understood as the ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships and worldview created and shared by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors that can include a common history, geographic location, language, social class and/or religion and how these are transformed by those who share them. Thus, it includes not only tangibles such as food, holidays, dress and artistic expression, but also less tangible manifestations such as communication style, attitudes, values and family relationships.

Diaspora: The concept of "diaspora" (from the Greek *diaspeirein*, to scatter) has traditionally been applied to the dispersion of the Jews after the conquests of Palestine and is roughly linked with exile or bondage of people originally belonging to one nation or having a common culture. Accordingly, it

is often remarked that the forces, which have mostly driven Black-Africans abroad (i.e., slavery, Western colonialism, cultural imperialism and capitalism) are not unlike those that scattered the Jews. The concept of the African (Black) diaspora is a metaphor that can serve as a useful guiding thread for substantive analysis of dispersed Africans outside the continent in Europe, the Americas and the rest of the world. African diaspora in Euro-Western societies cannot be fully understood apart from political, historical and structural legacies of slavery and imperialism. It must be noted however, that many Africans were dispersed globally by choice, through adventure, for economic reasons and to seek knowledge long before European contact with the New World and their inauguration of the trade in human cargo.

Ethnicity/Ethnic Origin: For the purpose of this study, "Ethnicity" refers to socially selected cultural (rather than biological or physical) attributes which people employ to describe themselves and which others, in turn, use to describe them.

Eurocentrism: It is an ideology or body of myths, symbols, ideas and practices that exclusively or predominantly values the worldview, existence and cultural manifestations (e.g., history, politics, art, language, music, literature, technology, economics, etc.) of people of European origin and that devalues and subordinates the cultural manifestations of people from all other lands of origin.

Hegemony: A process of domination whereby the ruling class is said to exercise political control through its intellectual and moral leadership over allied classes (Bocock, 1986).

Lower Mainland: This includes the cities/municipalities of Vancouver, Burnaby, Richmond, New Westminster, North Vancouver City and District, West Vancouver, Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, Langley City and District, Surrey, White Rock, Delta, Coquitlam, Port Coquilam and Port Moody. For variety, the term Greater Vancouver is used interchangeably with the Lower Mainland in this study.

Multiculturalism: The term first came into vogue in Canada during the 1960s to counter "biculturalism," a term popularized by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. It has, to a considerable extent, replaced the term cultural "pluralism," although that term is still favoured in Quebec. Multiculturalism is used in at least three senses: to refer to a society that is characterized by ethnic or cultural heterogeneity; to refer to an ideal of equality and mutual respect among a population's ethnic or cultural groups; and to refer to government policy proclaimed by the Canadian government in 1971 and subsequently by a number of provinces.

Prejudice and Discrimination: Ethnic and racial prejudice usually refers to an unsubstantiated negative prejudgement of individuals or groups because of their ethnicity, race, or religion. Discrimination is the exclusion of individuals or groups from full participation in society because of their ethnicity, race or religion. Prejudice (an attitude) and discrimination (behaviour) are usually linked, but are distinct phenomena. In a vicious cycle, prejudice frequently leads to discriminatory behaviour while discrimination reinforces or creates social and economic inequalities that then reinforce prejudices.

Race: There are some disagreements among scholars over the meaning and existence of race. In this study "race" refers to the distinction of human population based on "socially perceived" physical traits (e.g., phenotype, skin colour, hair texture). These attributes are not intrinsically meaningful in view of overwhelming evidence in support of one human race from the standpoint of biology. But over time, people have given these attributes qualities that have become entrenched. Race is here seen as a social construct, arguably a social myth.

Racism: The disagreement among scholars over the meaning of "race" does not extend to its derivative, racism. It refers to the doctrine that some races are innately superior or inferior to others. Because racism indiscriminately includes groupings such as religious sects, linguistic groups and cultural groups under its concept of "race," it can be regarded as a virulent form of ethnocentrism (the belief that one's own ethnic group is superior to others). Racism is based on the assumption that organic, genetically transmitted differences between human groups are intrinsically related to the presence or absence of certain social, psychological or cultural traits of that group. It is also predicted on the false assumption that human beings are naturally and permanently comprised of separate, pure races (e.g., Mongoloid, Caucasoid) and that the physical, mental and cultural qualities of each group are determined by its supposed genetic constitution. Individual racism is a belief by one individual about another person's "racial" inferiority. Institutional racism exists when the political, economic and social institutions of a society operate to the detriment of a specific individual or group in a society because of their alleged genetic makeup. Cultural racism is the expression of the superiority of a socially defined race's culture over that of another race.

Visible Minority: Following the *Canada Employment Equity Act*, visible minorities are "persons, other than Aboriginal people, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-White in colour." Specifically, the Act identifies the following groups as visible minorities: Blacks, Chinese, South Asians, Arabs and West Asians, Filipinos, Southeast Asians, Latin Americans, Japanese, Koreans and Pacific Islanders.

Personal Reflexivity

Personal reflexivity involves providing details about the researcher's personal investment in the study and in making explicit the assumptions that guide the research. Patti Lather (1991) argues that personal reflexivity is crucial when doing openly value-based inquiry. This study is openly ideological because it deals with the debate over the centrality or marginality of race, ethnicity and culture in the production and dissemination of knowledge. I entered this research fully aware that my personal location and investment has a significant bearing on the research process, including how data is gathered and treated. According to Hunt (1992), researchers' intentions, perceptions and actions must be included in the research process because they are the "most powerful and sensitive means for recording and interpreting our research" (p. 116). For a multicultural education research, the issues of race, ethnicity, class, gender, culture, sexuality and other social peculiarities present a specific window for understanding and interpreting data. This is so because knowledge can be understood in relation to one's subject location, politics, desires and interests.

I am not a disinterested party in relation to calls for multicultural art education and inclusive school curriculum in Canada. My African cultural ancestry, historical background and lived experiences have informed and influenced my position on multicultural education in Euro-Canadian American contexts. My social and political positions are relevant to this study because I have a stake in the success of Black/African-Canadian students. I could not pretend to be a fly on the wall or subscribe to a naturalistic discourse of distance, neutrality and detached involvement in order to deal with my subjectivity. As a critical ethnographer, I believe the passive observer rule could be another means of colluding with unequal power relations in society. As a parent of three children and guardian of an African-Canadian youth, I share a common experience and concern of many African-Canadian parents over the challenges of bringing up Black youths in Vancouver, Canada. Having survived a gang attack on my family, coupled with my numerous encounters with school authorities, the police and the courts of law, I cannot pretend to be oblivious to the issues. I acknowledge that my structural relations with participants, both as an "insider" and "outsider" influenced the kinds of questions I asked and the responses I received, the things I observed and created blind spots for other ways of being seen. My cross-cultural experience

resonates familiar issues of cultural alienation in the colonial and post-colonial education I have received in Ghana, my birthplace, as well as in Euro-Western education in Canada. As I walk through my experiences as a student, a professional teacher, a graduate student and now on the verge of becoming a professional art educator, I have learned that the educational system is mediated by power structures in society. As a result, schooling neither provides young Black/African-Canadians with confidence and pride in their cultural heritage nor encourages their full participation in the education process. My frustrations are not so much about what the post-colonial or Eurocentric curriculum have taught me, but with what was not taught. For instance, I have wondered recently why studying English Shakespearean literature was valued over African oral traditional poetry; why learning about the history of the British empire was more relevant than learning about the history of the empires of Western Sudan or the Ashanti empire in Ghana; why learning about the European art masters was more important than being taught about traditional African craftspeople and their artefacts; and why the Western canons about art and design were privileged over the African aesthetics of *relative proportion*. I also have to struggle with the fact that, in discussing issues of multicultural art education and representation of the "other," I have to employ the language of those who hold positions of power in society. The stripping away of my native language and culture with the substitution of English assimilation was done, obviously, for what were perceived to be good reasons – improvement of educational achievement and economic and social mobility. Nevertheless, I have come to know that loosing one's culture and language is an unnecessarily high price to pay for academic success and social acceptance. Evidence demonstrates that language differences per se are not necessarily barriers to learning. In fact, Nieto (1996) argues that the language and culture that children bring to school are assets that must be used in their education. Rather, the way in which teachers, schools and educational systems perceive native language may be even more crucial to a student's level of achievement.

Today, my immersion into academia may provide me some advantage as well as responsibilities. However, the contradiction that comes with this position is obvious. As a Black African and a minority member of Canadian society, my race and ethnicity intersects with my academic position to limit my access to the full benefits that come with my educational attainment. I share with many "others" the common historical experience of the subjugation of our existence through the devaluing and de-privileging

of our histories and ancestral knowledge within Euro-Canadian/American education systems. I further

acknowledge that my social immersion into Eurocentrism, while culturally dis-empowering, paradoxically,

becomes a source of my educational and political empowerment. For instance, my heightened awareness

of power inequities within schools has come about because of my participation in the academy. In the

course of my graduate studies, I was attracted to courses such as *Historical and Social Foundations of Art*

Education, Multiculturalism, Anti-racism and Education, Seminar on Women and Education, History of

Race Relations and Multiculturalism in Canada and *Curriculum Issues in Contemporary Art Education.*

These courses stimulated my intellectual interest in multicultural education and anti-racism education.

They enabled me to begin to look at my world differently and be critical of art education theory and

practice, as well as the entire art establishment for its exclusionary practices. It was through my graduate

courses that post-modern theories, critical theory, feminist theory, anti-racism theory, Africentric theory

and many other theoretical paradigms became meaningful to me. I began to appreciate the need to

appropriate my experience of "difference" and "otherness" as a legitimate political ideology and to

acknowledge the important connections between African ways of knowing and other forms of knowledge

that are grounded in historical material experiences. Consequently, I became actively involved locally in

multicultural art education and in raising people's consciousness about African art and culture as well as

multicultural education issues. My position of "otherness" ironically, became my source of empowerment.

As important as these factors were, they do not tell the whole story. While pursuing my graduate studies at

University of British Columbia, I had the good fortune of having some progressive and open-minded

professors in art education who were interested in minority issues and multicultural education. The issues I

was concerned about they had been writing about years earlier; therefore, the congruence between their

ideas and my interest was very close. My encounter with some members of the education faculty who were

interested in minority education no doubt encouraged me to venture into this tension-ridden terrain. My

vision in this study was to unveil the ways in which students, particularly Black/African-Canadians, are

victims of the education system, rather than to act as a catalyst for the improved efficiency of schools in

their continuous victimization of ethnic minorities. This study, therefore, is not a disinterested piece of

work; it grows out of my passion for inclusive education and my desire to ensure that Black/African-

Canadians, like other cultural groups in Canada, are fairly treated and represented in knowledge production and dissemination.

I am conscious of limitations in Africentric and critical ethnographic interpretations. At one point they are liberatory because they open doors to what has been previously hidden and undermine existing conventions of representations; yet they can also be restrictive in the sense that they can appropriate the data to the researcher's interests, so that other significant elements may be silenced. Although what is documented is my interpretation of what I heard and witnessed from participants, the strength of the study lies in the careful accumulation and re-presentation of evidence and in attention to reciprocity – the negotiation of meaning with participants in the study. Throughout the study, I have made the effort to make reflexivity a fundamental theme. The pointed effort to reveal my own value perspectives and subjectivity situates my study within a critical ethnographic research tradition. However, I am conscious that this openness could make this study susceptible to criticisms.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Socio-historical Context of Black/African-Canadian Children's Education

This chapter presents an overview of literature related to Black/African-Canadian artistic and educational experience. It includes an overview of theoretical work that attempts to identify, analyze and explain the barriers to Black children's participation and achievement in art and in education. The chapter looks at some definitions and approaches to multicultural education and how it is conceptualized in art education. Part of the literature focuses on the American experience because more people are writing about education and the issues of race, ethnicity, class and gender, which have longer history of attention in the United States. It is also because multicultural education indicates similar patterns, themes and approaches in both Canada and the United States. The chapter also situates the study in an Africentric paradigm, drawing attention to African art and aesthetics as valid sources for multicultural art education.

Historical Overview of Black Experience in Canada

This section discusses the educational experiences of Black/African-Canadians, past and present and their struggle for educational equity. I analyze some of the causes of educational underachievement, among Black/African students, which call for curriculum reform as a means of addressing racial and ethno-cultural inequities. Many Black educational activists in Canada maintain that Blacks cannot know where they are heading until they know where they have been (i.e., their historical roots in Africa and in Canada) (Alexander & Glaze, 1996). A historical perspective is an essential component in the analysis of any social situation and this is especially pertinent in the light of Black/African-Canadian experience in Canada.

Blacks, like the Chinese, Jews, Ukrainians, Japanese, Italians and Germans, have had a long history in Canada and North America. The earliest records show that Africans visited and inhabited North and South America long before European settlers "discovered" the "New World" (Van Sertima, 1976). Slavery became a familiar fact in early Canada just as it was in the United States. Although some Blacks

arrived as early as the 1600s as slaves, the majority came to Canada voluntarily as free Negroes, preferring the uncertainties of pioneer life, to slavery in the United States or the West Indies. Most Black pioneer settlers in the 18th and 19th centuries settled in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, the prairies and British Columbia. The Black presence became more visible following the abolition of racial quotas in immigration in the 1960s that led to an influx of non-White immigrants from developing countries (Whitaker, 1991). In addition, the 1976 *Immigration Act*, which initiated the establishment of an inland refugee determination system, in line with the UN Convention for Refugees, also led to a substantial increase in the proportion of immigrants and refugees from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. Notwithstanding the long history and growing presence of Blacks, Asians, First Nations Peoples and other visible minorities, Canada's education has continued to be dominated by Eurocentric curriculum, reflecting the cultural hegemony of the British and French as "founding nations." Representation in art and art history has also been Eurocentric and discriminatory against African art and other non-Western art forms. While Euro-Western art is placed into the category of high art or fine art, African art forms are classified as crafts or under folk art traditions giving the impression that the latter is inferior to the former.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, Blacks were lured into Canada through promises (from Britain) of freedom, justice, formal education and equality with their White counterparts. But they soon came up against racial attitudes similar to those found in the United States and from which they were fleeing. In fact, these rights had to be dearly won. Prior to the 1960s, official policies, written and unwritten, served to ensure that Black children would not integrate with Whites. Thus, racial discrimination and stereotypes of past generations were reinforced (Boyko, 1997; Whitaker, 1991). The legacy of race science and its colour scale theories which held great sway between the mid-nineteenth and twentieth centuries, continued to define social and educational policy as well as the relationship between White and non-Whites in Canada. Due to racial hostilities, many of the pioneer Black settlers and their descendants returned to the United States following the American Civil War and the Reconstruction. Ironically, however, Canadian classrooms are devoid of the story of the inhuman treatment of Africans and other visible minorities, of how their dignity was stolen and their culture destroyed and of how Africans resisted such treatment even if it meant sacrificing their lives. As a result, many Black children do not

know their people's story and neither do White children know the African Holocaust. Teaching about such a monstrous human brutality should forever remind the world of the ways in which humans have often violated each other. Asante (1991) stresses that, without an understanding of the historical experiences of Black/Africans, schools cannot make any real headway in addressing their problems of the present.

Despite their consistent efforts to break into the vicious cycle of discrimination through improved education, the Black leadership in Canada, unlike their counterpart in the United States, never attained a consensus over the issue of school segregation and vocational training that often reinforced separation. Generally, they embraced the missionary curriculum with its hidden agenda and the notion that separate schooling could engender equal education. This situation persisted until the 1950s and long after Blacks in the United States, particularly in the North, had rejected the separate but equal formula in schooling. The Black newspapers in eastern and central Canada performed a useful role toward educating the Canadian Black community and toward the Black liberation struggle, particularly in the decades preceding and following the American Civil War of 1861, but they made a minimal impact in addressing the problems of educational inequities (Winks, 1997). This is particularly true of the *Voice of the Fugitive*, established in 1851 by Henry Bibb, and the *Provincial Freedman*, established in 1853 by Samuel Ringgold Ward and later edited by Mary Ann Shadd, the first woman editor of a Canadian newspaper (Walker & Thovaldson, 1979). The Black newspapers encountered numerous problems. Among them were intense competition from English newspapers and from Black newspapers in the United States, the lack of business support and patronage and the issue of parochialism and small readership. But, perhaps what made the Black editors less visible during that period was their non-militant mainstream position on issues. By remaining politically conservative, they missed the opportunity to challenge Canadians to tackle, head-on, sensitive and unsettling issues that were crucial to the survival of the Black community.

Canada, has for a long time, pursued a policy of cultural assimilation of its ethnic minority populations, yet at the same time, it has been less willing to structurally integrate these groups into the socio-economic and political sectors of the society. Denied full participation, the contribution of Blacks and other minorities to nation building has been severely stifled. For the country to benefit fully from its large population of immigrants, it will be necessary to chart a new course by endorsing relevant plans,

policies, programs and interventions that will enhance immigrants' educational success and contribution to the Canadian social, economic, cultural and political life.

The Black Pioneers of British Columbia

The story of the Black pioneers of British Columbia stands apart from the larger Black Canadian history. Blacks had played a key role in the formative years of cities and towns in this province, particularly Victoria, Barkerville, Kamloops, Saltspring Island, Peace River Country and the Queen Charlotte Islands. But, unfortunately, they have been unrecognized. Historians have either distorted their history or presented them as minor curiosities of the province's early days. The omission of Blacks' contribution from Canadian history reinforces a common myth that Black presence in Canada is a recent phenomenon. Recognition of the early Black presence and contribution in the province shatters this myth.

By 1857, California was a "free" state, yet Blacks were subjected to increasing persecution and abuse of their civil rights, prompting the movement of more than 700 Blacks to Victoria (in the company of White Americans) to seek freedom and economic prospects during the gold rush of 1858 (Walker, 1985). Many of the Black pioneers were well educated. They had acquired various skills and professions in the United States and had brought with them adequate money and property to invest in British Columbia. The Black pioneers were tough, resourceful, aggressive, ambitious and integrated into mainstream society comprising British, Americans, French, Italians, Germans, Jews, Chinese and Indians (Kilian, 1978). Unlike their counterparts in central Canada and the Maritimes (the fugitives and the Loyalists, some of whom arrived as slaves) who encountered hostilities right from the onset, the Black pioneers received some level of acceptance from Victoria's White population. The British and the first Governor of British Columbia, James Douglas, who himself had Black ancestry, were particularly welcoming. Many Blacks settled in other parts of Vancouver Island and established themselves as gold prospectors, merchants, restaurant operators, manual labourers, farmers, barbers, dentists, homesteaders, teachers, policemen, lawyers and journalists (Kilian, 1978). Indeed, their achievements defied the logic of racial essentialism and White stereotypes of the time that characterized Blacks as unambitious, poorly educated, dependent and unqualified to associate as equals in the institutions of white society.

In Victoria, Mifflin Wister Gibbs stood out as the representative of the Black community. Twice, in 1866 and 1868, he was elected to serve on the Victoria City Council. He eventually became the council's financial controller. At the time when White American residents of British Columbia threatened a demand for annexation to the United States, the Black community formed the first militia unit - African Rifles - in 1860 to defend the colony against American encroachment. They also formed a fire brigade to begin fire-fighting service. In 1867, Mifflin Gibbs was a delegate for the Yale Convention where terms for British Columbia's entry into the Canadian Confederacy were defined. In 1885, a Barbadian Black named Seraphim Fortes arrived in Vancouver and established himself as a lifeguard on English Bay Beach, near Stanley Park. He is credited with more than a hundred daring rescues of swimmers. At his death, a fountain monument was built in his honour. The irony is that, like the Asians, Jews and Indians, Black pioneers were not fully accepted into white society. Despite the promise of legal equality, discrimination and segregation found expression in the churches, schools, theatres, saloons, restaurants and other public facilities. Whites, especially Americans, often employed physical intimidation and violence to enforce these divisions. At Saltspring for instance, Blacks were compelled to open a separate school for Black children. While certain individual Blacks achieved acceptance, there was a widespread feeling among Whites that Blacks must not mingle with the general society. White prejudice against Blacks was grounded in the legacy of slavery, imperialism, race "science," and Eurocentrism, which gave credence to the notion of white supremacy.

By the 1870s, when the gold rush was over, the American Civil War had ended and slavery had been abolished, many Blacks found the United States to be economically more attractive than Vancouver Island and left for the United States. Walker (1985) noted that by the turn of the century, Blacks were so thinly scattered across the province that they rarely came to public notice. The anxieties of the white community were now firmly focused on the Asians - Chinese, Japanese and East Indians whose numbers, energy and "foreignness" alarmed the white society. Nevertheless, Blacks continued to encounter profound institutional discrimination in the areas of housing, employment and education, even with their small population, but rarely was the discrimination publicized.

From the 1920s, when the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) established itself in British Columbia, there were

scattered incidents of discrimination and violence against Blacks in the workplace and in housing. Kilian (1978) noted that the KKK fell back on anti-Oriental agitation due to the lack of adequate Black targets. The Black pioneers had played a key role in the early years of the colonies that became British Columbia and yet the province had forgotten them. As Kilian rightly noted, "Fools, knaves and madmen have given their names to British Columbia's streets and towns; the only monument to the Blacks is a drinking fountain dedicated to Joe Fortes, the lifeguard of English Bay Beach" (p.12). Until the 1960s, Black settlers in Canada continued to face widespread racial discrimination, segregation and hostilities, particularly in Nova Scotia. African Blacks and other visible minorities were restricted access to Canada through a host of exclusionary immigration regulations. It was only in 1962 that Canada replaced its race-based immigration policy with one that placed emphasis on educational and professional background of immigrants. Nevertheless, it was only after 1970 that Black Africans gained access to Canada in considerable numbers (see Table 1.1).

The Struggle for Educational Equity

The education which was available to early Black communities through missionary groups was both culturally irrelevant and less vigorous than that provided by the common school of the day. The missionary curriculum was aimed primarily at maintaining a servile and content population (Winks, 1997). The "African Schools" in Nova Scotia, or the "segregated coloured schools" in the Maritimes, Ontario and in the prairies, lacked adequate facilities, teachers and relevant curriculum. Although a few of the coloured schools in Ontario followed the public school curriculum, a majority lacked relevant curriculum. This situation was not peculiar to the Black community. It also applied to the First Nations Peoples, Asians and to a lesser extent, "working class European children," as well as East Europeans who were the economic underclass and less desirable immigrants respectively at the time (Owen, 1995). Black children were deliberately restricted to basic reading, writing, sewing and catechism (Pratt, 1972; Winks, 1997). Geography, algebra and grammar, for instance, "were considered unnecessary accomplishments in children who would subsequently be required to perform the meanest tasks" (Pachai, 1987, p. 52). Racism and racial stereotyping in Canadian education systems encouraged low teacher expectations and placement

of Black students in dead-end programs, or courses, which severely restricted their life opportunities. The separate school policy that was unofficially practised in many communities was an infringement upon the rights of Black parents and their children. This is because despite fulfilling their tax obligations, many Blacks and other ethnic minorities could neither attend the public schools, nor continue with high school education and post secondary opportunities which were based on the grading systems of the public schools. It is clear that the educational goals for Black children were being set by white society, which intended Blacks to remain ignorant and servile.

Black parents persisted in their demand for educational and social equity even as they remained divided over the issue of school segregation and integration. In Ontario, the establishment of the Buxton Mission School in 1850, stood as an exception and benchmark for what Canadian Blacks could achieve. With adequate funding, qualified teachers and support from the Presbyterian mission, the school operated successfully well into the 1900s. It opened its doors to Canadians of diverse ethnic backgrounds, offered multi-centred curriculum and produced many successful Black teachers and professionals (Alexander &Glaze, 1996; Winks, 1997).

Like other school subjects, art education in Canada is centred on the Western canon and notions of art. Many art critics and anthropologists, in the past, ignored the artistic accomplishments of Blacks/Africans and erroneously referred to them as "ugly," "primitive" and "childlike," and invalidated its worth as a school subject[3]. This prejudice continues to be reinforced in representations in art education, art museums and galleries in many Western societies today. A number of English and German art critics, (i.e., Owen Jones, Charles Hercules Read, Ormonde Dalton and Felix von Luschan), however, have consistently challenged such positions and praised the aesthetic excellence of African art forms (e.g., Benin art and Asante ornamental designs) and judged their quality as comparable to the best works of other civilizations (in Barkan, 1997; Eisenhofer, 1997) (see Figures: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, & 2.4 for sample pictures). Owen Jones, for instance, admired African artists' affinity with nature and hoped that modern art "would return to a more healthy condition . . . we must get rid of the acquired and artificial and return to

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[3] See F. Graeme Chalmers, 1992, and Ira Jacknis, 1976, for a detailed description of Victorian views of African art and the art of the so-called primitive people.

and develop natural instincts" (in Jacknis, 1976, p. 106). Art educators and historians (Gardner, 1959; Janson, 1971; Schuman, 1981) have systematically ignored and distorted the long historical traditions of African art and culture and suggested, for instance, that the civilizations of the Nile Valley, Ancient Egypt and Nubia cannot be attributed to Black Africa in spite of abundant historical evidence and similarity of culture. Where African art and culture have been included in mainstream art programs, it is often presented as a token or a heap of anthropological curiosities and exotic ritual celebrations. Across Canada, some Black parents have resisted such portrayal of African culture and demanded structural changes to address concerns about discrimination and prejudice in the schools. Some parents have worked for policy and curriculum changes at the school board level and have been instrumental in the establishment of race relation's policies in Ontario, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (BEWG, 1993; BLAC, 1994; BUF, 1971; CABE, 1992).

Over the period from 1984 to 1994, there has been a plethora of commissions, reports and theoretical pronouncements aimed at breaking down barriers and providing a more inclusive education to emerging and insistent multicultural audiences. In Ontario, the document, *For the Love of Learning: A Report of the Royal Commission on Learning*, 1994, reflects many of the Black/African community's recommendations vis-à-vis their educational needs (BEWG, 1993; CABE, 1992). The British Columbia's educational reform initiative, *Year 2000: A Framework for Learning* (BC Ministry of Education, 1992) stresses the need to understand cultural heritage and develop tolerance and respect for the ideas and beliefs of ethnic cultures. Similarly, in *A Legacy for Learners: A Report of the Royal Commission on Education,* Sullivan (1994) recognized that British Columbia needed multicultural education not only to ensure educational equity and foster healthy inter-group attitudes, but also to "preserve diverse cultural heritages through language instruction and through other studies in history, geography, art, music, or drama to remind us of who we are today and from what culture we once came" (p. 28). These reports inject a new legitimacy for multicultural education in the province. The *Black Learners Advisory Committee's* (BLAC) report of 1994 is perhaps the most significant event in Nova Scotia's attempts to redress its longstanding educational inequity. This report, like the others, sets the stage for a new educational accountability,

Figure 2.1
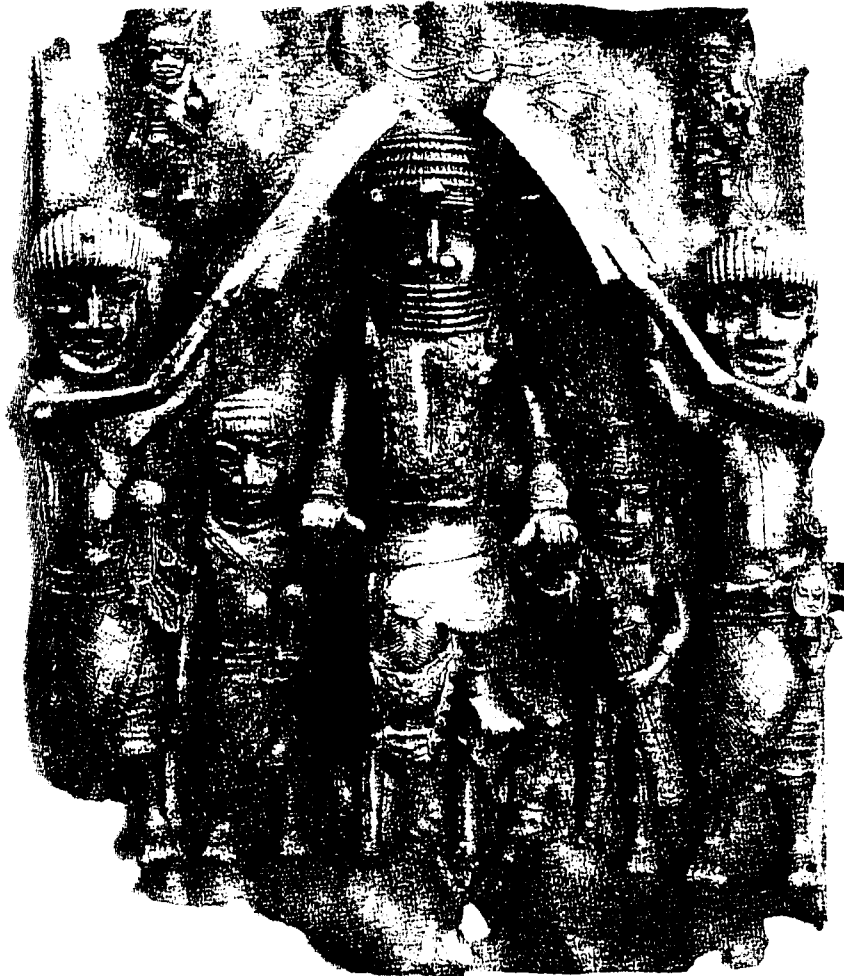
Bronze Plaque of Oba (King) of Benin, Nigeria (1600 C.E.) (A Member of the 1897 British Punitive Expedition).
Note: From World History: Perspectives on the Past (p. 325) by L. S. Krieger, K. Neill and E. Reynolds, 1997,
Evanston, Illinois: McDougal Littell.

Figure 2.2

Two Bronze Heads from the Yoruba Kingdom of Ife, Nigeria (1100 -1600 C.E.)
Note: From World History: Perspectives on the Past (p. 325) by L. S. Krieger, K. Neill and E. Reynolds, 1997, Evanston, Illinois: McDougal Littell.

Figure 2.3
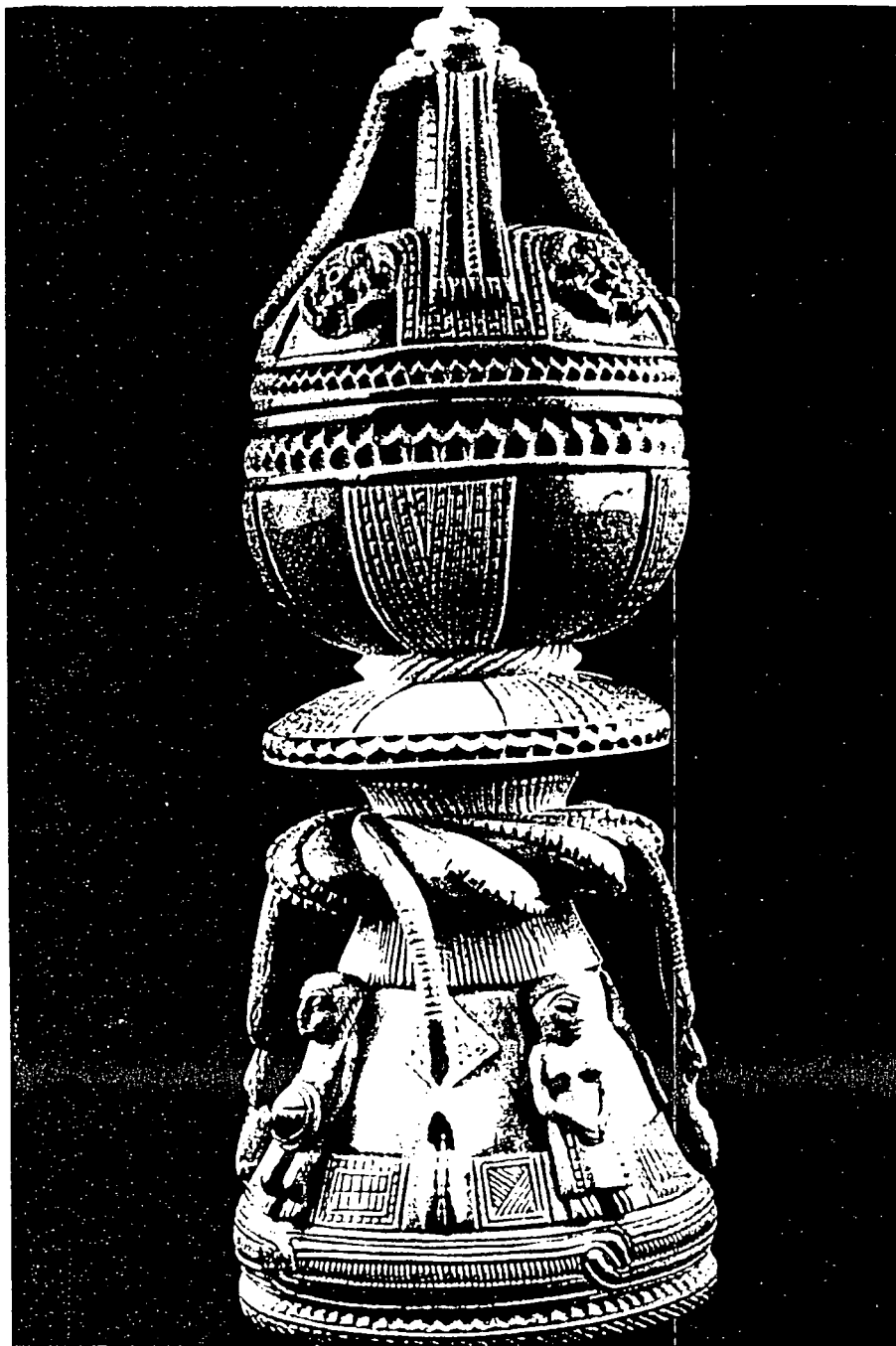
Ivory Saltcellar from Edo of Benin, Nigeria (in the British Museum)
Note. From Studies of Benin Art and Material Culture, 1897 – 1997, by J. Nevadomsky, 1997, African Arts 30(3), p. 21.

Figure 2.4
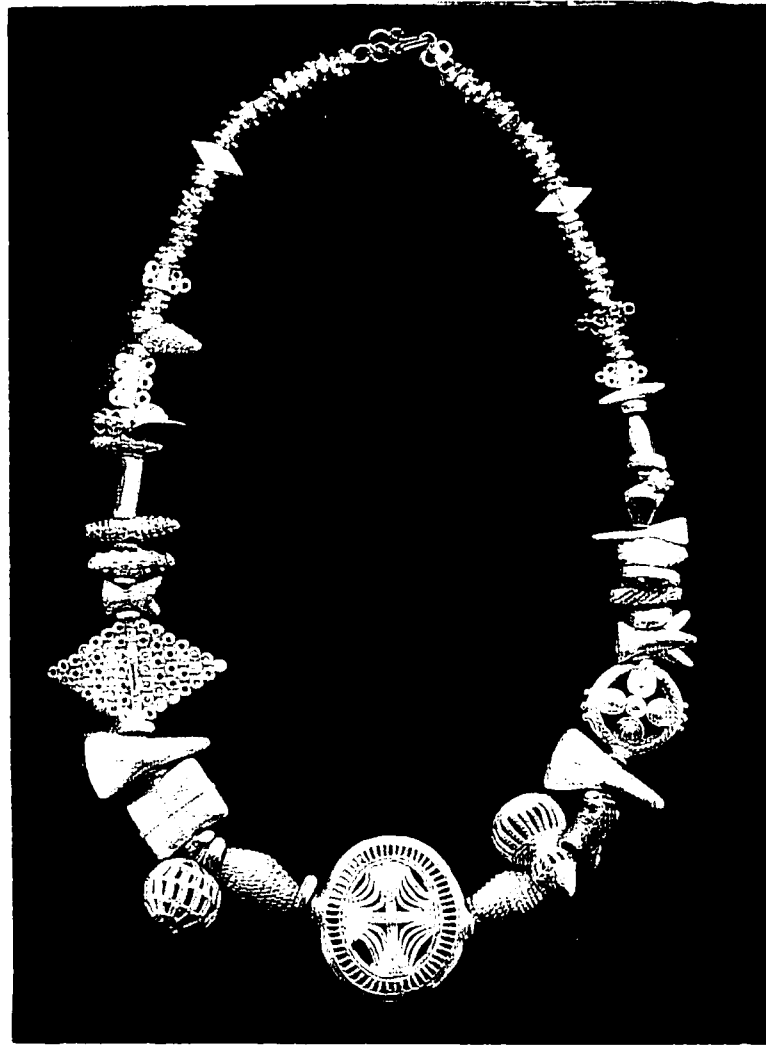
Necklace of 108 Pieces of Gold from Ashanti People, Ghana (in the British Museum)
Note. From World History: Perspectives on the Past (p. 321) by L. S. Krieger, K. Neill and E. Reynolds, 1997, Evanston, Illinois: McDougal Littell.

which, if carefully implemented, could serve as a blueprint for positive changes for Black students across Canada. While in theory, many of the provincial documents aim to meet the challenge of inclusiveness in school, the difficult task of converting policy statements into concrete action remains.

The calls for inclusive curriculum and alternative pedagogies and the demand for educators to incorporate African-centred ways of knowing should not be viewed merely as a move to replace one hegemonic form of knowledge with another, but rather as one of many possible ways of addressing inequalities inherent in Euro-Canadian/American schools. With Africentricity, Dei (1996) explains,

> emphasis [is placed] on the value of group unity, mutuality, collective responsibility, community and social bonding. These values can help move education away from an emphasis on individual competitiveness and a privileging of rights of individuals without any matching social responsibilities. (p. 75)

These cultural values can be taught using African art, which is a reflection of African culture. The yearning to become familiar with African art and non-Western ways of knowing, stands in conflict with those whose privileges are entrenched in Eurocentrism and Canadianism. This explains why reluctance to implement multicultural education has originated from the very institutions, schools and educators that are charged with its implementation. A nationwide survey by Solomon and Levine-Rasky (1994) shows that Canadian teachers' support for multicultural education varies according to how the innovation is conceptualized. When teachers conceptualize multicultural education as the encouragement of respect for ethnic cultures, support was very high. On the other hand, when multicultural education was perceived as the curriculum mainstreaming of diverse cultural norms, values and traditions, support fell by over 20%. Emerging from these conceptualizations are: the continuous marginalization of multicultural education in the mainstream curricula; the superficiality in its treatment; the failure to engage in more profound meanings of culture; and the preoccupation with inter-group harmony within school and community. The extent to which these pedagogical approaches can ensure equitable learning environments for all students has been the source of much antagonism between multicultural and anti-racist educators. Lack of adequate support and provisions (resource materials and means) to implement and sustain multicultural education initiatives has contributed to restricting the development and articulation of its pedagogy. In multicultural Canada, where all teenage students have the opportunity to attend high school, one would expect that

Black students would take advantage of their rights to pursue upward mobility through education. And yet, as noted by Patrick Solomon (1992), we have a paradoxical situation of high educational aspiration and low school performance. Generally, schools are left to determine students' needs, and cultural bias often influences curriculum content, tracking, teaching methods, hiring, parent/school relations, assessment and language policies. The historical "streaming" of black students and other ethnic minorities into vocational programs is a self-fulfilling prophecy on the part of schools, many of which view the presence of Blacks and students of various ethnic minority backgrounds as a Canadian dilemma. While higher educational attainments do not always translate to better employment opportunities for Blacks and other visible minorities in Canada, these groups continue to hold on to the conviction that education is a key ingredient for their successful integration into the Canadian society (Burrell & Christensen, 1987; Hou & Balakrishnan, 1996).

Indigenous Black Canadians and Caribbean-Canadians have long histories in the provinces of Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario and in the prairies. These groups have also been widely studied over the years (BLAC, 1994; Calliste, 1994a, 1994c; Codjoe, 1995; Pachai, 1987; Pratt, 1972; Walker & Tholvaldson, 1979; Winks, 1997). No group of Canadian Blacks has been more closely and frequently studied than those in Nova Scotia. Yet, as noted by Winks, "for all of this remarkable industry, for all of the data gathered, the informants interviewed, the cards filled, the computers programmed, little of moment emerged" (p. 384). Black populations of continental African origins are the least studied among Black groups in Canada and particularly in British Columbia. While several reports have been produced on such visible minority groups as East Indians and Chinese, there remains a dearth of research on Blacks and African immigrants in the Lower Mainland (Province of British Columbia, 1992). As shown in Table 2.1, the 1996 Census indicated that Blacks formed only 2.9% of the visible minority population in the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD) of British Columbia compared with the Chinese and Filipinos with the percentage of 49.4% and 7.2% respectively. Given the relative smallness of Black/African community in the Lower Mainland, one could be tempted to explain away this lack of attention. However, the dearth of research on Black/African immigrants is a serious neglect of a group that, arguably, faces higher levels

Table 2.1

Visible Minority Population in the Vancouver CMA, 1996		
Visible Minority Group	**Population**	**Percentage**
Chinese	279,040	49.4
South Asian	120,140	21.3
Filipino	40,710	7.2
Japanese	21,880	3.9
Southeast Asian	20,370	3.6
Arab/West Asian	18,155	3.2
Korean	17,080	3.0
Black	16,400	2.9
Latin American	13,830	2.4
Visible Minority*	6,775	1.2
Multiple Visible Minority**	10,210	1.8
TOTAL	564,590	100

* This includes Pacific Islanders and other visible minority groups not included elsewhere.
**This includes those who reported more than one visible minority group.
Source: Statistics Canada (1996 Census). The Daily, February 17, 1998, p. 7.

of racial stereotype and discrimination than other visible minorities owing to their higher visibility and the legacy of slavery. Furthermore, several issues concerning the education of Black/African-Canadians in the Lower Mainland lack the necessary research finding for any meaningful policy formulation. My focus in this dissertation is on Black Canadian children from Continental African origin who are emerging as a visible minority group in Greater Vancouver and whose education, like their Black counterparts elsewhere, presents a Canadian dilemma (Brathwaite, 1989). Ogbu (1986) classifies this group of Blacks as voluntary immigrants and yet unlike other voluntary immigrants, they encounter major barriers to their intellectual and social advancement in Canada.

Identity Politics and Black Educational Experience

Racial stereotypes and the White image of a Black's place in society have tended to subject all Blacks in Canada, irrespective of their differences, to common experiences that have tended to shape their identities, educational experiences and activities in Canada. Walker and Thorvaldson (1979) argue that:

> Because they [Black Canadians with parental origins from countries of Africa] share their colour, image and many of their experiences not only with each other but with the descendants of Canada's earlier black settlers, the new black immigrants must be considered not just as "new Canadians" . . . but as "new black Canadians." (p. 39)

Racial essentialism is problematic because it distorts and ignores the complex and diverse intellectual reflections, histories, cultural practices, artistic creations, social classes and other experiences that describe the social reality of Black people. While it is true that the lives of indigenous Black/African-Canadian students, those from continental Africa and the Caribbean, are intertwined by race and diaspora experiences, there are certain issues around which they converge and diverge. Eurocentrism has been insidious in essentializing Blacks and has created a common alienation among Blacks of continental Africa and the diaspora. Hicks (1994) points out the weakness in current multicultural art education approaches in the United States that ignore the dynamics of cultural formation of various ethnic groups who are the participants of local education systems. Through her teaching experience, she discovers that the identities of African-American students are located within the American context rather than continental Africa. Therefore linking African-American students with African culture, she notes, is a "dislocation of

pedagogy" for students whose identities are formed by diaspora experiences and assimilation within the host society. Whilst her argument seems to provide the basis for resisting racial essentialism, it fails to engage in a historical analysis of racial identity vis-à-vis the experiences of Black people in America and elsewhere. What are the underlying reasons for African-American students' rejection of an African cultural heritage? What have they internalized of the African imagery in American society? What impressions and impact have the negative imageries of continental Africa created among African-American students? Whose interest does the unbalanced representation and distortion of the continent, both in school texts and mass media, serve? Racism and the systematic disparagement of African culture in Euro-Canadian/American society create widespread dislocation and disorientation among persons of African descent. This explains why some scholars, students and artists of African descent rush to deny their "Blackness" or their African identity in order to gain acceptance into the Euro-Canadian/American norm. If a child concludes that there is something wrong with her/his culture, then her/his self-concept and cultural pride is severely diminished. This is so because one's basic identity is one's self-identity, which is ultimately one's cultural identity; without a strong cultural identity, one is lost.

Racial stereotyping in Eurocentric curriculum and pedagogy has produced aberrations of perspectives among persons of colour. Ironically, however, the reality of Eurocentrism and racism in Euro-Canada/American society also provides legitimate grounds for the discussion of shared realities and "enabling solidarity" among African-Canadians, African-Americans, continental Africans and the diaspora. The solidarity and liberation of all people of African heritage was the main mission of W. E. B. Du Bois in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the United States. Similarly, the Harlem Renaissance, an African consciousness movement in the United States, accentuated by Marcus Garvey, challenged the social order and asked Blacks in American to consider a return to Africa, their motherland (Clarke, 1985). An enabling solidarity, according to Dyson (1994), appeals to the richly varied meanings of cultural practices, the contradictions, the diversity of authentic roles within Black cultural identities and the ever-changing historical experience in supporting the vision of Black identity and Black/African-Canadian artistic, educational and cultural experience. Due to historical continuity, the complexities of racial identity and the reality of racism in society, it is neither appropriate to ignore the solidarity among

Blacks and the link of African-Canadians with African culture nor to place an ideological blockade on critical dissenters who will situate their identities within a Euro-Western context rather than Africa.

Black/African-Canadian students are not a homogeneous group. However, some commonalities exist in the educational experiences of students born in Africa and the diaspora, including those of mixed parenthood. Research by Dei, Holmes, Mazzuca, McIsaac and Campbell (1995) shows that Caribbean students are less inclined than African immigrant students to identify with Africa due primarily to negative and unbalanced representation of the continent both in school texts and in the mass media. Caribbean students were more concerned with "social labelling" of Black students as "trouble-makers," and about the attempts by schools to place students from the Caribbean in English skill development (ESD) classes. Students born in Canada, particularly to mixed parents, raised questions of identity. Continental African students and their parents, on the other hand, were more concerned about the broad issues of language, religion, culture and the negative image about the continent that mainstream school and popular media discourses present to unsuspecting students and Canadian audiences. Students, who speak with distinctly different accent and dialects, pointed to inter-group discrimination and prejudices among their peers. Also, concerns about racial discrimination, the lack of representation of Black/African perspectives, histories and experiences, the absence of Black teachers and a prevailing culture of Eurocentric dominance in the school system, were shared by all Black youths.

The above findings suggest that diverse students of African heritage can relate to the tenets of African-centred education. It seems possible that African-centred education could bring all people of African descent from the margins to the centres of post-modern history. Despite differences among Black groups, many diaspora scholars (e.g., Asante and Asante, 1985; Diop, 1978) have argued that Africans and their descendants in the diaspora form a single cultural river with numerous tributaries characterized by their specific responses to history and the environment. Just as we can speak of European art and culture despite the differences, so do we understand African art and cultures based on the knowledge of common characteristics and differences. People of African descent share a common experience drawn from the devastating legacy of slavery and colonialism; a common struggle for liberation against political, cultural and economic domination; and a common origin traced from Africa, the ancestral home of all Black

people. Baldwin (1986) contends that to speak of "Black people and Black experience outside the context of African culture is utterly meaningless" (p. 24). Asante (1987) also points out that the culture and history of African-Canadians, African-Americans and Blacks in the diaspora represent developments in African culture and history, inseparable from place and time. Making this claim, however, does not deny the African-Caribbean, African-Canadian and African-American histories and cultures in their own right. A viable multicultural pedagogy and politics must affirm both common cultural characteristics and differences. African-Canadians must be exposed not only to mainstream knowledge that assimilates them into "Canadianism" but also to Africentric knowledge that affirms their "Africanness" as their hyphenated identity depicts.

Explanations for Black Children's Educational Underachievement

It is common knowledge supported by a large body of research that the structural process of delivering education has different impact on various groups in Canada. Various causes have been attributed for the relatively high incidence of school failure and "dropouts" among Black students in Euro-Canadian/American contexts (Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac, & Zine, 1997). Traditionally, the theories of "genetic inferiority" and "cultural deprivation" have been advanced to explain the school failures of Black students and children from culturally diverse and deprived backgrounds. With these theories, often referred to as "deficit models," school failure is blamed either on the students themselves, who are said to be genetically inferior, or on the economic and cultural disadvantages of their communities, which deprive them of the necessary preparation (Bereiter & Englemann, 1966). Such a perspective overlooks the complex interrelationship between the economic, social, educational and political factors contributing to school failure. Cultural deprivation or the socio-pathological perspective was employed as a justification in the residential school system in Canada where Native Indian children were forcibly removed from their homes and families in order to "exorcize" them of their "malignant" cultures (Boyko, 1997; Moodley, 1995). This explanation of school failure has long been discredited not only as ethnocentric and scientifically unfounded, but also for its inadequate explanation of the failures of so many students (Nieto, 1996). Scientists and social reformers have concluded that differences in educational attainment among

groups are social artefacts created through historical, socio-political and educational inequities. Stephen Gould's (1996) masterwork, *The Mismeasure of Man*, effectively and thoroughly contributes toward deflating pseudoscientific explanations of intellectual attainments among Black children. It undermines, for instance, *The Bell Curve* and the hereditarian IQ theory, or those who would classify and rank people according to their supposed genetic gifts or limits. William Ryan (1972) also challenges the theory of genetic inferiority and cultural deprivation. He argues that:

> We are dealing, it would seem, not so much with culturally deprived children as with culturally depriving schools. And the task to be accomplished is not to revise, amend and repair deficient children, but to alter and transform the atmosphere and operations of the schools to which we commit these children. (p. 61)

School failures of Blacks and other minorities may be caused by the structures of schools, which are static, classist, sexist and racist and which represent the interests of the dominant classes. The emphasis of Euro-Western education has been on moulding and shaping children from non-European backgrounds so as to fit into an educational process designed for middle-class White children. Such an approach to schooling is inherently problematic because many of these children live in different conditions that directly affect their schooling, including their interactional and learning styles (B. Young, 1990). Not acknowledging these differences often results in schools and teachers labelling children's behaviour as deficient instead of making provisions for them in the curriculum. Ogbu (1986) and Nieto (1996) talk about the cultural incongruence between the home and the school and explain that it is the school's perception of the students' values, skills, expectations, language, culture, race and class as inadequate and negative and the subsequent devalued status of these characteristics in the academic environment, that help to explain school failure.

Research on teachers' interaction with students, and particularly teacher expectations, has shown that students' performance is influenced by subtle messages from teachers about students' worth, intelligence and capability (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Expectations of students' achievements are often based on the social class and race of the students. Because of racial stereotypes, the academic abilities of Black children and visible minorities are often underestimated. Due to systemic discrimination as well as administrative complexities, formal education is unable or unwilling to respond to the particular

learning styles, or specific problems of Black/African-Canadian learners with varying socio-economic backgrounds. Research by Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac and Zine (1997) tells us that students who perceive a lack of curriculum content devoted to their history, interest and experience are likely to disengage or 'fade-out' from school. If Black/African-Canadian students can relate to what they are learning at school, they are likely to learn better. But unfortunately, many Black/African-Canadians have lost their cultural centeredness and exist in a borrowed space. Their existential relationship to the dominant culture defines what and who they are at any given moment (Asante, 1998).

In art education, researchers have examined differences in aesthetic perceptions of ethnic groups (Gayle, 1972; Irwin & Farrell, 1996; Neperud, Serlin & Jenkins, 1986). Although the debate about a distinct Black aesthetics is far from over, Irwin and Farrell (1996) and Neperud, Serlin and Jenkins (1986) suggest that most ethnic groups possess aesthetic values central to their culture. Therefore, cultural discontinuity or the marginalization of minority students' cultures is detrimental to their artistic development. If a school system, as a matter of course, neglects the individual backgrounds, histories language, interactional and learning styles of its students, and categorizes and labels those who do not fit the norm, then one should expect failure to be the outcome. It is important in these instances that culture is treated as a mutable process rather than as unchanging product. That is, while we examine how culture may influence learning and therefore achievement in school, we must be wary of overgeneralizations that lead to gross stereotypes, which in turn may lead to erroneous conclusions about individual students' abilities and intelligence. Although culture is indeed integral to the learning process, it affects every individual differently, given differences in social class, family structure, psychological and emotional differences, birth order, residence and a host of individual distinctions. Learning occurs in various forms, as there is uniqueness among individual students. Some students learn in combination of preferred modes as supported by the theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983). From a pedagogical perspective, therefore, good teaching practices address the various intelligences as appropriate, reaching each student's preferred learning modes and challenging all students to develop intelligences they have not yet fully refined.

In the United States, Twiggs (1990) observes that many teachers overtly or covertly tend to

characterize minority children, particularly those from poor socio-economic backgrounds, as unruly, lazy, inferior and dumb. As a result, they expect little from them since they believe that such students have no worthwhile aspirations. Black males, especially, endure the most of this negative attitude. They are often labelled in early grades as troublemakers even before they ever get into trouble and may be targeted for suspension as they progress through school. This prejudicial attitude is not peculiar to American White teachers. Canadian teachers have either inherited or imported similar attitudes as is evident from the study *Push Out or Drop Out? The dynamics of Black/African-Canadian Students' Disengagement from School* by Dei, Holmes, Mazzuca, McIsaac and Campbell (1995). Blacks and minority teachers whose socio-economic class, training and experiences are modelled from Eurocentric perspectives may also disapprove that which defies the Eurocentric middle-class norm. Even more destructive is the fact that Black children are deprived of the knowledge of Black/African artistic, cultural and historical traditions. Contrary to the notion that Black students disengage from school partly as a result of low self-esteem, Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac and Zine (1997) discovered in their study that Black students are rather 'pushed out' because they have a strong sense of cultural pride and self-esteem which schools ignore, devalue, or seek to contain through complex administrative processes and assimilation into the Eurocentric norm. Thus, Black/African-Canadians are faced with an educational dilemma. On one hand, Black students and their parents recognize the importance of finishing school for employment and social mobility; on the other hand, their interpretations of the curriculum and the operations of the school systems cause them to disengage from school. If teacher education in the future is to present a model of the positive incorporation of racial, ethnic and gender diversity, its student body, faculty, curricula and pedagogy must become culturally diversified and receptive to multicultural perspectives. For far too long, minority groups have been underrepresented as teachers and role models in Canadian classrooms.

Black students of Continental African origin constitute a unique case. Some have to deal with memories of their homeland; isolation as a result of being newcomers to Canada; the challenges of adjusting to their new environment where native culture, native language and foreign accents are devalued; and the problems of discrimination and racial stereotyping. Due to differences in objectives, history, values and practices, incompatibilities between the home culture and the school culture become profound,

leading to "cultural clash" which may produce school failure (Nieto, 1996). With the unique experiences of Blacks in Canada and the experience of a long history of discrimination, it is important that appropriate modifications in curriculum and instruction are made to ensure greater cultural congruence and the possibility for success. Without sensitivity to the intellectual and cultural needs of Blacks and other minorities, Canadian educational systems have proceeded as if the needs of Black/African-Canadian children are the same as those of middle-class White children.

In 1971 the Black United Front (BUF) of Nova Scotia, outlined the long-standing causes of low Black educational attainment and high dropout rate. In a brief to the Royal Commission on Education, 1971, BUF blamed Black learners low achievement and school drop-outs on the dominance of Eurocentric curriculum and systematic lack of "Africentric" curriculum; lack of Black teachers, administrators and role models; insensitivity of White teachers to the needs of Black students; inappropriate testing methods for Black students; use of prejudicial texts, remarks and racial slurs; systemic streaming of Black children into general, vocational or dead-end programs; and the lack of pre-schooling for Black children (BLAC, 1994, p. 30). Many of the conditions that existed in the 1970s have continued to limit Black/African-Canadian students' educational participation and attainment not only in Nova Scotia, but also in other provinces as well. The BLAC Report (1994) on the education of African Nova Scotians also reiterates similar concerns based on evidence from the grass roots. It states that:

> Clear deficiencies that exist include the shortage of policies affecting race relations at the Board and school levels; the need for school curriculum and policies to accommodate cultural diversity; the need to realign the relationship between the home and the school; the lack of any development of creative and resourceful programs for teachers' professional training, maturation and growth in a multicultural and multiracial society; a scarcity of Black role models in the [educational] systems, methods to respond to racial harassment and the assessment of students for placement; the lack of an effective process to evaluate text books for bias and the absence of materials to engender more positive attitudes in the African Nova Scotia student. (BLAC, 1994, p. 14)

The protracted outbreaks of racial violence in Cole Harbour District High School in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1989, 1991 and 1997 (Hamilton, 1997), for example, attest to the consistent hostility to Black learners in the province.

The Promise of Multicultural and Anti-racist Education

Multicultural and anti-racist education, both advocate greater opportunity for educational success of students of diverse background in Canada. Multicultural educators link the issues of culture with school processes. They examine minority children's underachievement and stress that equality in education can be attained by: attuning teaching strategies to culturally different ways of perceiving and learning (Smith, 1983); developing culturally relevant curricula (Fleras & Elliott, 1992); providing basic knowledge of students' own cultures (Hoopes & Pusch, 1979); and improving the students' self-image, usually by valuing the students' culture (Fleras & Elliott, 1992). Anti-racist education links the issues of identity and power with schooling process. It integrates the institutional structures of society including teaching, learning, educational administration and how local communities (e.g., parents, families, community groups) interact with these structures. Both multiculturalism and anti-racism promote the removal of bias and ethnocentrism from texts and the curriculum. They also emphasize the contributions of minorities to the development of Canada as a nation (Fleras & Elliott, 1992). However, the major emphasis of multicultural education has been on reducing individual racism while anti-racist education has been on reducing institutional racism. I find the goals of multicultural education and anti-racism education largely compatible, complementary and reinforcing. A rigid dichotomy, which would create an obstacle to greater equality in education, is therefore unnecessary. Multicultural education is a means to enrich the lives of all students by helping them to understand and value their own ethnicity, gain an appreciation of the ethnic cultures of others and to share their cultural heritage. A critical multicultural education perspective explores the promises of both multicultural education and anti-racist education. It links issues of culture with education and aims at promoting educational equity and inter-group harmony. However, it recognizes that education is not apolitical and therefore advocates the need to challenge its content and form. Critical multiculturalism brings to multicultural education a sharp institutional analysis that might otherwise be missing.

African-centred knowledge embedded in African art and culture is one window through which the goals of multicultural education could be achieved. African-centred knowledge involves "the epistemic saliency, values, belief systems and world views of society which are imparted to the younger generation

by community elders" (Dei, 1996, p. 95). Africentricity brings us to understand that the interrelationship of art and knowledge with cosmology, society, religion, medicine and tradition stands alongside the interactive metaphors of discourse as principal means of achieving a measure of knowledge about experience. Thus, through the knowledge of African art and culture, connections could be built between the home culture and the school culture, as well as between mainstream art and other artistic traditions in order to enhance students' self-esteem and success. African-centred curriculum according to Carol Lee (1994) is culturally situated and aims at cultivating a sense of mutual interdependence among students, teachers, parents and the wider community. School, work and communities are interwoven in the articulation of the experiences and social practices of all stakeholders in the school. Curriculum and pedagogy are informed by a holistic integrated view of schooling. The school promotes education for the interest of the public rather than simply for private interest, individual enrichment or self-improvement. Nevertheless, it does not negate individual self-worth and the right of self-determination by other groups.

For the art educator, the challenges are: to raise these issues for classroom discussion; to provide students the opportunity to experience appropriate cultural education which gives them an intimate knowledge of ethno-cultures; and to honour and respect the history and culture of all people. African art education will speak to continental African students in a familiar voice because it will provide the opportunity for them to experience identity-based knowledge that connects with their experiential realities. It also has the potential of connecting with mainstream culture due to cross-cultural commonalities and similarities in the social functions of art. The art historian, Dissanayake (1988, 1992) and socio-anthropological theorists (Banks, 1993; Chalmers, 1996) argue that there are far more similarities than differences among cultural and ethnic groups. Ironically, however, due to ethnocentrism, too much emphasis is placed on the differences than on the commonalities. African art in a multicultural curriculum will increase self-awareness and facilitate the search for personal identities among Black students and will serve as a bridge to understanding mainstream art and other art forms (e.g., Asian art, First Nations art and Islamic art). McFee (1986) argues that all groups need and use art for the purpose of identity, continuity, change and to enhance their cultural values. As students become well informed through the knowledge of African art and culture, they gain some understanding which empowers them to question the dominance of

European art in the school curriculum. Multiculturalism is a positive dynamic force, a philosophy that should permeate all curricula. It is based on the concept that each and all of the diverse cultures now present in Canada have something of value to offer and share with other cultures, as we strive to build a new and better way of life together.

A multicultural curriculum may be taught in a way that will perpetuate racial stereotyping. As a reform movement that challenges institutionalized paradigms and practices in education, multicultural education stands the risk of being appropriated by the establishment. The way out of this dilemma is for educators to become vigilant in the multicultural education process. Anti-racist teaching would incorporate appropriate pedagogical methods, attitudes, knowledge (e.g., multicultural content) and the necessary skills to bring about learning that will challenge racism and change the bias of the traditional ethnocentric education to which we are accustomed in Canada. Research in the pedagogy of African-American teachers of African-American students, has shown how teachers employ students' cultural knowledge and experiences as a bridge to the dominant culture with the aim of overcoming some of the debilitating and negative messages to which their students are subjected in schools and society. This "emancipatory" pedagogy empowers students to think critically, analyze the inherent values of dominant cultures and work actively for social justice (King, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Emancipatory art education should reflect the multiple and collective origins of art and art historical knowledge and correct repressive and monovocal art historical text portrayals of historically marginalized cultures and groups. It should also require a liberative student-teacher relationship that will open up art history, art criticism, aesthetics and art production to critical analyses and reconstruction. Such critical interactions, according to Freire (1970), stimulate both students and teachers to be producers of knowledge rather than passive receptors of pre-formulated and privileged knowledge of others.

Africentricity needs to move from the conceptual stage to its practical application where teachers are taught to put Black/African-Canadian students at the centre of curriculum and instruction. In effect, students should be shown how to see with new eyes and hear with new ears. Black/African-Canadian students must learn to interpret and centre phenomena in the context of African heritage while non-African-Canadian students are taught to see that their own centres are not threatened by the presence or

contributions of others. Dei (1996) reiterates this point by arguing that, "Euro-Canadian/American schools need a new form of education that will particularly assist Black youth to reinvent their "Africanness" within a diaspora context and create a way of being and thinking that is congruent with positive African traditions and values" (p. 90). This suggestion applies to all Black youths in Canada because firstly, racial discrimination negatively affects all Black children, though in varying degrees, and secondly, because the struggle for social justice and educational equity is a collective endeavour. Africentrism is a form of intervention against white supremacist racism in the academy that has led to the trivialization, distortion, or exclusion of African history and art, as well as the underachievement of many Black students. This prejudice and biased omission gave the world the false impression that Africa did not possess any history, artistic excellence, civilizations and institutions of value to study as contributions to knowledge, world history and civilization. Without an inclusive art education, Black/African-Canadians bring almost nothing to the multicultural table but a darker version of whiteness. Inclusiveness means dealing foremost with equity and justice with regard to the intellectual and cultural needs of all students; having a multiplicity of artistic and cultural perspectives represented as integral part of mainstream art education; and reforming school, classroom practices and learning materials to meet the challenges of diversity.

Africa is rich with many art forms and has greatly influenced European art styles, particularly *cubism*. The contribution of Africans to world art and history, knowledge and civilization should, therefore, be acknowledged and celebrated in a multicultural curriculum. Five hundred years of Western European contact with continental Africa was intertwined with slavery, imperialist plunders of African art and treasures (e.g., Ancient Egyptian and Nubian art, Benin court art and Ashanti gold ornaments), artistic borrowing and cultural appropriation (Coombes, 1994). Historical injustice against the people of Africa and the diaspora calls not only for a continuous dialogue about the protection and restitution of cultural patrimony, but also for the transformation of art curricula to meet the needs of Black/African-Canadian students and other visible minority students.

Conceptions of Multicultural Education

<u>Multicultural Policy in Canada</u>

Canada has always been an ethnically heterogeneous society. Apart from the First Nations people, all other Canadians are either immigrants or can trace their ethnic backgrounds from the places (country or area) of origin of their ancestors (James, 1995). Since the arrival of the "founding" peoples, the French and the British in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries respectively, the Canadian identity into which immigrants are socialized and incorporated has evolved from Anglo-conformity, melting pot, mosaic, two-nations, to multiculturalism. In the decade and a half after 1945, 96% of immigrants came from Europe (mainly due to post-war dislocation), the United States and Australasia. Immigration to Canada from other parts of the world was discouraged or prohibited at this time. In 1962, Canada replaced its ethnic-based immigration policy with a less discriminatory "colour blind" Immigration Act which resulted in a dramatic shift in the country of origin of Canada's immigrants (see Table 1.1).

Significant changes in immigration levels and patterns and the English-French tensions in the 1960s posed a great challenge to the well-established concept of Canadian identity grounded largely on British institutions and values. In response to these developments, the federal government in October 1971 adopted the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism's recommendations, which inaugurated the policy of multiculturalism for Canada. The new policy of multiculturalism contained the government's concern for the integration and the protection of ethnic groups and their rights to preserve and develop their own culture and values within the Canadian context (Friesen, 1985). Initially, the government provided aid to support ethnic organizations, including cultural centres, festivals, both ethnic and multicultural publications and a series of histories of twenty ethnic groups. While some people received this policy with enthusiasm and saw it as the biggest accomplishment in our journey toward social equity, others greeted it with disappointment (Fleras & Elliot, 1992).

The influx of non-European immigrants in the 1970s and 1980s, re-awakened latent fears and hostilities toward non-White immigrants. The government responded to this with the passage of both the Human Rights Bill and the Canadian Multicultural Act. The Multicultural Act recognizes our cultural diversity and states that we are all free to maintain and share our cultural heritage and to participate fully

and equally in our national life. The multicultural policy issued by the House of Commons (pp. 8550-8581) according to Friesen (1985) contained the following guarantees:

1 The government of Canada will support all of Canada's cultures and will seek to assist, resources permitting, the development of those cultural groups which have demonstrated a desire and effort to continue to develop, a capacity to grow and contribute to Canada, as well as a clear need for assistance;

2 The government will assist members of all cultural groups to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society;

3 The government will promote creative encounters and interchange among all Canadian cultural groups in the interest of national unity; and

4 The government will continue to assist immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada's official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society. . . . (Friesen, 1985, pp. 1-2)

Some provinces, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, became supporters of multiculturalism on the grounds that it makes Canada stronger and more of a "global village." Notwithstanding, some ethno-cultural groups still view Canada's multiculturalism as tokenistic for not extending the promotion of ethnic cultures to embrace heritage languages. Multiculturalism within a bilingual framework creates tensions and contradictions between the taken-for-granted cultural and linguistic assimilation to English or French and the plurality that multiculturalism promises. Since language is an integral part of culture, the critics ask: What is cultural preservation without linguistic preservation? This demand led to the introduction of non-official language or *Heritage Language* instruction, both in and outside school hours by the various provincial ministries of education. The group to take greatest advantage of these multicultural programs were those of European origin and relatively long residence in Canada: Ukrainian, Italian and Polish Canadians.

People committed to national unity, or "Canadianism" foresees multiculturalism as a further institutionalization and deepening of political and economic inequalities for minority cultural groups. Porter (1979) for instance, saw the integration of non-official languages and non-European cultural values into the Canadian classrooms as detrimental to the culture of science and technology and to the upward mobility of children of non-European origin. What this argument ignores are the facts that the nation has been historically divided along ethnic, class and gender lines, as well as the pervasive inequalities in social

justice, the distribution of knowledge and power. The French, especially those in Quebec, like the First Nations, view multiculturalism as harbouring a hidden agenda to neutralize their distinctive claims: cultural hegemony as a "founding nation" and Aboriginal treaty rights respectively (Sanders, 1987). In Quebec, the term "cultural pluralism" was preferred to "multiculturalism." The "two-nation" definition of Canada, now discarded elsewhere in Canada, was much closer to the hearts of Quebec than "multiculturalism." By the end of the 20th century, Canadian national identity had evolved through several stages: "Anglo-conformity," "melting pot," "mosaic," "two nations" to "multiculturalism."

Friesen (1985) perceives educational institutions' role as critical in fostering understanding of cultural differences for all Canadian citizens. Equality of education requires a serious re-examination of the hidden curriculum with the aim of including components of various cultures in the school curriculum and activities. In Canada, most urban school boards, as in Toronto, Ottawa, Winnipeg and Vancouver, have implemented some reform with the aim to provide a more inclusive curriculum. However, because education is a provincial responsibility, the federal government has little power to ensure any uniformity in the implementation of multicultural education policies. This situation has led to the implementation of various models of multicultural education in Canada that leaves much to be desired. In the *Legacy of Learners*, the report of the Royal Commission on Education for British Columbia, Sullivan (1988) acknowledges that with multicultural policy, the social agenda constructed for schools should be more complex and broadened to accommodate cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, gender and linguistic differences. Sullivan emphasizes that:

> This commitment to multiculturalism means that we also look to schools to foster healthy inter-group attitudes, to break down cultural stereotyping and to organize themselves in ways that ensure equality of treatment and equality of access for all minorities. This commitment means, too, that we look to schools to preserve cultural heritages through language instruction and studies in history, geography, art, music and drama, to remind us who we are today and from what culture we once came. Similarly, it means also that we look to schools to help solve the special learning problems faced by some minorities. And, finally, we look to the schools to do all these things without obscuring their larger educational vision. (p. 28)

With the enormous challenges to schools and educators, multiculturalism needs to be approached as a progressive, innovative and a dynamic program that can affectively influence various levels of Canadian society. In developing a school program for a multiethnic setting, Wright and Coombs (1991)

suggest six areas that may form the foundation for dealing reasonably with the complex task of providing equal opportunity for all Canadians. First, "developing a conception of person or humanity" may enable us to recognize the common needs of society. Second, "developing a sense of self-worth" may assure people that their values, abilities and contributions are important and appreciated. Third, "developing a sense of society" is important to ensure that collective rights and responsibilities stand as the key to the cohesion of community. Fourth, "developing an understanding of the concepts of prejudice, stereotyping and racism" is an important strategy for dealing with them. Fifth, "developing an understanding of what harms people" is important to reveal all other factors that hurt people both physically and psychologically. Finally, "promoting good reasoning" is an important virtue, which enables individuals to understand social justice and participate fully in society. These principles, according to Wright and Coombs, cut across all cultural and ethnic groups when designing programs. The future direction and success of multiculturalism requires both the government and public support and as Bagley, Coard and Friesen (1988) explain, "If multiculturalism is to work, it needs support from the grass roots" (p. 30). To determine the grass root requires not only an understanding of internal structures of construction of ethno-cultural groups, but also the examination of the historical and social foundations of the content of a school curriculum and the structures that shape Canadian society. Nieto (1996) argues that multicultural education should not only concern itself with culture at the superficial level but also be active in challenging the societal power structure that has historically subordinated ethnic minorities and rationalized the educational failure of members of marginalized groups as being the results of their perceived inherent deficiencies.

Defining Multicultural Education

There is a massive body of literature, theoretical pronouncements and research about providing education grounded in multicultural perspectives, with no consensus on what exactly constitutes multicultural education. Due to ambiguity curricula frameworks, textbooks and teacher education programs that claim to be "multicultural" often lack any coherent guiding philosophy. Consequently, diversity is incorporated simplistically into the art curriculum, often within a Eurocentric framework. Teachers' support for multicultural education, however, depends on the ways the innovation is understood

and conceptualized.

What is understood by the term *multicultural education* is varied, both in terms of theory and practice. It has become a slippery signifier onto which diverse groups project their hopes and fears. As noted by Grant and Sleeter (1993), some theorists focus their work primarily on ethnic groups of colour. Others conceptualize multicultural education more broadly to encompass race, class, gender and exceptionality - and the interactions of these variables - as important components of the field (Banks & Banks, 1993). As an open concept, multicultural education is subject to multiple interpretations and often contradictions, thus permitting critics to reject its effectiveness as an aid in deciding educational policy, or to view it as a concept without theoretical underpinnings. Multicultural education seems to have lost its focus as it struggles to accommodate more issues. For instance, race and gender issues bump on each other frequently. There is also a weak link between theory and practice, which is interpreted as weak theory.

Despite Canada's early multicultural history, it is difficult to speak of a distinctively Canadian model of multicultural education. Multicultural education in Canada has evolved as a collection of perspectives cross-fertilized by American and British variants (Moodley, 1995). Different images of Canadian society have attracted different responses from the provincial school systems. Officially, Canada abandoned the policy of assimilation in managing diversity when it embraced multiculturalism in 1971. Nevertheless, many criticize multicultural ideas as little more than a glossy veneer that quietly endorses a more deceptive variant of assimilation. Various models of multicultural education have been advanced or practised in Canada (Coombs, 1986; Fleras & Elliot, 1992; McLeod, 1981; Ouellet, 1992; Young, 1979). Generally, they can be synthesised into five major approaches or meanings that represent the various ways that multicultural education is taught in English-speaking countries: 1) Human relations approach; 2) Education of the culturally different; 3) Education for cultural pluralism; 4) Specific group studies approach; and 5) Multicultural and social reconstructionist approach (EMC-SR) (Grant & Sleeter, 1989; Sleeter & Grant, 1988):

1)   Human Relations Approach: This approach seeks to foster cultural understanding and positive relationships among individual members of diverse racial and cultural groups, to strengthen each student's self-concept and to increase school and social harmony. This is a liberal pluralistic view that sees cultural diversity as intrinsically valuable and beneficial to society. The human relations

curriculum includes lessons about stereotyping, discrimination, ethnocentrism and individual differences and similarities. The human relations approach is grounded on an assumption that knowledge about cultures reduces inter-group conflict and increases opportunities for minorities. Teacher education based on this model prepares teachers to honour diverse student backgrounds and to promote cooperative learning and harmony among students. However, institutional discrimination, or real conflicts between groups, are often glossed over in lieu of supporting the "I'm OK, You're OK, Everybody is OK" ideology (Sleeter, 1992; Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1994).

2) Education of the Culturally Different: This approach helps fit students into the existing social structure and culture. It builds bridges between the students' backgrounds and the schools. This approach accommodates students who are exceptional and/or culturally different by altering regular teaching strategies to match students' learning styles and by using culturally relevant materials. Education that prepares teachers for teaching culturally different children would, by extension, not question the dominant culture's traditional aims. Rather, the emphasis would be on techniques for building bridges between children and their schools and helping students to master an official language and adapt to the norms of the dominant culture. The problem of cultural discontinuity remains for the student (McLeod, 1992).

3) Education for Cultural Pluralism: This approach promotes social equality and cultural pluralism. It stresses that all cultures warrant equal respect and value. Curriculum, in this approach, is organized around the contributions and perspectives of different cultural groups. Cultural content can be assessed from the perspective of the "insider." It pays close attention to equity in terms of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, social class, language, age and physical ability. This approach to multicultural education also builds on students' learning styles, adapts to their skill level and actively involves students in thinking and analyzing life situations. It encourages native language maintenance for students whose first language is not English and multilingual acquisition for all students (Banks, 1993; Moodley, 1995; Nieto, 1996).

4) Single Group Studies Approach: This approach promotes social structural equality and immediate recognition of the cultures of groups whose identities are at risk. Usually implemented in the form of ethnic studies, or women's studies, this approach assumes that because of past curriculum biases, knowledge about particular oppressed groups should be taught separately from conventional classroom knowledge in either separate units or separate courses. The single group approach seeks to raise people's consciousness concerning an identified group by teaching both its members and all others about the history, culture and contributions of that group, as well as how

that group has been oppressed by, or has worked with, the dominant group in society. Although the ultimate goal of such programs is the accommodation and maintenance of diversity, they can be exclusionary in their group-specific nature (Dei, 1996; McLeod, 1992).

5)   <u>Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist Approach:</u> This approach extends previous approaches and teaches students to critically analyze social inequality and oppression by helping them to develop skills for social action. This approach encompasses "anti-racist education" and "critical pedagogy." It entails direct challenge to societal power structure, racism and social inequalities. This approach promotes social structural equality and cultural pluralism and prepares students to work actively toward equality for all people (Grant, 1992, pp. 21-22; Nieto, 1996, p. xvii; Turner, 1994, p. 408).

These notions of multicultural education contain many contradictions and the categories are not mutually exclusive, or as distinct as their labels seem to suggest. Culture is the central category while inequality, power and racism are infrequently mentioned. In Canada, McLeod (1992) identifies three approaches to multicultural education namely: *ethnic specific, problem oriented* and *cultural/intercultural models*. The ethnic specific model has the characteristics of single group studies approach. Ethno-cultural groups in Canada that have established separate school programs include the Ukrainian, Hutterite and Mennonite schools in Alberta, Chinese, Hebrew and Greek schools in Ontario and Quebec and Punjabi and Hebrew schools in British Columbia (Moodley, 1995). There is a crucial difference between segregated schools imposed by the dominant group and those developed from within subordinated communities. The goals of the latter are generally to provide excellent and affirming educational experiences for students who have been dismissed, or isolated by the traditional schools, whereas the goals of the former are usually to maintain social hierarchies. Taking into account a variety of multicultural perspectives, self-segregated schools face some serious challenges and criticism. These include a tendency to create new myths in place of old ones, and the segregation of students by ethnicity, race and gender. A problem-oriented approach involves proactive and reactive programs that help immigrants to adapt to Canadian society and to respond to issues of racism and other forms of inequality. Many of the immigrant service providers in Canada have adopted this approach to cultural education. The cultural/intercultural model promotes education for cultural pluralism. Its overarching values are equality of access and shared

ownership.

In Canada, multicultural education is located within a consensus paradigm. For most educators, differences are to be gently reaffirmed along guiding threads of similarities. Some teachers' non-commitment to multicultural education signals their ideological opposition to the national policy of multiculturalism. As noted earlier, one study found that, as long as multicultural education is conceptualized as the encouragement of respect for minority cultural traditions, rather than curriculum mainstreaming of diverse cultural traditions, its support among educators from the dominant group remained high (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1994). Such conceptualization of multicultural education is based on the belief that multiculturalism may undermine the dominant culture, Eurocentrism or Anglo-centrism in Canadian society. Thus, defence of "Canadianism" may well be a thinly veiled disguise for Anglo-conformity. The dominant culture does not necessarily mean the culture of the predominant ethnic group in terms of demographics but rather, it refers to the social practices and representations that affirm the central values, concerns and interests of the social class in control of the material and cultural capital of society. Some of what Jean Baker Miller (1976) has to say about the relationship between dominant and subordinate groups would appear to explain the general lukewarm attitude of mainstream Canadians toward multicultural education:

> A dominant group, inevitably, has the greatest influence in determining a culture's overall outlook - its philosophy, morality, social theory, [education] and even its science. The dominant group, thus, legitimizes the unequal relationship and incorporates it into society's guiding concepts . . . It follows from this that dominant groups generally do not like to be told about, or even quietly reminded of the existence of inequality. 'Normally' they can avoid awareness because their explanation of the relationship becomes so well integrated *in order terms*; they can even believe that both they and the subordinate group share the same interests and, to some extent a common experience. . . .
> Clearly, inequality has created a state of conflict. Yet, dominant groups will tend to suppress conflict. They will see any questioning of the 'normal' situation as threatening; activities by subordinates in this direction will be perceived with alarm. Dominants are usually convinced that the way things are, is right and good, not only for them but, especially, for the subordinates. All morality confirms this view and all social structure sustains it. (pp. 6-8)

This situation vividly elucidated by Miller above, engenders continuous marginality of multicultural education to the mainstream curricula, thereby undermining efforts to explore and engage in deeper analysis of culture and power.

In order for art educators to transcend their articulated conservative conceptualizations of

multiculturalism toward a more holistic and inclusive model, concerted effort must be made to: move multicultural curricula beyond superficial practices to a deeper level of literacy embedded in cultural pluralism and cultural group studies such as Africentric, Asiacentric and Aboriginalcentric pedagogies; move from institutional marginalization of minority cultural knowledge forms to curriculum centrality; and develop an understanding that the movement from ethno-cultural injustices to social justice will be conflictual, disharmonious and resisted by opponents. To bring about any real change in the relationship between Black/African-Canadian students and students from other cultural groups, multiculturalists must adopt not only the liberal pluralistic approaches but also eclectic approaches that incorporate the transformative political agenda embedded in single-group studies approach (i.e., African-centred knowledge and Asian-centred knowledge), cultural pluralism and the social reconstructionist approach. A truly holistic and inclusive approach will avoid competition and judgement. A commitment to multicultural education reflects the premise that those secure in their cultural heritage will concede a similar right to others whose cultural identities are at risk.

Multiculturalism and Art Education

Since the adoption of the policy of multiculturalism for Canada in 1971, there has been a growing expectation that schools will broaden their agenda to embrace cultural, ethnic, religious, gender and linguistic differences. Unfortunately, schools have made little progress in reforming the art curricula to better serve children from diverse cultural backgrounds, particularly Black children who have experienced a long history of racial discrimination in Canada. Multicultural art education calls for the restructuring of art and art education from its Eurocentric focus to reflect the multicultural background of students. The Getty Centre for Education in the Arts, through its Discipline-Based Art Education project (DBAE) has had tremendous influence on art education curricula in North America. Although DBAE has evolved from an elitist concept to a dynamic curriculum movement that is open to multiple views, it falls short of assuming a more aggressive and proactive role in serving the needs of minorities.

Multicultural education concerns itself with the relationship between cultures, between student and teacher, between school and society. It concerns itself not only with the understanding of cultural

differences, but also with the positive endorsement of such differences. It creates opportunity for the recognition of similarities that exist between individuals and groups, the plurality of the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of these individuals and the acceptance of such plurality. As Best (1986) notes, "the identity of a human being and the character of his thoughts and feelings cannot intelligibly be regarded as independent of his culture" (p. 34). He also points out that the failure to try to understand the different criteria of other societies creates a tendency to depreciate them. Cultural expression through the arts is central in promoting the presence, identity and socio-political involvement of the Black community in Canada. As an educational tool, art at its fundamental level is multidimensional. It is timeless and dynamic, like an organism that continually develops meaning over time and space as their various contexts provide (Chanda, 1998). Re-imagining historical and cultural meanings as dynamic will allow us to move away from our personal, egocentric viewpoint and embrace a broader construct that relates to a collective history.

Many art educators (e.g., DiBlasio & Park, 1983; Feldman, 1976) point out that art programs can help build a positive ethnic self-image by reinforcing the artistic heritage of these students. Art does not only bridge the gap between cultures and promote the transmission of cultural heritage (Boughton, 1986), but it is also a strong means of fostering unity and enhancing cross-cultural understanding of similarities and differences. Although there are different conceptions and functions of art among cultures, there are also common concepts and functions that could be identified. Both the differences and commonalities must be celebrated in multicultural art education. There is a presumption that inter-group conflict can be reduced with cultural literacy, especially, when it affirms and celebrates cultural differences and similarities (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1994). It is this understanding and appreciation of differences that Grigsby (1986) says creates bonds between people.

Multicultural art education instils a sense of integrity and dignity in children and, as Feldman (1976) adds, renews cultural identity and pride from generation to generation. Although building pride in one's cultural roots through positive exposure to artistic heritage may not automatically rehabilitate individuals who have experienced years of marginalization, it can, in the long run, help to validate the existence of a particular self with particular heritage (Collins & Sandell, 1992). Through the discipline-

based methods of art teaching, students from all cultures could gain knowledge of the art from other cultures by understanding the context in which the art was created and the function of the work of art in that society. This understanding, laying the groundwork, could help them extend this learning to their own cultures and discover through art that culture is not a hermetically sealed unit. They would be enabled to see that, behind the cloud of cultural diversity, there are common interests. Consequently, as DiBlasio and Park (1983) note, including art exemplars from diverse ethnic groups during instruction would not only benefit the mainstream culture but would also serve to bolster ethnic pride and reinforce collective cultural identity among the minority group. This is a major "multicultural" argument - the belief that incorporating other forms of knowledge and cultural perspectives into the dominant curriculum will benefit all students.

The vast majority of students are ignorant or misinformed about the bountiful reservoirs of African-Canadian, African-American and continental African histories, cultures and contributions to the world. Many Canadians are ignorant not only about the ideas and achievements of Martin Luther King, Cheikh Anta Diop and countless other Black personalities who have helped to shape the course of society, but also about the history of Canadian Blacks and their contribution, particularly during the settlement of Nova Scotia, Ontario, the prairies and British Columbia. Raised on a diet of Western history, colonial discourses, Eurocentrism, "Tarzan books and films" (which have resurfaced recently in a more subtle tone), racist myths and fears, stereotypes and sensational news media, many unsuspecting youths in North America have come to conceive of Africa as a jungle, a large village, a land of the grotesque, or at best a poor country inhabited by wild animals and "savages" and "tribal people." But in fact, Africa of a Hollywood movie is often very different from the Africa that really exists. Palaeontologists make us aware that human life started in Africa many millions of years ago and then spread to the rest of the world. Africa is where humans first learned to use fire, make tools and create art. It is truly the cradle of civilization. Africa is the land of lost kingdoms and ancient cities. The empires of the Nile flourished in Egypt and Nubia from 3100 until 400 B.C.E. (Krieger, et al., 1997) (see Figure 2.5 for map). The kingdom of Ethiopia has been traced to about 300 B.C.E. The royal empires of Western Sudan – Ghana, Mali and Songhai – and their ancient cities of Awdoghast, Gao, Jenne, Kumbi Saleh, Tangier and Timbuktu thrived between 500 C.E. and 1700 C.E. (see Figure 2.6 for map). At their peak, these empires rivalled those of

Europe at the time. Modern Africa is the home to about 14 per cent of the world's population and with more than 1000 different languages. It is the second largest continent consisting of 54 different independent and separate countries (see Figure 2.7 for current map of Africa). This enormous diversity coupled with the artificially created national boundaries by the colonial powers (during the Berlin Congress of 1884-85), creates unique challenges regarding political stability, peaceful coexistence and economic development. The task of reclaiming African humanity is a significant dimension of the Africentric vision and of the process of de-colonization. Teaching children facts about Black people and their cultures will encourage students to develop awareness of themselves, others and the existing social structure that impact on their lives. It may also provide information and the tools for improving relations among ethnic groups that have historically lived in physical and psychological isolation from each other.

In order to achieve the goals of multicultural art education, Twiggs (1990) stresses the need for educators to become familiar with the culture of their students, both lived-in and inherited cultures. For the Black/African-Canadian students, ideas such as mutual interdependence, group unity, resilience and the role of religion, extended family traditions and motherhood must be considered when designing an African-centred art curriculum. The sources and promotion of traditional African education are community based, originating in the symbolic interchanges in village life (Asante & Asante, 1985). Stuhr, Petrovich-Mwaniki and Wasson (1992) advance five positions, which are relevant for teaching art in a multicultural context: 1) a student/community-centred education process in which the teacher must access and utilize the students' socio-cultural values and beliefs and those of the cultures of the community when planning art curricula; 2) an approach that acknowledges teaching as a cultural and social intervention and which alerts teachers to be aware of their own cultural and social biases; 3) an anthropologically-based method for identifying socio-cultural groups and their accompanying values and practices which influence aesthetic production; 4) the use of culturally responsive pedagogy that represents the socio-cultural and ethnic diversity existing in the classroom, community and the nation; and 5) a focus on the dynamic complexity of factors that affect all human interactions such as physical and mental ability, class, gender, age, politics, religion and ethnicity. These socio-anthropological positions seek a more democratic approach whereby

Figure 2.5
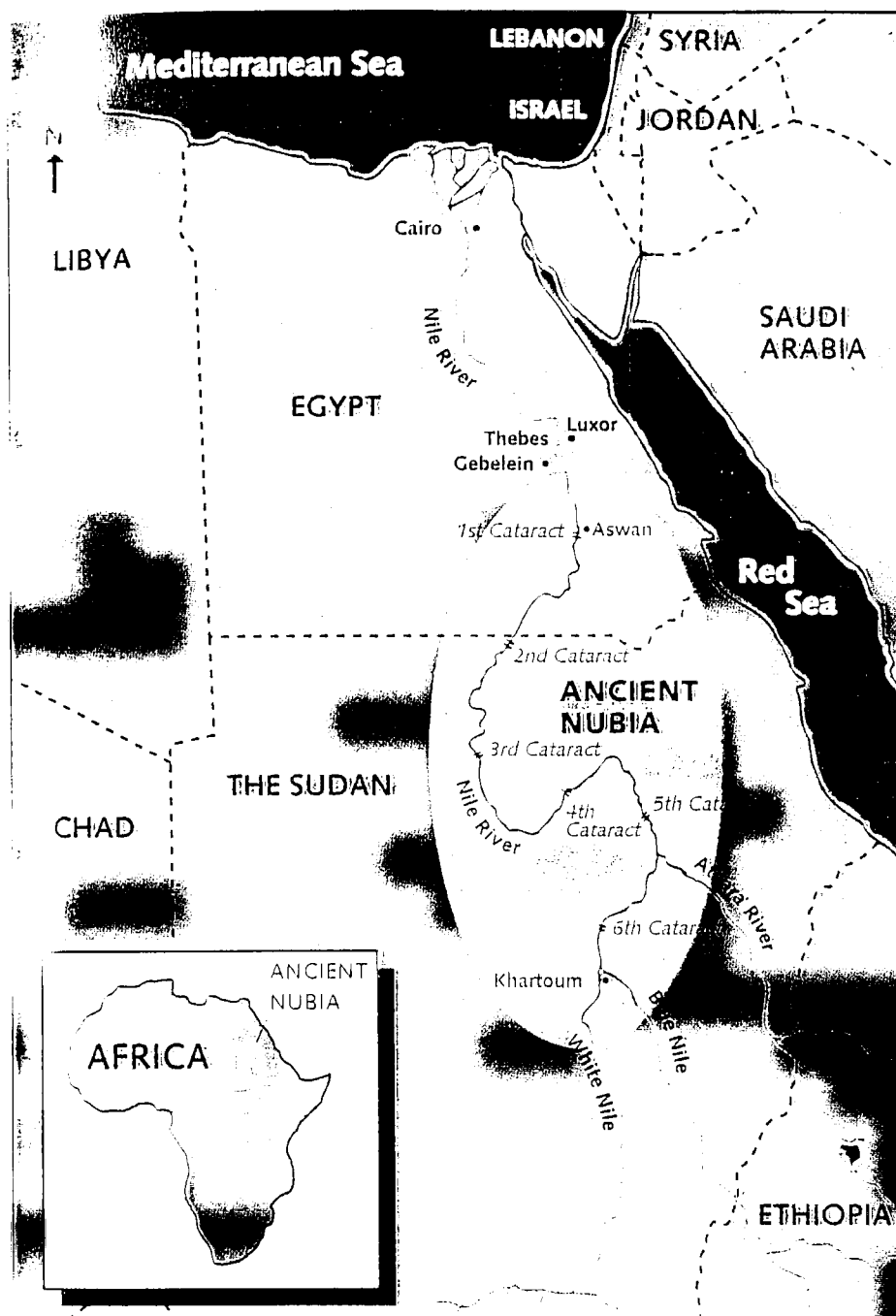
Map of Northeast Africa showing Egypt and Ancient Nubia
Note: From Nubia: Ancient Kingdoms of Africa (p.11) by J. L. Haynes, 1992, Boston: Museum of Fine Arts.

Figure 2.6

African Kingdoms, 1000–1500

Strait of Gibralter

Fez

Marrakesh

Canary Is.

ALMORAVID EMPIRE

Taghaza

Tunis

MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Tripoli

Alexandria   Cairo

EGYPT

S A H A R A

Nile River

Red Sea

Blue Nile

Senagal River

Walata

Kumbi Saleh

Timbuktu

Jenne

Niani

Niger River

Lake Chad

KINGDOM OF IFE

KINGDOM OF BENIN

Gulf of Guinea

White Nile

Lake Rudolf

Lake Albert

Lake Victoria

Mogadishu

Kismayu

Malindi

Mombasa

Zanzibar

KEY

▨	Swahili city states
▢	Ghana about 1000
▢	Mali about 1400
▢	Songhai about 1600
- - -	Trade routes

0   1000 miles

ATLANTIC OCEAN

Zaire River (Congo River)

Lake Tanganyika

Kil

Lake Malawi

INDIAN OCEAN

Comoro Is.

Zambezi River

KINGDOM OF ZIMBABWE

Zimbabwe

Limpopo River

MADAGASCAR

Map of Ancient African Kingdoms showing Ancient Ghana, Mali and Songhai
Note: From World History: Perspectives on the Past (p. 321) by L. S. Krieger, K. Neill and E. Reynolds, 1997, Evanston, Illinois: McDougal Littell.

Figure 2.7

TRIBES:

1 Mahafaly
2 Diola
3 Lebou
4 Makonde
5 Ndebele
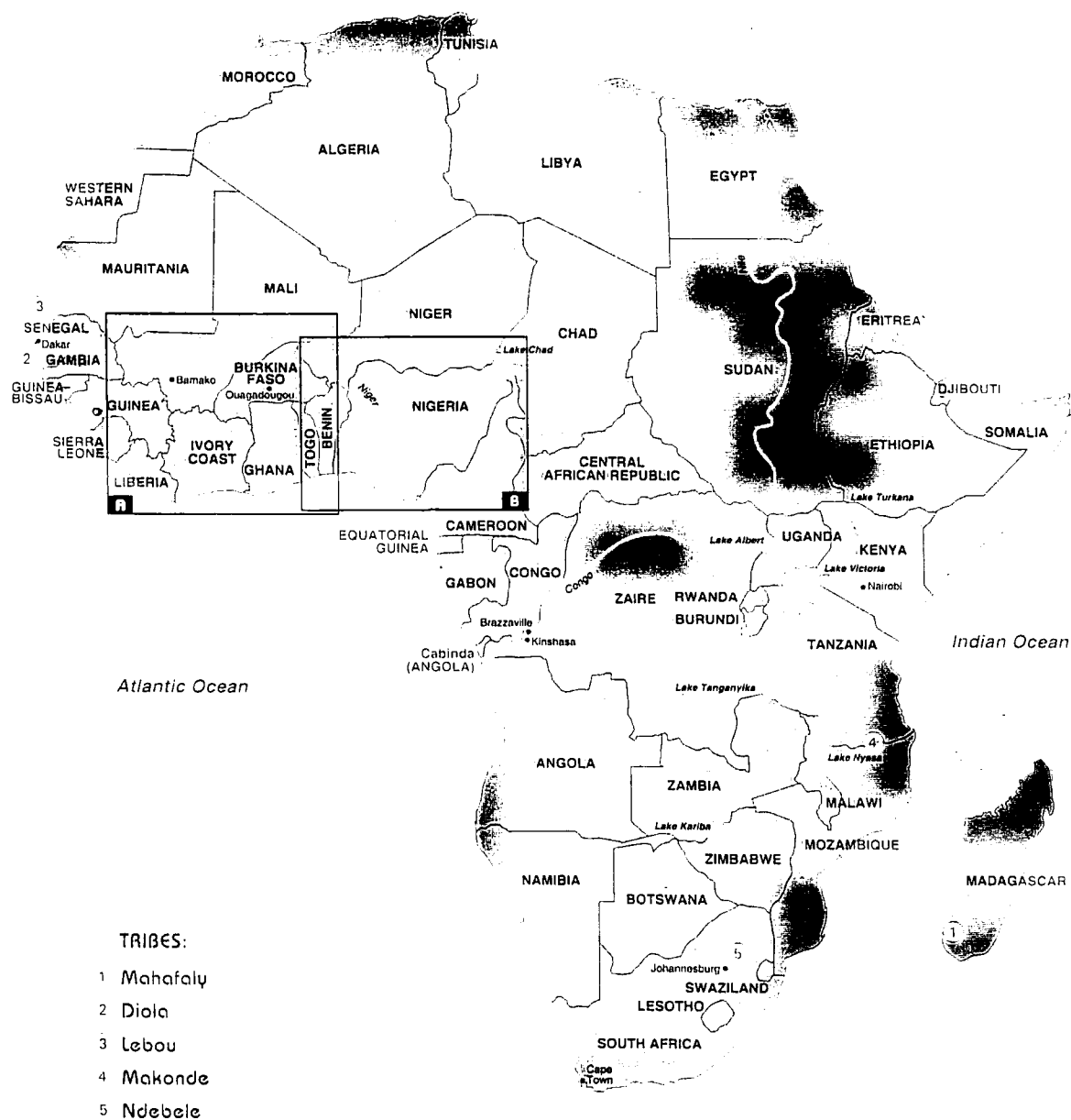
Map of Africa showing Various Countries
Note: From Contemporary Art of Africa (p. 18) by A. Magnin and J. Soulillou (Eds.), 1996, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Pub.

the disenfranchised are also given a voice in art education process.

This study is in line with the multicultural education principles outlined by Stuhr, Petrovich-Mwaniki and Wasson. It suggests the infusion of Africentric art content into the mainstream curriculum through a student/community-centred approach, and with culturally responsive pedagogy, that meets the needs of Blacks and minority students. As Zimmerman (1990) indicates, "African art can be used as a vehicle for understanding distinctions between appreciating a work of art from any culture and understanding its cultural origins and the context in which it was created" (p. 9). It can therefore be included as a strand in a pluralistic approach to art education. Collins and Sandell (1992), however, argue that the arts of non-mainstream cultures are not insulated against ideological bias and oppressive elements. Therefore, they caution advocates of pluralistic approaches to multicultural education to be critical of other forms of artistic and cultural knowledge that mimics the gender bias and imperialistic disposition of Western art. While the argument of non-neutrality of non-Western art forms seems plausible, it must be emphasized that power has been the underlying factor behind the hierarchical distinction between Western and non-Western art. Those with power have used it to enhance the status of their art at the expense of the powerless. African art is presented here as a non-hegemonic source of a multicentric curriculum. Its ideological and philosophical positions are examined to identify any ambiguity, contradiction and biases. Africa is rich in every aspect of human art. As the cradle of civilization and the home of many art forms, it has shared its spirit with every continent. Best (1986) states that:

> It is the consciousness of other cultures which allows us more fully to appreciate our own and to extend our understanding of rationality and humanity by imaginatively entering into the activities of other societies which have some significant relation to art in ours . . . The contribution of education, or of engagement with the arts of other cultures is to stimulate a process of dialectical interaction . . . With open mind and willingness to learn one can extend and enrich one's artistic conceptions in an encounter with another culture. (pp. 41-42)

With the experience of a long history of racial discrimination and educational inequities and underachievement, Black/African students need a form of multicultural education to compensate for educational inequity as well as a broader view of world art history and contributions. The dominance of Eurocentrism in art education has not served Black students well. Their cultural background, identity and heritage are often marginalized in the curriculum. African art within multicultural environment will not

only permit the use of African-centred knowledge and pedagogy but will also provide identity-based knowledge that speaks directly to those struggling to define themselves within the mosaic of multi cultures in Canada. It also has the potential of enhancing cross-cultural learning and for connecting students' experiences with mainstream culture leading students and educators not only to question the dominance of Eurocentric curricula but also to actively seek for cultural equity through inclusive curricula.

Approaches to Multicultural Art Education

A variety of curriculum approaches and teaching methodologies and strategies have been suggested for teaching art in a multicultural classroom. Among them are: the Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE), Multicultural Discipline-based Art Education (MDAE) and Feminist Approaches to art education. Both DBAE and MDAE profess a discipline-based approach to art teaching and they could be employed to teach art in a multicultural classroom. The difference is that MDAE assumes a more cross-cultural perspective, however, these models, if skilfully implemented, could help art educators become more competent in handling the challenges of multicultural art education. One of the main goals of feminist art educators is to uncover mechanisms by which gender discrimination is perpetuated in art education, in order to develop effective strategies to counter it. Feminist art education analyzes social systems and their representations of women and minorities in the art world and explores alternative approaches to art education. It is a political ideology with varied perspectives within a broader political struggle. These approaches are not mutually exclusive. Despite their ideological differences, these models share a common focus in dealing with the socio-cultural aspects of art education.

Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE)

Discipline-based art education (DBAE) is undoubtedly the most discussed and written about approach to art education in the recent past in North America. The Getty Centre for Education in the Arts (GCEA), now the Getty Education Institute for the Arts, became a catalyst for reform in art education by arguing that:

> art education is as fundamentally important for personal development as training in Mathematics, English and Science. It nurtures imaginative cognition. It develops understanding and appreciation

of man's highest artistic achievements. It deepens understanding of culture and history. And it sharpens perceptive and analytical skills that are vital for higher order mental tasks. (GCEA, 1984, p. 1)

Although the idea of DBAE had first evolved during the 1960s, its theory was not fully developed or integrated with actual practice in the classroom until the 1980s. Through extensive consultations with professionals and academics in the field, the Getty Centre adopted Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) in 1982 as a vital approach to ensure a serious place for art in the public schools. In DBAE, four fundamental art disciplines of aesthetics, art criticism, art history and studio production are integrated in a written sequential curriculum whose content leads to cumulative knowledge, skills and understanding in art in grade K to 12 (Dobbs, 1989). Clark, Day and Greer (1987) extended the ideas first set out by Greer (1984) in a monograph sponsored by the Getty Centre. They pointed out that works of art present us with complex meanings and to comprehend such meanings require the cultivation of abilities to explain them. DBAE therefore became an appropriate response to the challenges posed in interpreting works of art.

DBAE curriculum seeks to promote egalitarian values. It does not serve only the talented, but also provides for the majority of students and teachers who do not have a particular bent for being creative or artistic. With DBAE, "it is no longer as important to express one's inner self as it is to function as an informed and intellectual member of society" (Moore, 1991, p. 38). Differences of opinion regarding the relegation of studio activity and non-Western art to a minor rather than a central position have generated some levels of confrontation within the field of art education. Those in favour of studio-centred approach to art education (London, 1988; Zessoules, Wolfe, & Gardner, 1988) accused the Getty Centre for promoting DBAE as an elitist approach to art education and for ignoring other cultural perspectives. In their zeal to elevate art to the level of an academic discipline, art educators gave little consideration to issues of gender and diversity that were germane to the socio-cultural foundations of art. As early as the 1970s, Chalmers (1973, 1974, 1978), Grigsby (1977), McFee (1971), and McFee and Degge (1977) drew attention to the sociological and anthropological dimensions of art. But it was not until the early 1990s that the GCEA began to welcome new voices and multiple perspectives on DBAE. In his book *Art and Ethnics: Background for Teaching Youth in a Pluralistic Society* (1977), Eugene Grigsby, an African-American art educator, demonstrated how art education could be used to heighten awareness and

sensitivity of children toward multicultural and multi-environmental perspectives. McFee and Degge (1977) also recommended that art educators learn about other art, exemplified in non-Western traditions. They emphasized that a major purpose of art education is "to give teachers a somewhat broader basis for understanding how art functions in society generally and how functions are varied in meaning and style in any one specific society that has an identifiable culture pattern of values and attitudes" (p. 28). Chalmers, in his three articles, reiterates the need for a socio-cultural foundation of art education that would complement the historical, philosophical and psychological perspectives of the aesthetic education movement. Chalmers is particularly effective in articulating the concern that non-Western cultures were not represented as subject matters for study in DBAE. These works implicitly question the pretence of DBAE to democratic praxis and the notion of a universally applicable objective criterion for evaluation in art.

DBAE purports to be universal, both in terms of theoretical content and practice. However, its theoretical underpinning and formalist teaching methodologies are constructed to reflect the attitudes, beliefs, values and biases of the dominant Euro-Western culture. That DBAE emanates from a Eurocentric patriarchal ideology is unquestionable. Its historical component does not offer any insight into the history of the art of non-Western cultures since it focuses only on the history of the art of the West (Calvert, 1988). Dobbs (1989) explains that the Eurocentric perspective of DBAE stems from the training, knowledge, experience and values of professionals in the art disciplines, which in turn have been shaped by the overwhelming emphasis on European art prevalent in their own schooling. Within such context, it is not surprising that art education is perceived from a Eurocentric perspective. The problem, however, is that in a multicultural milieu, such a curriculum acts as a form of oppression for those students whose experiences are incongruent with the world view that such knowledge affirms. Thus, in spite of the promise of DBAE many multiculturalists continue to question whether it is capable of recognizing and addressing issues of diversity.

Since the beginning of this decade, there has been an encouraging response in DBAE to embrace issues of feminism and multiculturalism. This is evident from the Getty Centre's *DBAE Handbook* (Dobbs, 1992), which supports curricula built around diverse art traditions. Under the leadership of Thandiwee

Michael Kandall, issues of gender and multiculturalism appeared on the centre stage of Getty's agenda on

DBAE (Kandall, 1993). Some of the central themes emerging from the Third Issues Seminar on DBAE

included the need to address biases and the problem of context in art education; the need for new curricula

materials and images in the classroom; and the need to attain equity and human rights through educational

programs (Kandall, 1993). Dwaine Greer (1993) responds to the controversies that have surrounded

DBAE since its inception in 1984 by concluding that:

> DBAE now seems to define art more broadly, includes art of other cultures, seems to no longer
> promote only the 100 canons of art made by dead white Euro-American males, seems to embrace
> the "popular arts" as worthy of serious consideration, no longer equates aesthetics only with
> aesthetic experiences and responses, realizes the limitations of aesthetic scanning, acknowledges
> that art has social content as well as form and is tolerant of contributions of feminist scholars. If
> the writers who support DBAE have understood the objections and have responded in a way that
> satisfies the critics, as the characterization above suggests, the future of DBAE should be bright
> indeed. (p. 94)

Chalmers (1992) points out that DBAE could be effective in addressing multicultural issues in the

classroom if art teachers would:

> Recognize, acknowledge and celebrate racial and cultural diversity in art within our society, while
> affirming and enhancing self-esteem and pride in one's own heritage. Promote cross-cultural
> understanding by identifying similarities, particularly in the role and function of art, within and
> among cultural groups. Address, in all art disciplines and not just art history, issues of
> ethnocentrism, biases, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and racism. (p. 16)

The extent to which DBAE serves an art educator depends on his/her background, skill,

imagination and creativity. DBAE is a guide to what to teach and not necessarily how to teach. Instructors

do not necessarily rely on prescription or formulas, yet they are expected to achieve a natural balance

among the four components of DBAE. While it is impossible for an art teacher to discuss all the cultures

of the world adequately at any given time, it is possible to examine and understand some of the ways in

which culturally different people may respond to the same visual phenomena. Due to the inadequate

professional preparation of teachers in multicultural issues, lack of adequate in-service programs, many

curriculum concerns of ethnic minorities have been ignored.

Multicultural Discipline-based Art Education (MDAE)

Multicultural Discipline-based Art Education (MDAE) is the most recent curriculum model, which

Dennis Fehr (1993, 1994) offers as an alternative approach to art education in a multicultural milieu.

MDAE appears to fill in where DBAE is lacking. It is a tripartite model of art education that focuses on the child, the subject and society. Fehr points out that the ongoing elitist-versus-populist debate over DBAE does not only increase the relevance of multicultural study in the art classroom but also respect for the contributions of minority cultures. The MDAE model is the infusion of multicultural study with discipline-based art education. It provides for studying the cultural context of a work of art and examining its cross-cultural influence in addition to learning the history of the specific work of art. Fehr advocates the accommodation of all the cultures represented in a classroom when teaching art.

MDAE emphasizes reaching across cultural boundaries, examining cultural influences, contributions and common interests without looking down upon any culture. Its aim is to afford the art educator the opportunity to recognize and understand the inner realities of the student, discover their ontological values and the realistic ways they attempt to understand the world. It identifies with a "multicultural agenda, which is met more effectively with an art curriculum that emphasizes viewing than with one that emphasizes making" (Fehr, 1993, p. 192). MDAE enables art educators to tap, at regular intervals, into each student's culture in order to identify with all the students and give them the opportunity to express themselves in their own unique ways, thus justifying MDAE's tripartite nature - the child, the subjects and the society. The MDAE model does not nullify DBAE. What it does, according to Fehr, is to rejuvenate the DBAE curriculum to reflect "a confluence of academic content and studio activities within a secure and encouraging environment" (pp. 197-198).

Post-modern Approaches to Art Education

This study is informed by the work of Black feminist such as Aidoo (1984) hooks (1990), Oyèwùmí (1997) and Mohanty (1991). Feminist art education too is an outgrowth of the women's movement and post-modernism. It deals with issues and topics relevant to feminism in the visual arts, taking place in formal classroom and alternative learning environments. Feminist art criticism, art history, aesthetics and art production have significant implications for the conception and implementation of art education. In an effort to assert their legitimacy in the art world, feminists have been in the forefront in the development of new methodologies and alternatives to art education (Collins & Sandell, 1984; Gouma-Peterson &

Mathews, 1987; Zimmerman, 1990). These researchers have set forth feminist approaches to art education

and Collins (1981), Nadaner (1984), Garber (1990) and Hagaman (1990) have situated these position

statements within the context of feminist art criticism.

Feminist researchers perceive gender as a basic organizing principle that profoundly mediates and

shapes our understandings of the world and art, both cognitively and emotionally. Therefore, feminist

criticism has been directed toward correcting distortions, generating new theories and exploring alternative

approaches to art education. For Frueh (1985), feminist inquiry serves both art criticism and art history "by

seeking knowledge about the overlooked meanings of art; by examining our own unacknowledged

assumptions and biases and those of previous and contemporary art historians and critics; and by

developing ways to write about art that will serve as new models for art critical discourse" (p. 41). In the

formalist approach to art criticism from which DBAE derives its features, "meaning is constituted by and

gains its identity from, the language system of the work" (Nadaner, 1984, p. 21). Nadaner pointed out that

this approach to art criticism, which builds on a careful description of formal properties of art is inadequate

even when subjectivity is permitted. This is because it assumes that it is reasonable to apply universal

formalist standards to the interpretation of the aesthetic qualities of an African mask, an Impressionist

painting and a Byzantine icon without contextual and cultural considerations (Nadaner, 1984). The

weakness in the formal approach to art criticism is that it does not consider the variety of socio-cultural

factors relevant to art interpretation. Feminists insist that we should always consider what criteria underlie

decisions of what counts as "good" art. To the feminist art critic, universal and objective criteria used for

the evaluation of art are non-existent due to different values, goals, interests and functions of art (Garber,

1992, p. 213). Garber argued that:

> Evaluation accordingly must take place in a context that includes consideration of cultural contexts
> in which the object is being evaluated. Contextual factors include the experiences, ideologies and
> taste of the period in which the object was made and of the person or group judging it. Feminists
> ask questions having to do with why painting is considered art while quilting is at best a "mirror
> art" or craft and why subjects of war are valued above mother and child or flower paintings. (p.
> 213)

Feminist art criticism discusses the dichotomy of craft and art, a categorical split which excluded many

female products from the latter designation. Such discussions characteristically do not fit within

mainstream, formalist definitions of art. Garber (1990) proposes a feminist approach to art criticism based

on contextual theory that recognizes art as a meaningful element of, and response to, culture and society. She argues that, feminist approaches allow the art critic: to analyze social systems and their representations of women and minorities in the art world; to examine the political nature of feminism itself; and to validate subjective experience and self knowledge as necessary for creating awareness among women.

Feminist art critics have been influential in their shift toward exploration of narrative in works of art, as opposed to the modernist emphasis upon form. Unlike art historians who traditionally aim at objectivity by writing about various aspects of an artist's life and career, or of a particular period's aesthetic mentality, art critics write about the art of their own time, more often than not, in a subjective manner (Frueh, 1985). The traditional art historical methodology answers questions about art: Who made it? When? Where? How? Feminist and post-modern art criticism, on the other hand, goes beyond these questions to examine the "Whys," which demand analyses of social and conceptual contexts. It is a more inclusive activity, which pursues the acts of recording, analysis and interpretation in new ways.

Frueh (1985) argues that in the feminist approach to art criticism, the term art object does not make sense, because a subject-to-subject relationship replaces the standard subject to object relationship. This approach weaves the fabric of it's content out of the critic's subjective, psychological response to a work of art. Aesthetic arguments raised by feminists are organized around female sensibility, or feminine aesthetics and the criteria for evaluation of art. These issues form the foundation for structuring philosophical dialogue in the classroom. A search for a particular female aesthetic, most often referred to as *female sensibility,* has occupied some feminist theoreticians of literature and art. Collins (1981) defines a female sensibility as "a capacity or disposition of female artist that is discernible in the personality of that artist and which, if evidencing itself in the artist's work, gives to it feminine characteristics" (p. 84). This issue, like the concept of female imagination in literature, has generated vigorous debate between female artists and art critics and eventually divided them into diverse ideological positions: those who are not willing to make separate responses to works of women; those who wish to create separate criteria for works done by women; and those who embrace diverse perspectives drawn from both the male art establishment and the female counter movement. The problem is whether the process and product of the art making experience are different for women than for men. If so, is the origin biologically determined? Is

it purely socially constructed, or both?

Advocates of integrationist approaches to reform in art history and criticism challenge the validity of the concept on the grounds that it perpetuates a negative stereotype and demonstrates a misunderstanding of art activity. Collins (1981) stresses that "if this concept promises to give us access to reality but serves only to blind us to all perceptions which do not fit our prejudice, then it is not only useless, but dangerously unjust" (p.85). The integrationist approach to feminist reform in art argues for the art teacher to expect and demand similar performance from students regardless of gender.

The separatists, those who believe in the existence of an art unique to women, argue that women's political, biological and social experience is different from that of men. The implication is that the art teacher should expect differences in interests, skills and attitudes to occur along the lines of gender, but not to misconstrue the differences as indication of inferiority or superiority of one gender over another.

A third model, evolving out of the concept of female sensibility is the pluralistic approach, which involves elements of both integrationism and separatism. Zimmerman (1990) pointed out that, "in the pluralistic approach, gender differences in art are acknowledged but the concept of two separate art worlds is not accepted. Inclusion of female sensibilities, according to a pluralist, would enhance art learning for all students" (p.2). Art teachers in this context are expected to encourage individual differences and help all students develop a full range of individual skills, attitudes and interests. Collins (1981) advocated that art teachers apply all three approaches in the classroom and engage in an ongoing critique of values associated with art and women.

Feminist art criticism is a political ideology. It should be understood not as another "approach" or a singular perspective, but as part of a broader political struggle. It is fluid and ongoing, a means of social action stressing alternatives to a patriarchal system of art making, art history, art criticism and aesthetics so embedded in DBAE. It emphasized the relevance of concepts such as class, sex, race and culture in respect of the context in which art is created. The political ideology in feminist criticism drives the way methods are employed and the questions that are asked. To fully understand the art world and provide inclusive curriculum, art teachers need to embrace feminist perspectives and broaden their choices to encompass personal, spiritual and socio-cultural functions of art.

African Art and Multicultural Education

The art of Africa is like a great river that runs far, wide and deep. It reaches out and connects with other major art forms of many cultures. Understanding its historical, cultural, environmental and its cross-cultural and functions can enhance multicultural art education. Africa is a complex continent rich with many different people representing a wide variety of cultures. A careful analysis of African art will shed some light on the political, economic and socio-cultural themes and characteristics that portray the image of cultural diversity as well as commonalities across cultures. Traditional African art is an instrument of expression in which the socio-religious life of the people is manifested and preserved from one generation to another. The realm of African art can be classified into three hierarchical levels. On the lowest rank of creation are the handicrafts: baskets, headrests, combs, smoking pipes, beadworks, divination objects, calabash bowls and other items of utility, mostly the work of hunters, gatherers and nomads. These are objects that reflect the socio-religious life of the people but which are often judged by outsiders to be lacking substantive aesthetic worth. At the next level are the masks and wooden sculptures, stools, musical instruments, paintings and the creations of agriculturalists and villagers that inspired the Post-Impressionists and Cubists. At the apex are classic works such as the Benin bronze and ivory sculptures, Asante gold ornaments and cult objects (see Figures 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, & 2.4 for sample pictures), the Great Zimbabwe architectural ruins and of course ancient Egyptian and Nubian art, including the great pyramids and the sphinx (see Figure 2.8). Due to modernization and cultural evolution, contemporary African art and artists have taken a new character. The works of leading African artists such as Ablade Glover and Wiz Kudowor (Ghana), Austin Hleza and Margot Horn (Swaziland), Dada Qgam (Botswana), Elias Jengo (Tanzania), Elimo Njau and Theresa Musoke (Kenya), Francis Musango (Uganda), Groupe Bogolan Kasobane (Mali), Penda Gueye (Senegal), Sfiso Ka-Mkame and Michael Miamane (South Africa), Tahir Bushra (Sudan), Tibebe Terffa (Ethiopia) and Tomy Ndebele (Zimbabwe), among others, boldly depict the ongoing evolution of the African art experience using a variety of artistic mediums with influences from Africa, Europe and elsewhere (Pollard, 1996). Some Western critics of contemporary African art have often claimed that traditional art is the only true African art of merit and that contemporary African art

Figure 2.8

Head of the Great Sphinx (Akhet Khufu) and a Pryamid (2590 B.C.E.)

forms are not purely traditional and therefore are irrelevant (Pollard, 1996, p. 19). Ultimately, this attitude reveals considerable condescending ignorance and imperialistic arrogance. If Western critics could not find anything wrong with Pablo Picasso, Matisse, Paul Simon and other European artists borrowing from Africa, why should African artists be confined to one cultural box or be represented through the eyes of the Euro-Western critic? This is unacceptable because Africa, as a cultural entity, is evolving and so are its artists.

It could be necessary to attempt to answer two crucial questions using the art of sub-Saharan Africa as a focus for multicultural art education: Why do people make art? What are the functions of art? To respond to the above questions from a cross-cultural perspective, it will be necessary to approach them in ways that acknowledge cultural diversity and, at the same time, celebrate what we have in common. Art educators have a lot to learn from related disciplines of anthropology and sociology if we really want to advance the course of multicultural art education. Judith Blau (1988) argues that by focusing attention on the material and social conditions and functions that drive art production, sociologists of art are able to advance their understanding of why and how people make and use art. This approach will be relevant to multicultural art education because it expands understanding and appreciation of artistic productions from many cultures. African-centred art and knowledge can be integrated with other centred knowledge to achieve multicentric and inclusive education.

Almost all visual art forms in traditional Africa are created for their utilitarian value. Their importance resides in their functions rather than their form. Some items are used to give prestige to nobility, to reinforce authority of the king and to impress upon the commoner about the importance of the court. Others are employed as a means to uphold or enforce social values. A certain mask, for instance, might be a status symbol, medal, certificate or an emblem of rank. It might have the power to judge, or its presence might give authority in the meeting of elders. It might be used for the collection taxes or entertainment. Some objects are purely utilitarian in function, such as boxes, baskets and containers or the heddle pulleys on traditional looms. The most important are the sculptural figures and masks used in religious ceremonies. Traditional African sculptural figures are used as points of reference for contact with the ancestral world and as focal points for placating the guardian spirits of the universe. Some are

employed as village guardian and special protectors of pregnant women and people. Others are mediums of divination to foretell the future and communicate with the gods and ancestors. Sculptural figures permeate all aspect of traditional life. They are present during entertainment as a source of enrichment; during planting and harvest to enhance the fertility of the land; during birth to ensure health and beauty of children; during puberty and initiation ceremonies for the smooth transition of the youths into the responsibilities of adulthood; during marriage to ensure fertility of the couple; and during deaths and funerals to ensure the smooth farewell and transition of the departed to the underworld. Traditional African art objects usually are owned by individuals, groups, families, communities, religious cults and secret societies. Only a few may be owned by the entire tribe such as the Golden Stool of the Ashanti of Ghana. Masks on the other hand rarely belonged to individuals; they belonged to the collective group of a religious cult, families and tribes.

African-centred Perspective on Gender and Multicultural Education

Although attitudes towards gender are changing in contemporary African societies, many Black/African immigrants to Canada grew up in a cultural environment where people were socialized to believe that boys and girls were predestined to fulfill distinctly different roles in society. Certain forms of masculinity, particularly ones that promoted "machismo" and chauvinism among boys, were sustained in the education system. The overarching effect of male dominance in the colonial state became a legacy in post-independent Sub-Saharan Africa where women were virtually reduced to second-class citizens unfit to determine their own destinies. Formal education for boys in colonial and early post-colonial Africa was perceived to be a viable economic venture; one that could yield dividends, in the form of economic security for parents in their old age (Adu-Poku, 2001). Females, generally, are socialized to internalize that marriage and procreation are what a woman was created for and that higher education was an unfortunate postponement of her self-fulfilment (Aidoo, 1984).

Growing up in Ghana, I witnessed the structural inequalities in the education system, and the unceasing discriminatory practices against females, within the family unit and society. When families with limited financial resources were confronted with decisions about which of their children to educate, most

often, the men or fathers who had the final decision tended to favour boys over girls. Such decisions were grounded in prevailing patriarchal cultural discourse and the modern economy, which presented and socialized boys to take up roles as future husbands, breadwinners, leaders, decision makers, public/modern sector workers, craftsmen, soldiers and politicians, with girls as future wives, mothers, petty traders, farm workers, and domestic workers. The socio-political milieus in most African societies forced women into economic dependence and domestic servitude.

At an early age, I was initiated into the cult of male chauvinism. As a boy, I enjoyed many privileges that my social position afforded. Unlike my sisters who were overburdened with household responsibilities, I enjoyed continuous support and motivation from my parents toward my studies at home and school. My parents demonstrated clearly their interests in their sons' educational achievement over their daughters', even though the girls spent much of their time and energies generating extra income to supplement family resources. Ultimately, while my brother and I managed to pursue higher education, my sisters terminated their education after graduating from secondary school.

My family's experience of sexism is not a unique one. It is a common experience in many African families. Until quite recently, official policies, written and unwritten served to reinforce the colonial tradition of male dominance in the educational and political spheres. The educational system was deeply entrapped in gendered colonial histories, despite attempts to transform it toward a more neutral identity. The famous quotation from Kwegyir Aggrey: "If you educate a man, you educate an individual. If you educate a woman, you educate a nation" (Aidoo, 1984, p. 259) evidently points to the fact that some individuals perceived formal education as the answer to the limitations of the untrained mind, and to the problem of female subordination in society. The disadvantage of females in formal education in most African states has engendered women's continuous subordination and lack of access to resources in the postcolonial era. While I acknowledge my privileges and power under such a system, I critically interrogate prevailing patriarchal discourses of Africentric theory and practice. I reject the lure of hegemonic male domination entrenched in patriarchal culture and colonial legacies. This is because colonization played a major role in the subversion of gender systems and relations rooted in ancient African traditions.

Colonial custom and practice evolved from a worldview which believes in the absolute superiority of the colonizer over the colonized, the *masculine* over the *feminine*, and the modern or progressive over the traditional or the so-called "primitive." Two social categories that emanated from Western philosophical thought were the 'men of reason' (the thinker) and the 'women of the body' (Oyèwùmí, 1997). Feminists, both from Africa and the West view gender as a social construction and therefore repudiate Eurocentric male articulations of gender. Gender was not the foundational social thought and identity among many African societies (i.e., the Akans of Ghana, Zulus in southern Africa, and Ondo Yorubas of Nigeria) (Arhin, 1983; Oyèwùmí, 1997). Nevertheless, due to imperialism, this debate, or 'the women question,' has been universalized and uncritically imposed on African cultures making it difficult for Black/African males and females to reclaim their traditional roles and relations with one another; relations grounded on indigenous principles of reciprocity, mutual respect, community and group unity.

In Africa today many women are increasingly being empowered to assert their rights to self-determination in the midst of structural inequalities in society. They are claiming their own voices and spaces from which they could speak with people who make the policies that affect their health, education, economic and personal development. The pressure continues to mount on the male dominated governments in Africa to ensure gender equity by yielding some privileges men have inherited from oppressive colonial legacies and oppressive cultural practices in Africa. In the Western world, however, the intersection of race, class and cultural histories, as well as the common experiences of racism has led many Black women to see Black men as allies toward a collective struggle against racism rather than as perpetrators of patriarchal domination. By analyzing African societies through Western gendered perspectives, Western feminists and other scholars have largely ignored the fact that gender categories in many African societies are neither pre-cultural nor fixed in historical time and cultural space.

Social and artistic roles in traditional African societies were differentiated and gendered, but not in ways that produced marked inequalities and subordination. Women and men worked together as partners with their roles complementing each other. Nevertheless, certain social and religious prohibitions limited both women and men from participation in certain art making ventures. In African cosmology, deities are linked with human safety and security, as well as fertility of the earth, crops, animals and humans. To

make the deities accessible and channel their vital force for the benefit of humans, artistic objects and rituals are employed to venerate and cultivate the powers of benevolent spirits. Among the Akans of Ghana for instance, a woman in her menses is considered "unclean," for religious reasons; therefore, she is restricted from engaging in certain sacred and mundane activities. Since *kente* weaving, *adinkra* cloth printing and woodcarving, like the ancient Egyptians and Nubians, owned their conception to the demands created by the king's court and priestly class, women were excluded from those sacred art forms. This is because of the belief that menstrual blood, among other things, could defile or offend the ancestral spirits and the gods, thereby bringing calamity upon society.

Sons and nephews learned the art of stone- and wood-carving, metal smiting, leather tanning and weaving from their father and uncle. Older women in their menopause could, however, spin cotton into thread, make embroidered fabrics, and in some cases weave because they posed no threat to the gods. On the other hand, pottery making has been the inherited legacy of women. Religious taboos restrict men from traditional pottery making. Until recently, an entire family of young women could become potters after being apprenticed by their parents from childhood. Again, religious taboos prohibit women from producing figurative pottery and highly ornamented designs. However, with modernization and cultural evolution, some traditional customs are gradually being modified giving way to the participation of both genders. Women are increasingly participating in roles that were traditionally designated for men and vice versa. Westernization has led to the production of hybrid products from technical or formal institutions and industries, thereby eliminating the need to rely on traditional techniques and practices. Since most formal art institutions in Africa are founded on European models, the art disciplines tend to be elitist and male centred. While the fine arts (i.e., painting and sculpture) have been male dominated, women have found more expression in the utilitarian arts (i.e., textiles and pottery/ceramics). Most immigrants arrive in Canada with a mindset grounded in their home culture, which may conflict with Canadian cultural practices. Cultural incongruence between the home and school environments creates conflict for some Black children and their parents as they try to adjust to the new realities.

<u>The African Cosmological Concept.</u>

African art is conceptual. It represents ideas drawn from the philosophy of their worldview. It is interwoven with the fabric of everyday life in ways quite different from most Western art. To explore the arts of Africa, it will be essential to understand the underlying philosophy behind the concept of *African Cosmology*. African cosmological concept is a worldview that attempts to theorize the origin and nature of the universe and humans place in it. Although there are slight variations in this concept, it is a general belief in traditional sub-Saharan Africa that the visible and invisible worlds are under the control of a hierarchy of supernatural beings and elements - humans, animals, inanimate objects, spiritual beings and so forth - who are interconnected and interdependent (Bell et al., 1990). This could be illustrated on a triangular analogy as shown in Figure 2.9. There is no separation between the spiritual and the material, substance and form. One realizes that one is a part of an extended family: ancestors, the unborn, the Supreme Being (God) and nature. Therefore, to destroy one component of the web of cosmic elements is to destroy the entire universe, even the creator. The continuity from material to spiritual is the universal basis of the Africentric viewpoint. In addition, the idea of balanced ecology and of being one with the environment is further expression of the African cosmic beliefs. Cosmic beliefs provide the background for African culture including art, customs and behaviour. Traditional African societies realize that there is a cosmic rhythm operating on different levels other than their own. These elements engage in continuous struggle for control over the universe. Humans are situated at the centre of the earth, the presumed battleground of the spirits. Therefore, benevolent spirits must be obeyed and venerated to reciprocate their protection of humans against malicious powers. The Supreme Being charges the benevolent forces with the responsibility of seeking human's welfare and protection, but they offer their blessings on contractual basis. They can withdraw their protection when provoked or violated. This could bring about premature death, natural disaster, barrenness and diseases. Humans therefore, placed at the centre of these spiritual struggles, are fundamentally driven to use artefacts to objectify and contain the intangible spirits. Shrines are built as a means of concentrating their powers in times of worship. Worship involves the use of magic and ritualistic art forms that serve as receptacles of the spirits and vehicles of psychic force. Africans

Figure 2.9

The African Cosmological Concept

(Supreme Being, Creator, Sustainer of the universe, Giver of destiny,
Immortal. Generally not represented in art)

GOD

(Spirits of the dead-
kings, chiefs, queen-
mothers, family elders,
respectable and success-
ful individuals, heroes
and heroines whose
deaths were considered
satisfactory. They are
represented in art
forms)

Ancestors

Human
Beings

Nature
Gods

(Non-human spirits,
ministers of the
Supreme Being charged
with special functions.
Habitation: trees, rain,
thunder, lightening,
sculpture, etc. They can
influence one's destiny.
They are usually repre-
sented in art)

Lower Forces

Animals, Vegetation, Inorganic Matter, Nature

(Habitation: monsters, dwarfs, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic
spirits, elephants, witches, sorcerers, diviners, forest, grassland,
trees, air, sun, moon, rivers, streams, sea, lakes, rocks and mountains)

venerate their ancestors, pay homage to and appease the spirits in order to ensure security, survival, continuity and balance of the family and society. The African cosmological concept and basic beliefs about human safety engage the African in complex magico-religious rituals involving the use of all kinds of artefacts. Religion, indeed, runs like a silver thread in African art and thus tends to become the real inspiration of the craftsperson.

Artistic Criticism and Aesthetics of African Art

The criteria for judging quality and creativity in African art vary slightly from society to society, but many common characteristics could be identified. The traditional African uses both language and art as primarily an expressive means of symbolic communication. In this sense, art becomes a vital mode of symbolism of culture. The African artists never lose contact with nature. In their subjective approach to life, they demonstrate their links with nature and the forces that activate it.

Sculpture is the index of African art. It is an expression of force and movement revealed in human beings and nature. The artist does not create because of any feeling of a need to express herself/himself, but in order to produce some useful objects. Objects are made not as art in the Western sense, though valid systems of aesthetics lie behind them, but as implements of the socio-religious life of the people in which art enhances status, reinforces authority, expresses spiritual values and, in the most intimate way, confirms life itself. The most beautiful work of art may well just be thrown away or destroyed after it has been "used," a fate that countless masks and figures have suffered. Generally, African wood sculptures display characteristics that include abstraction, stylization, rhythm, three-dimensional quality, static and erect posture, monochrome and decorative, restrained gesture, symmetry and frontalilty. In Yoruba land, for instance, a fine sculpture should neither be too real nor excessively abstract. Full, well-finished organic details are necessary. The art of cicatrisation is of paramount importance. It identifies ones lineage and was a mark of civilization. Euphemism (depicting people in their prime of life) is a necessary artistic criterion and is portrayed by a careful application of round shapes. Angular shapes depicted old age. Among the Luba of Zaire, the Dogons and the Bamana people of Mali, however, images are stylized with interplay of angular and round forms to produce rhythm.

Generally, all African human figure sculpture in wood follows the *Proportion of Significance* or the *Relative African Proportion*. The parts of the body viewed as the most important, are given the greatest attention and subsequently exaggerated in sculpture. The head, which is the seat of wisdom, is enlarged. The breast, navel and sometimes the sexual organs are all exaggerated to show their importance. Hands, fingers and feet are often rudimentarily treated because they are less significant or because of limitations of the wood from which they are carved. Similarly, in other artistic depictions, individuals are presented according to their rank in society with kings, chiefs, clan heads and spiritual figures given pre-eminence. There is immense stylization involving the use of geometric volumes, broad planes, linear and plastic rhythms, angularity and roundness, abstraction, balance and symmetry that offsets any notion that African art lacks creativity and aesthetic qualities. Although we can identify some common characteristics of African art, the multiplicity of stylistic variations is enough to show the extent to which the artists kept innovating and changing designs to suit local contexts, beliefs, philosophies and purposes for which a work was made.

Before the beginning of the twentieth century, Europeans were baffled by the arts of Africa because they defied the Western standard and notions of beauty. Many Western art critics, in their ethnocentric views, derogatively referred to the art forms in Africa as primitive and childlike (cited from Jacknis, 1976 and Chalmers, 1992). Art was viewed from the context of Western aesthetics and isolated from the cultural and environmental factors that have influenced their creation. During the early part of the century, however, Western artists such as Derain, Vlaminck, Picasso, Braque and Matisse contributed in projecting the works of native African artists as an important branch of world art. Picasso endeavoured to familiarize Westerners with the aesthetics of African sculpture by translating into his paintings the African use of distortion in sculpture. The principles of African art were then applied to European painting and sculpture and the outcome was *Cubism* which was a radical development in Western art history. The Austrian artist, Gustav Klimt and the German artist, Paul Klee also found inspiration from the symbolic and decorative patterns of central Africa.

Art critics may evaluate by using visual comparisons, but it is not useful or valid to compare aesthetic qualities from different cultures using only Western standards. Art educators need to recognize

that all cultures have definitions of quality and can point out examples of their own art that are excellent, mediocre and poor. More recently, African art has undergone tremendous transformation due to acculturation. Styles and concepts from other cultures have been borrowed and utilized to meet the needs of new clients. Similarly, non-Africans have increasingly been producing art works with African characteristics. The dynamics of cultural borrowing demonstrate an inherent connection among humans and their cultures and art teachers need to stress this connection in multicultural art education.

Cross-cultural Functions of Art

Sociologists (Anderson, 1990; Blau, 1988) and the art historian (Dissanayake, 1992) suggest that all groups need and use art for the purposes of identity, continuity and change and to enhance their cultural values and that, art exists across cultures for gnoseological (spiritual), hedonistic and recreational purposes. Wolff (1981) argues that many people are involved in the production of any work of art because sociological and ideological factors affect the artist's work, and that audiences and "readers" are all active participants in the creation of art. In traditional African societies, artists rarely claimed ownership of what they had produced. Their identities were greatly influenced by the society in which they lived. Chalmers (1996) points out that the cross-cultural similarities in the roles of artists, patrons, groups and publics need to be studied in multicultural art education. For example the cultural contexts in which images are erected in youths initiation camps in Africa or in which totem poles are executed and raised in a First Nations community in Pacific Northwest might be compared with a story of the creation of an altarpiece in medieval Europe or with the erection of contemporary sculpture in a modern city. It is the job of art educators to assist students to investigate those understandings and purposes.

Art for Life: Traditional African art was closely connected with the *cycle of life*. The importance of life to Africans can be seen in the rich variety of artefacts they make to inaugurate the *Rites of Passage* - birth, puberty, marriage and death; to usher in the fishing, hunting and agricultural seasons; and in the service of religion. The Dogon and Bamana people of Mali, Ashantis of Ghana, Baule and Senefu people of Cote d'Ivoire, Dinkas of Sudan, Bakongos of Congo, Luba and Mangbetu people on Zaire, Yorubas of Nigeria, to mention a few, have creation myths about the origin of the first birth and life. Across Africa,

fertility figures, couple sculptures, masks and magic sculptures are made to serve procreative, therapeutic, protective and religious functions in rites associated with birth and death. Art for life and in the service of religion is a cross-cultural concept. Visual arts are used in places of worship to enhance religious beliefs and enrich life. McFee (1986) indicates that, in all cultures, art is used to objectify by making beliefs and superstitions more sensuously tangible, so that they can be seen and felt.

Art and the Rites of Passage: In most African cultures, both the transition between childhood and adulthood (initiation) and the transition between death and the afterlife were significant events celebrated by ceremonies called *rites of passage.* These consisted of three stages: separation, seclusion and re-birth. A variety of artistic objects were employed during these ceremonies and rituals to educate and prepare members of the society for these major changes. Magic sculptures and charms are employed to induce fertility among the barren. An Ashanti woman from Ghana might carry an *Akuaba* doll to solicit a beautiful and healthy child. The Bakongos of Zaire place a *Simbu* figure in their huts as soon as a woman begins labour to induce easy labour and delivery. The Yoruba of Nigeria have the *Ibeji* figures to protect the souls of twin children. Education of the child was a community affair conducted informally through stories and participation of daily activities and ceremonies. During initiation rites, the youths were educated to understand life and the universe. Images of gods, ancestors and cultural heroes were erected in some initiation camps where the initiates learned the laws, traditions, histories and the secrets of their tribes, groups and societies. Among the Fons of Benin and Akans of Ghana, the initiates are provided with special woven clothes (kente) and stools carved for the initiation. Among the Bapendes of Zaire, the masks worn by the youths are thrown away to mark the end of adolescence and entry into adulthood. Since death is believed to be associated with supernatural causes, traditional Africans consult shrines of gods and their ancestors to verify the spiritual cause of one's death. Among the Akans of Ghana, there are special mourning and funerals cloths popularly known as *adinkra* (farewell) cloth. Among the Egungun and Gelede secret societies of Nigeria and in Cameroon, masks are worn during funeral ceremonies. Masks, statues, effigy pots and reliquary figures are also associated with funeral rites and ancestral cults. In Western societies, the transition of a child to adulthood might be signalled by a high school or college graduation, confirmation in a church or a special birthday celebration. The death of a person would be

observed with a wake, funeral or other ritual. McFee (1986) posits that, in all cultures, art enhances and is used to enrich celebration and ritual in human events. The study of different holidays and festivals is one way to show students that, across cultures, many types of art are used to celebrate and enrich major cultural events.

Art for Nature and Social Well-Being: In many African communities, art was employed to ensure that the community was safe, peaceful and well fed (Chanda, 1993). In parts of West Africa, agricultural seasons are still inaugurated with festivals using masks, statues, hunting and fishing images, songs and dances to ensure successful hunting and a bumper harvest. Certain art forms were used to protect people from negative forces and to maintain law and order in society. Masks served as status symbols and emblems of rank. The wearing of a mask could confer on the wearer the power to act as a tax collector, a lawyer, a judge, a priest or the head of a funeral ceremony. With the advent of modern ideas, as well as the influence of Christianity and Islam, many of the artefacts have lost their social significance.

Art as an Element of Culture: The works of art created in Africa make it possible for us to learn about and understand the people in that continent, their histories, values and beliefs. The artist did not only delight our aesthetic senses but also provided objects with many socio-cultural functions. The use of art, both to perpetuate and change cultural values, is a universal phenomenon (Chanda, 1993). A pluralistic and multicultural approach to art should assist art educators and students to understand not only different types of art but also their connection to specific cultural contexts. Therefore, rather than a mere exposure to techniques and materials from other cultures, art educators need to probe into why different individuals and cultures create, acquire, protect, commission, display, admire, steal, destroy, become advocates for and ignore art (Chalmers, 1996).

Art for Recreation and Aesthetic Enhancement: Educators, overall, have caused much harm to learners by equating art with recreation and with a limited understanding of aesthetics rather than by viewing art from a socio-anthropological standpoint. This dominant perspective, unfortunately, has contributed to the neglect of many other important functions of art. The cross-cultural concept of art as aesthetic enhancement has not been sufficiently translated into curriculum in multicultural art education. For many years, art has been used in all societies to decorate and enhance the environment. Public

sculptures, murals architecture and many objects are designed to beautify the environment and enrich life. In many African communities, places of importance such as palaces, clubhouses, shrines and temples were beautified with wall decorations made of paintings, engraved patterns, symbols and designs. Across cultures, nobles adorned themselves with rich artefacts in the form of clothing, jewellery and other special objects. Like all other cultures, Africans produce a variety of musical instruments for entertainment and recreation. In contemporary societies, people may visit museums, galleries and movie theatres for recreational purposes.

Art for Socio-political Power and Status: In all societies, people use art to show their personal wealth and social status. Many Africans believe that success or failure in life is determined both by destiny and attitude. A close bond to the spirit world through veneration and divination is not only a security against diseases, poverty and spiritual attacks, but also a means for establishing personal power and social status. Objects of empowerment included shrines, masks, statues, charms, amulets and talismans. The possession of these items could constitute a visible sign of wealth and status in society. African traditional rulers are especially known to use art to show their wealth and power. A king's court may be surrounded by richly crafted objects of adornment such as thrones, stools, palanquins, umbrellas, ceremonial staffs and swords, textiles with elaborate designs and jewellery of gold and silver. Among the Akans of Ghana, it might conveniently be stated that without the stool there might be no chieftaincy; for it is a well known fact that to capture a chief's stool at wartime is to bring an end to the sovereignty of the chiefdom whose stool is seized. Similarly, the *Golden Stool* of Ghana is believed to hold the souls of all Ashantis, the loss of which will bring doom to the ethnic group. In Western societies, people may acquire or collect artefacts for personal wealth. It may also have some special correlation to social status. Berger (1972) has shown that, from the time of the Renaissance, a relationship has existed between personal wealth or social status and the possession and display of European oil paintings.

Art and the Economy: Across cultures, art objects have always been valued for their economic worth. Since subsistence agriculture is a major occupation in Africa, artefacts are employed in the rites that foster increase in agricultural produce. Some magic sculptures are used to bring about wealth and economic prosperity. In Africa, art forms produced for trade ranged from embroidered cloth, printed and

dyed fabrics, woven cotton, silk and raffia, household baskets, beads, pottery, musical instruments, metal implements, ivory, wood sculpture, gold jewellery and cowry shells. Africans traded among themselves and with the Arabs before the arrival of the Europeans. After the arrival of the Portuguese in the fifteenth century, the Europeans traded with West Africa for gold, ivory and African artworks. In almost every country, tourist art has been promoted for its cultural, educative or economic value. Today, the demand for tourist art in Africa is so high that art objects are made under assembly line conditions.

A theme approach to the study of the functions and role of art in sub-Saharan Africa has many implications for curriculum in multicultural art education. If art educators became sensitive to, and aware of the cross-cultural functions of art, they will be able to make the subject more meaningful and relevant to a greater variety of students who cannot easily assimilate into the Euro-Western culture. Although ethnocentric traditions have limited our vision and understandings of art, the realities of today demand that we pay enough attention to the *why* of art. This is a challenge in multicultural art education. Chalmers (1996) stresses that our culture-bound aesthetic preferences should not restrict the universality of our approaches to the study of art. "We need to move beyond our own preferences" (p. 28).

Summary of Review of the Literature

This study grows from issues raised in the literature that have been more often called for than resolved in multicultural education. In order to predict where Black/African-Canadian learners are heading, it is imperative to understand the context of where they have been. The socio-historical context of Black/African-Canadian learners in Canada provides a backdrop for understanding their educational realities, as well as the need for alternative education models that are more inclusive of other cultural groups. The literature review revealed many factors that have implications for the effective education of people of colour, and for visual arts and multicultural education. These include: the persistent barrier to Black/African-Canadian participation and attainments in the education system; the absence of research which specifically addresses the education of Black/African-Canadian children in British Columbia; the gap between policy and promise of multicultural education and the socio-political realities of Black/African-Canadian learners; multiplicity of approaches and ambiguity in multicultural curriculum

theory and practice; and the predominance of European cultural hegemony in art education and the education system in general. These themes and issues have generated discussions, among Africentric scholars, about alternative paradigms that would foster understanding of the cultural realities of African peoples, both from the continent and the diaspora. They also reinforce the demand for the education system to explore the art and cultural knowledge of ethnic groups that form the mosaic of Canadian society.

CHAPTER THREE

AFRICENTRICITY AND ART EDUCATION

Scholars of Africa and the diaspora have long sought new and alternative theoretical frameworks that would afford a fuller insight into the cultural realities of African peoples and the dynamic processes unfolding in the continent. One of the most intellectually stimulating and innovative concepts that has emerged in the scholarship on African peoples within the last three decades is "Africentricity" (Afrocentricity). Africentricity means placing African ideals at the centre of our approach to problem solving or, any analysis that involves African culture and behaviours (Asante, 1987). Africentrists seek to regain control of African culture, art, history and scholarship, which have experienced centuries of epistemic violence through the legacies of slavery, colonization and the hegemony of Eurocentric scholarship. The Africentric conceptual framework influences my theoretical perspective. The underlying assumption in this study is that students of African descent are in a stronger position to learn if they are placed at the centre or in their "own space" rather than in a "borrowed space" or the margin of Eurocentric curricula. In order to understand the Africentric project, it is first necessary to analyze and review Eurocentrism and its historical manifestations in modernity. An awareness of the intellectually debilitating effects of the Eurocentric legacy forms an indispensable backdrop for understanding the contemporary debates about Africentricity and multicultural art education.

Critique of Eurocentrism in Art Education

Broadly speaking, Eurocentrism refers to an ideology or body of myths, symbols, ideas and practices that exclusively or predominantly values the worldview, existence and cultural manifestations (e.g., history, politics, art, language, music, literature, technology, economics, etc.) of people of European origin and that devalues and subordinates the cultural manifestations of people from all other lands of origin. Eurocentrism, like Renaissance perspective in painting, envisions the world from a single privileged point, attributing to the "West" an almost providential sense of historical destiny. It centralizes and augments Europe in our understanding and practices of art education, art history and the entire art

establishment, while literally marginalizing the rest of the world. Eurocentrism organizes everyday language into binalistic hierarchies implicitly flattering to Europe: *our* "nation," *their* "tribes"; *our* "religions," *their* "superstitions"; *our* "culture," *their* folklore"; *our* "art," *their* "crafts"; *our* "defence," *their* "terrorism" (Stam & Shohat, 1994). The word "Eurocentric" is sometimes taken as a synonym for "racist." But although these two words are historically intertwined, they are in no way equal, for the simple reason that Eurocentrism is pervasive in our educational systems, the media and in the general consciousness of our modern world. Despite its normative character, it is quite possible for both Europeans and non-Europeans to contest its oppressive aspects and still accept Eurocentrism in its non-hegemonic forms. For this reason, the critique of Eurocentrism is directed not to individuals per se, but to oppressive institutions and historically configured relations of power embedded in Western discourses.

For centuries, Western Eurocentric thought has dominated our understanding and evaluation of art, yet art has continued to be created throughout the diverse cultures of the world. The theoretical underpinnings of Eurocentrism in art education, and in schooling in general, could be traced to some of the classical texts of Western philosophy and science such as the writings of Immanuel Kant, David Hume, Jean-Francois Lyotard, Carl Marx, Georg Wilheim Friedrich Hegel and Charles Darwin. Although, there are points of divergence in the narratives of these classical Western theorists, they converge on their appraisal of European modernity as the *real* in contrast to the *unreality* of human existence in the non-European world and on what is termed as the "fulfilment of all humanity" (Lyotard, 1992). The imperialistic policy of extension of European authority, influence, power, domination over other people and territories was the driving force of European modernity. Kant, the father of foundationist epistemology sought to replace traditions, myths and religion with formal logic, reasoning and science as the focus of modernity. According the modernist theory, "universal freedoms" and "the fulfilment of all humanity" require us to look to humanity as a whole, not as it shows itself in all its diversity and amplitude. Furthermore, this universal fulfilment must be mediated through European historicity (Lyotard, 1989). This idea is in contrast to multiculturalism which stresses inclusiveness and views the world from different cultural perspectives.

The idea of European superiority has its roots from the Renaissance and flourished during the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It became the centrepiece of the European Enlightenment, as well as the colonialist project of global subjugation and expansion. Colonization per se is not a new phenomenon, having been practiced by ancient empires like the Aztecs, Greek, Incas, Old Kingdom of Ghana and ancient Egypt. What is peculiar in European colonialism is its global reach, its affiliation with institutional power, its imperative mode and its attempted submission of the world to a single "universal" regime of truth and power (Stam & Shohat, 1994, p. 297). In its global invasion and subjugation, European modernity discovered the *unreality* of myriad non-capitalist social formations and non-European democratic traditions which it violently shattered and replaced with its own replication of itself in what it termed as "an air of normality" (Serequeberhan, 1997). European imperialists' occupation of Africa, for instance, destroyed the political structures of the well-established kingdoms of Ashanti, Benin and Zulu, including the state-supported rich art traditions. In establishing colonial control, the traditional courts or palaces of Ashanti, Benin and Zulu, once the largest consumer of local art was scattered, the *Asantehene* exiled, the *Oba* deposed and *Chaka* annihilated respectively. As Achebe (1959) puts it, with the advent of European colonialism "things fall apart." The African's mode of life, his indigenous habitat of human existence, was displaced by the violence of the "civilizing mission." Cultural treasures, most of which were already considered antiquities were plundered causing the indigenous culture to slip into an irrevocable artistic decline. In Benin City alone, 3,000 pieces of valuable bronze and ivory works of art were pillaged during the British "punitive expedition" of 1897 (Nevadomsky, 1997) (see Figures 2.1, 2.2, & 2.3). This *normality*, which obscures the limitations of Western socio-political traditions, is grounded on an idea, which dignifies pure force with arguments drawn from science, morality, ethics and a general philosophy. The "general philosophy" that glorifies European existence as the true human existence has been passed on from Kant to Hagel, Lyotard, Marx, Darwin and to generations of European philosophers, scholars and art educators. In exorcizing "the half devil and half child" or "savages" of their "malignant" cultures, European civilization became both the standard and the model by which this so-called deficiency of non-Europeans is recognized and remedied. Charles Darwin, Charles Dickens and a host of racist hardliners for instance, saw the extinction of the so-called "lower races" as desirable and good for humanity (Brantlinger, 1990). No doubt, European slavery and colonialization represented truly horrific chapters of

the history of humanity. Stam and Shohat (1994) point out that:

> Eurocentrism minimizes the West's oppressive practices by regarding them as contingent, accidental and exceptional. Western colonialism, slave trading and imperialism are not seen as fundamental causes of the West's disproportionate power. Eurocentrism appropriates the cultural and material production of non-Europeans while denying their achievements and its own appropriation, thus consolidating its sense of self and glorifying its own cultural anthropology. In sum, Eurocentrism sanitizes Western history [and art] while patronizing and even demonizing the non-West; it thinks of itself in terms of its noblest achievements - science, progress, humanism - but of the non-West in terms of its deficiencies, real or imagined. (pp. 297-298)

In conventional treatments of Western history, the sting of Euro-Western oppression and colonialism is softened by the portrayal of Black/Africans and non-Europeans as the beneficiaries of a benevolent civilizing on the part of Whites. In this way, a disgraceful part of Euro-Western history is distorted and romanticized. The deconstruction critique of the "master script" which serves as the foundation of Western art and philosophy is a basic critical task in the discourse of Africentricity. During the Enlightenment, colour prejudice was strong, even among highly influential and educated Europeans. The famous Scottish philosopher, David Hume, wrote in an essay published in 1742:

> I am apt to suspect the Negroes and in general all other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to Whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences . . . Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction between these breeds of men. (in Popkin, 1973, pp. 245-246)

Also, in *Observations of the Feeling of the Sublime,* Kant (1784), who is often acknowledged as the founder of modern aesthetics, provides a categorical response to the critical question of whose humanity was at stake in the Enlightenment project. Kant unequivocally affirms that:

> The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling . . . among the hundreds of thousands of blacks who are transported elsewhere from their countries, although many of them have even been set free, still not a single one was ever found who presented anything great in art or science or any other praise-worthy quality, even though among the whites some continually rise aloft from the lowest rabble and through superior gifts earn respect in the world. So fundamental is the difference between these two races of man and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in colour. (pp. 110-11)

It is not only the "Negroes of Africa" that Kant mocks in this manner, but also all non-Europeans including Arabs, Persians, Japanese, Chinese, Indians and the "savages" of North America. Nevertheless, Blacks stood at the highest point of his negative pinnacle, precisely because of their colour. Also, Kant

underplayed the implications of being "transported elsewhere" from one's native country (i.e., the experience of African enslavement) when he compares the level of achievement of the subjugator with the subjugated.

Language and words are powerful tools in racial discourses and stereotypes. For it was not by accident that Caucasians of fair complexion came to be constructed as Whites, Asians as Yellow, Native Americans as Red and Africans of darker complexion as Blacks. Race science and its classification coincided with European imperialist and Enlightenment project that sought to subjugate the rest of the world and establish white supremacy during the 17th and 18th centuries. From a Eurocentric standpoint, and from the standpoint of race science, "whiteness" and Caucasian/White people connote purity, moral uprightness and positive values. It is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. On the lower end of the colour hierarchies, "blackness" and people of darker complexion became associated with negative connotations. They were constructed as uncivilized, violent and threatening to Whites. This was an inversion of reality, and a rationale for repression and control; for Blacks and people of colour had far more reasons to be fearful of Europeans, whose histories are characterized by structural violence and oppression through slavery and colonization.

In view of overwhelming scientific evidence that shatters the notion of the existence of race in morphological terms (e.g., Appiah, 1992; Gould, 1996), it is worth noting how Kant recognizes a "fundamental" "difference" and correlates "mental capacities" to the "colour" of "these two races." Serequeberhan (1997) points out that Kant was well aware of the faulty character of the empirical travel literature and information about non-Europeans that was available to him. For example, Kant's review of the "Ideas for a Philosophy of Mankind" in 1785 states that: "Working with a mass of descriptions dealing with different lands, it is possible to prove, if one cares to do so . . . that [Native] Americans' and Negroes' . . . natural potentialities are on the same level as those of any other inhabitants of the planet" (in Beck, 1963, p. 47). Now then, why should Kent ignore the above and be so categorical in his negative and inaccurate evaluation of non-Europeans? As Kant himself tells us, what is at stake here is the making of "natural distinctions" and "classifications based on hereditary colorization." Also, like the conquest of Native Indians and others, the enslavement of the African required a rationalizing ideology. The starting

point was for the perpetrators to define Africans as inferior. Therefore, any information that presented

contrary evidence to the notion of existence of race or African inferiority was discounted. It is ironic to

learn that some of the European cultural figures most revered today condemned European colonialism

themselves. For instance, Samuel Johnson, an archetype of the neoclassical conservative, wrote in his

World Displayed of 1759 that, "Europeans have scarcely visited any coast but to gratify avarice and extend

corruption; to arrogate dominion without right and practice cruelty without incentive" (quoted from Green,

1977, p. 421). Yet, contemporary multiculturalists and Africentrists are often viciously attacked for

making the same points.

Nearly a century after Kant, the notion of white supremacy and the idea of Europe as the centre of

everything continued to be nourished in art education literature. In Europe at the end of the 19th century,

African and Pacific artworks were regarded as ethnographic curiosities. In 1876, Zerffi who taught art

history and produced art education texts for nineteenth century British art teachers, propagated the dubious

assumptions that the "Negro's reasoning faculty is very limited and his imagination slow. He cannot create

beauty, for he is indifferent to any ideal conception. He possesses only 75 - 83½ cubic inches of brain"

(pp. 23-24). Like his predecessors, Zerffi (1876) describes the White *man* as:

> the crowning product of the cosmical forces of nature. To him exclusively we owe art in its
> highest sense . . . He surpasses the other . . . group of humanity, not only in technical skill, but
> especially in inventive and reasoning power, critical discernment, purity of artistic taste. The white
> man alone has produced idealized masterpieces in sculpture and painting. (in Chalmers, 1992,
> p.135)

Numerous books and articles have been written about the arts of Africa, including the European

encounter with the civilizations of the African Nile valley (Egypt and Nubia), Zimbabwe architectural

ruins and stone sculpture, Benin bronze and ivory art, Ashanti gold ornaments and others which refute

Zerffi's assertion. In fact, the discovery of ancient Nubian art, as well as Benin art and material culture

confounded many Europeans due to their sheer technical mastery. To this day, Benin antiquities have been

described as priceless, "sophisticated and baroque products of statecraft and empire that bear comparison

with the best of the West – the African equivalent of Renaissance" (Nevadomsky, 1997, p. 20). The

European's attraction to this new aesthetics stemmed from the apparent inconsistency between the widely

reported savagery and primitiveness of native Africans and the surprising evidences of artistic and

technical skills of native Africans, particularly the Edo people of Benin (see Figures 2.1, 2.2, 2.3). In Europe, the quality of the British plunder, the novelty of the subjects and the technical perfection of the works were generally celebrated as unprecedented and the veneration of Benin art overshadowed the punitive violence surrounding the events of 1897. What was the impact of these artworks on Western images of Africa and on Western aesthetics in general? How are we to explain that this artistic transformation took place at the zenith of imperialism, when social Darwinism was the prevailing ideology? Hegemonic education can exist only so long as accurate information is withheld. For instance, student would be able to interrogate the notion promulgated by Hume, Kant and Zerffi that Africans never contributed to the arts and sciences (cited in Chalmers, 1992) if they know that the Greeks, particularly Herodotus credited Africa (ancient Egyptians and Nubians) for initiating the disciplines of history, philosophy and science (Diop, 1974, Herodotus, 1987).

Although African art was influenced mainly by sociological, cosmological and ideological factors, European interest depended on how these objects met the Western aesthetic criteria. Aesthetic appreciation of African art influenced the Primitivist-Modernist revolution in England including the Pre-Raphaelites and the Arts and Craft Revival (Barkan, 1997). Even before the avant-garde declared the arrival of Primitivism, many works of art from Africa defied their categorization as ethnographic curiosities. Nevertheless, many Europeans continued to view African works of art, including Benin antiquities as a kind of rubbish, or as "damaged ivory" (Luschan, 1919, p. 4, 8,). These Europeans were still stuck to the "frozen vision" and myths of African inferiority in art and all aspects of civilization in spite of overwhelming evidence of existence of remarkable aesthetic accomplishments. Like the authenticity of the discovery of the first cave art in Africa, some Europeans out of egocentrism began to deny the African roots of Benin antiquities, stating that "it is not possible to leave the discoveries of Benin to the Negroes" (Buchner, 1908, p. 981). Indeed, writers speculated about European, Indian, Assyrian or Egyptian origins of the style and technique of Benin art (Luschan, 1919, p.15). Even the Primitivist art movement in England pursued their aesthetics without acknowledging the impact of African and Pacific art.

Chalmers (1992) notes that the notion of the superiority of some races based on craniometry, religion and geographical determinism influenced thinking in art education during the nineteenth and

twentieth centuries. Art theorists, poets and novelists sustained their racial prejudice and stereotypes with dubious statistics about brain size and facial angle to determine intelligence and artistic development; by misapplying the Biblical account of the Old Testament - Pre-Adamite theory to account for separate origins of humankind; and by evoking geographical determinism to defend racial ranking. Gould (1996) points out that racism was widespread throughout the egalitarian periods of European Enlightenment and the American Revolution because of the idea of white supremacy and widespread illiteracy among non-Europeans. Even though racist claims that no African, Asian, or Native American had contributed to civilization and the arts were inaccurate and rather shaped by the socio-cultural milieu, they became entrenched in white publications and popularized in the mass media as established fact. Gould argues that the supposed racial differences expounded during European enlightenment were nothing more than cultural differences which appropriate education could abridge. Although Jews, Catholics, or Protestants, depending on who was doing the writing, were also castigated in the battle for racial supremacy, it was promulgated in European circles that "people of colour just did not have the right things going on in their heads to qualify as *man* in the philosophical sense" (Popkin, 1973, p. 250). Chalmers (1992) states that, "today this sort of thinking is covertly embedded in much of what has been called elitist aesthetic and art education theory" (p. 136). The Kantian notions of a historical, non-instrumental aesthetic stance were influential in the aesthetic education movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Arnheim and Lamer's notion of trans-cultural expressive universals in aesthetics ignores the influence of culture or context on aesthetic experience and perception. The question is: whose interests the media and aesthetic education theorists were serving as they defined and institutionalized certain regimes of truth (i.e., the assumption that the fine arts are more noble, profound, or worthy of aesthetic consideration than the folk arts, popular arts or non-mainstream art forms)? Certainly, those in positions of power employed such means to maintain their position of dominance. A number of books and articles echoing similar sentiments and advancing sociological approaches to visual art education have been written for art educators in recent years (Freedman & Hernández, 1998; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; McCarthy, 1998). These views reflect an historical stance, one that accepts that knowledge, meaning and value are epistemologically bound to their social, historical and political contexts.

The Eurocentric idea that adults of so-called inferior races are like children of superior races led Europeans to stigmatize African art as "primitive" and "childlike." Although discoveries of African and non-European art (i.e., Benin art and Asante ornamental designs) have long undermined this myth, many, in their Eurocentric thinking, continue to devalue the arts of other cultures even as some European artists (e.g., Braque, Derain, Matisse, Picasso and Vlaminck) appropriated African aesthetics into their own painting and sculpture, the outcome of which was *Cubism*, a radical development in Western art history. Colonialist discourse and Eurocentric discourse are intimately intertwined. While the former explicitly justifies colonialist practices, the latter embeds, takes for granted and "normalizes" the hierarchical power relations generated by colonialism and imperialism without necessarily contesting those issues directly. In a pluralistic Canadian society with different traditional art forms and cultural origins, the traditional standard of a Western formalistic aesthetic system cannot be applied exclusively anymore but must be critically analyzed with regard to its underlying assumptions of art historical scholarship.

A historical analysis of colonial discourse is intended to unearth the contradictions inherent in the assumptions of Western art education and philosophy, in order to establish a context for rationalizing alternative theoretical/curriculum frameworks which recognize, validate and emancipate segments of society that have been marginalized. The necessity for this undertaking is grounded on the fact that, Eurocentrism is the general consciousness of our educational systems, global economy, politics, media and societal practices. Although today, our Black/African heritage is no longer (at least in principle) considered "evil" in the Euro-Western world, Blacks and visible minorities continue to face a more covert hegemony in the educational systems and the media which functions to perpetuate distortions, omissions, misappropriation and dominance. Eurocentrism is not something that merely affects people of European descent. Westernized Africans, diaspora Africans, Europeans and other immigrants living in Europe, Canada and the United States generally share, by their training, socialization and educational formation, in the intellectual heritage of Europe. Thus, to explore this shared heritage in terms of how it conceptualizes our lived humanity is crucial to critically appropriating it. While Eurocentric ideologies marginalize other groups, the social immersion into Western intellectual heritage, paradoxically, empowers many immigrants in their struggle for political and cultural emancipation. Postcolonial criticism bears witness to

the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world. Africentricity as a postcolonial theoretical concept explains the cultural realities of African people in the midst of European cultural hegemony in the educational systems of the world. For contemporary Africans, such cultural realities and experiences are marked and, in fundamental ways, structured by our experience of and confrontation with Eurocentrism.

Africentricity and Knowledge

Ancient Egyptian and Nubian Civilizations: Symbolic Legacy of Africa

The civilizations of the African Nile valley, ancient Egypt and Nubia continue to cast their spell over the modern world. This is undoubtedly due to their high level of architectural, artistic and technological achievements, as well as their advanced system of writing and the quality of their literature (see Figures 2.8, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 & 3.5 for sample artworks). Equally impressive is the all-embracing philosophy of ancient Egypt, in which science and religion formed an indissoluble whole. The thrust of the works of Africentric historians (i.e., Asante, 1990; Bernal, 1987, 1991; Diop, 1974, 1978, 1991; Williams, 1987) is a redefinition of the place of Egypt (Kemet) and Nubia (Kush) in African history. In *The African Origin of Civilization*, Cheikh Anta Diop (1974) calls attention to the historical, archaeological and anthropological evidence to support his thesis that ancient Egypt, like Nubia, was a distinct African Nation and was not historically or culturally a part of Asia or Europe as claimed by some Egyptologists. According to Diop, the history of Africa cannot be written correctly until African historians connect it with the histories of the civilizations of the Nile Valley.

Interpretations of Egyptian racial history remain diverse and inconclusive. Following the birth of Egyptology in the early part of the 19th century, many Europeans, influenced by imperialist ideology, have attempted to place Egypt (Kemet) as part of the Middle East or the Oriental world (Murdock, 1959; Woolley and Randall-Murdock, 1910), creating the artificial division of the continent at the Sahara desert. However, Diop (1974, 1991), Bernal (1987, 1991), Williams (1987) and other Africentric scholars demonstrate unequivocally that ancient Egypt and Nubia were indigenous African kingdoms and the birthplace of civilization. They believe that linking Egypt and Nubia of antiquity to Africa is the best way

Figure 3.1
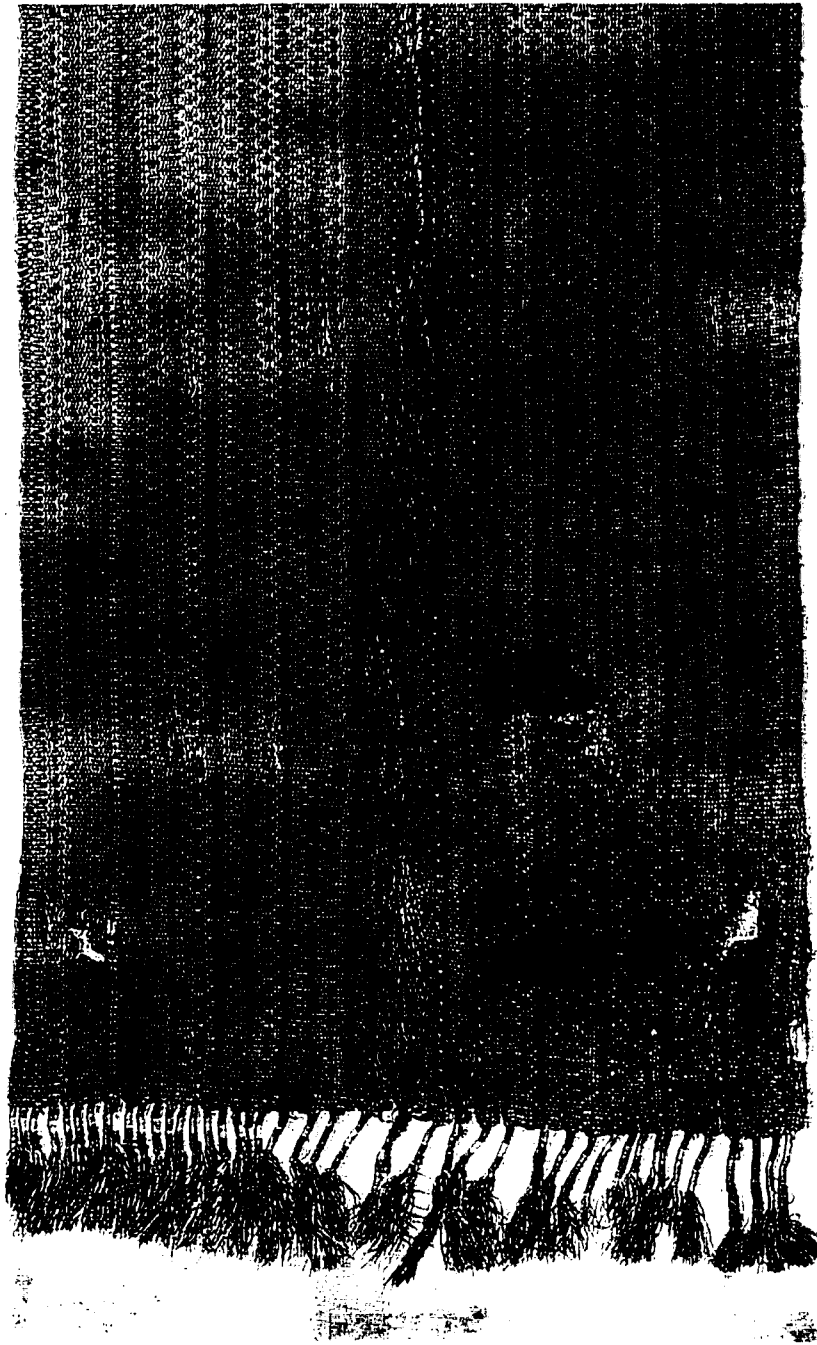
Ancient Egyptian Linen Woven with Colourful Geometric Patterns and Strips (1550-1200 B.C.E.)
Similar to the Ghanaian *Kente* Cloth.
Note: From Egypt the World of the Pharaohs (p. 403), by R. Schulz and M. Seidel (Eds.), 1998, Germany:
Könemann Verlagsgesellschaft.

Figure 3.2

Pharaoh and Wife before the Deity Anubis, God of the Embalmers (1280 B.C.E.)
Note: From Egypt the World of the Pharaohs (p. 2), by R. Schulz and M. Seidel (Eds.), 1998, Germany: Könemann Verlagsgesellschaft.

Figure 3.3

The Golden Mask from the Valley of the Kings, Tomb of Egyptian Pharaoh Tutankhamum (1325 B.C.E.)
Note: From Egypt the World of the Pharaohs (p. 234), by R. Schulz and M. Seidel (Eds.), 1998, Germany:
Könemann Verlagsgesellschaft.

Figures 3.4 and 3.5

Figure 3.4: **Pottery Vessels of the Ancient Nubians** (2000-1550 B.C.E.)
Note: From Nubia: Ancient Kingdoms of Africa (p.11) by J. L. Haynes, 1992, Boston: Museum of Fine Arts.
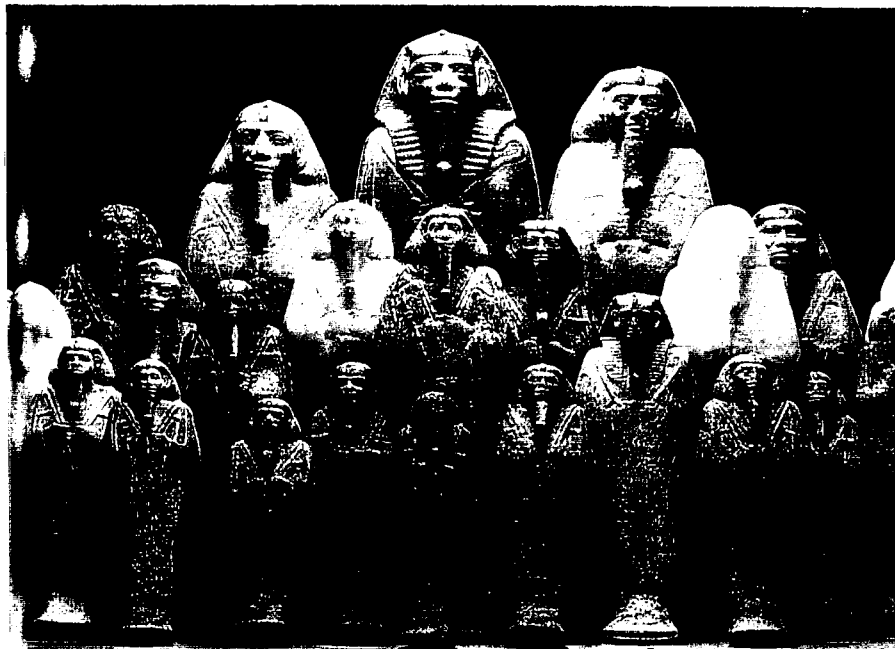
Figure 3.5: **Shawbits from the Tomb of Nubian King Taharka** (690-664 B.C.E.)
Note. From Nubia: Ancient Kingdoms of Africa (p. 28) by J. L. Haynes, 1992, Boston: Museum of Fine Arts.

to conceive and build Africa's cultural future, similar to the role that Greco-Latin antiquity plays in Western cultures.

Based on current research, in art history, archaeology and anthropology we know that the artistic and cultural achievements of the Kemites and Kushites were "part of a continuous Negro civilization extending from the mouth of the Nile up beyond the sixth Nile cataract into what is now the Republic of Sudan" (Drake, 1987, p. 142) (see Figure 2.3 for map). The Egyptians identified their neighbours from Nubia or Kush as people of the South. Although Egypt established its dominance over Nubia for a longer time, both countries shared a past of conquering and being conquered by each other. Because Nubia served as important cultural centre and trade route for travellers from the interior of Africa as well as the Mediterranean world, it was known throughout the ancient world, particularly to the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans and peoples of the Near East. Drake (1987) points out that "what the Egyptians called Lower and Upper Nubia, the classical Greeks called Ethiopia – "Land of Burnt Faces." Ethiopia, as used by the Greeks, did not refer to the modern state of Ethiopia, which, in antiquity was called Axum and later Abyssinia. Instead, it embraced the land of Africa from Aswan in the south of ancient Egypt to Khartoum in the modern Republic of Sudan. Nubia, like Egypt, developed a complex society with a centralized government, written language and expanding commercial trade.

Records show that the kings of Nubia or Kushites ruled Egypt during the Twenty-fifth Dynasty (746-664 B.C.E.). The Kushites brought Egypt into their empire and ruled Egypt for nearly a century. They proved themselves impressive pharaohs, as they constructed many new monuments and encouraged a revival in both the literature and the arts in Egypt.

Ancient records indicate that the Kemites defined themselves in the Mdu Ntr as KMT (i.e., the Black men and women or Black people (Faulkner, 1981, p. 286). In support of the Kemites self-identification as Black people, Diop (1990) examines the "divine epithets" or attributes of Kemite deities as follows:

Kmwr   =   the Great Black for Osiris.

Km   =   the Black + the name of the god.

Kmt   =   the Black + the name of the goddess.

According to Diop, " 'Black' or 'Negro' is the divine epithet, invariably used for the chief beneficent gods of Egypt" (p. 43). Precisely, the Km (Black) attribute is applied to deities - *Anubis* (see Figure 3.2 for picture), *Apis, Hathor, Isis, Min, Thoth*, etc. The attribution of Blackness to these ancient Egyptian deities demonstrates that the deities were in the image of the devotees. Being the most ancient of peoples, the Ethiopians said that Egypt was one of their colonies brought to them by the deity *Osiris* - ruler of the dead and funerary cult. The Kemite priests taught that, "Egypt, in the late pre-dynastic times, was established as a colony of the Ethiopians - that people were moving northward beyond the first Nile cataract carrying the rudimentary elements of what would become Egyptian civilization" (Drake, 1987, p. 16).

Excavations at Qustul supported the hypothesis that Kemetic civilization and writing came from the South (Williams, 1987). In this excavation at the royal cemetery of the Nubians in "Ta-Seti," Qustul, many Egyptologists were shocked to learn that the A-Group of Nubia at Qustul used Egyptian-type writing, hieroglyphics, 200 years before the Egyptians did (Williams, 1987). This fact had already been recognized much earlier by Diop (1974) when he wrote that it was in Nubia "where we find the animals and plants represented in hieroglyphic writing" (p. 125). The name Ta-Seti, meaning, "Land of the Bow" was the name given to a southern nome of Kemet and the A-Group people of Nubia in reference to their famed archers. The Ta-Seti had a rich culture at Qustul with the same funeral customs. The rich graves of the A-Group kings contained luxury objects of pottery, musical instruments, gold jewellery, stone vessels, statuettes and related artefacts, as did the Egyptians (see Figure 3.4 & 3.5). Williams (1987) of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, has made it clear that Qustul pharaohs are the Egyptian rulers referred to as the "Red Crown Rulers."

Diop (1974) contends that the Black identity of the ancient Egyptians was an evident fact among European historians who preceded modern Egyptology and the contemporaries of the ancient Egyptians (Herodotus, Aristotle, Diodorus, Strabo, Pliny and others). Herodotus, who visited Egypt and other parts of Africa (between 484 and 425 B.C.E.) repeatedly referred to the Egyptians as dark-skinned with woolly hair (Diop, 1974, 1991). Nevertheless, interpretations of Egyptian racial history since the late 19th century have favoured the so-called " Hamitic hypothesis," which attempted to establish a pre-historic prototype for the White colonization of Africa in the 19th century (Woolley and Randall-MacIver, 1910). Parker

(1917) points out that ancient Greek historical works make it abundantly clear that many ancient settlers of Greece came from Africa, especially the Garamantes and Pelesgians who founded many ancient Greek cities (pp. 15-16) These Africans who were described by classical writers as Blacks or dark-skinned, were Malinke/Mande-speaking people from the Fezzan region of Libya, the Egyptians and East Africans (Parker, 1917). Nevertheless, Lefkowitz (1992) perpetuates the myth that the only Blacks in ancient Europe were slaves or mercenaries. To this effect, Diop (1974) reminds us of the French scholar Count Constantin de Volney (1757–1820), who visited Egypt in the late 16th century, between 1783 and 1785 and tried to refresh the memory of Europe, who, because of the recent enslavement of Blacks, had forgotten the past of this people. Volney remarked of the Egyptians as the brown-skinned Copt with bloated face, puffed up eyes, flat nose and thick lips. He further states that the Kemites were the first people to "attain the physical and moral sciences necessary to civilized life" (Clarke, 1991). The opinion of the ancient writers on the Egyptians is more or less summed up by Gaston Maspero (1846-1916) in *The Dawn of Civilization*, where he says: " By the almost unanimous testimony of ancient historians, they (the Egyptians) belong to an African race which first settled in Ethiopia on the middle Nile, following the course of the river they gradually reached the sea" (quoted from Clarke, 1991, p. xix).

The English writer, Sir E. A. Wallis Budge (1969) in his book, *The Gods of the Egyptian,* states that the Prehistoric native of Egypt, both in the old and new Stone Ages, was African and there is every reason for saying that the earliest settlers came from the South. Williams (1974), in reference to the sculpture of Akhet Khufu known throughout the world by its Greek reference, the Sphinx (see Figure 2.8), affirms the African identity of the Kemites in *The Destruction of Black Civilization* with the following comments:

> As though he intended to settle the question of his racial identity for all ages to come, he had his African features so boldly and clearly carved into a portrait statue that not even a fool could seriously doubt that this mighty monarch was a "Negro." (p. 69)

In his review of Martin Bernal's book, *Black Athena,* the English writer, Basil Davidson also makes the following statement about how Egypt, as a part of Africa was left out of world history:

> But isn't Egypt, other issues aside, quite simply a part of Africa? That it seems is a merely geographical irrelevance. The civilization of Pharaonic Egypt, arising sometime around 3500 B.C.E. and continuing at least until the Roman dispositions, has been explained to us as evolving

either in more or less total isolation from Africa or as a product of West Asian stimulus . . . Now what is one to make of this unlikely view of the case, coming as it has from venerable seats of learning? Does its strength derive from a long tradition of research and explanation? Is it what Europeans have always thought to be true? Have the records of ancient times been found to support it? . . . The answer to such questions is plainly and unequivocally in the negative. That the ancient Egyptians were Blacks (again, in any variant you may prefer) – or, as I myself think it is more useful to say, were African – is a belief which has been denied in Europe since 1830, not before. It is a denial, in short, that belongs to the rise of modern European imperialism and has to be explained in terms of the "new racism," especially and even frantically an anti-Black racism, which went together with and was consistently nourished by that imperialism. (Quoted from Diop, 1991, pp. xvi-xvii)

What can be understood from Davidson's statement is that the rise of Europe and its recovery from the Middle Ages brought about systematic colonization not only of most parts of the world, but also of information about the world. Consequently, the historical achievements of Africans including the legacies of ancient Egypt, Nubia, and the kingdoms of Western Sudan have remained frozen in Western historiography. What Africentric historians, both in Africa and in the diaspora, have attempted to do is to unveil colonial discourses and restore what had been taken away under slavery and colonialism.

Diop (1991) contends that if Egypt is a dilemma in Western historiography, it is a created dilemma. This is because Western historians have rested the foundation of "Western Civilization" on the mistaken assumption, or claim, that the ancient Egyptians were Caucasians. To achieve this, Diop explains that, they had to "ignore masterpieces of Egyptian history by ancient Greek writers and other White historians who did not support this point of view, such as *The Ruins of Empires* by Count C. F. Volney (1787) and Gerald Massey's great classic, *Ancient Egypt, The Light of the World* (1907).

An examination of Egyptian art from *Egypt: The World of the Pharaohs*, shows that Egyptian artists often depicted themselves with varying shades of brown: red-brown for the men, yellow for their women and a dark brown or black for Nubians (Schulz and Seidel, 1998). Paintings from the tomb chambers of Egyptian kings and queens that show the monarch in dark brown or black skin colour indicate that they were Nubians or of Nubian descent (see Figure 3.2). Many colour illustrations published in *Africa in Antiquity: The Arts of Ancient Nubia and Sudan* by Hochfield and Riefstahl (1978) and in *Nubia: Ancient Kingdoms of Africa* by Haynes (1992) show that the Nubians also depicted themselves with varying shades of red-brown, varying features and hair texture. This pictorial evidence counteracts speculations that the Kemites got darker as one moved farther south along the Nile and that those from the

South were markedly different from those in the North (Yurco, 1989). Winters (1984) points out that, the Kemites, like their cousins in Kush, were composed of the two major African variants: one straight-haired and the other curly-haired with varying facial features.

Many Western historians and scholars have questioned Africalogical research by Africentric scholars and especially, the evidence of an African foundation for the Egyptian and Nubian civilizations, as well as the view that Egyptians spoke an African language rather than an Afro-Asiatic one (e.g., Baines, 1991; Martel, 1991; Schlesinger, 1992; Yurco, 1989). They cite the shortcomings of *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (vol. 1-2) by Martin Bernal (1987, 1991) and argue that his thesis of Hyksos or Egyptian foundation of Grecian civilization is based on poor and outdated theories that cannot be supported by historical, anthropological, or archaeological criteria. The use of Bernal as a method to discredit Africentrists is groundless because Africentric scholars who recognize the contribution of Blacks in the formation of Athens and Attica do not hold Bernal's view that the Hyksos (Egyptian Asiatic kings of the Fifteenth Dynasty) founded Greek civilization. In his review of Diop's (1991) book in the *New York Times Review of Books*, Baines (1991), an Egyptologist, claims that both the evidence and the reasoning used to support Diop's arguments are frequently unsound (p. 12). Baines asks the readers to reject Diop's work because it was not a work of originality, yet he fails to dispute any factual evidence presented by Diop (1987, 1991). In the United States, Africentrists have been described as ethnocentrists who want to tribalize America (Schlesinger, 1992).

Many Egyptologists believe that the Egyptians were a mixed population, which got darker and "more Negroid" the farther down the Nile one went. Nevertheless, Schlesinger (1992) and Yurco (1989) maintain that the base of Egyptians were White. The Egyptians saw very little difference between themselves and the Nubians, despite disagreements that often resulted in wars. A comparison of Egyptian, Dravidian, Nubian, Mende and other ancient African languages illustrates a common cultural macrostructure shared by these speakers, which subsequently evolved along separate lines (Diop, 1974). Diop points out that all of these languages share pronouns and demonstrative bases that validate the theory that there were cognate Black civilizations in Africa before the expansion of Indo-European-speaking peoples after 1500 B.C.E.

Based on research, in art history, archaeology and anthropology, Africentrists have undermined the theory that the Egyptians and Kushites were ethnically and racially two different groups (Yurco, 1989). Ongoing studies and excavations in Africa continue to produce evidence of the rich legacy that the ancients left for their progeny on the continent and throughout the diaspora. Prominent among other evidence is the reference to the ancestral lineage all over Africa. When one examines the culture and traditions of both ancient Egypt and Nubia, one finds a common core that is characterized by (a) a concept of spirituality that is typified by Per-ah, the Pharaoh as the house of light and by the entire place being a "temple of the light of God;" (b) particular burial customs that reflect a high level of symbolism and deep philosophical thought and conjecture regarding life and the afterlife; (c) areas or nomes governed by a god-head or deity; and (d) socio-historical governance and rulership being recorded as dynastic periods. Many of the cultural practices that existed in ancient Egypt and Nubia are still evident in contemporary times, among African peoples. The effort of Africentric historians (i.e., Asante, 1990; Bernal, 1987, 1991; Diop, 1974, 1978, 1991; Williams, 1987) to redefine the place of Egypt (Kemet) and Nubia (Kush) in African history should inspire multicultural educators and teachers to seek revisions in their local curricula to include African-centred multicultural education.

The Africentric Paradigm

The Africentric paradigm holds that "any meaningful and authentic study of peoples of African descent must begin and proceed with Africa as the centre, not periphery; as subject, not object" (Abarry, 1990, p. 123). Africentricity at its best is "a quest for and an expression of historical and cultural anchor, a critical reconstruction that dares to restore missing and hidden parts of our historical self-formation and pose the African experience as a significant paradigm for human liberation and a higher level of human life" (Karenga, 1988, p. 140). Africentricity is a "standpoint," an epistemic location from which people of African descent look at themselves, others and society. "Standpoint epistemology," refers to the self-conscious perspective on self and society, arising out of an oppressed group's critical apprehension of itself and its location in relation to the system it inhabits (Hartsock, 1983). In articulating elements of the Africentric standpoint, I acknowledge the influence of feminist standpoint theories, particularly, those that

embody a rich tradition of critiquing hegemony and a dominant gender or racial discourse. It should be emphasized that reference to the Africentric standpoint does not negate the existence of multiple positioning within it. This is because Africentrists are not homogenous in their ideological and cultural orientation.

The theoretical conceptualization of an African-centred approach is the handiwork of contemporary African scholars such as Amilcar Cabral, Chinua Achebe, Cheikh Anta Diop, Frantz Fanon, Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Martin Heidegger, Molefi Kete Asante, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Tsheloane Keto, Mualana Karenga and a host of other social scientists mainly based in Africa and the United States. The main thrust of the Africentric project is to liberate the research and study of African peoples from the hegemony of Eurocentric scholarship and thus assert a valid worldview through which Blacks/African peoples can be studied objectively. Though the Africentric idea has featured in the works of Black/African intellectual pioneers in Africentric thought and action (e.g., Dike, 1956; Diop, 1974; Du Bois, 1947; Ngugi, 1983; Nkrumah, 1963; Senghor, 1970; Woodson & Wesley, 1922), its present conceptualization is more innovative and sophisticated. It has been described more appropriately as a philosophical model based on traditional African philosophical assumptions and contemporary intellectual and popular movements (Abarry, 1990; Asante, 1988, 1990; Schiele, 1990). A liberating ideology enables Africans to see themselves as conscious beings who are active and central agents in the making of history and in the reconstruction of identities after enslavement, colonialism and apartheid.

Africentricity, as a postcolonial intellectual enterprise, seems to have invigorated the debate among a wide range of scholars (Asante; 1998, Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac & Zine, 1997; Calliste, 1994; hooks, 1991; Wallace, 1989; West, 1989) with respect to the production and use of what is termed "emancipatory knowledge." Swartz argues that:

> this debate over the centrality or marginality of race, class and gender groups in the production of knowledge is not over the relative importance of historical figures and events, nor is it over the potential impact of the curricular experience on self-esteem or the modelling of race, gender and class heroes or heroines. Rather, it is a debate over emancipatory versus hegemonic scholarship and the maintenance or disruption of the Eurocentrically bound "master script" that public schools currently impart to their students. (1992, p. 341)

In classroom practices, Eurocentric ideologies silence multiple voices and perspectives, mainly by

legitimizing dominant, White, upper-class, male voicing as the "standard" knowledge students need to know. All other ways of knowing are omitted from the master script unless they can be dis-empowered through misrepresentation. Thus, any content that does not reflect the dominant voice must be brought under control, *mastered* and then reshaped before it can become part of the master script (Swartz, 1992).

Much of the writings on African historical past, prior to the 1970s, have been Eurocentric, therefore, they neither recognize African classical thought and past that have been instrumental to the development of early societies and institutions of the world.[4] Several attempts have been made to deny the African origin of ancient Egyptian and Nubian civilization (Adams, 1977; Randall-MacIver & Woolley, 1909), as well as devalue its long historical traditions of art and culture (Gardner, 1959; Janson, 1971; Schuman, 1981). Scholarly works by historians and Egyptologists (i.e., Bernal, 1987; Diop, 1974, 1981)[5], however, confirm the African origin of ancient Nubian and Kemetic or Egyptian civilizations. These scholars redefine the place of Egypt in African history. Through historical, archaeological and anthropological evidence, they establish that the ancient Greeks were influenced by the civilization of Africa, which predates all other civilizations. The Greeks taught that the study of subjects such as art, history, philosophy, mathematics, astrology, literature and science originated in Africa along the Nile Valley of ancient Egypt and Nubia (Diop, 1974; Herodotus, 1987). Africentrists also stress the need to recognize the achievements of Blacks/Africans in modern medicine, engineering, astronomy, politics, scholarship, entertainment, sports, the military and in religion. Histories of world civilization have become so disjointed and distorted that students have no way of discovering these essential pieces of information as well as other knowledge of the organic relationship of Africa to the rest of human history. Consequently, the works of Cheikh Anta Diop and other African historians, both in continental Africa and the diaspora, is a restoration project; an attempt to restore what slavery and colonization had taken away.

Africentricity does not only insist on African origin of ancient Kemetic or Egyptian civilization

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[4] A notable exception is Basil Davidson, author of over 30 books and documentary films on Africa, spanning the years from early civilizations and centuries of slavery to colonial rule and independence.

[5] *The African Origin of Civilization,* 1974, by Cheikh Anta Diop (an African from Senegal) is the first major work on Egypt to assert the African origin of the ancient Kemetic civilization. Martin Bernal's first volume of *Black Athena,* 1987 (The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985), discusses how the "Ancient Model's" recognition of Egypt (and Phoenicia) as the root of classical civilization was overthrown by the "Aryan Model" which denied it.

but also adopts Africa as the classical reference point in any discussion of African culture and civilization. It is Diopian in methodology. In the thinking of Cheikh Anta Diop (1974), Africa can never be understood until Africentrists dare to link the continent to its classical past. The importance of Egypt to constructing an African worldview rests on its antiquity, authenticity, level of achievement, document availability, relevance to contemporary Africans, world history and civilization (Karenga & Carruthers, 1986). Robinson (1983) argues that the construction of the "Negro" by the colonialists effectively savaged African history and created historical amnesia in Europe and among Africans concerning the contribution of Africa to world history and civilization. Robinson notes that Eurocentrism,

> substantially eradicated in Western historical consciousness the necessity of remembering the significance of Nubia for Egypt's formation; of Egypt in the development of Greek civilization; of Africa for Imperial Rome; and more pointedly of Islam's influence on Europe's economic, political and intellectual history [to which Africans also contributed significantly]. (p. 4)

Africentrists see it as an important obligation to rescue and reconstruct this rich complex and varied legacy that introduced the basic disciplines of human knowledge, produced the oldest sacred texts (i.e., Book of the Dead) on which a significant part of Judeo-Christian ethics and theology are based, produced magnificent artefacts that have stood the test of time, developed a technology for smelting iron and steel long before Europe did, contributed the calendar and hieroglyphs among other critical things and was a school for the Greeks to whom other Europeans pay so much homage (James, 1976). Africentrists view the remarkable contributions of Blacks in Nubia, the forgotten empires of Ghana, Mali, Songhai, Benin, Ashanti, the lost university at Timbuktu, as well as the achievements of modern Africans as crucial in view of systemic distortion of African history from Eurocentric accounts. Many historians and educators in Europe and North America have made plantation slavery and its legacies their sole preoccupation, and have avoided all of the fragments of the African past, which could re-establish African historical and cultural continuity. They have also indoctrinated their students to do likewise, thereby denying Blacks/Africans a role in ancient world history.

Africentricity as a political ideology should be understood as part of a broader socio-political struggle. Africentrists see African-Canadian, African-American or African-Caribbean experience as a dimension of African history and culture which cannot be separated from its past (Diop, 1976). This notion

is firmly rooted in the Pan-African movement and the concept of "Négritude" promoted by renowned

Black/African nationalist such as Du Bois (1947), Nkrumah (1963), Ngugi (1984) and Senghor (1970).

Due to enslavement and colonialism, Africa becomes the "homeland" for the African diaspora more in

symbolic, metaphoric and cosmological terms than in a sense of territoriality or landedness. Pan-

Africanism as a concept is more meaningful and important to diasporic Africans than are the regional,

national or ethnic boundaries within Africa.

<u>Africentrism, Centrism and Polycentrism.</u>

The philosophy that Black/African thinkers extract from Diop's interpretation of ancient African

texts is called "holism" (Asante, 1988, 1990). This view, which has come to be called "Africentrism,"

claims that all reality is a unity and that we divide this unity into parts only because of limitations of our

present knowledge. Although its principles may encompass all groups, Africentrism highlights a centre in

its name because self-knowledge depends on being centred in one's self, one's own experience and one's

history. In education, "centricity" refers to a perspective that involves locating students within the context

of their own cultural references so that they can relate socially and psychologically to school curricula and

other cultural perspectives. Restoring Black/African-Canadian students to the centre of their experience

according to Dei (1994) can provide them with a sense of agency in the context of phenomena. Although,

the experiences of Black/African-Canadians have never been centred in the Canadian cultural space to be

restored, yet drawing on the history can inform and create symbolic space for cultural identity. The centrist

paradigm is supported by research showing that the most productive method of teaching any student is to

place his/her group within the centre of the context of knowledge (Asante, 1990). For students from Euro-

Western backgrounds in Canada, this is easy because almost all the experiences discussed in Canadian

classrooms are approached from the standpoint of European perspectives and history. On the other hand,

students from non-European backgrounds exist in a borrowed space. They are made to see themselves as

the "acted upon." Only rarely, do they read or hear of non-Europeans as active participants of history. For

example, most classroom discussions of the European slave trade concentrate on the activities of

Europeans to the exclusion of the resistance efforts of Africans (Asante, 1991). The "centrism" in

Africentricity emphasizes a path to knowledge rather than displacement of the other. Africentrists recognize the validity of other non-hegemonic perspectives - Asia-centred, Aboriginal-centred, America-centred and even Europe-centred in its non-hegemonic forms. Africentrists have argued cogently that the acceptance and recognition of all perspectives: acentrism, is far more likely to lead to genuine human knowledge and inter-cultural understanding than reliance on one absolute worldview. "Acentrism" is the view that no single group can claim a centre stage except in the context of incomplete descriptions. Each group constitutes its own centre, but these "polycentres" coalesce to form the whole. *Polycentric multiculturalism* could be the focus of multicentric education.

Centring the self in experience and history is an important first step toward holism (Verharen, 1995). But as we become more mature, we progress beyond the self to encompass our group: ethnocentrism. A wide contact with all the groups of humanity leads to a vision of humanity as a unity: anthropocentrism. But a holistic philosophy pushes us beyond humanity to the universe and the whole realm of reality: acentrism. A person educated in a truly centric fashion comes to view all groups' contributions as significant and useful. There can be no ethnocentrism in a holistic philosophy. In effect, Africentrism becomes "polycentric" in its practical expression. Within a polycentric vision, the world has many dynamic cultural locations, many possible vantage points. "Polycentrism" here deals with fields of power and struggle over the centrality or marginality of cultural groups in the production and dispersion of knowledge. Polycentric multiculturalism envisions a restructuring of inter-communal relations within Canada and beyond. It sees all cultural histories in relation to social power. Unlike liberal pluralism which is grudgingly accretive and premised on an established hierarchical order of cultures:

> Polycentric multiculturalism thinks and imagines 'from the margins,' seeing minoritarian communities not as 'interest groups' to be 'added on' to a pre-existing nucleus but rather as active, generative participants at the very core of a shared conflictual history . . . It sees identities as multiple, unstable, historically situated, the products of ongoing differentiation and polymorphous identifications and pluralizations. (Stam & Shohat, 1994, p. 300)

Polycentric multiculturalism is not merely about sensitivity toward sentimentalized "others," but rather, about dispersing power, empowering the disempowered and transforming institutions and discourses. Its affiliations are clearly with the underrepresented, the marginalized and the oppressed.

Philosophical Underpinnings of Africentricity

In Asante's (1988) formulation, Africentricity is a way of life, undergirded by a value system, a religious orientation and a way of knowing that differ from, but connect with other conceptions of human beings. To understand the Africentric concept better, it will be important to analyze its cosmological, ontological, epistemological and axiological underpinnings. In *Understanding an Africentric Worldview: Introduction to an Optimal Psychology,* Myers (1988) distinguishes between a traditional African worldview (optimal) and Eurocentric worldview (suboptimal) in their interaction with the attributes of cosmology, ontology, epistemology and axiology (see Table 3.1).

It seems to me that Myers' conceptualization of African and Euro-Western worldviews is rather polemical as it pits one view against another by suggesting the existence of two distinct worldviews. In reality, however, there are multiple standpoints and centres of culture within the Euro-Western, African or other worlds. Africentrists do not only acknowledge these multiple world-views but also the many contradictions embedded within them. Western feminists, post-modernists and critical theorists, for instance, may not fit into the essentialist model outlined below because despite being products of Euro-Western consciousness, the ideological positions of these theorists are inconsistent with the traditional Euro-Western category to which Myers attempts to confine them. Similarly, Africentrists are not homogenous in their ideological or theoretical orientation. This is evident, for instance, from the diverse ideological positions located in the discourse on the African liberation struggle (i.e., Kwame Nkrumah's Marxism-Leninism theory in African politics, Leopold Senghor's Négritude and Julius Nyerere's African Socialism). The Africentric perspective expounded in this study goes beyond the occlusion or exclusion of the traditional African and Euro-Western categories as it takes into account the multiple positions, contradictions and interconnectedness within them. Although the Africentric philosophy is grounded on traditional African ideals, our contemporary experience of and confrontation with Eurocentrism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and the lived actuality of post-colonialism in Africa and the diaspora, in fundamental ways, structure it. European and African worldviews cannot be perceived as totally distinct and mutually exclusive categories in view of our shared cultural and intellectual heritage.

Table 3.1

L. J. Myers' Distinctions Between Traditional African/Euro-Western Worldviews		
Worldview	**Traditional African**	**Euro-Western**
Reality	Spiritual	Material
Nature of Knowledge	Self Knowledge (Symbolic Imagery and Rhythm)	External Knowledge (Counting and Measuring)
Nature of Value	Highest Value: Interpersonal Relationship. Womanism.	Highest Value: Object - Materialism
Logic (Reason)	Union of Opposites (Diunital)	Either/Or
Identity	Extended Self	Individual Self
Self Worth	Intrinsic in Being	Extrinsic
Values Guiding Behaviour	Spiritualism, Oneness (We)	Materialism, Competition (I)
Life Space	Infinite	Finite
Worldview	Holistic, Oneness	Segmented (Quality)
Peace-Happiness Orientation	Eternal	Temporal
Stress-Anxiety Orientation	Carefree	Continual Confrontation
Love Orientation	Unconditional (See Beyond to Trust)	Conditional (Appearance)
Group Orientation	Unity through Ideology	Unity through Common Goals
Learning	Consensus	Universal

(Handout developed by Dr. Fred Swan, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, 1988).

Africentricity is an inclusive ideology. It rejects the continuous existence of a particular cultural hegemony. The manner in which the Africentric conception expresses the fundamental sense of African peoples of the proportions, meaning and functions of the universe and of the natural context of their own existence is represented in the African cosmological belief. Cosmologically, an Africentric mode, like other non-hegemonic discourses, views the structure of reality from a perspective of interdependency. That is, all elements of the universe are interconnected (Bell et al., 1990). The preservation of the components of terrestrial and celestial elements becomes the supreme responsibility of humankind. African Cosmological beliefs provide the background for African art, religion and culture. The planet earth serves as a battleground of the spirits competing for control, or to topple the order of the universe. Therefore, the Supreme Deity (God) must be obeyed and worshipped through the mediums of benevolent spirits and minor deities (see Figure 2.9) to preserve the order of the universe and guarantee humans' security, survival and continuity. Worship involves the use of magic and ritualistic art forms that serve as receptacles of the spirits and vehicles of psychic force.

Ontology represents the sense and beliefs of African peoples of the meanings and origins of their existence. The nature of reality (ontology) in an optimal conceptual system is spiritual and material simultaneously. Africentricity assumes that all elements of the universe, including the earth, humans, animate and inanimate elements are spiritual - that is, they are created from a similar universal substance (Akbar, 1984). Spirituality in this instance implies the invisible or nonmaterial substance that connects all elements of the universe. The belief in life after death and re-incarnation compels the traditional African to ensure continuity of life through the bond between the living and the dead ancestors, or the material and spiritual worlds. The Africentric model presents a holistic perspective of human beings: mind, body and soul are believed to be interdependent and interrelated phenomena. Without the development of the spiritual or metaphysical element, the human is considered incomplete (Asante, 1987; Mbiti, 1970; Nobles, 1996). In a suboptimal conceptual system, material and spiritual are separate. Only external sources versus internal sources are accepted as reality.

Epistemologically, the Africentric construct places considerable emphasis on an affective way of

obtaining knowledge (i.e., understanding events and reality). That is, from an Africentric standpoint, self-knowledge through emotion or intuition is considered valid and critical (Akbar, 1984; Asante, 1988; Schiele, 1991). One will use all of one's senses, not just formal logic, to explain their reality. The focus on affective ways of knowing does not imply a rejection of rationality. Rather, affect and cognition are considered interdependent in the process of knowing. Africentrists believe that human actions cannot be understood apart from the emotions, attitudes and cultural definitions of a given context. Myers (1988) explains that people of African descent learn through symbolic imagery and rhythm. Symbolic imagery includes the use of phenomena such as words, gestures, tones, rhythms, rituals, intuition and objects to convey multiple meanings. The Akans of Ghana, for instance, express their philosophical thought in oral literature embedded in proverbs, myths, folktales, songs, rituals, customs, traditions, artefacts and its very socio-political institutions. Akbar (1984) states that, "In Western dualistic thought, not only is mind and body (reason and emotion) considered to be independent phenomena, but there is a trinitarian tendency that views spirit as independent of both mind and body" (p. 408). Knowledge is acquired externally and scientifically through counting and numbering, as revealed by positivist researchers.

Axiology embodies the dimension of values, principles and standards of ethics and morality. Axiologically, Africentricity significantly underscores the value of group unity, mutuality, collective responsibility, community and social bonding. The highest value would be interpersonal relationships between woman and man, family and the tie with extended families and community. This emphasis fosters a human-centred perspective toward life rather than an object or material perspective in which the value in maintaining and strengthening interpersonal bonds supersedes the concern over acquiring material objects and accumulating wealth (Schiele, 1994). The stress on collectivism does not mean a rejection of the notion of uniqueness (Akbar, 1984). Rather it rejects the idea that the individual could be understood apart from others. In the suboptimal worldview, the highest value would be the acquisition of materials, objects and not personal relationships. Life is finite and limited; external forces such as money and clothing are indispensable in determining ones happiness. What makes Africentric concepts more inclusive is that they seek to orient our worldview in ways that challenge social Darwinism, capitalism and most forms of Marxism - all of which are grounded in their own particularity.

Critique of the Theoretical and Methodological Conception of Africentricity

The preoccupation with the ancient world, particularly, ancient Egypt by Africentrists is described by some critics as "intellectual weakness" (Appiah, 1993; Chavez, 1994). These critics claim that apart from Egypt, the rest of Africa has no intellectual legacy. Africentrists have dismissed this attack by proving the existence of ancient monuments, art, politics, iron and steel smelting technology, medicinal knowledge and writing systems in places like Nubia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Libya, Sudan, Ghana, Zimbabwe and Congo as well as African artefacts that are found in museums across the colonial nations of Western Europe (i.e., France, The Netherlands, Britain, Germany, Holland) and the United States (i.e., Museum of Cultural History, Los Angeles; National Museum of African Art, Washington D.C.; the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco; and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). Africentrists have also focused on the modern achievements of Black/Africans in all fields of endeavour to make their point. They argue that the study of Egypt is not simply for its hieroglyphics and monuments but in terms of its philosophical and epistemological understanding of time, place and histories of the African peoples. The study and understanding of the full extent of ancient Egypt is seen as the starting point rather than the limit of Africentricity. Just as Europe has looked to its past as a source of pride, it is important for Black Africans to recover that part of their history that has been frozen. Without this rich history, Africans can only then assume the status and identity accorded them by the Euro-Western world and would have no resource of classical heritage from which to counter Eurocentrism and racism in our society.

Methodology provides a system of rules that govern the means by which statements of theory may be challenged (W. C. Banks, 1992). Banks argues that within a multicultural environment, the most successful methodology is that which sets forth the most stringent rules for challenge and refutation as well as the most liberal appearance of accessibility. The Africentric paradigm, like other ideologically oriented paradigms (e.g., critical theory, feminist theory, neo-Marxism), is a system that is contending for a position of pre-eminence in expressing the interests and explaining the actions of subordinated groups and particularly, the Black/African community. Unlike scientific theories and methods that have acquired ontological and epistemological hegemony, Africentric theory is often criticized as lacking sound epistemological foundation and for paying only the barest attention to the protective demands of theory for

methodological framework. The scientific paradigm presumes the existence of an objective external reality about which secure, "truthful" statements can be achieved through inquiry. Although the Africentric theory presumes an objective, external reality, it believes, unlike the scientific theory, that reality is multiple and "truth statements," "knowledge" and "values" are historically, culturally, politically and socially mediated and legitimated by those in power to perpetuate domination. Africentrists, like post-modern deconstructionists, are sceptical of modern views of science, epistemology and methodology. Some Black/African scholars (e. g., Asante, 1998; W. C. Banks, 1992; Dei, 1996; Karenga, 1988) criticize conventional empiricist frameworks as neither appropriate nor relevant to the sociological realities of Black/African students and other ethnic minorities. This is because of ideological bias and the logical problem inherent in analytic and synthetic structure of racial comparison.

The Africentric theoretical school has advanced constructs that focus upon the unique characteristics of African peoples (i.e., from physical appearance to artistic creativity). Conventionalists however, argue that such claims of distinctiveness, when set forth as a theoretical principle, are problematic because it either presupposes the validity of racial distinctions or simply reflects the existence of sociologically defined categories. The problem here is that the most concrete evidence to which science has appealed for the substantiation of the existence of race as a category has lacked demonstratable reliability. Because of the diversity of African existence and postmodernist distaste for grand theories, any Africentric claim of uniqueness of human conduct becomes questionable. The primary challenge for Africentrists is the need to specify clearly the priority and centrality of the African-diaspora in the Africentric project. Although, as an intellectual enterprise the Africentric idea was conceived and developed under Pan-Africanism, Negritude and the Black Civil Rights Movement, the project is unavoidably and ideologically linked to the liberation project of all African peoples and even the Third World as a result of similar historical and human experience. Asante and Asante (1985) and Wiredu (1980) argue that beyond what may be a fragmentation of the cultures and philosophies of African peoples along ethnic, national, religious, class, ideological and gender lines, lie some common characteristics and experience of all African peoples.

Notwithstanding the manifesto of Africentricity for a return to authentic African cultural and

cosmological roots, many Africans and the diaspora have drawn upon an array of indigenous and foreign discourses to sustain their program of self-affirmation. The absence of analysis within the Africentric framework of what is traditionally called *teleology*, for instance, deprives it of an essential source of justification for programs of self-development rooted in the African Christian doctrine of salvation and the mission of the Nation of Islam which have been sustaining intuitions in diasporan African experience.

Africentrists have been accused of distorting and replacing documentary history with ideology by teaching, for instance, that Cleopatra, Socrates and some other ancient Greeks were Blacks, and that the French army, during the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798, blew the nose off the Sphinx to cast doubts over the race or ethnicity of the Pharaohs represented in these great ancient monuments. Africentrists are of the view that history should be continuously re-imagined and revitalized for each historical situation. They insist that while there could be some errors or exaggeration in attempts to revitalize the frozen histories of Africa, much of their scholarship is based on responsible and defensible claims. Some of the criticisms from the anti-Africentrists' camp are based on ignorance and distortion of Africentric ideas to suit their own purposes. Their argument is based on the assumption that multicultural and Africentric projects could fragment society (Bissoondath, 1994; Porter, 1972; Schlesinger, 1992). Unfortunately, this is a false assumption because the history of Canada, like the United States, has been pluralistic from the beginning and cannot be interpreted simply from the standpoint of any single group. The Africentric idea is thus projected as a model for intercultural agency in which pluralism exists without hierarchy.

Critics of Africentricity claim that it attempts to replace one type of hegemony (Eurocentric) with another (Africentric). Critics view it as a separatist dialogue and a reaction to Eurocentrism and hence anti-European. However, the theory is based on the assumption that there are multiple centres of culture and history. It emphasizes a holistic mission that connects and builds the various centres of one's own life and living. The notion of "polycentrism" is an inclusive ideology that connects Africentricity with the concepts of "cultural pluralism," and "multiculturalism." Hence, it cannot be claimed to be a proposition for anti-European discourse. In fact, it is the "generative theme" of acentrism contained in this discourse that makes it a captivating paradigm. It totally rejects hegemonic centrism, regardless of its sources. The political dimension of Africentricity is rather a response to Euro-inferiorization of African personhood,

destruction of much of their civilization, suppression of their histories and distorted accounts of Africans and their history. It should be re-stated that Africentricity represents a range of beliefs rather than a fixed ideology. It can be manifested in a variety of ways, from a sentimentalized and romantic view of culture, to an inclusive and humanistic curriculum and pedagogy.

African-centred epistemology is also criticized for ignoring issues of gender in its analysis. The observation that culture can be used to perpetuate and legitimize certain practices, which may be dis-empowering for women is valid, particularly in the context of Africentricity. As Dei (1995) points out, in traditional African communities, varied forms of domination and exploitation based on gender, ethnicity and class have existed and continue to exist today. African women and those in the diaspora continue to expose and challenge the contradictions in their societies (hooks, 1989; 1994; Oyèwùmí, 1997). Attempts by some scholars to perpetuate, or establish male dominance in Africentricity through selective recapturing or misreading of traditional African cultures has been questioned. It is important for scholars to decolonize African studies and the Africentric project by incorporating both male and female perspectives and experiences in order to understand the fundamental ordering of social relations, institutions and power structures in African and diasporan communities. Dei (1995) opines, "the complete rejection of feminism by some African scholars in the name of maintaining tradition or on the basis that it is Western is problematic" (p. 161). While there is a legitimate ground for the discussion of shared realities and enabling solidarity in addressing contemporary social injustices, Africentrists need to guard against totalizing discourses that trivialize the pain and suffering of Black women and the Black "underclass" that are everywhere on the continent and in the diaspora.

Summary of Africentricity and Art Education

Africentricity provides an alternative perspective for the conceptualization of art education and general education. It offers students, teachers and school administrators an opportunity to reaffirm the Africentric worldview that has been repudiated and defamed within the Eurocentric framework. The predominance of the Eurocentric worldview has created an illusion that the perspective of people of European origin is the only view of the world. The recovery of Europe from the Middle Ages brought

about systemic plunder, subjugation, colonization and control not only of most territories of the world, but also of knowledge systems of the world. The legacy of white supremacy propagated during the European Enlightenment created the myth of African inferiority in art and all aspects of civilization despite evidence of remarkable aesthetic, technological and political accomplishment.

Africentricity unveils colonial discourses and attempts to restore what has been taken away under slavery and colonialism. Due to their reference to a philosophical worldview and values based on African cultures, Africentrists are often accused of promoting dogmatic, rigidly ethnocentric and exclusionary ideology. These criticisms however are unfairly generalized since Africentricity in education represents a range of beliefs rather than a fixed ideology. Inclusive Africentric models cannot be exclusionary because they emphasize a holistic philosophy of polycentric multiculturalism, which connects and builds on multiple centres of knowledge, history and culture, to engender multi-centric curriculum and pedagogy. The ideological assumptions inherent in the Africentric theory influence the research method for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Method

This section deals with the methodology and method of the research. As has been stated in the first chapter, the primary objective of this research was to examine the cultural and educational barriers to Black/African-Canadian students' participation and attainment in art and education and to seek better ways of providing inclusive art education and schooling. Due to the inherent complexity of social interaction and "openness" of this inquiry, I adopted a qualitative research methodology influenced by *Africology* or the Africentric conceptual framework and critical ethnography. As a rationale for choosing a qualitative research method for this study, including data collection and analysis, I referenced Filstead's characterization of this method:

> Qualitative methodology refers to those strategies, such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing, total participation in the activity being investigated, fieldwork etc., which allow the researcher to obtain first-hand knowledge about the empirical social world in question. Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to 'get close to the data,' thereby developing the analytical, conceptual and categorical components of explanation from the data itself. (1970, p. 7)

The thoughts, feelings and perspectives of Black students and those from other backgrounds, parents, guardians, teachers, community service workers and concerned adults, were crucial to developing a methodology for this study. Africology is defined as the Africentric study of phenomena, events, ideas and personalities related to Africa (Asante, 1990). The Africentric research method flows from the ideological assumptions inherent in the Africentric theory. It establishes a worldview about the writing and speaking of African peoples that is epistemologically valid. The Africentric paradigm is eclectic. In this sense, it embraces several liberationist approaches to studying phenomena. For instance, the tenets of participatory research, feminist research and critical ethnography coincide with the Africentric framework. Despite the liberationist tenets of feminism, Africentrists and feminists have not yet agreed on the role that, for instance, White feminism or Marxism, can play in Africentric discourse (Asante, 1998; W. C. Banks, 1992; Dei, 1996; hooks, 1990; Oyèwùmí, 1997). This is so because, as products of Eurocentric consciousness, these theories often exclude the historical and cultural perspectives of Africa. As a theory

therefore, Africentricity is undoubtedly still in an evolutionary process.

This multi-method qualitative research approach provides participants with a much stronger voice in expressing their individual and collective struggles and in making sense of the interaction of complex issues in their multicultural and educational experience. Studies that rely on quantitative data to explain minority students' experience may not adequately deal with the complexity of issues that influence their participation in school. My goal in this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of Black/African-Canadian artistic and educational experience, including the socio-historical and present socio-economic context. I examined related research and historical documents. I listened to the narratives, observed the interactions among students, teachers, parents, community service workers and connected their narratives to each other and to wider social issues. In addition, I needed to gain some insight into the impact of a multicultural art and cultural program on various groups of students. The qualitative research approach enabled the researcher to explore these complex issues from various perspectives. Lather (1991) explains that "theory adequate to the task of changing the world must be open-ended, non-dogmatic, speaking to and grounded in the circumstances of everyday life. It must moreover be premised on a deep respect for intellectual and political capacities of the dispossessed" (p. 55). Educational research is about understanding human problems and behaviour with the goal of addressing problems and transforming behaviour to produce better teaching or learning processes. The views on qualitative research expressed by Lather are compatible with the goals of Africentric research. It empowers the people researched by treating them as participants and not as subjects. People as autonomous beings must have a moral right to participate in decisions that claim to generate knowledge about them. Such a right protects them from being managed and manipulated. Participatory research is a methodology that facilitates the liberation of oppressed people (Hall, 1981a; Irwin & Miller, 1997; Tandon, 1981). VioGrossi (1981) suggests that participatory research must attempt to "initiate a process of dis-indoctrination to allow the people to detach from their own cultural elements, those elements that have been imposed on them and are functional to the status quo" (p. 46). Participatory research is pragmatic in that it involves those who are traditionally the researched in the formulation of problems, collection of data and interpretation and use of findings.

The Africentric method rejects the hierarchical relationship between an investigator and subjects.

It speaks of research that is ultimately verifiable in the experiences of human beings, as the ultimate empirical authority. The methods of proof are grounded upon the principles of fairness and openness. The knower is inseparable from the known. A researcher's sensitivity, flexibility, listenability, objectivity, empathy with others and tolerance for ambiguity play an important part in the research process. Asante (1990) points out that:

> The Africentrist seeks to uncover and use codes, paradigms, symbols, motifs, myths and circles of discussion that reinforce the centrality of African ideals and values as a valid frame of reference for acquiring and examining data. Such a method appears to . . . re-valorize the African place in the interpretation of Africans, continental and diasporan. (p. 6)

The Africentric method is open to approaches under which researchers are immersed in the socio-cultural context of study. As a community-based collaborative study, this research involved two experts who were members of the African-Canadian community in the implementation of the African Art and Cultural Program as well as the data collection process. The study achieved triangulation of information through focus group interviews with student participants, individual in-depth interviews and interviews with parents to corroborate students' responses. This approach is in contrast with traditional ethnography and the experimental frameworks, which are based on the logic of manipulation of variables and prediction. Traditional ethnographic research has relied upon "the rationality and stability of writers and readers and upon non-contradictory subjects who say what they mean and mean what they say" (Britzman, 1990, p. 2). But for the Africentrist, "being there" does not guarantee access to truth and so the tradition of ethnographic authority derived from participant/observation becomes decentred. So, too, does the investment that "reality" is somehow out there waiting to be captured by language (Asante, 1990). Like the phenomenologist or feminist, the Africentrist searches for essence by questioning all assumptions about reality that are rooted in a single view of the universe (Asante, 1990).

The context of African people encourages collective as opposed to an individual struggle against the structures of racism and oppression. No doubt, cultural and social immersion is viewed as crucial to an Africentric inquiry than scientific distance. As an insider, I had to deal with all the problems and possibilities that surface when the researcher and those researched are members of a common cultural community. In this sense, my identity provided a contextual starting point for developing relationships. It

provided some degree of trust and accessibility to information. My socialization and training provided the advantage of knowing the history, language, philosophy, values and myths about the people under study. Other methods often assume that the researcher need not know anything about a culture in order to undertake a project. In recent times however, some classic ethnographic and social science research have become the subject of much controversy. In the article, "Ethnography of Africa: The Usefulness of the Useless," Owusu (1978) argues that due to fundamental misunderstandings of groups and cultures under study, many traditional ethnographies are "at best, oversimplifications and at worst, flat wrong" (p. 312). An "outsider" to a culture often is faced with the problem of misrepresentation and misappropriation in an attempt to gain access to the discursive space of others. My shared identity with the Black community enabled me to establish rapport, which was necessary for honest and open discussions, and for recovering authentic narratives with participants. Nevertheless, my relationships with participants were also differentiated by other equally important diasporan characteristics such as differences in nationality, native language, ethnic background, religious beliefs and experience that made me both an insider and an outsider simultaneously. Thus, I had to grapple with the political conflicts, the methodological dilemmas, ethical issues and often, conflicting roles in this research.

One of the values that attract me to Africentric and critical ethnographic methods is the commitment to the participant as a knowing intentional being who contributes to the construction of knowledge. It argues that people are bearers of ideology rather than essential authors (Fuss, 1989). My thrust as an Africentric researcher is to abandon the linear method of inquiry and adopt a methodology that will treat my participants as knowers in knowledge production through dialogue. The multi-method qualitative research approach enabled the voices of the participants to inform significantly the analytical process and resultant interpretations. Africentric method, like critical ethnography, promises to deliver voices that have been previously shut out of normative educational research. There is also the practical commitment of the right to speak, to represent oneself and, in this vision; the researcher is committed to advocating subjugated knowledge. By centring participants' narratives in the analyses and working from their experiences to develop a theoretical understanding, the participants themselves have played an important role in the creation of this knowledge. Agar (1980) points out that:

Whether it is your personality, your rules of social interaction, your cultural bias toward significant topics, your professional training, or something else, you do not go into the field as a passive recorder of objective data. During the fieldwork, you are surrounded by a multitude of noises and activities. As you choose what to attend to and how to interpret it, mental doors are slam shut on the alternatives. While some of your choices may be consciously made, others are forced by the weight of the personal and professional background that you bring to the field. (p. 48)

Lather (1991) suggests the use of reciprocity as a system for negotiating meanings, power and understanding, while speaking with participants in emancipatory research. According to Lather,

Critical inquiry is a response to the experiences, desires and needs of the oppressed people. Its initial step is to develop an understanding of the worldview of the research participants. Central to developing such an understanding is a dialogic research design where respondents are actively involved in the construction and validation of meanings. The purpose of this phase is to provide accounts that are bases for further analysis and a corrective to the investigators' perception regarding the subjects' life-world and experiences. (p. 63)

Site and Context

The principal sites for this study were: 1) Multicultural Family Centre (MFC); and 2) an east Vancouver Elementary School in British Columbia.[6] Research participants were selected from the African-Canadian parents and children who participated in the activities at the MFC, and from a Grade 7, art class at the east Vancouver School including the school principal and art teacher.

The Multicultural Family Centre (MFC) is a community-based social service provider with a wide range of programs, support and services aimed at improving access to health care and social services for immigrant and refugee communities in Vancouver and its surrounding districts. It is located at the Research, Education and Action for Community Health (REACH) Community Centre in the heart of east Vancouver. The MFC, a brainchild of Carole P. Christensen (Professor at the University of British Columbia School of Social Work & Family Studies, and a former Director of that School), was established in 1991 with initial funding from Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada (now Canadian Heritage), following a comprehensive survey and community consultation. During the first phase of its existence, the MFC extended its outreach program to the Vietnamese Community. At the request of several other community leaders and members, services were later extended to the Latin American and the African

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[6] To protect the identity of participants from the school, as promised on the Consent Form, the actual name of the school is never mentioned in this study.

Communities in 1993 and 1994 respectively.

As a Canadian of African-American heritage, and a professor with over two decades of cross-cultural clinical practice and research experience in Quebec (McGill University, School of Social Work) and in British Columbia, Dr. Christensen (Program Director of the MFC) demonstrates understanding of issues faced by people of colour in Canada. The need to provide culturally appropriate outreach programs led the MFC to work in close cooperation with members of the various immigrant communities in order to promote healthy adaptation and integration of their members into the host society. Similar motivation led the MFC to enter into a working partnership with the REACH community health centre which provides medical and dental care, counselling and health education programs in the multiethnic Grandview-Woodlands area of Vancouver. This partnership has enabled both the MFC and REACH to enhance the cross-cultural training of their respective staffs, thereby, ensuring the delivery of culturally appropriate programs and services to the various ethnic communities. Since its inception the MFC has cooperated with several agencies and existing programs to assist its clients. It has served as a practicum or field training site for students of Social Work, counselling, nursing and art therapy, and has provided education, volunteer and employment opportunities. As an indicator of success, the MFC has managed to continue its programs through funding from the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board, the former British Columbia Ministry of Multiculturalism and Immigration, and grants from a number of other sources. In addition, the MFC was awarded the End Racism Award by the Ministry of Multiculturalism and Immigration in the year 2000, for the African Women and Children's Program.

Based on community input, the MFC's program for the African community has expanded from its initial focus on women dealing with issues of health, parenting, intergenerational conflict and adaptation to include programs for children. The purpose of the African children's program is to foster positive cultural identity and increase self-confidence in academic and social abilities. The MFC began a Youth Program in the spring of year 2000, emphasizing the promotion of self-esteem and combating racism experienced in schools and in the wider society. The Centre, through its cross-cultural facilitators, encourages Black/African parents to be active participants in their children's education by becoming familiar with the Vancouver school system and school/teacher expectations of parents.

My connection with the MFC started through my voluntary experience with the African-Canadian children at the Centre. After working with the children and youth for about two years as a volunteer instructor in African art and culture, I began to identify with their problems and concerns, particularly with regard to the conflict of values that some of them experience between the home and school cultures. I also became concerned about the cultural discontinuity and marginalization of the children's cultural heritage in school. My goal was to help raise their self-esteem and cultural awareness through art activities. Following two years of volunteer time, I expressed to the MFC Cross-cultural Facilitators and the members of my dissertation committee, a desire to conduct a study about the African children's art and cultural experiences at the MFC, and their educational realities in the public school classroom. The parents, the MFC staff and members of my committee responded favourably to my proposal by providing insightful suggestions, which helped in the formulation of this research.

The East Vancouver Elementary School: My decision to extend the study to a public school was a difficult one because of the Vancouver School Board's moratorium on unsolicited research in the school district at that time. As I grappled with the decision either to abandon the idea altogether or to seek a school in another district, the Program Director of the MFC, promised to arrange for me to conduct my study at an inner-city, multi-ethnic elementary school in east Vancouver with which the MFC had an ongoing working partnership. This decision was a welcome development since it enabled me to gain access to a second research site: a school right in the heart of Vancouver with a large multicultural population and close to the MFC, my first research site. The school has a student population with roots from over 29 ethnic, linguistic and national backgrounds. The majority of students were of Chinese and Vietnamese origins, with the remainder having various backgrounds, including First Nations, Indo-Canadian and Euro-Canadian. Due to its multicultural student population, its relations with the MFC, and its open-door policy, it warmly accepted my request to conduct this study at the school.

Selection of Participants/Entering

Before the selection of participants and sites for the study, I put together a curriculum advisory team. The advisory team included two MFC cross-cultural facilitators (who are also mothers), two parents,

two members of the Black/African-Canadian community (who eventually became facilitators for the African Art and Cultural Education Program), an art teacher from the east Vancouver School and the researcher. As participatory research, my goal was to bring together parents, community workers and the school to provide suggestions for appropriate content and methodology for an African-centred multicultural art curriculum. The first meeting with the curriculum advisory team took place in February 1998 at the School of Social Work in the University of British Columbia. At the meeting, I discussed the focus of my study and the role of the advisory team. It was during this meeting that the idea of expanding the study to cover a public school was decided. At first, I was reluctant to expand the study knowing the commitment it would involve. However, after speaking with my thesis committee, I felt excited about the possibilities of implementing an African-centred multicultural art program at both the community and public school settings. I was enthusiastic that my work would make a valuable contribution to art education and provincial and district multicultural education policy. I felt pleased that my proposal had received positive response from both the curriculum advisory and the thesis committees. The second meeting with the curriculum advisory team took place in April 1998 at the MFC. There had been initial contacts with the parent-group during their vocational training sessions and parent forums at the MFC. Our deliberations centred on content, rationale and scope of the African Art and Cultural Program. We discussed the logistics: time lines, materials and equipment, costs, space, potential participants and research sites.

When I was ready to begin my research, I submitted a proposal to the Multicultural Family Centre requesting permission to conduct research at the MFC with the African-Canadian Community. I indicated my intention to design and implement an African-centred multicultural art curriculum project at the centre and in a school setting. The MFC responded positively to my proposal and suggested that I could undertake a pilot study during some of my regular voluntary art teaching sessions at the centre. From then on, the MFC program facilitators began to introduce and advertise me to the Black/African Canadian community who visited the centre weekly. For eight weeks, I was provided a platform to explain my proposed research to the group, as well as invite them to volunteer as participants. There was a lot of enthusiasm on the part of the Black/African-Canadian parents and youth toward the study. Consent forms

were provided to all the parents and the youth who volunteered to participate in the study. The consent

forms outlined the title, purpose, procedures, commitments and benefits of the study. Besides their own

consent, students had to have their parents' signature on the consent forms if they were willing to

participate in the research project. I also assured them of confidentiality and anonymity (i.e., use of

pseudonyms in place of real names). I reminded them that their participation was voluntary and that they

could change their minds at any time during the study. In all, 10 parents agreed to participate in face-to-

face interviews but only eight of them participated in the interviews. It was expected that speaking directly

to the stakeholders involved in the daily experience of Black/African-Canadian children would most

effectively portray the issues involved in their education. The process of arranging and negotiating the

details of my interviews and visits provided me with some insights regarding the extent to which the

African-Canadian parents and their children accepted my claims of insider status. Although I provided the

parents the option of choosing the venue for the interviews, all of them invited me into their homes to

conduct the interviews. In many cases, their courtesies and desire to share their meals with me were typical

of the tradition of African hospitality.

The MFC, through its partnership with the School in east Vancouver, assisted me in securing a

second research site in east Vancouver. As indicated earlier, the Vancouver School Board had placed a

moratorium on unsolicited research undertakings involving the school district at the time. At our first

meeting in November 1998, I was introduced to the school principal and four classroom teachers by the

MFC cross-cultural facilitator. Since the meeting was pre-arranged, the principal had organized four

teachers who expressed their desire to have me teach African art and culture in their respective classes. I

discussed briefly the purpose and nature of the research and explained that the kind of study I was

planning to conduct in their school would not permit me to work with all the classes and their teachers. It

was collectively agreed that a Grade 7 art class would be the most suitable group for the study. I also

raised the issue of obtaining informed consent from the parents of students who were to participate in the

African Art and Cultural Program and a focus group interview. It was commented that since my proposal

was compatible with the Grade 7 art curriculum and was not going to subject the students to individual

interviews it should not be an issue. In any case, I suggested that the school, through the classroom

teacher, should make the parents aware of the program and students given the option to opt out if they so desired. I assured them of confidentiality and anonymity. I was, of course, elated that the school had responded positively to my proposal without any pressure from me. I knew the importance of developing a sincere, non-hierarchical, reciprocal relationship with participants. After obtaining approval from the school, I was introduced to the school's administrative staff, vice principal and some other teachers. I felt welcome.

The following week, I met with the Grade 7 art teacher during lunchtime to discuss the implementation process. We had a detailed discussion on how to integrate the African Art and Cultural Program into her own art curriculum for the year. The school agreed to provide all the art materials that would be needed for the project. We set up the dates and times that were mutually convenient for starting and completing my work at the school. Following the lunch break, the teacher introduced me to the class. I told the students that I was there to share my expertise in African art and cultural knowledge with them. I also told them that I would conduct a focus interview with the entire class at the end of the program and that their teacher would send notes to inform their parents of the program. I thought carefully about what to wear since I was going to be introduced to the art students who would be participants of my study. For my visits to the school, African costume became my clothing of choice.

Securing the consents of the MFC, parents, students and from the east Vancouver Elementary School was time-consuming, nevertheless, designing the program was not as easy as I had anticipated. It took me nine months after my first meeting with the curriculum advisory team to come up with the outline of my final program. In August/September 1998 the African Art and Cultural Program was implemented at the Multicultural Family Centre. It was again implemented at the east Vancouver School between January and June 1999. Between the Fall of 1998 and Winter 1999, I spent the time contacting students and their parents for interviews. Before the implementation of the African Art and Cultural Program, a series of focus group interviews were piloted at the MFC. This allowed me to test and develop my interview questionnaire, as well as gain a preliminary understanding of Black/African parents' and students' perceptions and opinions of the education system, particularly with regard to multicultural education.

<u>Data Collection</u>

Data for the study has been generated through the implementation of the African Art and Cultural Program (AACEP). In the study, 30 Black/African-Canadian students between the ages of 10 years and 18 years participated in the two-week African Art and Cultural Education Program in August/September 1998 at the MFC. Fifteen children who could provide informed consent and met the demands of the research were selected for the interviews (see Table 4.1 for attendance record). Individualized interviews were conducted with Black/African-Canadian students and parents at their homes; with the art teacher and principal at the east Vancouver School; and with the Cross-cultural facilitators at the MFC. Table 4.2. provides the background information of Black/African-Canadian students who participated in the interviews. Out of the 15 students, there were 7 females and 8 males. The gender of the participants was fairly balanced in order to gain broader understanding of the issues from the perspective of both genders.

<u>Interviews</u>: Two formal interview methods were employed following the implementation of the program. These included: 1) focus group interviews, with the 15 selected Black/African-Canadian students, and 29 students from the Grade 7 art class in the east Vancouver School. Each interview session, took between one and two hours. Questions were formulated according to the level of the group being interviewed to achieve a better understanding of each group of participants. I was aware of the age group of the students, as well as the educational background and socio economic status of the six parents and two MFC facilitators who agreed to participate in the study. All the parents, except one had at least a university degree. Of the three fathers, one was a high school teacher in Surrey, one was pursuing a PhD degree and the other was a security officer. The mothers held such positions as administrative secretary, teacher, child support service worker and social worker. The interview questionnaire was pilot tested with a group of African-Canadian children and parents at the MFC. Interviews with parents, guardians and MFC facilitators made it possible to cross-reference students' narratives as well as to gain the adults' views and perspectives on Blacks and education in British Columbia.

The interviews allowed me to review the research questions in the course of data collection and analysis with the aim of soliciting adequate answers to the research questions. A second round of

Table 4.1

	Attendance Record of Black/African-Canadian Students for the African Art and Cultural Education Program at the Multicultural Family Centre								
Date 1998		August					September		
#	Name & Country	24th	25th	26th	27th	Break	31st	1st	2nd
1	Amet (Somalia)	\	\	\	\		\	X	\
2	Bayan (Ethiopia)	\	X	\	\		\	\	\
3	Charles (Nigeria)	\	\	\	\		\	\	\
4	Dave* (Uganda)	\	\	\	\		\	\	\
5	Dixie* (Uganda)	\	\	\	\		\	\	\
6	Don* (Kenya)	\	\	\	\		\	\	\
7	Eden* (Eritrea)	\	\	\	\		\	\	\
8	Emma* (Ghana)	\	\	\	\		\	\	\
9	Estella* (Uganda)	\	\	\	\		\	\	\
10	Fadai (Eritrea)	\	\	\	\		\	\	\
11	Fatima (Ethiopia)	X	X	\	\		\	\	\
12	Feven (Somalia)	\	\	\	\		\	\	\
13	Filmon (Zambia)	\	\	\	\		\	\	X
14	Gifty* (Uganda)	\	\	\	\		\	\	\
15	Hannah* (Sudan)	\	\	\	\		\	\	\
16	Henok (Ethiopia)	X	\	\	\		\	\	\
17	Jethro (Uganda)	X	\	\	\		X	\	X
18	John* (Uganda)	\	\	\	\		\	\	\
19	Judas* (Sudan)	\	\	\	\		\	\	\
20	Jonathan (Djibouti)	X	\	\	\		\	\	\
21	Lillian* (Uganda)	X	\	\	\		\	\	\
22	Maryam* (Sudan)	\	\	\	\		\	\	\
23	Nancy (Nigeria)	X	\	\	\		\	\	\
24	Ronald* (Uganda)	\	\	\	\		\	\	\
25	Ruth (Nigeria)	\	\	\	\		\	\	\
26	Sammy (Somalia)	X	X	\	\		\	\	X
27	Susie* (Sudan)	\	\	\	\		\	\	\
28	Simon (Eritrea)	X	X	\	\		\	\	\
29	Sarah* (Uganda)	\	\	\	\		\	\	\
30	Thomas (Ghana)	X	X	X	\		\	\	\
	Total	21	25	29	30		29	29	27

"X" refers to non-participation & "\" refers to participation.
(*) identifies students who participated in the individual interviews.

Table 4.2

No.	Name & Gender	Age & Grade	Country of Origin	Immigration Date
	Background Information of Black/African-Canadian Students **January – September 1999**			
1	Estella (F)	12½, Grade 7	Uganda	1990
2	Gifty (F)	14½, Grade 9	Uganda	1990
3	Hannah (F)	14, Grade 8	Sudan	1994
4	Lillian (F)	13, Grade 7	Uganda	1989
5	Maryam (F)	17, Grade 11	Sudan	1994
6	Susie (F)	12½, Grade 7	Sudan	1994
7	Sarah (F)	17, Grade 11	Uganda	1989
8	Dave (M)	16, Grade 11	Uganda	1990
9	Dixie (M)	14, Grade 9	Uganda	1992
10	Don (M)	13½, Grade 8	Kenya	1986
11	Eden (M)	15, Grade 10	Eritea	1993
12	Emma (M)	18, Grade 12	Ghana	1996
13	Judas (M)	14½, Grade 9	Sudan	1994
14	John (M)	15, Grade 10	Uganda	1990
15	Ronald (M)	15, Grade 10	Uganda	1992

interviews with participants were carried out to augment and clarify previous information. I videotaped all the seven lessons in the African art unit with the consent of parents and the students. Similarly, I audio-recorded all the interviews and transcribed them for analysis. Transcribing the interviews was a very arduous process as any ethnographer can attest. I transcribed 27 individual and group interviews, most of which required at least two separate visits to complete an individual interview. When all the transcriptions were completed, there were over 250 pages of transcripts to study.

Black/African-Canadian students' interviews: I carried out two major interviews (focus group and individual) with each of the 15 Black/African-Canadian student-participants. The goal of the interviews was not only to shed light on the artistic, educational and cultural experience of the learners from the African-Canadian community in Vancouver, but also to obtain the perspective of individual participants regarding their perceptions about the African Art and Cultural Program. The focus group interview at the MFC provided some insights into students' reaction immediately following the implementation of the program. Since the lessons were still fresh in their minds, it was expected that their responses would be an accurate reflection of their experiences during the workshops. The purpose of conducting the individualized interviews with the Black/African-Canadian students was to follow up on the focus group interview with a broader scope of questions that provide information in greater depth. Questions that guided the interview of the Black students can be seen in Appendix II.

Focus interviews (in-school): At the east Vancouver School, the focus group interview was intended to determine the impact of the program on students' understanding and perceptions of multiculturalism, African people, their art and culture. Questions that guided my focus interviews at the school can be found in Appendix II.

Parent/MFC cross-cultural facilitators' interviews: Although schools play the most direct role in affecting the educational experiences of students, including their cultural education; parents, guardians, the community and other stakeholders also have responsibilities and identifiable roles to play in the delivery of education in Canada. Black /African-Canadian parents and MFC cross-cultural facilitators were interviewed to solicit their opinions and perceptions of the education system, with special reference to Black/African learners and multicultural education. Questions that guided my interviews with the two

groups of educational stakeholders can be seen in Appendix II.

School principal/teacher's interviews: As "front line" workers in the education system, teachers are crucial in the schooling process. I interviewed an art teacher and a school principal at the end of my program at the east Vancouver school. The interviews took place at a pre-arranged time in their offices. Sample questions that guided my interviews can be found in Appendix II.

Informal interviews: Throughout the study, I talked to the students, parents and MFC program coordinators during the weekly group meetings at the MFC and during African parents' workshops. I also participated in the monthly forums at the MFC where Black/African-Canadian parents brainstormed and discussed pertinent issues affecting their lives and the Black community in general. Although these conversations sometimes touched on issues discussed in this study, they were largely informal in that they were neither pre-arranged nor directly connected to my study. I did not take notes, but usually summarized the conversation in writing at the first opportunity. I frequently talked to the Black youths who came to the centre, some of whom were not participants in the African Art and Cultural Program. I also talked with many parents, some of whom were not formally interviewed.

Data Interpretation from a Critical Multicultural Education Perspective

To interpret and make sense of the data and materials collected, I adopted data analysis procedures most appropriate for critical multicultural education research. The goal for adopting such a procedure was to understand the role that critical pedagogy could play in facilitating a more thoughtful analysis of multicultural education, as well as how students understand and interpret their school experiences. In order to manage the large volume of data gathered, I used QSR NUDIST (N5), a software program for qualitative data analysis to code the interview transcripts and field notes. By importing the interview transcripts and field notes onto the QSR NUDIST (N5) program, it became possible to manage, explore and analyze the data. The flexibility gained from the N5 program in coding documents, searching texts and nodes, importing and exporting data and reporting on the research data, enabled me to become familiar with the data including its main outcome and themes.

In reporting the data in Chapters Six and Seven, I employed a reference system obtained from the

NUDIST (N5) program for qualitative data analysis. First, I grouped the interview transcripts into four separate documents: 1) Responses from Black African-Canadian Students (S); 2) Responses from Black Parents/MFC Cross-cultural Facilitators (P); 3) Responses from School Principal/Art Teacher (T); and 4) Responses from Students at the east Vancouver School (N). Second, each document was subdivided into text units (a text unit is the smallest segment of text that the NUDIST program can code or retrieve) that corresponded with responses of participants to the interview questions. Finally, after coding the documents, the NUDIST program numbered all the text units (responses to each question) and automatically generated a reference system for each document. This made it possible and easy to find, retrieve and work with each text unit or question and response from participants. By identifying the common themes and viewpoints, I gained comparative perspective on perceptions of the education system and on the impact of the African Art and Cultural Education Program.

In deciding on categories or themes to re-present participants' perceptions of the education system in British Columbia and Canada, I went back into the literature and re-read many of the pieces I had employed to frame my proposal and justification for the study. The research literature on Black/African-Canadian educational experience in Ontario, Nova Scotia and other parts of Canada became more meaningful when I placed it in juxtaposition with the stories of the Black/African-Canadian parents and students in this study. Many of the issues that were discussed in Chapter Two were reinforced in the course of the interviews with participants. Due to prolonged contact with participants and the comprehensive nature of the interview data, as many as 24 issues or themes emerged from parents' perceptions of the education system. When the various interview transcripts were exported into the QSR NUDIST (N5) program as four separate documents, I coded and searched the documents using the initial 24 themes as code words. In order to make sense of the data I decided to merge related issues into broader categories of seven themes namely: curricula issues, institutional constraints, multicultural education and Africentric knowledge, teacher preparation and representation, role models, family and community participation and gender issues. This process enabled me to know what each individual or group of participants was saying under each of the seven major themes.

In order to provide a reflective analysis of data during different stages of the research, I used Sonia

Nieto's (1999) framework for the interpretation of data in multicultural education research. According to Nieto, the experiences of people who have been disenfranchised by traditional schools could be properly understood by applying six principles from a critical multicultural education perspective. Critical pedagogy has inspired the inclusion of students' voices in multicultural education through its insistence on students' involvement in the process of their own education. Because critical pedagogy recognizes the political nature of education and the need to challenge its content and form, it also brings to multicultural education a sharp institutional analysis that might otherwise be missing under "liberal" or uncritical forms of multicultural education (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995).

How can the lens of critical multiculturalism facilitate our understanding of the perspectives of students, parents and teachers on the education system; and of the impact of an African centred cultural education model on students? Nieto (1999) points out that multicultural education without a critical perspective may conceal oppressive social structures or, in other words, bring about superficial changes that may not affect, in any meaningful way, the life chances of students who have been marginalized in the school system. While it is necessary that students' lived experiences be centred in the curriculum to make education more meaningful to them, it will not necessarily make them more critical thinkers. Similarly, the celebration of ethnic or cultural festivals and the inclusion of a few characteristic examples from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds to the curriculum can be very uplifting for students, but it may not help them critique the Euro-centric male focus on art history or how history has been traditionally taught as unproblematic progress, regardless of the ethnic perspective. Again, changing pedagogical practices in response to community demands, while probably a good thing to do, will not likely, in itself, result in transforming experiences of Black/African-Canadian learners.

Critical multiculturalism introduces new directions in data analysis and interpretation that will bring about a critical assessment of racism and the negative impact of school policies and practices on students who have been the greatest victims of school failure (Nieto, 1999). The six principles Nieto proposes bring to multicultural education a critical and institutionalized analysis of data:

1. Critical multicultural education affirms students' culture without trivializing the concept of culture: It was evident in the stories of the Black/African-Canadian students that African art, culture and history, which were conspicuously missing from the school curriculum, had become a

rich source of motivation and pride during the African Art and Cultural Education Program at the MFC. But a critical multicultural education perspective goes beyond the mere affirmation of students' backgrounds, to a genuinely transformative pedagogy and curriculum.

2. <u>Critical multicultural education challenges hegemonic knowledge</u>: Students often accept much of what is taught in schools as factual knowledge. Knowledge from textbooks acquires even more authenticity among students. Banks (1995), however, makes it clear that "hegemonic knowledge that promotes the interests of the powerful, elite groups often obscures its value premises by masquerading as totally objective" (p.15). A critical multicultural education perspective demands that all knowledge be interrogated and scrutinized to determine its veracity or otherwise.

3. <u>Critical multicultural education complicates pedagogy</u>: A critical multicultural perspective enables us to understand that there is no one right away to teach. This perspective complicates the question of pedagogy; it challenges teachers to re-think what and how they teach, and to constantly question their decisions.

4. <u>Critical multicultural education problematizes a simplistic focus on self-esteem</u>: Critical multicultural education perspective problematizes the notion that students cannot learn unless they feel good about themselves. Self-esteem operates in relation to particular contexts rather than as a unitary concept. If self-esteem is understood as an individual psychological construct, it overlooks the socio-political context of students' lives, downplaying racism and other oppressive behaviours that students experience. Hence, how schools and society create low self-esteem in children needs to be considered. Low self-esteem may be the result of school policies and practices that respect and affirm some groups while devaluing others. While students internalize many negative messages to which they are subjected, others actively resist negative messages through interactions with, peers, family and school.

5. <u>Critical multicultural education encourages "dangerous discourses"</u>: Multicultural education is perceived by many as a threat because it encourages "dangerous discourses" that challenges the status quo in and out of school. During the interviews, students were able to discuss "dangerous discourses" about race, power, privilege, identity, difference, culture and inequity, which have no place in most schools, but which have profound effects on students' lives. Critical multicultural education demands that students be encouraged to discuss controversial issues within their socio-political context that may provide meaningful focal points for the learning of all students particularly, those alienated by the school. It has the potential to link learning with democracy. It is not neat; it does not hold all the answers, nevertheless, it is a more hopeful pedagogy.

6. <u>Critical multiculturalism admits that multicultural education cannot do it all</u>: Multicultural

education is a hopeful pedagogy in that it holds great promise for transforming the future of countless youngsters who would otherwise be alienated by the school and society. But a critical perspective makes it clear that multicultural education is not a panacea. For Black/African-Canadian youths the road ahead is difficult one. Many have little to look forward to but a life of unfulfilled expectations. The dilemmas faced by many Black youth, obviously include far more than irrelevant curriculum and pedagogy. They are potential victims of socio-political circumstances like racial discrimination, violence, police harassment and cultural maladjustment. Despite the many challenges, schools can still make meaningful improvements in education of the youths who are poorly served by the education system if multicultural education and school policies are tuned to their needs not, just as those of English speaking, middle-class students. Many teachers and schools have provided inspiring cases of academic success of students who might otherwise have been dismissed as incapable of learning or achieving.

Summary of the Research Methodology

The African-centred multicultural art education curriculum and pedagogy acknowledges the significance of issues of research orientation, methods, data collection and analysis as discussed in this chapter. The research methodology is influenced by the Africentric conceptual framework and critical ethnography. Africentric research methods flow from the ideological assumptions inherent within Africentric theory. It is eclectic and embraces the tenets of approaches such as participatory research and feminist research. Critical ethnography situates this study within a wider socio-political and historical context which serves emancipatory and democratic interests. Through the implementation of the multicultural curriculum unit, the study generated its data. Interviews (group and individual), participant observation, field notes and videotaping of the workshops form the basis of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DESCRIPTION OF THE ART AND CULTURAL CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Introduction

Cultural discontinuity is detrimental to students' artistic and intellectual development due to cultural differences in aesthetic perception and learning styles of ethno-cultural groups (Irwin & Farrell, 1996; Neperud et al., 1986; Nieto, 1996). For a long time Canadian school systems have been unable or unwilling to adequately address the artistic and cultural needs of Blacks/African-Canadian children and other visible minorities despite the policy of multiculturalism. The purpose of this integrated curriculum is to provide an interrelated, arts centred unit of study using Black/African culture as the theme for organizing experiences. The unit employs the mediums of visual arts, verbal arts and history and geography to foster understanding and appreciation of African art and culture (see Appendix I). To the Africentrists, all academic disciplines (mathematics, science, philosophy, history, art and literature) are interconnected; they are taught as separate subjects only by distortion (Verharen, 1995). The overriding goal is to attempt, through the implementation of this unit, to redress some misconceptions about Africa and its people, celebrate the positive aspects of Africa that are rarely seen or known, enhance cultural awareness and self-esteem of Black/African-Canadian students, as well as promote cultural understanding and healthy inter-group relations among students. The unit can be useful to children in Grades 7 – 12. As indicated earlier, this curriculum unit is an interdisciplinary approach to multicultural art education. As educators respond to calls for inclusive education, many art educators are increasingly moving toward interdisciplinary models of art teaching. Many educators agree that any given discipline is not merely a content area or a concentration on certain topics, but a set of strategies, perspectives and processes. The more educators think of disciplines as living practices, the more we realize that multicultural education curriculum must draw from the processes – the pedagogy and learning modes – of different discipline areas. Most of the activities in this unit, while they focus on visual art, are appropriate for a social studies class. Some activities are also appropriate for language arts, science and other subject areas.

Curriculum Process

A curriculum, as a document, is a plan of what one wants to teach (content skills or knowledge to be learned); why one wants to teach (the reasons for teaching the content in the curriculum) and how one wants to teach (strategies or methods for effective transmission of the curriculum). The curriculum process was broken into two parts: 1) The Curriculum Platform established the reasons that served as the foundation to the curriculum; and 2) Deliberations included the content and methods of implementing the curriculum. The foundation for African-centred multicultural education is grounded on African cultural values, both indigenous and contemporary, the cultural needs of stakeholders, especially the African-Canadian community and the rationale for art and multicultural education.

Education and artistic life in Africa is not separated from everyday life. Art education exists both in theory and in practice. The theoretical aspects of African art knowledge are embedded in the abstract, philosophical, cosmological, psychological and spiritual ideas. For example, by combining round shapes/forms (which may represent women or the Supreme Deity) with angular shapes/forms (which may represent men) in an African sculpture, a message of harmony between the Supreme Being, women and men in society is conveyed. The practical aspects of African art are the concrete artistic visual productions and the aesthetic life of indigenous and contemporary Africans. They include the performing arts, body arts and visual arts forms. There is a strong socio-cultural reinforcement in traditional African art education. Africans believe in a Supreme Being and a hierarchy of gods and ancestors. The African view of the universe from a perspective of interdependence and interconnectedness of spiritual, material and human elements is the underlying philosophy of African art and culture. Artefacts may represent the spirits and deities in concrete form and facilitate spiritual communication. Africans believe in communal life and spontaneous sincere expressions. Important ideas are expressed in graphic and abstract symbols. Artistic expressions have meaning (i.e., utilitarian, psychological, spiritual, symbolic and philosophical). They are impersonal representations of ideas rather than resemblance and individual self-expression. Ideas of knowledge are found in proverbs, graphic symbols, stories and folktales. For instance, the following African proverbs, "knowledge is like the baobab tree" (meaning there is no end to what a person can know), and "two heads are better than one" (meaning collaborative thinking yields better results), confirm

traditional African ideas about knowledge. Since there is no end to knowledge, no one can claim to know everything. Therefore, important decisions and conclusions are arrived at through discussions and consultations (two heads are better than one).

Rationale

Visual arts education provides opportunities for students to perceive, respond to, create and communicate through images. This enables them to experience and apply throughout their lives the power, ideas and emotions expressed in visual images. The visual arts are fundamental to the development of individual potential, social responsibility, cultural identity, cultural awareness and cultural appreciation. Unlike other subjects, art education is unique because through artistic expression, children can think, feel and act creatively at the same time. Art objects are visual sources of knowledge and are necessary for human development. Images become meaningful to students when they develop an understanding of the personal, social, cultural and historical contexts in which these images are viewed or created. We acquire and develop subjective thinking through art. This process enables us to cope with differences in interpersonal relations and contradictions of life.

Art is an integral part of any culture. It may serve as a means of communication through which cultural ideas and values may be transmitted and taught. For it is through art that people express their profound cultural values and cognitive patterns. In traditional Africa, art and life are interwoven. The meaning of art is conceptual and therefore, the use of the term *art* in a Western sense of understanding may not be accurate or appropriate to describe the myriads of objects, rituals, ceremonies and symbolisms that characterize the arts of Africa. African art represents ideas drawn from particular circumstances and a particular worldview. To best appreciate it, therefore, requires the understanding of the historical, cultural, philosophical and environmental factors that have influenced its creation. This task requires a great deal of contextual knowledge of the role of the arts in the diverse African cultures and an effort of imaginative and aesthetic judgement. It will also require a broader conception of art that includes the visual arts, verbal arts, body arts and performing arts.

Africa is the land of lost kingdoms and civilizations. Most people today assume that the world of ancient Africa was limited to Egypt and that sub-Saharan Africa had no historic past before European

contact in the 16th century. Nevertheless, Nubia, Egypt's rival, stands as one of the earliest known African civilizations that flourished for over 500 years, before the building of the great pyramids of Egypt until after Columbus's voyages to the New World (Botwinick, 1978). Again, for well over a thousand years, from about C.E. 500 to 1700, the civilizations of Western Sudan – Ghana, Mali and Songhai, flourished. The wealth of these Mende-speaking kingdoms of Western Sudan was legendary in medieval Europe. During the same period, Europe suffered from constant warfare and only slowly recovered its lost glory. The history of the "Dark Ages" and the Renaissance is taught in every school. However, most of us know nothing about Africa's history, except Egypt.

Awareness of the fact that there existed great African civilizations and well-ordered empires such as those of ancient Egypt, Nubia, Great Zimbabwe, Old Ghana, Mali and Songhai shatters the long held myth that Africans were inferior, incapable of creating art or anything of value. Colonization of Africa did not only result in the systemic control of territories but also of information about the continent. As a result, achievements of Blacks of ancient Egypt, Nubia, Old Ghana, Mali, Songhai and other African kingdoms have remained frozen in world history. Revealing the glory of these forgotten empires in Africa enables us to share in the inspiring process of historical recovery that is taking place today and thereby scraping away hundreds of years of ignorance, prejudice, misrepresentation and neglect.

The content of cultural education employed in this unit included lessons on: 1) The land of Africa, 2) Ghanaian *Kente* weaving and African identity, 3) Mask making, 4) African mythology, folktales and fables, 5) Printmaking from African *Adinkra* graphic symbols, 6) Ancient Egypt and Nubia, and 7) Introduction to ancient empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai. A copy of the complete curriculum unit plan is presented in Appendix I. A brief summary of the activities will be provided here to facilitate the reading and understanding of the curriculum implementation process.

1. The Land of Africa is intended to encourage children to learn through artwork, map study and verbally the various African countries (see Figure 2.7 for map), their cities and major geographical features, in relation to other continents. Knowledge about the continent of Africa, the size, the various countries, political boundaries, landmarks, minerals and other natural resources, population and culture, could serve as the context for understanding the role of the arts in diverse African sub-cultures. Since most children may be either ignorant or misinformed about Africa, this lesson will provide a more accurate and practical knowledge about the geography of the continent and disabuse the misconception of Africa as a village, a jungle or a small country.

2. <u>Traditional African Cloth Weaving</u> is an ancient industry in Africa, having been practiced by the ancient Egyptians and Nubians (see Figure 3.1 for a picture of an ancient Egyptian woven linen, with patterns similar to a Ghanaian *kente* cloth in Figure 5.1). Cloth weaving was already a part of African life before the European explorers reached the continent in the 15th and 16th centuries. Clothing can tell us a great deal about both individual wearers and the cultures of which they are members (Chanda, 1993). In West Africa, members of royalty, honoured gods and many ordinary people wore elaborately decorated clothing made from animal skins and woven cloth like *kente* (see Figure 5.1 for a sample *kente*). *Kente,* a cloth of many strips, rich colours and geometric patterns is worn on joyful occasions as symbol of Asante pride and Ghanaian identity, nevertheless, it finds expression among African-Americans and Africans in the diaspora as a symbol of African identity and cultural heritage. Children will be introduced to Asante and Ewe *kente* from Ghana and Togo after a brief historical introduction to *kente* and African identity and weave similar beautiful patterns with coloured paper.

3. <u>Masks</u> play important roles in African, North American and other cultures. For more than 5000 years, masks have been a characteristic African art form (see Figure 3.3) and a central feature of African ceremonial and social life. They validate political authority, initiate the youth into adulthood, protect communities from witchcraft, assist the spirits of the dead, teach social values and simply entertain. Each mask is part of a dynamic ensemble worn by an individual who, in assuming the role of the mask, is transformed from her/his everyday personality into an expression of a spirit force (see Figures 5.2, 5.3 & 5.4 for sample masks). Today, masks are often worn in public performances for general entertainment. Their changing role reflects social and cultural transformations occurring in the continent. In North America, masks play some role in First Nations cultural celebrations as well as Halloween. Children will be introduced to a wide variety of masks across Africa including their significance. They will learn the skill of using papiér mâche to fashion their preferred masks and they will reflect upon them.

4. <u>African mythology, *Ananse* stories and folk tales</u> form the basis of learning by "oral tradition." The verbal arts serve as mediums for entertainment, for expression of profound religious beliefs and for instruction in moral, intellectual, spiritual and emotional values. In Africa, oral tradition has been a means of passing on cultural heritage from one generation to another. From the many peoples of Africa and the diaspora come dramatic tales of native folk tales of honour and sadness, good and evil about animals, humans and super-humans (See Peggy Appiah, 1966). Specialists in *Ananse* Stories and African folklore will retell some dramatic stories that will rekindle the creativity and self-awareness of the children. The remaining time will be used to complete all unfinished works.

5. <u>Making prints from African symbols</u> has been part of the continent's artistic and cultural tradition particularly, in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Zaire. In many societies, cultural symbols have been employed as artefacts for interpreting and codifying knowledge and experience. The Ghanaian *adinkra* graphic symbols convey ideas about society, the spiritual world and the individual inner world (Figure 5.5). While *kente* is worn on joyful occasions, *adinkra* cloth is worn at functions for departing guests and at funeral ceremonies (Rattray; 1959, Chanda, 1993) (see Figure 5.6). In this lesson, students will study numerous symbols from Africa including their symbolic meanings. Children will provide their own T-shirts, choose their own symbol(s) and design them on "Copy-Trans Paper" which will transfer permanently to their T-shirts.

6. <u>Ancient Egypt and Nubia </u>are among the earliest known civilizations that flourished along the African Nile Valley (see Figure 2.5) over 5000 years ago (O'Connor, 1993; Krieger, Neil, & Reynolds, 1997; Hochfield, & Riefstahl, 1978). Studying Egypt (Kemite) and Nubia (Kush), the two earliest known African civilizations will therefore help lead us toward an overdue reassessment of Africa in terms of its contribution to world cultural history. Additionally, awareness of ancient African artistic and cultural achievements will not only inspire and empower young people of African descent but also challenge other youths to be critical of their "received" knowledge. This lesson will introduce students to Egypt and Nubia as birthplace of civilization and examine the legacy of artistic and cultural knowledge in their closely intertwined history.

Figure 5.1

Kente **Cloth, Ashanti People of Ghana**
Note: From Kofi and His Magic (p. 13) by M. Angelou, 1996, New York: Clarkson Potter Publishers.

Figure 5.2

Mask, We People, Ivory Coast (Early 20th Century)
<u>Note</u>: Source: <u>African Art Collection, Brooklyn Museum</u>, California: Pomegrante Calendars & Books
Rohnert Park, (1997).

Figure 5.3

Mask, Mende People, Sierra Leone
Sende Society Mask (Sowie), (Early 20th Century)
Note: Source: African Art Collection, Brooklyn Museum, California: Pomegrante Calendars & Books
Rohnert Park, (1997).

Figure 5.4

Mask, Lumbo People, Gabon (Late nineteenth - Early 20th Century)
<u>Note</u>: Source: <u>African Art Collection, Brooklyn Museum</u>, California: Pomegrante Calendars & Books Rohnert Park, (1997).

Figure 5.5

#	Symbol description	#	Symbol description
1	Gye Nyame (except God). *Symbol of the Omnipotence and immortality of God*	2	"Funtunfunafu denkyem funafu, won afuru bom nso worididi a na wo ko". *Sharing one stomach yet they fight over food*
3	Odenkyem (crocodile) da nsuo mu nso ɔhome nsuo na mframa. *The crocodile lives in water yet it breathes air, not water*	4	Bi-nka-bi. *Obi nka obi (bite not one another). Avoid conflicts Symbol of unity.*
5	Osrané (moon). *"Osrane nnfiti preko ntware man" It takes the moon sometime to go round the nation.*	6	Kramɔ-bɔne amma yanhu kramɔ-pa *We cannot tell a good mohammedan from a bad one The fake and the genuine look alike because of hypocricy*
7	Nsaa (a kind of blanket). *Nea onim nsaa na ɔtɔ nago*	8	Fofoo. *"Sɛ die fofoo pɛ ne sɛ gyinantwi abɔ bedie" What the fofoo plant wants is that the gyinantwi seeds should turn black. Symbol of jealousy*
9	Adinkra hene (Adinkra king). *Chief of all the adinkra designs, forms the basis of adinkera printing*	10	Dwanimen (Ram's horn). *"Dwonnin ye asise a ode n'akorana na ennye ne mben" It is the heart and not the horns that leads a ram to bully (Concealment).*
11	Mpuannum (Nkontimsofoɔ Puaa). *Five tuffs of hair A traditionally fashionable hair style*	12	Hye wo nhye (he who burns you be not burned). *Symbol of forgiveness—Turn the other cheek*
13	Nkonsonkonso (link or chain). *We are linked in both life and death. Those who share common blood relations never break apart Symbol of human relations.*	14	Owuo Atwedie Baako Nfo (obiara bewu). *All men shall climb the ladder of death*
15	Sepow: *(knife used in executions) This is thrust through the victim's cheeks to prevent his invoking a curse on the king*	16	Gyawu atiko. *This is said to be the design shaved by Gyawu, a once Bantamahene.*
17	Wawa Aba (the seed of the wawa tree). *'Wawa' is a hard wood used in carving hence its significance in Akan culture.*	18	Kuntinkantan (do not boast). *There is need for humility and servitude.*
19	Fihankra (the circular house) *This signifies safety in a home*	20	Nyame nwu na mawu (if Nyame God -- dies then I may die) *Perpetual existence.*
21	Ohene niwa (in the king's eye). *The king has lots of eyes and nothing is hidden from him*	22	Akoma (the heart) "Nya akoma" heart) *Have patience Symbol of endurance*

Adinkra Graphic Symbols, Ashanti People, Ghana

Figure 5.6
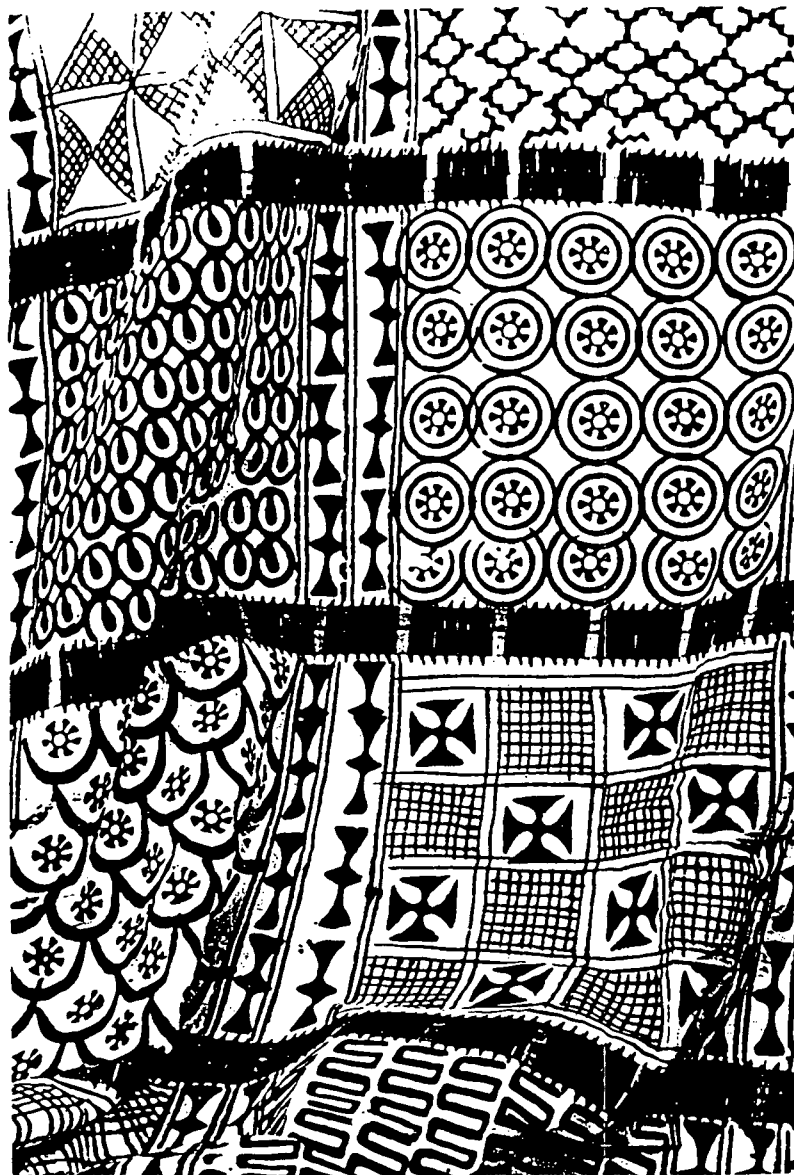
Adinkra Cloth, Ashanti People, Ghana

7. The introduction to the Royal Empires of Old Ghana, Mali and Songhai is important for Black/African-Canadian self-identification, self-esteem and existence, as well as the "multicultural literacy" of all students. Africa has contributed immensely toward world history and civilization as is evident from the empires of Western Sudan and many more. The royal kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, Songhai and their ancient cities of Awdaghast, Gao, Jenne, Kumbi Saleh, Taghaza, Tangier, Timbuktu and Walata thrived from 500 to 1700 C.E. (see Figure 2.6). At their peak, these empires and cultures rivalled those of Europe at the time (McKissack, 1994; Davidson, 1977). Unfortunately, this history has long been frozen. Most accounts of African peoples have, in the past, emerged from outside the Black/African community, as such, they interpret Black/African societies and histories in terms of their deficiencies, real or imagined, as opposed to their achievements. This lesson will introduce children to brief histories of these empires and their major contributions to Africa and the rest of the world. The knowledge of Black/African history and artistic accomplishments will not only stimulate the minds of the youths to dig deeper and explore for even more information on Blacks and other ethnic minorities, but also inspire them to be critical of their "received" knowledge. Furthermore, awareness of collective human achievements can promote healthy relationships among students of all backgrounds.

Content Selection and Implementation

Curriculum considerations always include questions that centre on issues of inclusion and exclusion with respect to content selection. This presents several conceptual and practical problems particularly when dealing with a complex heterogeneous and multi-ethnic Black/African Canadian community with no defining boundaries. Some art educators (Hart, 1991; Jagodzinski, 1982) suggest an emphasis on multiple values or aesthetic pluralism because a universal aesthetic is hard to find. Aesthetic pluralism assumes the accessibility of understanding art multiculturally and cross-culturally, specifically in terms of the categories and intensions of its producers and consumers. While the emphasis on multiple values is useful to multicultural curriculum, there is ample evidence of general characteristics of African art and culture, as well as common sociological themes that reflect all art productions. These considerations merit interest as content in a multicultural art curriculum. To achieve greater social relevance, the study of African art forms must be contextualized. Comparing the traditional weaving, mask making, sculpture, folklore and folk tales from selected African societies can provide insights into the relationships between the geographic, religious, political and technological context of cultures and the influence of context on the art forms they produce and cherish. The principal emphasis in content selection should be placed on similarities among the various African cultures rather than on differences, and on

positive achievements rather than on deficiencies. This does not mean that differences must be ignored; rather differences should be celebrated as, essentially, ways of expressing common human values. In teaching masks of Africa, for example, the teacher could discuss African masks as they relate to the masks of other cultures (i.e., the Northwest Coast First Nations, the Chinese and Kwakuitl).

Other important issues that were also taken into account in designing this unit included the following: 1) experiences that are likely to meet the goals of this project; 2) content that would grab and sustain the attention of students; 3) what is affordable and feasible; 4) the age group and school grades of children participating in this study; and 5) input from parents, community members and learners. The activities have been carefully selected so that cultural similarities and themes among the various African ethnic groups are brought to the fore and the target culture of Black/African-Canadians presented in a positive light. Due to time and structural limitations, many important elements of traditional African culture could not be included in this unit.

Scope, Suggestions and Materials

The lessons outlined here have been organized in sequential fashion leading from simple to complex ideas and activities. The lessons were designed to fit into a two-week period. The original plan was for a much longer period to provide children with a broader background of Black/African history, art, and the geography of the continent. Since children's interests could not be sustained with the initial theoretical presentations during the pilot study, practical activities were interspersed with theoretical presentations during the implementation of the main program.

Using participatory research, members of the African community were involved in the initial planning and decision-making. Parents and the advisory team were consulted for their opinions on the choice of content through parent's forums organized by the MFC. While some parents contributed by providing their children with resource materials, others were involved through the provision of transportation for their children and through actual class visits and participation. Two members from the African community volunteered their expertise by teaching two of the lessons involving African

geography and Black/African history. The unit encouraged students to establish connections between the arts of Africa and those of other cultures and sub-cultures.

<u>Setting for the Art and Cultural Workshops</u>

The MFC was instrumental with the implementation of this program. Firstly, it provided the sites for this research by allowing me to conduct my study at the Centre and assisted me in securing a second research site at an east Vancouver School. Secondly, the MFC provided nearly all the equipment, materials, and resources I needed to carry out the project. It advertised the program, provided transportation for participants and arranged for a venue within the Britannia Community Centre.

All of the lessons took place in the art studio at the Britannia Community Centre under the MFC's auspices. The MFC occupies a space that is not large and equipped enough to accommodate an art program of this nature. The studio space arranged at Britannia could accommodate the 30 children who participated in this project. The room was narrow, rectangular and well lit. One wall was completely filled with large glass windows while the remaining were decorated with visuals, and occupied by an electric kiln, cabinets and cupboards. The classroom configuration was reorganized several times to suit each lesson. On the first day of class, attendance was 21. This number increased to 25 on the second day, reaching 30 by the fourth day (see Table 4.1). Details of the African Art and Cultural Curriculum Unit can be accessed from Appendix I.

Profiles of Instructors for the African Art and Cultural Program (AACEP)

Before proceeding to the African Art and Cultural Education Unit, I will introduce the instructors to enable the reader to have a better understanding of their backgrounds and concerns.

<u>The Researcher</u> was the principal curriculum designer and instructor in five of the seven activities/lessons that comprised the African Art and Cultural Education Unit. He is a graduate student in Art Education, Department of Curriculum Studies, University of British Columbia. He is an art teacher and a former lecturer at the College of Art, University of Science and Technology in Ghana. While pursuing his graduate studies in Canada, he has had the opportunity to teach a course in art education at University of

British Columbia, as well as African art and culture at a number of high schools and art/community centres in Greater Vancouver. Having three sons, he worries about the future of African-Canadian youth in Canada, as the education systems often lead them to disengage from school with its attendant consequences.

Mr. DAK was a volunteer instructor for "Activity Six: "The History of Ancient Egypt and Nubia." He was originally from Uganda, but was trained as a historian in Ontario. He is a social activist interested in advancing the course of Black youth in Canada. He is the current president of the African Canadian Association of British Columbia (ACABC). He is also the editor of the newsletter, *African Drum,* which features stories, news items and events of interest to the African-Canadian community.

Ms. CAM was a volunteer instructor for Activity One: "The Land of Africa." She is a teacher by profession and immigrated to Canada from Uganda. Ms Cam has been an active member of the African Canadian Community in Vancouver and a regular participant of the African Women's Program at the MFC. She has been a coordinator of an African Youth Program funded by the Ministry of Multiculturalism and Immigration. She is a member of Board of Directors of the African-Canadian Development and Information Services Association (ACDISA) in Vancouver.

Summary of Description of Art and Cultural Curriculum Implementation Process

The African-centred multicultural art curriculum is an interdisciplinary unit grounded in curriculum theory and theories of art education. The unit is influenced by Africentric philosophy. In the African context, art, theory and practice are inseparable from everyday life. The meaning of art is conceptual and, therefore, requires a great deal of contextual knowledge to understand the diverse African cultures. Seven lessons formed the content of this curriculum unit for Black students and students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Issues of content selection and implementation, scope, structural and physical limitations are addressed in the curriculum process. Input from members of the Black/African-Canadian community, parents, students, an art teacher and two MFC's cross-cultural facilitators influenced the development of the curriculum unit, implementation and the data collection process.

CHAPTER SIX

PERCEPTIONS OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

This chapter discusses the research subjects' own perceptions of the education system in British Columbia, Canada, as were evident from their stories during the interviews. The data collection approach uncovered vivid information not only about perceptions of the education system, but also about the community's needs and how they could be addressed in order to provide greater opportunity for success. Research on students' perceptions of their education can provide a great deal of insight for critical multicultural educators.

As shown in Figure 6.1, the data obtained from participant observation and interviews are organized under seven major themes that emerged from the literature and during the analysis of the data. Each theme provides different insight into the Black/African-Canadian community's experience and perception of the education system, and their children's position within it. Quotes taken from the discussions and interviews have been used extensively to highlight the themes. As indicated in Appendix III on the Consent Form, all real names of participants were replaced with pseudonyms. The methodology is geared for producing self-explanatory data. No theme is exclusive of other issues. For in the lives of those who shared their stories, the situation of the Black/African-Canadian learner is complex. Therefore, the issues and themes outlined here overlap and form a complex tangle.

While this section summarizes what people view as the major barriers to Black/African-Canadian participation and achievement in school, most importantly, it also includes their suggestions for improving the education system to serve the needs of all Canadians, especially Black/African-Canadian learners. It is important to mention that the views expressed in this chapter can only be attributed with certainty to the students, parents and teachers involved in the study. They are not to be taken as the views of all members of the Black/African-Canadian community in Vancouver or elsewhere. That being said, however, I must point out that the particular educational problems faced by the African-Canadian students in this study are not unique. Other studies on Black/African-Canadians have shown that similar barriers affect the education of African-Canadian children in Ontario and Nova Scotia (i.e., BLAC, 1994; Braithwaite, 1989;

Figure 6.1

The diagram below identifies seven major themes which emerged from the analysis of the information, with each theme providing different insights into the Black community's perception of multiculturalism and the education system, and the Black/African–Canadian learner's position within it.
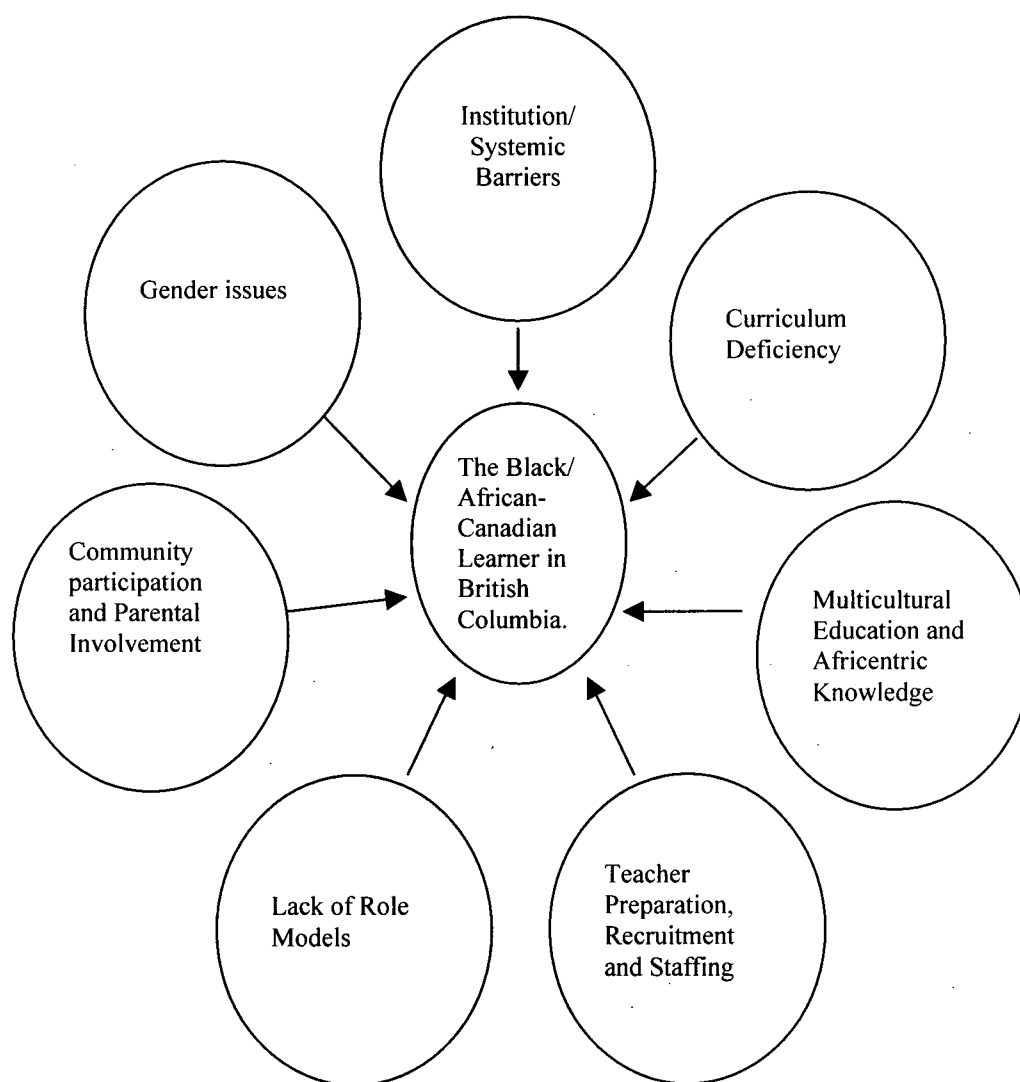
Perceptions of Multiculturalism and the Education System in British Columbia

CABE, 1992; Dei, Holmes, Mazzuca, McIsaac & Campbell, 1995; Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac & Zine, 1997). As a result, we can gain useful lessons for other contexts from this study. Some insight obtained from these interviews will prove beneficial to multicultural education and curriculum reform. In order to place participants in a meaningful context of this discussion, Table 6.1 provides the background information of Black/African-Canadian parents and MFC cross-cultural facilitators involved in this study. Out of the eight parents interviewed, two were MFC cross-cultural facilitators and six Black/African-Canadian parents. One of the parents was a single mother. Overall the parents/MFC facilitators comprised five mothers and three fathers.

Curriculum Deficiency

Curriculum refers to the total educational process, including goals, programs, objectives, methods, patterns of organization of instruction and of learning, and materials and resources used. As Canada becomes more ethnically diverse, many communities are demanding more broad-based curriculum and values that represent ethnic-cultural diversity in Canada. Because the curriculum in most schools is skewed toward a European-Canadian perspective, it excludes the lived realities and perspectives of many students (Banks, 1993, 1995; Nieto, 1996). Textbooks and other materials reinforce this bias, making the development of an inclusive curriculum even more difficult. Furthermore, multicultural education, for the most part, has either been ignored or treated superficially. Black/African-Canadians and other visible minorities have questioned the absence of a curriculum that is culturally relevant or reflective of their experiences.

<u>Experiences and Perceptions of Black/African-Canadian Students</u>

Black/African-Canadian students unable to find relevance to their own lives in the curriculum find it difficult to connect with the educational experience. In responding to the question of representation of Black/Africans in school curriculum and textbooks, Sarah, a 17-year-old grade 11 student from Uganda, made the following comments:

> **SAP:** To what extent are Blacks represented in school curricula, textbooks and in the education system in general?

Table 6.1

Background Information of Black/African-Canadian Parents/MFC Cross-Cultural Facilitators*				
Date for Individual Interviews: June. 1999 – February 2000				
No.	Name & Gender	Occupation	Country of Origin	Immigration Date
1	Clara (F)	Teacher	Uganda	1990
2	Eugenia** (F)	Social worker	Uganda	1992
3	Gifty (F)	Adm. Secretary	Kenya	1989
4	Marcia (F)	Foster parent	Ghana	1989
5	Fatia** (F)	Social worker	Canada	Born in Canada
6	Mark (M)	Teacher	Uganda	1994
7	Sala (M)	Priest	Uganda	1989
8	Tom (M)	Security guard	Sudan	1990

* The MFC serves as an agency for African women's struggle for self-determination and adaptation in their new and adopted society. Among the areas of concern given top priority by the women are: parenting in the Canadian context; knowledge about child development, intergenerational conflict and role dislocation (e.g., as mothers without support of extended family); acquisition of leadership skills; and education with regards to unique social and health concerns of African mothers with children. As a community-based social service provider, the MFC involves the women in periodic evaluation of its programs to ensure that culturally appropriate and up-to-date services are provided to the African-community.

** MFC Cross-Cultural Facilitators

I do not think that Black people are represented in much of what we learn at school, from curriculum and textbooks to staffing. I think we need Black teachers who could serve as role models and encourage Black kids to learn better. 119 (S. 08)[7]

Maryam, another 17-year-old student from Sudan, reiterated this view by commenting that:

I don't see that knowledge about Blacks and Africans are seriously included in the school curriculum. We learned about Kenya and ancient Egyptians from school, but I learned that they were not Blacks. I have learned from the African history class that the Egyptians were Africans who initiated the birth of civilization. 118 (S. 08)

The above quotes encapsulate the overall feeling the students seemed to convey regarding their perception of schooling and the organization of the curriculum. The comments demonstrate that Black students are conscious that the curriculum is never neutral but represents what is thought to be important and necessary knowledge by those who are dominant in society. The exclusion of Black/African content from the curriculum was a concern of many students who felt that the dominant curriculum was less relevant to their lived experiences and needs.

On the issue of multicultural education, the students expressed their views on how inclusion and promotion of Black/African perspectives should be carried out:

SAP: What do you think your school needs to do in order to promote multicultural education?

Eden, a 15-year-old grade 10 student from Eritrea, demanded some educational and social reform:

The school should hire qualified Black teachers, as well as include knowledge about Blacks and Africans in the school curriculum. [It should] represent Blacks in a positive light by learning about their achievements together with their failures. Do not show only pictures of war, starvation and diseases on TV. 157 (S. 10)

Estella, a 13-year-old grade 7 student from Uganda, made an argument for the inclusion of minority teachers:

I think my school should embrace multicultural education by including knowledge about African-Canadians and Black History, Chinese, Native Indians and Europeans. It should also hire more

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[7] 119 (S. 08): S = Black/African-Canadian Students' interview transcript/document; P = Black Parents/MFC Cross-cultural Facilitators' interview transcript/document; T = School Principal/Art Teacher's interview transcript/document; N = The East Vancouver Elementary Students' interview transcript/document.

119 (S. 08): 08 represents question #8 from the interview guide for Black/African-Canadian Students (see Appendix 2 for interview questions).

119 (S. 08): 119 represents the reference # of a text unit in the Black/African-Canadian Students' document (S) or, the file # for a response of an interviewee (Stella) to the interview question #8 (see Chapter Four, sub-heading "Data Interpretation from a Critical Multicultural Education Perspective" for further explanation).

> Blacks and minority teachers to show that Canada is a multicultural country. Teachers from non-European backgrounds may know their history and culture better than others. Otherwise, Black and minorities would be disadvantaged. 572 (S. 37)

These comments from the students intersect with the goals of multicultural education, which emphasize the inclusion of diverse cultures not only in curriculum, but also in staffing and hiring practices (Banks, 1995; Dei, 1996; Nieto, 1996). Eden and Estella touched on one of the critical issues of multiculturalism that hinges on employment equity. The virtual absence of Black teachers in British Columbia classrooms was a recurring issue. Eden raised the argument for a balanced and fair representation of Blacks in school curricula, textbooks and in the hiring of teachers. He pointed out the need for schools to validate the various experiences and achievements of Blacks in the curriculum. Again, he stressed the relevance of cultural education to his life by linking it with his self-esteem. Eden, therefore, raised the need for multicultural education to promote self-knowledge through the study of students' cultures and histories.

Feelings about the negative and unfair representation of Black/Africans in the school system and in the media were re-echoed by Estella:

> Sometimes knowledge in textbooks is [biased] against Blacks. I do not see many positive pictures of Blacks, Black authors, Black artists and other achievers in the books we use at school. When I read stories or watch a documentary on slavery, starvation, diseases and war in Africa I get discouraged. It scares me and makes me hate going to Africa. However, I believe there are good things happening in Africa that we do not know. 492 (S. 32)

Many students felt that schools, in some sense reinforce the negative campaign against Blacks through the use of textbooks and resources that legitimate the status of Whites, particularly White males, while maintaining bias and stereotypes against Blacks and other minorities. Estella's discontent with the educational system over the lack of Black role models, and with the Western news media over the representation of Africa, was a sentiment that was shared by many of the students interviewed. Lack of representation in curriculum and in school life explains why many Black students experience a sense of invisibility. This, in turn, reinforces the power and privilege of White students.

When asked specifically about whether African art features in their learning experiences in the visual arts at school, students were almost unanimous in pointing out the absence of African art and cultural activities in their various schools. Many of them claimed that their knowledge of African art and culture originates from their homes, the various African communities and the MFC. Dave, a 16-year-old

grade 11 student from Uganda, shared his experience in visual arts at school:

> **SAP**: Do you have any African art and cultural learning experiences besides those at the MFC? If yes, what is it, and where did you learn them?

> **Dave**: At school, we do pure western art stuff like drawing, painting, sculpture and art history. We have not yet done anything specific on African art. 213 (S. 14)

Lillian, a 13-year-old grade 7 student from Uganda, responded:

> No, I do not remember doing any African art in school or at home. We sometimes do some First Nation's art and celebrate Potlatch, but we do not have anything specific on Blacks. My parents, however, teach us African culture through their language, music and food from Uganda. 210 (S. 14)

Lillian's response reinforced the notion of exclusion of Black/African-Canadian perspectives in school curriculum. It also gives an indication that, despite the absence of Blacks from the visual art curriculum, her school opens up to First Nation's art and is receptive to other forms of artistic and cultural experience. This is a positive development. Nevertheless, attempts to integrate First Nation's art or other forms of artistic and cultural experience without the necessary institutional support led to tokenism. This piecemeal approach to transforming the art curriculum was undermined by structural barriers. These set-backs, however, should not be considered as valid reasons for art teachers not to pursue multicultural art education.

> Eden and Stella shared their experiences in visual art, African art and history in Canada:

> **Eden**: No. This is the first time I have participated in [an] African art and history workshop in Canada. Apart from the MFC, I have no African art experience. 217 (S. 14)

> **Sarah**: No. I have not previously had the chance to participate in African art and culture in other settings. But I do learn about Africa and Uganda through my parents at home and on TV. It is at the MFC that we directly engage in African art activities. 212 (S. 14)

John, a 15-year-old grade 10 student from Uganda, reiterated the general marginalization of Blacks and Africentric knowledge in the school curriculum. However, he felt that multiculturalism, to some degree, is being practiced in his school:

> We do not learn much about Black history and African art at school although we learned a bit about Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King. Illustrations and examples in our textbooks centre mostly on Whites. Perhaps this is because Canada is dominated by Euro-Canadians. There are a couple of teachers from Asian backgrounds because there are many Asians in Vancouver. 127 (S. 08)

Given that the curriculum encompasses the total educational process, many changes would need to occur

in the school environment, besides the curriculum content, in order to achieve true inclusive education.

Some of these suggested changes are discussed later in this chapter.

Perceptions of Parents/MFC Cross-cultural Facilitators

All the six parents and the two MFC cross-cultural facilitators interviewed were passionate in

expressing their opinions on the school curriculum, the general school organization and their children's

place in them. The general feeling was that the school curriculum is Eurocentric, and does not recognize

and affirm Black/African-Canadian culture and experience:

> **SAP**: What do you think is the status of non-Western art and culture in the mainstream curriculum?

Mark, an African-Canadian parent who is also a high school teacher in Greater Vancouver Regional

District, responded that:

> School curricula in Canada is Eurocentric because it was designed with Europeans in mind. There is the need for change because of changing society. Unfortunately, the rate of change in the demographics has not had a corresponding impact on the curriculum. 191 (P. 22)

Marcia, a foster parent, opined that:

> The art curriculum affirms the life, values and practices of Western Europeans who form the dominant cultural group in Canada. Multicultural education does not mean anything other than a human relations exercise. Cultural inequalities are not addressed in the curriculum. 195 (P. 22)

Gina, a parent and an administrative secretary, responded that:

> . . . the West has dominated every sphere of life in the last 400 years or so because of their power. The marginalization of non-Western art in the school curriculum and in the world is not any different from what goes on in other areas. Just like Native American or First Nations art, African art is often referred to as crafts or folk art, and it is not accorded the respect it deserves in the curriculum. 192 (P. 22)

> . . . People outside of the Black community make decisions about what is most important for students to learn without much consideration of the needs of the Black/African-Canadian community or other minorities. What is sad is that Canada is officially a multicultural country but this is not reflected in the curriculum. 03 (P. 01)

In response to the question of the extent to which schools are providing children with the

necessary knowledge about their artistic and cultural heritage, Clara, a teacher by profession, was

concerned that teachers were ill equipped to deal with the needs of Black/African-Canadian learners. She

revealed that:

. . . my children are not receiving the necessary cultural knowledge necessary for full participation. First, which teachers are educating my children? They are Anglo-Saxons, excuse me to say, old middle class Canadians with the "right" accents, values and Canadian ways. The education system has not been progressive enough to accept "foreigners" unless they speak with the "right" accent and have exceptional skills in mathematics and the sciences. 52 (P. 06)

These comments clearly demonstrate the concerns of the parents about the education system and the

curriculum in particular. Mark stressed the need for curriculum reform based on demographic changes in

British Columbia and Canada. Marcia and Gina spoke of the continuous marginalization of non-Western

art in the mainstream art curriculum in spite of Canada's multicultural education policy. Gina further

lamented on the general lack of consultation with Blacks and other cultural communities in the educational

process and how this could be reconciled with Canada's official multicultural policy. The demand for

curriculum inclusion and school reform should be viewed as a social justice issue, and in light of Canada's

multiculturalism and democratic principles.

Parents had various shades of opinion concerning the question of inclusive education:

SAP: What is your opinion about the increasing calls for inclusive education in British Columbia and other parts of Canada?

Mark: Depending on one's situation and perception, what we mean by inclusive education may vary. To some, inclusive education is helping children of different ethnic groups to get along. This does not go far enough to address racism and exclusion in education. Given the history of cultural exclusion, I think the calls for inclusive education are relevant; however, multicultural education should be all encompassing in content, teaching methodology, staffing and hiring practices. 29 (P. 04)

Cephas, an African-Canadian father and priest, felt that:

The school system does not provide Black kids with the tools to deal with everyday life situations. Black/African-Canadian youths have to deal with hostility as well as covert discrimination on a day-to-day basis, irrespective of when they migrated to Canada. . . . I think it is high time the school and the community deal with positive aspects of African culture and history in order to help children understand their identity and enhance their self-esteem. . . . 13 (P. 02)

Eugenia, an MFC Cross-cultural Facilitator, lamented that:

. . . The school system has not responded favourably to calls for multicultural education, especially from the point of view of African-Canadians. Our children are being lost and assimilated into the popular youth culture. Educationally, they are disorientated and alienated. Our children need to know this, and focus more on their academic future rather than on the too many negative attractions of pop culture. They need to know their culture and history in order to counteract the negative perceptions about themselves and their heritage. 45 (P. 05)

Mark's perception of multicultural education falls in line with the conception of multicultural education in

this study. It is all encompassing, inclusive and critical in content, methodology and staffing. Cephas

pointed out that cultural literacy is crucial for enabling Black children to deal effectively with everyday

life situations. Cultural assimilation was not perceived as an attractive option since Blacks and minorities

are often left out economically and politically. Eugenia, who insisted that African-Canadian children

should know their history and cultural heritage, also emphasized this point. It would be naïve to attribute

the failures and successes of Black students to the curriculum alone; other structural and institutional

factors are involved. Nevertheless, the data in this study suggest that school curricula play a leading role in

determining the level of involvement of Black/African-Canadians.

Perceptions of School Principal/Art Teacher

The role of teachers in the education process cannot be underestimated. Both the School Principal

and the Art Teacher expressed their views about the education system and the place of Black learners. On

the question of curriculum inclusion, both educators held a progressive opinion on the issue. They

indicated their support for multicultural education, and suggested the need to broaden the scope of the

current school curriculum to include the contributions of other cultures represented in Canadian

classrooms:

> **SAP**: Do you think multicultural education should be fully integrated into school curricula irrespective of the ethnic makeup of the school population?
>
> **Principal**: I think multicultural education should be integrated into the entire curriculum. For example, in math lessons, exemplars could be drawn from the various ethnic groups and cultures represented in the schools . . . Multiculturalism is implemented throughout the school year in the curriculum and through activities like food fairs, cultural costume fairs, festivals and in games. 05 (T. 02)
>
> **Teacher**: Yes, multicultural education needs to be fully integrated in all subject areas and in school organization in order for it to have the needed impact on children and society. I think that is possible, although we have not been able to accomplish that. We are doing some multiculturalism in our own small way. 06 (T. 02)

The attitudes and perceptions of the educators at the School towards the inclusive curriculum are contrary

to the attitudes of some educators and multicultural education critics discussed in the Review of Literature.

Critics have argued that the inclusion of cultures and traditions other than those of the founding fathers

may devalue the curriculum or threaten national unity (i.e., Bissoondath, 1994). The views expressed by

the Principal and the Art Teacher debunked the assimilationist's argument.

In responding to the question about the justification for multicultural education, they suggested

that an inclusive curriculum could engender healthy inter-group relations:

> **SAP**: In what ways can multicultural education be used to improve inter-personal and inter-group relations in school?

> **Principal**: . . . It allows other groups to understand and be aware of the cultural differences in our society. It enhances respect and inter-group harmony. 08 (T. 03)

> **Principal**: I think there is a lot to be gained from multiculturalism. I believe it should be embedded in every subject. If a teacher is not teaching multiculturalism in his/her lesson, then perhaps, the teacher may not understand much about it. It is there in science, math, social studies, stories, music, etc. I think the far better way to teach it is to integrate it as a part of the curriculum. When it becomes part of our everyday program, it becomes more effective than when it is forced on students as a separate curriculum area to be taught. 20 (T. 07)

> **Teacher**: Multicultural education can improve relations between people. The more you understand one another the better you get along. Unfortunately, there is something called racism, which I think, happens in every school. But if you address it in a positive way, you can reduce its effects. Multiculturalism facilitates healthy inter-group relations. By learning about other people's culture through art, festivals and cultural celebrations, children become familiar with those cultures and develop positive attitudes towards people from these cultures. 09 (T. 03)

Conceptualization of multicultural education at the School is based on the human relations model

discussed in Chapter Two. This approach to multicultural education, while it could foster positive human

relations in the School, has a marginal impact in addressing institutional discrimination and racism. As has

been the case in many situations where multicultural education has been implemented, the focus was on

the celebration of cultural festivals, food fairs and holidays rather than on sensitive issues of culture, race,

gender, education and power, and their interactions.

On the question of how the Ministry of Education's curriculum guides are applied in multicultural

education, the Principal explained that:

> **SAP**: How does the school curriculum conform to the tenets in the Integrated Resource Package (IRP), the Ministry of Education's curriculum guides?

> **Principal**: Well, I don't know how much knowledge the teachers have of the IRP. The IRP has a great deal of multiculturalism in it. But if a teacher is swayed too far from the IRP, by over indulging in multiculturalism, other curricula contents might suffer. 17 (T. 06)

> **Teacher**: I try to abide by the IRP curriculum [guide], but there is more room for teachers to explore and interpret the IRP. Multicultural education could be implemented in different ways in all subject areas as part of the transformation process. 18B (T. 06)

The approach to curriculum inclusion described above is not different from what many Black/African-Canadian students described in their respective schools. This approach divorces multicultural education from deeper levels of literacy, and the in-depth meanings of culture and power. The tokenistic approach to curriculum inclusion engenders further marginalization of minority cultural knowledge forms by moving them away from curriculum centrality.

In spite of the perceived usefulness of curriculum inclusion, it is limited by several factors, as the Principal's comments portray. The multiplicity of students' needs in most schools militates against culturally specific modifications in all cases. Because many classrooms in British Columbia and other parts of Canada are multicultural, with students from a diversity of ethnic, social class and linguistic backgrounds, it is difficult, and perhaps unrealistic, to assume that complete culturally compatible instructions can be provided for all children. Nevertheless, teachers who are genuinely interested in infusing multicultural objectives into their disciplines could adopt eclectic approaches. These approaches incorporate transformative political agendas embedded in models such as human relations, cultural pluralism, cultural group studies and social reconstruction. These models were discussed in Chapter One under the conceptions of multicultural education.

Summary

It is clear from the forgoing discussion that curricula in many schools are at odds with the needs of learners. This mismatch is evident from the narratives of the Black/African-Canadian students and their parents who perceive the curriculum as less relevant to their lives and lifestyles. Those further from the lives of Black students and their communities generally make decisions about what is most important for students to learn. These decisions let students know whether the knowledge they or their parents value is accorded prestige within the formal curriculum. Similarly, textbooks, an important component of the curriculum in most schools, are perceived as reinforcing the dominance of Euro-Canadian perspectives and sustaining stereotypes of Blacks and ethnic minorities. The curriculum as a document is hardly subjected to scrutiny by schools. As a result, the oppressive aspects of curriculum are left unchallenged to the detriment of those outside of the mainstream of society. Bringing these issues to the limelight is an

essential challenge for multicultural education. School boards, school administrators and teachers must face these curricula issues head on in order to bring about the needed reform.

Institutional Barriers: Racism, Discrimination, Stereotyping and Media Bias

Schools are institutions that respond to, and reflect, the larger society (Apple, 1982). Apple asserts that schools and educational institutions do not create the class system as much as reproduce it from one generation to the next, resulting in the process of cultural reproduction. It is therefore not surprising that institutional and systemic barriers find expression in schools in much the same way that they find their way into society as a whole. Although racism was not a pervasive theme in the narratives of students, there were moments when students narrated experiences of discrimination and what they referred to as subtle forms of racism. In this section, I will be discussing racist incidents and forms of racism that the students and their parents discussed in the transcripts.

<u>Experiences and Perceptions of Black/African-Canadian Students</u>

When the Black/African-Canadian students discussed their lived experiences in Canada, compared with their home or original countries, they pointed out the advantages and disadvantages of living in both situations. All the 15 students (see Table 4 for students' backgrounds) acknowledged the material and economic benefits of living in Canada. "I like Canada" was the sentiment students expressed most about their social life in Canada:

> **SAP**: How do you feel about your social and educational experiences in Canada, compared with your original country?
>
> **Maryam**: I think there are more freedoms in Canada than in Saudi Arabia or Sudan from where I arrived in Canada. I have the freedom to play basketball, volleyball, baseball, soccer and other sports. Sometimes, we do stupid things because of our freedom. If we were in Saudi, many of us would be in jail by now. In spite of the liberty in Canada, I think it is much more difficult for Black people to succeed in school or in the workplace due to discrimination. 22 (S. 02)

Ronald, a 15-year-old grade 10 student from Uganda, had the following to say about Canada:

> I like my life in Canada because I have everything I need. However, being an African-Canadian male, you can easily get into trouble or even be killed by police or gangsters. Even though life in Uganda is difficult, nobody would victimize you because of your colour. It is always nice to know that your extended family is there for you - your cousins, grandparents and aunts. Racism is what I hate from school. When some students tease you with racial slurs, the teachers can't stop them.

Sometimes I get into fights with them but some teachers would think you are a troublemaker. 27 (S. 02)

Emma, an 18-year-old grade 12 student from Ghana, also expressed his views on Canada:

I like Canada because I have more freedoms and opportunities than in Ghana. . . . But, the education system is hard for new immigrants. What I don't like is the fact that some teachers exhibit racist attitudes toward me. They pass negative comments against me in front of my class. I put in more effort in certain subjects but do not get the marks I think I deserve. . . . 30 (S. 02)

Dave: Life in Canada is great. We have computers and other high-tech facilities at school. I have friends from many countries, although I sometimes face problems at school. People pick on you and tease you all the time because you are Black. I think life in Uganda is also great. People are very nice . . . 25A (S. 02)

The above comments from Maryam, Ronald, Emma and Dave show that they recognized their privileged economic position in Canada compared with their home countries. They also acknowledged that they have more freedoms and rights in Canada. Nevertheless, they were unequivocal in expressing their displeasure with what they believe to be acts of racism and discrimination in their respective schools. Emma links his unsatisfactory performance in schools with the racist attitude of some teachers. Three other students, namely Maryam, Hannah and Dixie, reiterated this issue. When I asked students about their understanding of "racism" and whether or not they experienced racism in their schools, their responses were varied. Nine out of 15 claimed to have encountered some form of racism or racist attitudes in their schools:

SAP: What do you understand by racism? Have you ever experienced racism in your school? If yes, how does it feel to experience racism at school?

Maryam, a 17-year-old grade 11 student responded that:

Racism is discrimination against people because they are from a different culture or of a different skin colour. Yes, sometimes I feel that there is discrimination in my class. I try my best on my schoolwork only to be awarded average or less than average grades like "C" or "C-." Some teachers never give me a good grade no matter the effort I make. This is very discouraging and I am not sure whether I can describe it as racism. I cry because my parents are not happy with my grades. 479 (S. 31)

Hannah, a 14-year-old grade 8 student from Sudan, lamented:

Some of my teachers sometimes make me feel that I am stupid. They ignore me in class and/or use discouraging comments about Blacks in the classroom. They give me low marks for my work in English and Math and tell me it is okay because other students have difficulties in English and Math. My parents get mad at me. They think I am not learning . . . Racism means discrimination against somebody because of his/her background. When your skin is dark and your face is not smooth, you are considered ugly by your friends. 475 (S. 31)

Dixie, a 14-year-old grade 9 student from Uganda, also gave his comments about discrimination in school:

> Yes. Some teachers mostly favour girls when it comes to the award of marks. They give them more chances so as not to hurt their feelings. They take it harder on the boys because their feelings are stronger. Boys can talk back and stand up to teachers. Most teachers do not like that. 531 (S. 34)

> **Emma**: Racism is hatred and discrimination against someone because of his/her culture or skin colour. Yes, I have encountered racism at school. A Chinese boy called me "nigger" at school when they wanted to pick a fight with me. A teacher also insulted me because I was involved in an incident with a White girl. Since that incident, I have never felt comfortable in her class. She gave me grade "C-" in her subject. I hate the school altogether because of some teachers' attitudes. 487 (S. 31)

It is clear from these responses of the students that they are partly trying to blame their academic failures on their teachers who discourage them by giving them lower grades. Some students felt that, on average, Black students are awarded lower marks than White students for the same quality of work. This is a very serious perception on the part of the students and one that has serious implications for the education of Black/African-Canadians. The question is: How do we explain the generally low academic achievement of Black children in our school system? Should it be blamed on students' personal deficiencies, or is it because of structural barriers and structural inequities in school and society? It is my belief that the vast majority of teachers in Vancouver schools do not consider themselves racists. Therefore, most would be shocked to find out that many Black students impute racist attitudes in the manner they handle their classes, including evaluation of students. Nevertheless, these feelings among Black students are real and should be addressed in one way or the other.

The narratives of the students concerning their academic evaluation tend to personalize racism, indicating their failure to see it as a systemic or institutional issue. Their experiences must be understood as part of a long history of discrimination, exclusion, insensitivity, racism and systemic barriers against Blacks and visible minorities in the school system. The claim by Dixie that some teachers favoured girls over boys in the award of marks is contradicted by the fact that two out of the four students who complained about their marks were girls. Besides, all seven girls interviewed claimed to have encountered some form of racism or discrimination at school. Female students who claimed to have experienced various forms of discrimination and prejudice among classmates included Gifty, Estella and Lillian. Gifty

is a 14½-year-old grade 9 student from Uganda:

> . . . My experience of racism was not in my current school, but in kindergarten. I had no friends because I was Black. My only friend was the teacher. I experienced the same in grade one. In grade two, I had Sam, Victoria and Hannah as my friends. My Japanese, Chinese and Philippine friends were teased because they looked different. I hated kindergarten and grade one. 477 (S. 31)

Estella and Lillian reported that they often encounter rejection and isolation from some of their classmates, who either refuse to play with them or call them names. The stories of Gifty, Estella and Lillian, who attend separate schools, show how racial prejudices affect schools and children, even among classmates. It is important to distinguish racism from prejudice. Both racists and prejudiced people make judgements, which, most of the time, are based on wrong assumptions. Racists carry their judgements one step further, because they have the power to implement their prejudices. When students feel that the school would not protect them against racial harassment and hostility, they either take the law into their own hands, or withdraw in fear, often with devastating consequences.

It is worth noting that the same students who complained of the racist attitudes of some teachers also had their favourite teachers in their respective schools. In spite of the negative experiences of nine Black students in the school system, four of the students felt that race was not a burning issue in their school experience, although there were isolated incidents of discrimination. Susie, a 12-year-old grade 7 student of Sudanese and Saudi Arabian background, pointed out that:

> . . . There is no racism against me in my school. I have many friends at school from different countries. The principal warned everybody not to call other people names. All my friends are nice to me. 481 (S. 31)

> **Dave**: Racism means to think you are better than somebody, or to hate other people and their culture. I don't think I have experienced racism from my teachers or friends. Some of my teachers are really nice. 482 (S. 31)

> **Ronald**: . . . I have not experienced racism in my school, though, sometime, I feel there is favouritism and discrimination in my class. When there is trouble, the teachers often pick on my friend and me most of the time. I think it is not fair because sometimes we may not be involved in it. 484 (S. 31)

> **Eden**: . . . No, I don't remember any racist incident against me at my school. I know some guys do not like me at school but I do not care because I have other playmates and friends. I am happy in my school. 486 (S. 31)

Unlike the other nine students who claimed to be victims of racial stereotypes, Susie, Dave, Ronald and Eden felt they had no experience of racism or racist attitudes in school. Two other students, Don, a 13½-

year-old grade 8 student from Kenya, and Judas, a 14½- year-old grade 9 student from Sudan, were not

sure whether they had experienced racism. Although these views might appear to nullify the notion that

racism is pervasive and common among teachers and schools, they do not negate the existence of

institutional forms of racism. The comments of Susie, Dave, Ronald and Eden focused on individual

racism rather than on institutional racism which is pervasive, given the existing vertical mosaic in Canada.

Multicultural educators need to capitalize on the few progressive teachers who are genuinely open to

reform in order to move forward their agenda, while, at the same time, striving for institutional support.

The news media's role in reinforcing racism and negative stereotypes became a subject of

discussion. When I asked students about their perceptions about the representation of Blacks in the news

media (TV, Newspapers, Magazines, Radio networks, and the Internet), there was a general feeling that

the media often misrepresented Blacks particularly, in North America. Gifty explained that she received

much of her knowledge about Africa from her parents, and through the news media. However, she was

unhappy with the negative manner the media represented Blacks and Africans:

> **SAP**: What should be done to address the problem of negative references to Blacks, particularly in pop culture and mass media?

Estella thought that Blacks should protest against the news media for targeting one racial group with

negative references:

> **Estella**: The TV and the media should not show negative pictures about Blacks because they allow people to hate Blacks. They should be educated to get correct information about Blacks and their achievements, otherwise people would continue to show disrespect toward Blacks. 588 (S. 38)

Dixie also held a similar sentiment over the issue:

> I want the TV and new media to stop presenting negative Black images. There are some White people and non-White people who are involved in drugs here in Vancouver. Some are so poor and sick that they even beg in the streets for food and money but we do not see them on the TV all the time. However, negative reports on Blacks come on the TV and in the news all the time. This is unfair. I believe that if we get a Black president in Canada, things would change. 596 (S. 38)

Judas reiterated the notion that the mass media wilfully engage in selective exposure by being overly

negative in their reporting on ethnic minorities:

> Tell them to stop being negative towards Black/Africans. There are some bad things happening in Vancouver such as robbery, drugs and cocaine abuse, but the media do not show these on TV. The schools ought to teach Black history to enable Black children to understand themselves better. 601 (S. 38)

The news media representations have profound impact on how ethnic groups are perceived and received in society. The above references by the four students show at least some awareness on the part of the students of how stereotypes are manufactured and reinforced in our media-influenced society, and the effects this has on the lives of Blacks and other visible minorities. In trying to unveil the structures of oppression in the discourse of the mass media, we learn that the private media as an institution is driven by ideological, political and economic interests. For economic and political reasons, the media often seek sensationalism at the neglect of ethical and moral considerations in the dissemination of information. Misrepresentation of Blacks, or sensationalizing tragic events from Africa, only tends to reinforce negative stereotypes and racial prejudice. African scholars, opinion leaders, community workers, parents and teachers have a responsibility to educate the media and society to be circumspect in their references to the continent, and show sensitivity toward the plight of African peoples.

Perceptions of Parents/MFC Cross-cultural Facilitators

Unlike the narratives of Black youths, racism was a dominant theme in the stories of the African-Canadian parents. As well-informed adults and active members of the Black community, the parents had strong sense of identity and cultural pride. With their backgrounds, they were more conscious and sensitive to acts of repression, discrimination and racism than their children were. In expressing his concerns over school curricula, textbooks and school organization, Mark declared that:

> **SAP**: Do you have any specific concerns about your children's school art program, textbooks and the general school organization?
>
> **Mark**: Yes! I have problem with school textbooks and learning materials that are used in schools. I have the privilege to be among the few African immigrants, if not the only, to be teaching in the public school in Vancouver. I have observed and experienced racism in the school system. For instance, I found a video in our school library that depicts Blacks as eating dead human bodies for medicinal purpose. In the documentary, the group is not specified by name or geographical origin. I do not think this is appropriate for kids to watch and I have protested. Singling out a cultural or racial group with such a video is detrimental to Black kids. Even in science textbooks the images of malnourished people are often depicted as Blacks, reinforcing what the Western media has been showing on TV. Healthy people are not likely to be Blacks. If children are fed with such subtle and damaging messages, they grow up to be racists or have prejudicial attitude toward Blacks without any moral justification. It also reduces the self-esteem of Black kids. 11 (P. 02)

School environment plays an important role in the student's motivation to achieve. The use of racist and outdated materials in the curriculum was a major concern for most parents and students

interviewed. They felt that some of the materials used in school help to perpetuate racial stereotypes. Such materials, they demanded, should be discarded by the school board and supplemented with up-to-date materials with balanced and positive approaches to race issues. New materials must also challenge inequality, injustice and racism. Mark's passion over the issue of racism in the school system is linked to his lived experiences. As a high school teacher in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, he is privy to the day-to-day organization of the school. He expressed his frustration with the school board and school administration for their laisse-faire attitude toward school reform and inclusive education. He asserts that there is racism in schools, in textbooks and in the teacher recruitment process. Mark pointed out that he has had a bitter struggle with the school board and British Columbia Teachers' Federation for a number of years after obtaining all the necessary accreditation before he gained recognition and approval to practice as a teacher. Mark claimed that his experience is not unique because many qualified Black/African teachers and visible minorities face similar barriers in trying to enter the teaching profession in British Columbia, and in Canada. Clara expressed similar sentiments over the curriculum and the school system in Vancouver:

> I have many concerns because I have had the opportunity to volunteer in a private Catholic school and a couple of Christian schools in Vancouver. I was amazed at the number of books and resources in their libraries that portrayed Africa as a jungle, disease prone and poverty stricken. There is no positive image whatsoever about Africa, where the African children and their parents call their home. . . . 16A (P. 02)

> Tom: My experience as a parent of five children and interactions with other African-Canadian parents, have revealed that Black kids have been falling behind academically. They mostly obtain an average grade of "C" or below. Almost all the families I encountered have complained about their children's academic performance. Why have they not been obtaining "A" and "B" grades? What does it mean? Are all the Black kids so academically weak? Some of them I understand were on top of their classes before they came to Canada. There must be something wrong. I therefore suggest that Black families come together to provide extra or alternative education programs that would address these problems and augment whatever is going on in the schools. . . . If the children see teachers from their own ethnic or racial group, they would feel confident, and strive to make it, otherwise they are discouraged. 14 (P. 02)

> Fatia (MFC): My concern is that my children's school is multicultural in terms of its population, but it does not look so when you walk in the door of the school. . . . Children from non-mainstream cultures seem to be treated as extras. This is reflected in their academic performance and behaviour at school. They tend to hang around together with little or no inter-group interaction. 17 (P. 02)

On the issue of racism and schooling, all the six parents and two MFC cross-cultural facilitators

had various experiences to share. If there is one issue in which parents show much emotion and anger when discussing their children's school experiences, it is the issue of racism and its manifestations in the education system. Clara provided a vivid description of her understanding and experience of racism in Canada:

> **SAP**: What is racism? Have your children had any experience of racism in school?
>
> **Clara**: Racism involves one race or ethnic group putting down the other based on what the people look like. It is a very dangerous thing to declare judgment on one person as unworthy. Racism is about power about subjugation. My nephews have encountered derogatory words, racial slurs, rejection as well as being told they are stupid. The problem with racism in Canada is that it is very subtle and difficult to prove . . . Therefore, it is a difficult [issue] to address. It is like a snake that bites and covers up the fang while the poison continues to work inside you. So, it becomes difficult to show where the bite is to treat with the black stone. It affects you gradually until it kills you eventually. Teachers send subtle messages to children when they ignore their experiences and cultural backgrounds; and when they ignore children who put up their hands in the class to answer questions. . . . 259A (P. 29)

Clara's opinion on racism in Canada is blunt and directed toward school and society. She links racism with power and domination, and declares it as a dangerous social phenomenon. This comes out clearly with her use of the analogy of the poisonous snake to explain the subtle and covert forms of racism in Canadian schools and society. She shows how racism as a social "cancer" extends from society to school and vice versa. Fatia (MFC) expressed the subtle manifestations of racism in schools with her own experience:

> . . . It is a very difficult matter because most often, it is difficult to identify those acts as racism. In my case, it was so subtle that I found it difficult to convince the authorities that my son was encountering racism. I have heard people saying they would rather have someone call them a racist name than deny them a job or give them bad grades at school. 269 (P. 30)
>
> Based on my conversation with African parents and kids, their academic abilities are underestimated. I have had the opportunity to work with a number of Black kids at the Centre that I assume are bright students that would do well academically. However, I am often shocked when I see their report cards with C's C- and sometimes failures. I actually have not observed these kids in the school environment so, of course, my assumptions could be subjective. Nevertheless, I have been a teacher myself and I can identify a bright student after a long-term interaction. 08 (P. 01)

Three other parents and an MFC Facilitator, Cephas, Gina, Tom and Eugenia described racism and how it affects them and their children:

> **Cephas**: It is discrimination based on race, skin colour, ethnicity and cultural peculiarities. We have institutional or structural racism, which is embedded in social institutions, structures and systems that sustain domination and subordination of one group over another. Individual racism can take the form of prejudice against a person or persons due to skin colour or cultural peculiarities. When my kids were teased with racial slurs and the school refused to discipline the

culprits, it was a form of racism. When my child was told that he could not do math and therefore, should settle for sports, it was a form of racism. It was a form of racial profiling when the police repeatedly accosted my child without any basis. When children feel that they cannot seek redress from their teachers or the school would not protect them against racist acts they react with anger and violence, often incurring the displeasure of their teachers. 256 (P. 29)

Gina: I moved my kids from their former school because of misunderstanding with the teachers. My child had complained about some students who cast racial aspersions on her. I tried to discuss the issue with the teachers but they denied anything was happening. For me, racism is hatred and discrimination based on peoples' race and culture. 255 (P. 29)

Tom: . . . My children have been complaining about the way some teachers treat them in school by making them feel they are stupid. They often receive lower grades in certain subjects. . [in which] they believe to have performed well enough. When they talk to their teachers, they are commended for their grades. On two occasions Maryam and Hannah came home weeping because they were unsatisfied with their grades. 257 (P. 29)

Eugenia (MFC): Racism is putting one culture down and believing that one race is inferior to another. I cannot strictly say that my children have encountered racism at school. But the way they are discouraged from full participation in academic study leaves me to think that some teachers have hidden agendas to prevent Black kids from achieving their academic goals. When it comes to sports, they are encouraged but in academic work, they are discouraged. 261 (P. 29)

These views of racism demonstrate that the parents are informed on the issues. Cephas held a critical perspective on racism, and distinguished between structural or institutional racism and individual racism. He linked the former with power structures embedded in social institutions and systems, and the latter with person-to-person prejudices and stereotypes. As a practicing Christian cleric, he was very much aware of power hierarchies and oppressive structures, and has used the pulpit to preach against racism and racial intolerance on several occasions. Similarly, Gina, Eugenia and Fatia had cause to complain about schools and/or teachers for treating their children unfairly.

The preceding comments indicate that these parents were very much concerned about the academic evaluation and performance of Black students at school. On four occasions, Tom and Fatia reiterated this point. The parents challenged the view held by the Math and English teachers that the average performance of Hannah was satisfactory enough. They felt that it was in sharp contrast to the high aspirations of many Black learners. It is essential for teachers to view themselves as active socializing agents, capable of simulating or stifling students' motivation to learn, through the way they handle issues of reward and punishment, and/or assessment and evaluation. In Chapter Two, we learned that, teachers' interactions with, and expectations of their students have tremendous influence on students' performance.

Black/African-Canadian students take cues from subtle and unconscious messages of teachers about their worth, intelligence, and capability through classroom comments, rewards and punishment, and the award of marks. Many teachers consciously or unconsciously, have low expectations of students from particular backgrounds. Such teachers are, in the worse scenario, insensitive and racist. Unfortunately, the influence of teacher expectations and the complicity of the school have compelling implications for Black students. The educational system must recognize the centrality of teachers and prepare them to practice social justice in their classrooms.

Some of the parents including an MFC Facilitator intimated that racial stereotypes and lower teacher expectations have negatively affected their children's schooling by directing their attention to sports at the detriment of their academic development:

SAP: What are your perceptions of Black children and the education system in British Columbia?

Cephas: There is a general perception that Black kids are good in sports but not in academic work. As a result, teachers pump this into the heads of innocent Black kids. They encourage them in sports by giving them good grades in physical education. When it comes to academic work, however, Black kids are discouraged . . . This practice is covertly embedded in the education systems in North America. It takes serious parental intervention to turn things around for their children. 4 (P. 01)

Marcia: Our children are being misled into thinking that sports is what will make them successful in school and in life. Unfortunately, those who encourage our kids into sports are not Black teachers [who are largely absent in the schools] but mostly White teachers. If you are good at sports and at the end of the day it does not bring food onto the table or obtain the job you want, what sense does it make? 6 (P. 01)

Clara: . . . There is also the perception that Africans are heroes in sports and entertainment (Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, Michael Johnson, Mike Tyson, Michael Jackson, Janet Jackson etc.). Children get the message that perhaps that is where they can fit. This kind of perception, which the schools pump into the minds of Black/African-Canadian children, leaves them with only a few heroes. What about the many successful Black professionals and scholars around the world? I think the schools need to open up and create more opportunities rather than enforce stereotypes that limit minority students' life chances. 16B (P. 02)

Eugenia (MFC): Personally, my concern is that my children are made to feel that what would lead them to success is sports but not education. This is very unfortunate because I have very strong expectations for my two older boys, but now their aspiration is to play soccer in a country where there are even no professional soccer teams. We are struggling and working so hard to obtain good education for our children but there are so many obstacles in the education system that prevent our kids from achieving their academic goals. It is a problem. 18 (P. 02)

Young Black males face tremendous peer and societal pressure to submit into a particular mode of life; in this case, sports. Lower teacher expectations and stereotypes affect young Blacks males to the extent that

they internalize the notion of success in sports and thereby, affecting their academic success. The problem with these kinds of stereotypes is that they can blind teachers and schools from recognizing and supporting Black students who may have the aptitude for other forms of intelligences and abilities as supported by the theory of multiple intelligence (Gardner, 1983). Conversely, the stereotypes could work against Whites and other students who may possess talents for sports. Most teachers reject the notion that they have different expectations for their students based on race, gender or socio-economic backgrounds. Nevertheless, these parents felt that some teachers are affected by stereotypes that assume that Blacks have not the intelligence to perform at high academic levels.

In my conversations with Black/African-Canadian parents and MFC Facilitators, most of them expressed some concerns about the future of their children, given their own experiences in Canada:

> SAP: What is your greatest concern/worry for the Black youths in today's society?

> Tom: My concern is that racism may prevent them [Black youths] from achieving their best. My children on several occasions come from school weeping because they either felt cheated by their teachers in the award of exam grades or their schoolmates say they are ugly. These experiences, in the long run, have demoralizing effects on children's self-esteem. 230 (P. 26)

> Fatia (MFC): My worries are similar to those of the many Black parents I have met at the MFC. I am concerned that racism would prevent many Black youths from maximizing their potentials and achieving their aspirations. Many of them claim to work so hard in school only to be given very discouraging marks. Even those with qualifications, may find it difficult to get the good jobs and promotions because power still resides in the hands of the dominant class. . . . 233A (P. 26)

Similarly, Gina and Clara expressed their concerns over discrimination in school and society with emotion and passion:

> Gina: My greatest worry is about racial discrimination in this society that could prevent Black/African-Canadians from achieving their life aspirations. Canada has adequate resources to help all kids achieve their goals but, due to racism and class struggles, Black children do not obtain the full benefits of education. 228 (P. 26)

> Clara: I am hesitant in saying that our children are endangered species. There is very little understanding of Black children among the present crop of teachers. When the children arrive here, they are quickly assimilated into Canadian society. They, unlike their parents, lose their roots as they socialize into the school systems. As second generation Black/African-Canadians, they are also not fully accepted by mainstream Canadians in terms of socio-political participation. Therefore, they sometimes exhibit acts of rebellion and reactions of anger. As children, they do not know how to deal with their frustration because they lack analytical ability to deal effectively with their anger. I, as an adult, know how to respond to acts of racism, but when children respond with temper, they are labelled as troublemakers, and become targets for victimization. 233 (P. 26)

While being critical of the dominant social class agenda of subordination of the interest of Blacks and minorities, I was surprised to learn that five out of the eight parents, including the MFC Facilitators, also found reasons to criticize Black youths for yielding to the popular youth rap culture, and for contributing toward their own demise. When I inquired about their concerns for their children, and how the children managed cultural dissonance, they shared the following insightful comments:

> SAP: How do Black children, and your children in particular, manage adjustment in their two or more cultural worlds in Canada.

> Fatia (MFC): . . . Again, as I indicated earlier, many Black teenagers buy into the Los Angeles Black youth rap culture, which often make them targets for gang violence and police harassment. 233 (P. 26)

> Eugenia (MFC): Our children, especially the teenage boys, are hooked into a lifestyle that is not conducive to successful education. Due to the freedoms in Canada, our children feel they can do whatever they want without focusing on education or listening to their parents. The schools themselves are culprits because our kids do not find schools as supporting their educational pursuits. Their upward mobility is severely diminished. Many African youths, after Grade 12, are hooked to underpaid jobs without any long-term success. 9 (P. 01)

Clara narrated her experience with her nephews:

> . . . My nephews used to be innocent children when they were in elementary school, but now they are so much steeped into the Black brother thing [youth rap culture] to the extent that we are beginning to loose them. They have begun to identify with black images on TV, rap culture, which their peers pressure them to copy. This culture, which identifies them with strange life style, also leads them to be labelled as troublemakers. 79 (P. 08)

> Tom: Children here take advantage of the freedoms in this society to misbehave. My children are taught to call 911 when they are disciplined at home. Some children abuse this protection just as some parents abuse their children. The way we discipline our children at home in Sudan is different from here. Parents have to adjust to the laws of our new society in parenting our children even if we do not agree with them. . . . It is said that: "if you go to Rome, do what the Romans do." 239 (P. 27)

Parents noted that there are many attractions in the cities offering immediate gratification or a sense of excitement, which the schools are failing to match. The criticisms of their children and Black youths in general, seem to suggest that while the parents attributed some blame to the school system, teachers, and the general society, they expected the students themselves to share some responsibility and blame for their state of affairs. By linking the etiologies of Black/African-Canadian students' underachievement to the school, the community, individual student shortcomings and to the parents themselves, they were expressing the complexity of the problem that demanding more holistic solutions.

Black/African-Canadian parents need to take the initiative in addressing the problems facing Black youths. This can be accomplished through their active participation in community-based programs such as those offered at the MFC, and by some African cultural associations, which seek to address the needs of the Black community. Through coordinated effort, the African community can provide useful outlets for children to engage in activities like homework clubs, art clubs, sports clubs, music and dance clubs and voluntary clubs. These activities can help to keep the youths away from negative peer influence.

Parallel to the problem of racial stereotyping is the problem of selective exposure and racism in the media. Like the Black students in this study, majority of the parents, including the two MFC Facilitators, felt that negative stereotypes in the media are reinforced in the schools and vice versa. Fatia stressed that:

> **SAP**: What do you think about representations of Blacks in the news media? What can be done to address the problem of negative media representations of Blacks?
>
> **Fatia** (MFC): . . . The media emphasize too much of the negative and ignores the positive because it is the negative that sells. In so doing however, they perpetuate stereotypes and allow racism to flourish. The media could sensationalize good stuff if they want to. 286 (P. 32)
>
> **Cephas**: . . . The media use selective exposure to win people's minds. They largely misrepresent the African continent. 13B (P. 02)

Because of this perception, the parents, like their children, made a number of suggestions and strategies to deal with the situation:

> **Cephas**: We need to confront the media with rejoinders and protests anytime we feel that our interests are being misrepresented. We need to develop the culture of writing in order to counter publications that serve to tarnish our image. We need to be political in our outlook. We need to become members of the main political parties, participate in their activities, attend their meetings and speak our minds on issues. 282 (P. 32)
>
> **Marcia**: . . . we need to learn how to engage the media and educate them about their practices that are offensive to the African-Canadian community. 285 (P. 32)
>
> **Eugenia** (MFC): . . . the African community need to make noise and let the community know how much we hurt when we see so much of the negatives in print and mass media. 287 (P. 32)

As I have indicated earlier, Africans must take a leading role in educating the media and the general society on issues pertaining to Blacks and African peoples including the 54 different African nations and diverse cultures. Africa must be presented in terms of its rich natural resources; its potential for economic development; and its contributions to world's economy, art, culture and history, past and present.

Perceptions of the Art Teacher/Principal

Discussions with the School Principal and the Art Teacher yielded useful insight on their views on race, ethnicity and schooling. They held different opinions on how racism influenced the experiences of students in their school:

SAP: What are some of the most common concerns of parents of ethnic minorities over the operations of the school and its impact on their children's participation in school?

Principal: I think we are doing well in terms of dealing with the concerns of parents. Just recently, we had a speaker who does multiculturalism and anti-racism in the neighbourhood at our Parent Advisory Committee meeting. She was trying to invite parents to join her group to focus on multicultural and anti-racism issues in the community. One of the parents responded that they were very satisfied with the multicultural programs the teachers offered here and the way children behaved during and after school. 11 (T. 04)

Teacher: Racism has been the most common concern of both schools and parents. Every school is trying to address this problem to achieve zero tolerance for discrimination and racial hatred. But occasionally, we encounter incidents of racism in our school. As a member of the First Nations of Canada with rich cultural and artistic backgrounds, I try to incorporate multicultural art education within the limits of the prescribed curriculum and the Integrated Resource Package (IRP) for visual arts. 12 (T. 04)

SAP: Do you think that race and ethnicity are influential factors in the education of children in your school?

Principal: No, I don't think race, ethnicity, gender, social class, etc. are influential [factors] in schooling. We provide all our students with equal opportunity to excel. I believe that equality also prevails in employment because it is based on merit. 26 (T. 09)

Teacher: Certainly, children's social economics and racial status influence their participation in education. This happens because of how mainstream society has set things up. We all know, for instance, that those in the bottom of the social-economic ladder in Canada are the Native Indians and other ethnic minorities. Racism is all over in Canadian schools and in society, just as spousal abuse, substance abuse. Nobody wants to talk about it, yet it has a negative influence on children's participation and attainment in schooling. 27 (T. 09)

SAP: How are teachers prepared to deal with racial incidents if they should occur at your school?

Principal: We have had a number of training [sessions] for teachers and all staff to deal with all racial issues. We talk to parents and the children when there is an incident. The biggest racial incident that occurred quite recently was between a Chinese and Vietnamese boy. The Vietnamese said to the Chinese boy: "I hate you Black people". When the parents were invited, the father of this Vietnamese student repeated the same phrase . . . Again, a Portuguese boy calls a Chinese boy chimp. When the parent was brought in, he restated the same racial slur in front of me. Some of these groups bring to school deep-rooted rivalry that originates from their home countries in Asia. Anytime there is a racial incident in school, we have to go back to the children's parents and home. Children by nature do not see much difference between themselves; it is the parents, who inject their own beliefs and stereotypes into their children. We have no tolerance for racism and we try to make our students and parents aware of our policies. 53 (T.18)

Teacher: We do have "Second Step," a program on empathy where visuals are shown to educate mainstream teaching staff about how to treat other people. It is important that right at the beginning of every school year steps are taken to address the school about racial tolerance. Students must be aware that there is zero tolerance to racism: Personally, I encourage racial tolerance by helping students to understand other people's culture through multicultural art education. 54 (T. 18)

The Art Teacher felt that the racial sensitivity program at the School was useful for addressing racism and ethnic conflict. Nevertheless, she felt that the best way to deal with diversity is to try to assist every student to learn and to validate their experiences within the context of the School. The Principal was confident that the School had adequately prepared its teachers and the administration to deal with racial issues. She, however, felt that racism is largely a social problem that should be dealt with by the various ethnic communities rather than dominate the agenda of the School. This feeling, surprisingly, contradicted the efforts the School has been making through multiculturalism to reach out to the community. It is true that some parents, due to ideological, historical, economic and cultural factors, have internalized malignant racist attitudes that are passed on to their children. Nevertheless, to view the problem as somewhat divorced from the School is problematic, since schools are integral part of society. How issues of ethnicity, race and schooling are perceived and conceptualized may have different implications for multicultural education. If a school administration sees racism as an issue, it may dominate the agenda of that school. On the other hand, if racism is not viewed as a problem, it would become less of a priority for that school.

Summary

Programs in anti-racism and multicultural education would not achieve the goal of eliminating institutional and cultural barriers if teachers and schools are not abreast with the issues or, deny the school's responsibility to deal with racism. There should be a concerted effort to make school boards, public school administrators and teachers aware of students' and parents' perceptions and attitudes toward race and racism in the education system. The data revealed that many Black/African-Canadians feel that they have had to deal with covert and overt racist attitudes among teachers, classmates and school administration. This situation must be addressed if Black/African-Canadian learners are to participate fully in the education process.

Schools are governed by a great number of structures which often are contrary to the needs of

minority students, to the values of their communities, and even to the expressed purpose of schooling in providing equal educational opportunity for all students. The impact of racism and structural factors in schools shows that they often have a negative influence on the learning and achievement of Black students and learners from ethnic minority background. In effect, structural barriers within schools reflect and maintain the status quo, and the stratification of society. Therefore, multicultural education should not be divorced from societal power structures and systems. It should challenge all educators to make the schools a force for social justice and change in society. The school experience for the majority of Black students could be much more rewarding if the curriculum was attuned to their own lived experiences.

Multicultural Education and Africentric Knowledge

Education has often been viewed as a major vehicle for transmitting a society's heritage and the accumulated knowledge of the past. But in the case of British Columbia and the rest of Canada, Black/African-Canadian learners do not appear to be part of that heritage. Black history, art and culture are not part of the core school curriculum and teaching materials despite their long presence in Canada. This omission is one of the major barriers to Black/African-Canadian achievement, as the education system fails to provide cultural education for Black learners. The lack of multicultural context in the curriculum was one of the major themes in the discussions with parents. The following statement by Cephas gives a vivid picture of the situation:

> . . . The school ignores the cultural background of non-mainstream students. If young people placed in a new environment are not taught their history, art and culture there would be cultural assimilation. Currently, many Black kids face serious identity crises. Because they do not have an identity, they strive to create their own identity and are destroyed in the process. I think it is high time the school and the community dealt with positive aspects of African culture and history in order to help children understand their identity and enhance their self-esteem. . . . 13 (P. 02)

There is no affirmation of Black/African-Canadians within the school system, from textbooks and teaching materials to teacher representation. Many teachers have little or no knowledge of Black/African history, art, culture and literature. They therefore deny Black children the opportunity to gain not only self-knowledge and a sense of pride in their history and cultural heritage, but also the coping skills to deal with prejudice and racism.

Perceptions of Black/African-Canadian Students

All the 15 students interviewed spoke of a lack of curriculum devoted to their history, literature, art, culture and lived experiences. Their views on multicultural education ranged from a superficial to a deeper level of understanding:

SAP: When you hear the term "multicultural education," what does it mean to you?

Lillian: Multicultural education involves the celebration of Black History Month, Chinese New Year, Halloween, First Nations Potlatch and Multicultural Potluck Nights at the school. 69 (S. 05)

Dave: It involves the teaching and learning of the history, art, and culture of the various ethnic groups represented in Canada; not just Euro-Canadian stuff. 73 (S. 05)

Eden: In multicultural education kids from various countries come together and try to learn different things about different countries. 77 (S. 05)

Judas: In multicultural education, we learn things about Sudan, Africa, China, Asia and many other cultures at school. 80 (S. 05)

Don: Multicultural education helps kids to understand their own cultural heritage and appreciate the cultures of others. 76 (S. 05)

Although these definitions seem less sophisticated in terms of addressing issues of power, inequalities and racism, they demonstrate some level of awareness among students of cultural diversity in school and society, and the need for diversity to be affirmed and celebrated in school.

When I asked the students about the status of multicultural education in their school's visual arts, social studies and other subjects, Gifty, Estella, and Dixie thought that it was being implemented in social studies class. They claimed that they studied the various world religions, celebrated some North American cultural festivals and multicultural potluck nights every year, but nothing on Africa or Blacks: Other students expressed similar sentiments:

SAP: Is multicultural education implemented in your school?

Hannah: Yes! In social studies, we learned a bit about Africa – Nigeria and South Africa. In Grade 6, we had a lesson on Egypt, the First Nations of Canada and the Chinese. 82 (S. 06)

Susie: Not much. We only learnt about Europe and North America, and we celebrated Chinese New Year and the Halloween. 88 (S. 06)

Dave: Yes, we learn some multicultural stuff in social studies and art, but I do not think we have learned anything meaningful about Africa from school. I have learned many things about Africa from TV and magazines. 89 (S. 06)

John: We studied the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and the Roman Empire in Grade 9. We also learned about Dr. Martin Luther King Junior and Nelson Mandela during the Black History month. I think we need to learn more about Africa. 95 (S. 06)

Despite the general feeling among the students interviewed that multicultural education is offered in their various schools, most of them complained about the paucity of Black/African art, history, literature and cultural knowledge in the mainstream curriculum. They expressed their views about how African art, culture, history and literature could be useful to them:

SAP: In what way is your knowledge of African art, history and culture useful to you?

Estella: I am an African-Canadian, so I need to learn the culture of both Canada and Africa. I need my home language so I would not get lost when I visit Uganda. I enjoy the African food, music and art so much. 364 (S. 24)

Estella in this case, explained the need to be socialized into Canadian cultures as well as her African sub-culture in order to live her African-Canadian identity. She also recognized the need to acquire some values and language in order to communicate effectively as a Canadian with a Ugandan heritage.

Maryam: It allows me to understand my roots and remember my heritage. Remembering my roots is important for self-identity and self-esteem. 367 (S. 24)

Susie: Knowledge about Africa is very important to me because it is my roots. Everybody has a cultural root. I am proud to be a Sudanese and an African. I need to learn more about my home culture. 370 (S. 24)

Dave: Some people say bad things about Africa. It is important for me to know the truth about Africa by studying and visiting Africa myself. My parents will send us to Africa so I want to learn more about Uganda. 370 (S. 24)

An important lesson that can be drawn from the preceding statements is that these Black/African-Canadian students want multicultural education to become an integral part of their school subjects and experiences at school. The general view among the students was that the schools should integrate multiculturalism into all areas of the curriculum including science, math, social studies, history and technology. The schools, they suggested, should expose all students to the achievements of Black people from ancient times to the present in all spheres of life instead of focusing on negative or narrow aspects of Black history or, on only selective areas like sports and entertainment. They also stressed the need for schools to hire more qualified Blacks as teachers; the need to respect all students and treat them fairly irrespective of their backgrounds; and the need to ensure that Blacks and non-Europeans are well

represented in school curriculum, textbooks, instructional materials and by the media. Some of the students were of the opinion that most teachers did not know enough about Blacks and their history to be able to teach effectively. They suggested that teachers should be encouraged to acquire some knowledge about groups represented in their school to be able to teach them.

The issue of ethnicity and background of instructors generated an interesting discussion among students. Twelve students, out of 15 interviewed, indicated that they prefer an African instructor for African art, history or culture. They argued that while an African instructor may have practical experience of what they teach, other teachers may teach without that advantage.

> **SAP**: Does it make any difference who teaches African history, art and culture to you?
>
> **Lillian**: Yes. I think an African would know more about his/her culture. Our teachers do not know anything about African art, history and culture that [explains] why they don't teach them in our school. 414 (S. 27)
>
> **Sarah**: Yes, an African tutor would know more about the culture by way of studying it and living the culture. An African tutor would also serve as a role model to me since we do not have African teachers in our schools. 416 (S. 27)
>
> **Dave**: Yes. I want somebody who knows the art and practices the culture. An African would probably relate to Black students better than White or other teachers. I also think that a Chinese would be better when it comes to teaching Chinese culture. 418 (S. 27)
>
> **Don**: Yes, because Black tutors would understand Black culture and history as well as students. Black instructors would understand Black boys better. I do not care who teaches me Math or science but I prefer a Black tutor for African culture. 421 (S. 27)

While the 12 students stressed the benefits of having an instructor from similar ethnic or racial background three others, namely Dixie, Eden and John were not much concerned about the ethnicity of their African cultural instructors, as long as they were knowledgeable:

> **Dixie**: No, because they use textbooks to teach. If they can study and teach from the books, that would be okay with me. . . . 419A (S. 27)
>
> **Eden**: No. If they have read the culture and understand African art, they can teach. Some Africans may not be knowledgeable about their own culture to be able to teach. I want someone who has adequate knowledge and practice of the culture. An African teacher, [however], could also serve as a role model. 422 (S. 27)
>
> **John**: I prefer an instructor who knows the culture, history by practice whether s/he is Black or White. White people who have lived in Africa for a long time can teach African culture just as Africans themselves. 424 (S. 27)

It is clear that not all the students in this study were concerned about the ethnic background of an African cultural instructor. It is also evident that the majority of them felt that they could benefit from, and be validated by, the presence of instructors who have a similar ethnic background and experience as theirs. How can we explain this phenomenon? The key to understanding the importance these students place on ethnicity of instructors may lie with the treatment of Blacks and minorities in school and society. The presence of teachers from minority groups seems to provide minority students with a sense of hope, belonging and a belief that they would be respected for their intellectual capacities while being given a fair chance to succeed. Most importantly, not only would minority students relate to the experiences of instructors and other students who have a similar ethnic background, but they can also enrich mainstream students by bringing in new and alternative perspectives. As pointed out by Asante (1998), the experiential relationship is critical to the continued intellectual growth of minority students. Art education needs more minority role models to encourage the participation of more minority students in visual art programs.

Perceptions of Parents/MFC Cross-cultural Facilitators

The issue of exclusion of Black/African-Canadian cultural perspectives from the curriculum came up repeatedly in every individual interview and group discussions with parents and the two MFC cross-cultural facilitators. Most of the parents felt that nothing had been done to incorporate Black history, literature into the classrooms of British Columbia schools. It is clear that there is still resistance by many White educators to considering race, ethnicity and culture as factors associated with the schooling process. Cephas and Clara made the following connection between Black children's disengagement from school and the process of assimilation:

> SAP: Can you think of any reason why some Blacks and visible minority children "drop out" of school?

> Cephas: Black children, especially those who migrate to Canada start school with a disadvantage. Some children start school with a cultural mindset and learning styles embedded in their home culture. Unfortunately, they are compelled to discard their languages, cultures, learning styles, accent in order to participate in their new culture. For some kids, there is so much pressure coming upon them and trying to squeeze them into a particular mode. We need to be sympathetic with such children, struggling to fit into a culture that is alien to them. They are crying for help and trying out everything. The school . . . aggravates the situation by alienating them and discouraging their full academic participation. But if we as parents can give the necessary support right from the

beginning, it is amazing what could happen. 76 (P. 09)

Clara linked the problem of Black students' disengagement from school with cultural dissonance, racism

and isolation:

> Children of Black/African immigrants generally have difficulties in adjusting to the new and sometimes hostile school culture. Sometimes things they study at school have little relevance to their cultural backgrounds. Unlike Africa where there is much social support from the extended family, Black kids have inadequate support systems in Canada, both in school and at home. Some guardians are single and working parents with no time for parenting. Local counsellors may not adequately understand the African child. All these, coupled with racism, make some children "drop-out" of school. 79 (P. 09)

Cephas and Clara made revealing observation that confirm the assertion that cultural discontinuity or

cultural marginalization in school is detrimental to Black students intellectual and emotional development.

The ideological dissonance between cultures hinders teachers' ability to recognize, promote and generate

activities and events, which may affect, Black learners positively. This situation created frustration for

parents who felt the school was abdicating its responsibility to include Blacks in the education process:

> **Marcia**: I do not think the educational system really want to implement multicultural education fully. It only responds partially to satisfy various cultural groups. If they wanted to, multicultural education would have made a lot of impact by now. However, there is some resistance from some teachers and schools to maintain the status quo. 42 (P. 05)

> **Tom**: I do not know exactly what goes on in the school. However, I believe what they do about multicultural education is insignificant. I do inquire about what they study at school, but my children never talk about learning anything about Africa. The only aspects of Africa they had learned have been ancient Egypt, the cradle of civilization. 50 (P. 06)

> **Clara**: There have been some efforts on the part of some schools and teachers, but I do not think that is satisfactory. Much of these attempts have been superficial and do not fully embrace Multicultural education. 43 (P. 05)

> **Clara**: I do not think the schools are implementing multiculturalism. They are only implementing marginal aspects of other cultures. When multiculturalism is mentioned in schools, they think about food, clothes, cultural festivals and dances. That is not my culture. My culture is who I am, how I do things. Accepting my different accent, views, skills, qualifications and values as valid is what matters to me. Because you can come and eat my food and walk away without accepting me. The school touches on the fringes of multiculturalism. I do not know much about my own traditional dance, so how does that represent me? 34 (P. 04)

Generally, parents pointed out that the education system has not responded satisfactorily to

multicultural education, despite Canada's policy on multiculturalism. A common assertion was that a

strong sense of identity and pride in one's own cultural heritage could not only instill positive values and

booster self-esteem but also serve as a tool for dealing with prejudice and racism. Michael explained that

cultural beliefs and values are expressed in art forms, stories and folktales, history, language, religion, music, food and clothing. Children need to acquire all these through education from school and home. Tom also asserted that his children are Sudanese first and Canadians second, therefore it was expedient for the children to understand their Sudanese/African identity in order to become true African-Canadians. Because most African children do not have any extended family relatives apart from their parents living in Canada, Clara pointed out that practical knowledge of their home culture through African art, language programs, drama, stories, history, festivals and direct home (Africa) visits, could be useful in providing first hand experience to fill the gaps in their lives.

Clara shared the experience of a Ugandan family whose recalcitrant son became transformed through a short visit to Uganda. According to Clara, the boy's encounter with the realities of Uganda, including the economic struggles many of his Ugandan peers had to go through, softened his heart. Since his return to Canada the boy no longer takes things for granted and has adopted a positive outlook to life. Clara also advised African parents to take a cue from the First Nations of Canada who have nurtured a generation of culturally conscious people that would maintain their cultural traditions for many years to come.

Besides what African-Canadians expect to gain from the promise of multicultural education, the parents felt that the entire school system and students stand to gain from inclusive education. In multicultural education, all students acquire knowledge and skills in cultural literacy, critical thinking, reflection and social action. Mark pointed out that Black students bring to the visual art classroom a variety of new experiences and perspectives to be shared. By so doing students learn to view events and situations from a variety of perspectives, rather than from a single perspective. African cultures are rich in concepts, art forms, imagery, family values, moral values and spirituality, which could be shared or combined with other cultural traditions to create a multi-centric curriculum. Tom also felt that the inclusion of Black/African-Canadian culture enables the school and students to have a balanced view of art and the world by experiencing many cultures simultaneously in a single environment. On the other hand, Clara noted that, by virtue of their cultural backgrounds, Black children present some needs outside of the mainstream. This could be a dilemma for mainstream teachers who are not familiar with Black/African

historical and cultural landscape.

The parents also expressed their views on visual arts and multicultural education. A majority of the parents felt that if the richness of African cultures were to be revealed, a positive inclusion of African art in multicultural art education would be essential. However, African art appears to have had little or no room in the Euro-centric curriculum:

> **SAP**: Why do you think non-Western art forms are continually marginalized in the mainstream curriculum?

> **Gina**: Well, the West has dominated every sphere of life because of their power. The marginalization of African art and culture in the West is not any different from what goes on in other areas. Just like Native American or First Nations art, African art is often referred to as crafts or folk art, and it is not accorded the respect it deserves. 192 (P. 22)

> **Cephas**: African art is not judged based on its context but from the perspectives of Western art. This has a historical dimension to it. Due to slavery and colonization, African cultures were devalued, destroyed and relegated to lower status. It is not surprising that African art and culture is still marginalized in mainstream art curriculum and in society. 193 (P. 22)

> **Clara**: Non-Western art forms are not seen as art. They are seen as crafts or folk-art. I believe it is for Africans themselves to appreciate and project their own art instead of expecting Europeans to cherish African art. We have to define our own art instead of letting Europeans define our art. I like the cultural [renaissance] that is going on within the community of First Nations of Canada. They are reclaiming their art and culture from the hands of "foreigners." We can do the same. 196 (P. 22)

> **Eugenia** (MFC): [This is] because they do not value non-Western cultures, their art and way of life. They [Euro-Westerners] feel it has no benefit for them. It is up to Africans to work hard to appreciate . . . our art and culture instead of allowing the West to define African art for us. . . . 198 (P. 22)

The above views by parents reiterate the argument in the literature that the foundation of art history and art education is replete with Euro-centrism. Criticisms of the Eurocentric curriculum in visual art education have led to the birth of new and alternative approaches to art education. These include Multicultural Art Education (MAE), Multicultural Discipline-based Art Education (MDAE) and postmodern approaches such as Feminist Art Education and Africentric Art Education.

Mark, Eugenia and Fatia expressed some doubt concerning the school systems readiness to embrace multiculturalism. As they noted, most of the Canadian teaching force with their backgrounds, training, experiences and values shaped by Euro-centric perspectives are ideologically unprepared for curriculum integration of multicultural perspectives, a terrain which they believe could undermine

Canadian unity or limit Euro-Canadian privilege.

> **SAP**: What do you think teachers need to do in order to promote multicultural education, and encourage leaning among minority students?

> **Mark**: It is not likely that the present teaching staff who have no insight of African art and culture could impart multicultural knowledge unto their students . . . 47A (P. 06)

> **Eugenia** (MFC): The mainstream teachers need to unlearn their received knowledge. They need to change their attitudes toward minority children. Maybe multicultural education can bring about this change, I don't know. Parents also must be involved in order for the teachers to know how serious they are with their children. 99 (P. 11)

> **Fatia** (MFC): . . . Although in some schools, there are genuine efforts by some teachers to infuse multicultural objectives. It takes a lot of commitment and knowledge on the part of teachers and schools to go forward. Maybe the school that my sons attend, which I think does a poor job in multicultural education, has influenced my perception. I feel some schools may be doing a serious job. 44B (P. 05)

It can be deduced from the above responses that many of the Black parents felt that adequate cultural education has not been, and is still not available through public schools to Blacks and visible minorities. Parents in diverse ways expressed dissatisfaction with a teacher preparation process that produced teachers who lacked cross-cultural training or multicultural literacy, and are therefore ill equipped to teach multicultural classes. Two of the parents, Cephas and Clara however, felt that some teachers are doing their best with what they know. They felt that such teachers, together with Black students were victims of an inadequate system. Generally, they suggested that teacher education programs must be improved to include multicultural education and anti-racism education. For those teachers already in the system, they needed to be provided with increased opportunities for in-service training with community cooperation and support from the multicultural education units of school boards. There are positive signs that many school boards have adapted race relation policies, and have engaged in training teachers in race relations and cross-cultural understanding. A typical example is the "Second Step" program in empathy and racial sensitivity for teachers at the east Vancouver School, my site for this study.

Another area that was of interest to parents was in the recruitment of students for teacher training. All the parents insisted that the recruitment level of teachers should be looked into to ensure that Blacks are also recruited for training as teachers. Black teachers in the schools could not only serve as role models for Black students but also could serve to check racism in their respective contexts.

SAP: If you have the power to change something in the education system, what would that be and why?

Fatia (MFC): I believe the recruitment . . . of learners to teacher education and the universities should be looked into. I do not think the mainstream would accept quotas or affirmative action, which get them screaming . . . 286A (P. 32)

Clara: I would want to change the hiring policy of the school system. I would inject multiculturalism into the education system, from teacher education to hiring to curriculum content and pedagogy. Some Europeans have a phobia for anything different; that legacy has to change. 293 (P. 33)

Mark: I would change the recruitment practices that discriminate against visible minorities. I would include multicultural content and text in school curricula, and ensure that racism is completely eliminated from our schools. 289 (P. 33)

There was a strong conviction among the parents that teachers would be better equipped to respond to the needs of Black students if they were better trained and sensitized to the systemic discrimination, racism, and the diversity of cultures in BC and the rest of Canada. Therefore, teacher education and professional development programs should be revamped to improve teacher-readiness and strategies for multicultural education.

Perceptions of the Art Teacher/Principal

Although there were some areas where the opinions of the School Principal and the Art Teacher diverged, they converged on some issues. One of the areas where they differed in their opinions was on the issue of racism in the School. While the Teacher felt that racism was alive in the School, the Principal felt otherwise. However, on the issue of multiculturalism in the school, they shared slightly similar views.

The Principal felt that her school was a rare example of an institution that had made tremendous strides in the implementation of multicultural education. In responding to the question on the status of multicultural education in her school, the Principal explained that:

SAP: What is the status of multicultural education in your school?

Principal: We have 29 different nationalities; groups and languages represented in our school, so we are almost by default multicultural in our population make up and school organization. 02 (T. 01)

Principal: . . . Some of the things we do here in some classes do focus on the various cultural festivals, holidays and religious ceremonies of various groups. This allows other groups to

understand and be aware of the cultural differences in our society. It enhances respect and inter-group harmony. 08 (T. 03)

The Art Teacher also felt the School was open to multiculturalism:

I think the teachers are quite liberal here. At every stage, the curriculum states that each grade should learn about different countries, customs and cultures. 03 (T. 01)

Although the School is making some strides in the implementation of multicultural education, much needs to be accomplished in order to go beyond the emphasis on cultural festivals, food fairs and holidays. What I am suggesting here is that multicultural education without a critical perspective may not affect, in any substantive way, the life chances of students who have been mis-educated and marginalized in the curriculum.

Summary

Black African-Canadian students and parents are generally critical when discussing their views on the school system in Canada, particularly the belief that not all knowledge systems, experiences and cultural groups are represented in classroom instructions is evident. Parents articulated their concerns that there are gaps in curriculum content that need to be filled. When Blacks and minorities are included in the mainstream curriculum, their contributions are not presented with enough sophistication and centrality to assure Black learners and parents that their cultural experiences, art and histories are respected. It is important for educators to consider how Black/African Canadian students and parents from their various locations confront issues of marginalization within mainstream schools. This is not to suggest that their views should be adopted uncritically as if they hold the keys to all the problems of school. Rather, I suggest that as a group most affected by school policies and practices, their insight can be crucial for developing meaningful, liberating, and engaging education if they are sought through a critical and problem-solving approach (Friere, 1970).

Lack of Role Models

The absence of Black and minority teachers, guidance counsellors and administrators in the school system was a major concern of Black/African-Canadians. This concern has been expressed in many research studies that have examined student's perspectives of the education system (i.e., BLAC 1994; Brathwaite, 1989; Canadian Alliance of Black Educators, 1992; Dei, Mazzuca, McIsaac, & Zine 1997). Problems of representation, whether in terms of absence of knowledge about Blacks or absence of role models, are closely intertwined with the process of Black students disengagement in school. Black/African-Canadians perceive the Black teacher as an important role model who could help students to connect and identify with the school. The School Principal and the Art Teacher did not express any opinions because the issue was not raised during our discussion.

Perceptions of Back/African-Canadian Students

Many of the Black students interviewed felt that Black teachers and Black school administrators are important role models because they may share a worldview or social perspective they could identify with. In reality however, virtually all the students interviewed were in classrooms that were managed mainly by White teachers. Since many of them have not had the opportunity to be taught by Black teachers, it was not surprising that some of their best teachers as well as their worst teachers were not Black teachers. The students emphasized the importance of supportive teachers and welcoming classroom climate to their academic growth. Black and minority teachers' presence in schools sends an important message of inclusiveness in the school; recognition of the abilities of all peoples; and an opportunity to learn about varied social realities. Dei (1996) pointed out that this message is essential in a school climate in which the issues of race and representation in education are germane.

On the question of Black representation in school administration and teaching, and its impact on Black students, the prevailing response was that Black educators were virtually absent from schools in British Columbia. Hannah noted that:

> **SAP**: To what extent are Black/Africans represented in your school textbooks, curricula, and as teachers and administrators?

> **Hannah**: Blacks are not represented adequately in our school textbooks or in what we learn at

school. There is no African-Canadian teacher in my school. Besides, only a few teachers are non-Europeans. What we learn in social studies and other subjects are mainly about white culture. We have not studied African art either. 114 (S. 08)

Lillian also expressed her opinion as follows:

. . . I think it would be cool to have some Black teachers in my school. They can motivate us to learn because they may understand me better. They could be my role models 117B (S. 08)

Dixie: Not much. But we learned about Martin Luther King and Malcolm X during the Black History Month. We learned about how they lived; how they tried to change the world into a better place by speaking against discrimination. I learned Dr. King's speech, "I have a dream . . ." We also learned about Mark Jordan, Magic Johnson and successful Black sportsmen. I wish our school would teach more about Black/African history and achievements. 122 (S. 08)

Don: The only Blacks in my school are the few Black students. We do not have Black teachers, administrators or principals. Maybe it is because there are fewer Blacks in Vancouver compared with Toronto. 124 (S. 08)

There is adequate evidence to conclude that these Black students desire to have Black teachers in their classrooms. They question why all or most of the teachers in charge of the schools are from Euro-Canadian backgrounds, without any coming from their communities; and why the curriculum provides them little cue about themselves and their history. In effect, Black students want Black role models in their classrooms. The consequences of a lack of role models are numerous: while some get discouraged from learning, others make a conscious decision to disengage in what they see as less relevant materials delivered in less attractive contexts. For multicultural education to have a positive impact on Black youths, it is important that children are made aware of the contributions of members of their race or group to the arts, sciences and political life in North America. It is important to inject pride in children about the ongoing accomplishments of Black people – their hard work, self-sacrifice, resilience, integrity, fortitude and abilities in the midst of hostile environment. This could be achieved if Blacks are fairly represented in education and other fields in society.

Perceptions of Parents

Students' motivation to learn is stimulated through modeling, instruction and socialization by parents and teachers. The best teachers teach by examples. Black parents realized the positive aspects of having proper role models for their children. Using role models as a teaching tool is about teaching by employing examples of successful individuals in their specialized fields, be it teaching or art making. In

the case of Black students, the parents felt that they lacked proper role models in the education system including teachers, administrators and textbook contents. As a teacher in Greater Vancouver area, Mark was in a unique position as an insider to understand the issues affecting Black students in the province. From within, he summed up his evaluation of the school system in relation to its role in providing role models for students:

> **SAP**: How do you feel about the under-representation of Blacks and other visible minorities as teachers and school administrators?
>
> **Mark**: Black children do not have the opportunity to explore their full potentials. . . . Most kids are disadvantaged; they feel isolated, and had no role models in the school system. Cultural sensitivity is missing in the schools . . . 02 (P. 01)

Cephas expounded on the issues and its implications for the Black community:

> It is quite disheartening for children not to see people from their racial or ethnic background represented in their schools. It sends a bad message to our kids that we cannot become teachers and school administrators. It leaves our children with no role models, and denies them of the opportunity to learn about their history and cultural heritage. As little children, teachers have tremendous influence on their minds; as a result they need people they can relate with. This problem needs to be addressed if we want our children to benefit fully from their education. 274 (P. 31)

Tom also expressed his disappointment over the lack of role models in the education system for Black children:

> I feel bad that Blacks are underrepresented in the teaching profession in Canada. We need Blacks as teachers, school administrators to serve as role models for our children. 275 (P. 31)

These pronouncements about the absence of positive Black images in the school curriculum, contribute to a lack of cultural identity and motivation. Clara identified the hiring and recruitment practices in the public sector, teaching field, as well as teacher education programs as areas that need to be reviewed to ensure balance and employment equity. She pointed out that schools are places where images are portrayed in the beginning formation of children, therefore, children should see people of their kind as teachers, principals and administrators in order to boost their morale.

It was also felt among parents that the absence of role models in other sectors of society and professions tend to limit Black learners' educational and career aspirations. Some parents felt that often, the role models presented are considered out of reach or unrealistic to the Black learner:

> **Tom**: I believe the educational system must provide role models for Black children in order to

encourage them to work hard. Most of the time, the only names they hear from school are Dr. Martin Luther King and Black sports heroes, as if we have no other great Black heroes in art, science and other professions. For about 10 years now the United Nations Secretary Generals have come from Africa, namely Egypt and Ghana. Children need to know this, and the work they are doing. 05 (P. 01)

Clara: . . . There is also the perception that Africans are heroes in sports and entertainment . . . Children get the message that perhaps that is where they can fit. This kind of perception, which the schools pump into the minds of Black/African-Canadian children, leaves them with only a few heroes. . . . 16 (P. 02)

Role models should not necessarily be superstars, nor inspired towards power or wealth. They could be ordinary people who are caring, honest, and courageous or those who selflessly sacrificed their time and energies to help others. Many Black people who have good education are usually frustrated in the job market. They simply cannot obtain the appropriate jobs because of racial discrimination in Canada. Some professionals who are Canadian citizens have to move to the United States and other parts of the world to seek employment opportunities or accept lower paid jobs, which are unrelated directly to their training. This situation does not only leave Black youths in Canada with fewer role models to emulate but also with no motivation to strive to enter universities and undertake professional training. This is because they perceive that job opportunities are limited by racial discrimination. Without proper role models in their own communities and schools, some youths tend to the popular youth culture where they are exposed to all sorts of wrong models and social attractions.

Out of the eight parents interviewed, seven of them strongly indicated that parents' involvement in their children's education was crucial because they serve as the first role models for their children. This feeling was clearly portrayed by Clara:

SAP: What are some of your lived experiences that you think may make a significant impact on your children's education?

Clara: Parents are the most influential people on the lives of their children. If parents become interested in education, or involved in continuous education, the children are likely to be interested in education. If parents enjoy reading, or read to their children regularly, their children would emulate their example. If parents take children to the library regularly, they would be interested in reading . . . 125 (P. 14)

Mark: What happens to parents may affect children in one way or the other. If parents lack employment and feel isolated, it eventually may affect their children. Parents are the first role models for their children. If a parent likes reading, children may pick up that habit. The African family is doing two or three jobs without much time to spare. 120 (P. 14)

Cephas: As I indicated earlier, my children's education is very important to us despite our inability to invest much of our time in their schooling. I am currently completing my doctorate in Christian studies. My wife has a degree in religion. I believe our children watch us daily as we struggle through our own academic pursuits. The best support we can give our children is to set practical examples. They are more effective than the things we speak about. 122 (P. 14)

The parents demonstrated awareness of their responsibilities as active socialization agents and role models who could make a difference in the lives of their children. Children's home environment shapes the initial constellation of attitudes they develop towards learning. When parents nurture their children's natural curiosity about the world by welcoming their questions, encouraging exploration and introducing them to resources that can enlarge their world, they are giving their children the message that learning is worthwhile, fun and satisfying.

<u>Summary</u>

African-Canadians and other minority children need to feel accepted by their teachers, school authorities and feel a sense of pride in their ethnic cultures and contributions to the positive development of Canada and the world. Minority groups need people from their cultural groups with whom to talk and share feelings. Black students have had few Black role models from both their communities and the school system and have consequently affected their sense of self-esteem. Role models in the hands of a skilled teacher could influence learner's self-image. There is no doubt that some Euro-Canadian teachers serve as very good role models to Blacks and minorities but it is also necessary for Black/African-Canadian children to have positive Black role models to inspire them to succeed.

Teacher Preparation, Recruitment and Pedagogical Strategies

Teachers are human beings who bring their cultural perspectives to the classroom. They also bring their prejudices, stereotypes and misconceptions. The entire school curriculum is filtered through the hearts and minds of the teacher whose values and perspectives mediate and interact with what they teach and affect the ways the messages are communicated and perceived by their students (Banks, 1995). This makes the quality of school learning dependent upon the quality of teachers.

The main issues surrounding recruitment and hiring of teachers is the failure of the school systems

in Canada to recruit qualified Black and minority teachers and the failure of teacher education programs to attract visible minorities for training. The situation has ensured that Euro-Canadians interests, cultural assumptions and racial status quo are maintained. A recent study conducted in Ontario by Solomon and Rezai-Rashti (2001) explored teacher candidates' racial identities and the way these impact the process of learning to teach. The findings of the study indicated that candidates possessed limited knowledge and interpersonal skills for working with diversity. Although a few demonstrated awareness of the impact of racial difference in schools, many candidates, mostly Whites, preferred to remain "raceless" and "colour-blind" and denied the presence of "White privilege" in Canada. While cross-race partnerships provided the opportunity for candidates of different racial backgrounds to share perspectives and experiences in a positive interdependent manner, personal and institutional racism limited this learning opportunity. In order to prepare teachers for the growing ethno-cultural diversity in our schools, teacher education programs will not only require a better screening process for pre-service teachers but also a more comprehensive anti-racism curriculum in teacher education. The growing diversity in metropolitan areas of Canada is hardly reflected in the present teaching ranks. The British Columbia Teachers' Federation has conducted an extensive study on the demographics of public school educators in British Columbia. In the study, *Who Are the Teachers of British Columbia*, Anne Schaefer (1999) provided a detailed demographic picture of public school teachers in British Columbia with statistical data on gender, age, qualification, experience, earnings, recruitment, certification, hiring and employment patterns. She, however, failed to consider the cultural and ethnic makeup of teachers although she acknowledged the changing enrolment patterns in British Columbia's classrooms. This oversight is disturbing because it leaves out pertinent information that could advance the debate for inclusiveness and equity in teacher preparation programs in the province. While little is known statistically about the cultural/ethnic makeup of teachers in British Columbia, anecdotal information points to a dearth of teachers from visible minority backgrounds (Schaefer, 1999). In the United States, Bernard Young (1999) observed that despite evidence of increasing diversity in student population, prospects for increased representation of people of colour in the teaching force remain poor. This observation was clearly spelt out by a parent:

Marcia: I think it is part of the mainstream's policy of assimilation to ensure that children are

socialized into "Canadian" or Eurocentric values. There is a belief among members of the mainstream that multiculturalism may affect the dominance of the European powers. Hence, there is a hidden agenda to ensure that the teaching profession remains predominantly Eurocentric in all its forms. 276 (P. 31)

With the absence of a systematic training in multicultural knowledge or subject matter, parents

doubted whether teachers, school administrators and staff could contribute meaningfully towards

Black/African-Canadian academic and cultural excellence.

Perceptions of Black African-Canadian Students

Many Black students view teachers as the most central figures in their academic lives. They

therefore expect teachers and schools to meet their special needs. Unfortunately, many students are

alienated and discouraged by the same agencies they look up to for support. Like their parents, Black

students protested against under-representation of Blacks as teachers in teacher education programs.

When students were asked what they would change in their respective schools if they had the

capacity to do so, the dominant target was the cultural composition of teachers and school curricula. 11

students, out of the 15 interviewed, insisted that they would change the curriculum and the hiring practices

of the school board to ensure cultural balance:

> **SAP**: If you have the power to change something in your school, what would that be?
>
> **Gifty**: . . . I would create a bigger library with variety of books, including African history and literature. I would include more teachers from other cultural backgrounds, and ensure that there is respect for all students. 686 (S. 44)
>
> **Sarah**: I may change some teachers, because they are grumpy. They do not respect their students. They would discourage you by giving you poor grades in your work. Some teachers are good, particularly my PE [Physical Education] teacher. She is easy going. 689 (S. 44)
>
> **Dave**: If I had the power to change something, I would train some teachers again to enable them to understand [the needs of] Black students and work to help solve their problems. Some teachers just ignore you, if you do not understand what they are teaching. 691 (S. 44)
>
> **Ronald**: What I would change would include teachers in Home Economics and P.E. because I do not like them. They are too mean to us. The Home Economics teacher yells too much. 693 (S. 44)
>
> **John**: I would ask teachers to understand the needs of Black children, and not to ignore Blacks or discourage them. I would buy more books on African-Canadian and Black studies to allow people to read about Blacks. 696 (S. 44)

The importance Black children place on the ethnicity of their teachers is evident from the positive

image they cast for Black teachers. Black teachers' presence in schools is viewed as an affirmation of

Black student's cultural identity and capacity. Despite this perception among Black students, school

boards and the education system, through teacher preparation and staffing policies, have denied Black

students of role models they need to motivate themselves and their communities. On the contrary, they see

stereotypes of Black people in service roles being reinforced, as the few Black employees in the school

setting tend to be in support jobs rather than in senior teaching positions.

The issue of teacher pedagogy was not specifically discussed with the students. However, it could

be inferred from their responses to other questions that many of them found the standard pedagogical

approaches used in various classrooms less appealing. Pedagogy does not simply mean the techniques or

strategies that teachers adopt to make learning more interesting, although these are important aspects. It

also refers to how teachers perceive the nature of learning and what they do to create conditions that

motivate students to learn and become critical thinkers. Students provided various reasons why they

favoured some teacher(s) over others:

SAP: Who is your favourite teacher and why?

Gifty: Mr. W., the Music teacher is my favourite. He knows music very well. He is nice, caring and jovial. Most teachers avoid you but Mr. W. would approach you and ask about your progress at school and home. He is very funny and makes us laugh all the time. We also watch videos during his class or receive guest musicians. 164 (S. 11).

Lillian: I like my Math teacher because he takes time to explain things to you if you do not understand something. He is very nice and patient. He treats his students well. 165 (S. 11)

Maryam: I like my sports teacher because she encourages me to do my best in basketball, volleyball and soccer. I play for the school team and get better grade in the Physical Education course. 166 (S. 11)

Dixie: My favourite is Ms. L. She makes learning fun. She is not too hash on her students. She answers all kinds of questions. She understands students and encourages us. She is like a friend. You can share your problems with her. 170 (S. 11)

Ronald: My best teacher is my English teacher. She is very young and understands how her students feel. She tells us that she had similar experience when she was a student and, [therefore], sympathizes with those who have problems in her class. She helps me when I have trouble doing my assignments. I don't feel happy with my Math and Home Economics teachers. They are too bossy and discourage me from their subjects. 171 (S. 11)

Emma: The sports teacher, Mr. M. is my favourite because he likes me. . . . Since he comes from a developing country, he understands me better than other teachers do. He does not only encourage me to play soccer for the school team but also to work hard in other subjects. He sometimes pays

for the cost of sports fees I incur in school or for participating in tournaments. I always obtain grade "A" in his class. 174 (S. 11)

In describing their favourite teachers, the students used specific statements and descriptions that depicted traits of a good teacher. Teachers who are commended by students are those: 1) who know their subjects; 2) who are nice, caring and with good sense of humour; 3) who employ other teaching sources like videos and audio-visuals, computers, guest speakers/musicians, and posters; 4) who encourage student participation and motivate students to succeed; 5) who are patient, respectful of all students and welcome all sorts of questions from students; 6) who are approachable and are like friends; 7) who can empathize with students and be fair in their evaluation of students; 8) and who demonstrate interests in students beyond the classroom and school. It is important for multicultural educators to expand their repertoire of teaching skills and methods in order to reach out to all students and particularly those whose voices are marginalized within the curriculum.

For some students, the school serves as an important place where they hope to receive attention and support missing in their lives. Therefore, teachers who took a personal interest in the students were highly regarded. Generally, teachers who had positive perceptions, high expectations, respect and commitment to assist all students to succeed were described as favourites. In relation to the African Art and Cultural Education Program (AACEP), students largely expressed satisfaction with the learning environment that encouraged group work, cooperative learning, caring and respect, role-playing, cross-age tutoring and the use of visual resources. This variety of pedagogical strategies that the students found rewarding challenge teachers who are interested in transformative education to re-think what and how they teach, and to constantly interrogate their decisions.

Perceptions of Parents/MFC Cross-Cultural Facilitators

> **Mark**: It is not likely that the present teaching staff who have no insight in African art and culture could impart such multicultural knowledge unto their students. Until we have inclusive, staffing, administration and teacher education that emphasizes multiculturalism, our children would continue to be denied of their cultural heritage. Multiculturalism should come from top down and not only from bottom up. 47 (P.06)

The above comment, part of which has been quoted earlier, accurately encapsulates the perceptions of five parents and an MFC Facilitator on education policies regarding teacher backgrounds

and recruitment process. The contrast between the demographic profile of the typical classroom teacher or teacher education student, who is White and middle class and the public school classroom demographics in British Columbia, presents a challenge to the education system. Fatia, Gina and Cephas felt that most teachers and school administrators lacked the necessary training and backgrounds to implement any meaningful multicultural education. They suggested that teachers needed assistance to discharge their responsibilities with regard to multicultural education. They should be re-oriented in their training to acquaint them of the needs of all students. Furthermore, they demanded that teacher education programs should open up and encourage more Blacks and minorities to enrol for training. Many studies in North America including those by Black/African scholars have recommended that multicultural content and training be added to the curriculum for teacher preparation (i.e., Banks, 1994; Dei, 1996; Grant, 1989; B. Young, 1999). Bernard Young (1999) for instance, recommends deliberate and aggressive efforts, not only to increase the numbers of students of colour recruited into the teaching profession, but also to include cultural knowledge and alternative theories of social change. The suggestions by these parents reinforced this point. This also implies that visual arts pre-service teacher educators need to examine their own programs to determine the level of inclusion and how well they are currently delivering such competencies.

No one has a stronger, more direct interest in children's education than parents. Black parents do recognize this fact. Yet, for a variety of reasons, many Black parents, like Black/African-Canadian children are alienated from the school system. Some do not make enough time to assist their children due to economic circumstances. Others are not sufficiently informed or self-confident to be effective guides and advocates outside the home. One parent shared her experience and difficulties of managing her children as a working mother, sole provider and a parent. Teachers and schools need to strengthen relations and involvement of parents in the education of their children through parent advisory committees, parent/teacher interactions, parent volunteers and community-based multicultural programs. Such a co-ordinated approach incorporates a comprehensive set of teaching and learning strategies that mutually reinforce each other in order to enhance the achievement of students.

<u>Perceptions of Art Teacher/Principal</u>

The issue of under-representation of non-mainstream cultures in teaching and school

administration came up in my interviews with the two educators at the east Vancouver School. Although

the Principal felt that the school was "multicultural," by virtue of its multi-ethnic student population, the

teacher population did not reflect the diversity of student population:

> **SAP**: How do you feel about the under-representation of Blacks and other visible minorities as teachers, school administrators and policy makers in British Columbia?

> **Principal**: I think we have to look at the under-representation of minorities in the teaching field from various points of view. For me, yes they are under-capacitated in these roles, but let's face it; the percentage of Blacks and minorities may be quite few, which reflects the composition of teachers. I believe recruitment should be based on merit rather than affirmative action with quotas. 44 (T. 15)

The Art Teacher expressed her view on the under-representation of minorities in the teaching field. She

was of the view that:

> The implementation of employment equity has been very slow in the teaching field as well as other sectors of society. Until the last 10 years all the teachers here were Caucasians. It is a slow moving process but it is alive and moving in our school. I am looking up to the time when the teaching staff could reflect the cultural composition of the students. 45 (T. 15)

> **SAP**: What other practical steps should be taken to make schools more inclusive?

> **Principal**: We can encourage minorities but the standards must be maintained. We should not lower the standards to let minorities in. No way! 46 (T. 16)

> **Teacher**: Teachers education programs should recruit qualified minorities for training and subsequent hiring. Parents must be encouraged to participate in their children's education. We should learn all the important religious days and festivals of the peoples in Canada – Sikhs, First Nations, etc. 48 (T. 16)

While the Principal suggested that teacher recruitment, preparation and staffing should be based

on merit, the Teacher was of the view that conscious effort should be made to recruit qualified minorities

for training and subsequent hiring. The notion of basing teacher recruitment and staffing on meritocracy is

problematic. In order to understand its implications, we need to examine its embedded contradictions.

First, it leaves the question of who sets the standards, and who benefits from them unanswered. Second, it

assumes that there exists an equal playing field for all individuals and cultural groups represented in

Canada. Unfortunately, there is widespread evidence of the existence of the "vertical mosaic" (the

argument that ethnic/racial affiliation determines social class, and that visible minorities tend to be at the

lower ranks regardless of their educational training and qualifications) behind the rhetoric of meritocracy, employment equity and educational equity. Thus, it is imperative to take into accounts the structural inequities in society and their effects on visible minorities in dealing with teacher recruitment and staffing.

On the question of how well prepared teachers were in dealing with the challenges of diversity, the Principal and Teacher described a number of programs and strategies that were in place in their school:

> **SAP**: How are teachers prepared to deal with racial incidents at school?

> **Principal**: We have had a number of in-service training for teachers and all staff to deal with all racial issues. We talk to parents and any children who become involved in racial incidents in our school. . . . 53 (T. 18)

> **Teacher**: We do have "Second Step" program on empathy where visuals are shown to educate the mainstream teaching staff about how to treat other people. It is important that right at the beginning of every school year steps are taken to address the school about racial tolerance. Students must be aware that there is zero tolerance for racism. Personally, I encourage racial tolerance by helping students to understand each other's culture through multicultural education. 54 (T. 18)

It is welcoming to learn that multicultural policies in place at the school respond to some of the concerns of parents and students in this study. Generally, parents were of the view that teachers needed re-training in multicultural education and racial sensitivity to be able to reach out to minorities in their schools. The need to re-orient the attitudes of teachers has led to the belief that reform in teacher education and professional development program offers the best hope of significant change in the schools' attitude towards multicultural education. Because most teacher education programs still function within a framework that is exclusively Euro-centric, few teachers are prepared to face cultural diversity in their classrooms. The result is that many teachers try to treat all students in the same way, irrespective of their differences, thereby, reinforcing the unchallenged assumption that "equal means the same."

Both the Teacher and Principal saw pedagogy as an important factor that influenced the level of engagement or interest of their students. Each of them had her philosophy of teaching. The Principal believed that:

> . . . I think the far better way to teach it is to integrate [multicultural education] as a part of the curriculum. When it becomes part of our everyday program, it becomes more effective than when it is forced on students as a separate curriculum area to be taught. 20 (T. 07)

> **Teacher**: My philosophy is embedded in my culture where children are regarded as sacred. When you treat children as sacred and show love, care and respect toward their culture, then it is likely

they would grow up to become sacred, loving and respectful to others. It is not easy when teaching 29 kids because one kid may upset the entire class, but we have to look at the good in the child. I am interested, as a teacher, in developing the whole personality including the emotions and cognition. 21 (T. 07)

The School Principal felt that the various cultures that the children bring into their classrooms should serve as a starting point for teachers to investigate and discuss multicultural issues. The Teacher also felt that an effective multicultural pedagogy should motivate children; inject a sense of pride in students; infuse multicultural content in the curriculum; involve students in decision making including Individualized Education Plans (IEP); and involve parents in decisions on children.

Summary

As "frontline" workers in the education of children, teachers play a crucial role in the education process. Black/African-Canadian parents and students, therefore, expect that their views should be taken into consideration in teacher preparation and recruitment process. If the needs of the diverse student population are to be met, the participants expected that present and future teachers should demonstrate sensitivity to cultural differences and acquire the knowledge and skills to adapt their educational practices to their students' needs. Black parents and students demanded a fair representation of Black teachers to motivate Black children to learn and act as role models. While teachers must play a central role in meeting the special needs of children, it is unrealistic to expect that teachers can have the time and energy to assume the duties and responsibilities of social workers. A more holistic approach would reach beyond the school to involve other professionals and the child's family. If the responsibilities of the school, family and community are properly coordinated, they could go a long way to augment what goes on in the classroom.

Parental Involvements and Community Participation

Black children, especially those who recently migrated to Canada start school with many disadvantages. . . . For some kids, there is so much pressure coming upon them and trying to squeeze them into a particular mode . . . that is so hostile, and alien to them. They are crying for help and tying out everything . . . But if we as parents can give the necessary support right from the beginning, it is amazing what could happen. (Cephas, Parent)

While schools play the most direct role in the educational experiences of students, other

stakeholders (i.e., families and communities) also have responsibilities and roles to play in the education of students. Research is quite clear on the effectiveness of parents/school/community partnerships in education. In a study by Clark (1983), students performed better in programs with strong parental and community involvement than in identical programs with less parental and community involvement. Yet, for a variety of reasons many Black parents are alienated from the school system.

Perceptions of Black/African-Canadian Students

The Black/African-Canadian students discussed the importance of the support, encouragement and understanding of their parents and others to their education. While most of the students interviewed said that their parents demonstrated some level of interest in their education, especially in the area of cultural education and the learning of family values, others claimed their parents have not adequately been involved in their schooling:

> SAP: What cultural activities do you and your parents engage in outside of school?
>
> John: My parents have been a source of encouragement to me because they themselves have been active members of the African community. I attended the [Simon Fraser University] SFU African youths camp and participated in the African Art and Cultural Workshops. I found the art projects and the African folktales to be enjoyable activities. 190 (S. 12)
>
> Hannah: My parents attend programs at the MFC including picnics and other meetings. They also attend Sudanese cultural meetings and encourage us to participate. At home, we learn our Sudanese family values. 193 (S. 13)

John and Hannah's comments indicate how active some parents have been in mentoring their children to develop strong sense of identity. The African-Canadian Association of British Columbia (ACABC), with support from the MFC, organized the African Youth Camp in the summer of 1999, at the Simon Fraser University. It was a-week-long program which took the youths away from their homes to a secluded environment, where they engaged in many activities that improved upon their social, sports and academic skills. Through participation in games, sports, drama and entertainments, they were able to develop friendships and enhanced their self-esteem. John and some students referred to the 1999 African Youth Camp in our discussions because they know that I was a facilitator at that Camp. They might have assumed that the AACEP was a continuation of the Youth Camp, since both events were held a week apart and partly sponsored by the MFC.

Other students who indicated that their parents have been involved in the activities of the African community including the Multicultural Family Centre were Lillian, Stella, Eden, Emma and Susie. These students also indicated that their parents encouraged them to participate in the activities of the MFC and other African related cultural organizations. Stella, for example declared that:

> My parents participate in African activities through the MFC, and their association with the Ugandan community. My mother also works with the African-Canadian Association of British Columbia (ACABC). I also attend the African youths tutoring program with my parents' support. 197 (S. 13)

It became clear from our discussions that most parents of the students interviewed have been active members of their cultural communities, and have ensured that their children also benefited from participation in their cultural environment:

> **SAP**: How and where do you learn about your cultural heritage, and Black in general?
>
> **Dave**: My parents strongly believe in their cultural heritage and they teach us to understand and remember our African roots. We speak both English and our Ugandan language at home. We eat a lot of Ugandan meals, listen to Ugandan music and participate in many African cultural programs. I am happy that my parents will be sending us to Uganda to connect with my extended family next summer. 25 (S. 02)
>
> **Hannah**: My parents share a lot of their Sudanese cultural values with me at home. I can speak my native language with my parents. I now know and understand a lot of the Sudanese culture. They collect Sudanese art. 207 (S. 14)
>
> **Don**: My Mom usually shares with me events that are happening in Kenya, including information on my extended family. I also read news about Africa through the Internet, on TV, and through my participation in African cultural activities. 246 (S. 16)

Although Black students and parents who responded to this questionnaire, have strong feelings about how the inclusion of their cultural experiences in the school curriculum would enrich their education, public schools can only provide a part of what is needed for their education. The most important and successful cultural and historical education would depend on the independent efforts of the Black community. The parents seem to understand and support this notion through their participation in the MFC and their national cultural associations.

Perhaps of greater importance to students is the participation of their parents in their school through Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings, parent-teacher conferences, volunteering, advocacy and support in doing homework. Ten students, out of the 15 who participated in the interviews, described

the level of involvement of their parents as satisfactory:

> SAP: Is there any strong line of communication between your parents and schoolteachers?
Dave, for instance, intimated that:

>> Dave: My Dad shows a lot of interest in my education. He communicates with my school and teachers all the time. He sometimes visits my school or sends letters and notes to my teachers. Also, he attends Parent Advisory Meetings with my Mom. 610 (S. 39)

>> Hannah: My parents sometimes come to my school when my teachers invite them. However, I don't think they talk to my teachers about me. My Mom is very busy, she is working and my Dad is looking for a job. When they are not happy about my report card my Dad talks to my teachers during parent advisory committee meetings. My Mom does not understand many of the things I study at school. 603 (S. 39)

>> Lillian: Yes, my parents visit my school and talk to my teachers and counsellor about my performance at school. They attend some meetings at my school. Sometimes when my brother has a problem at school they go to talk to the vice principal and teacher. 606 (S. 39)

>> Emma: Yes, sometimes my Dad talks to the counsellor. He visits my school and talks to the vice principal and teachers about my progress. Also, when I get into trouble he comes to the school to discuss it with the vice principal and counsellor. 615 (S. 39)

For the 10 students, they felt that their parents were involved in their schooling, even though they expected them to improve on their levels of participation. On the other hand, the remaining five students did not hesitate in expressing their dissatisfaction with their parents' levels of involvement in their education. Judas and Gifty reported that their parents had less communication with their teachers. They have neither the time nor energy to help with learning at home.

>> Judas: No, my teachers send messages to my parents through letters and report cards. Sometimes my Dad attends the PAC meetings and parent teacher conferences, but not all the time because he works in the evenings. My Dad has never spoken with my school counsellor. 617 (S. 39)

>> Gifty: Not really. They hardly attend parent [PAC] meetings because of the time factor. They have attended parent teacher conferences about twice, but I do not think they really visit my school often. They are interested in my education but they are very busy. I wish they had much more time to help me in my homework. 605 (S. 39)

Maryam and Susie explained that their mothers have not been very much involved because they could not speak English fluently. They expected their fathers to become more involved even though they had busy work schedules. Some parents feel inadequate in assisting their children with their students because they may have little formal education. Although this was not the case for most of the parents of students interviewed, Maryam and Susie suggested that language deficiency was an obstacle for their mother's full participation in their education. Socio-economic status and minimal parent education should not

necessarily limit students from achieving as Clark's (1983) research has shown. In Clark's study, parental limitations were offset by alternative learning environments such as bilingual programs, community-based programs and homework centres which were available to Black parents and their children. Improving home-school partnerships could produce important benefits for students, teachers and parents. It can enable teachers to understand the social conditions of their students in order to offer appropriate assistance.

Black students felt that their community could also play an active role in ensuring their success in school and society. For instance, it was suggested that the MFC could expand its weekly tutoring programs by involving more tutors who could assist students in their homework and, at the same time, serve as role models:

> **Estella**: They should hire more teachers for the tutoring program. They need to hire at least one person who will be paid to organize regular programs for African-Canadian youths. Volunteers are not always reliable. 459 (S. 30)

> **Lillian**: I want the MFC to expand the tutoring program to include sports, and summer camp programs. This would attract more Black youths. They should teach Swahili and other African languages. 462 (S. 30)

> **Don**: The MFC should set up African music and dance clubs and encourage the youths to learn about their culture through music and dance. There are a lot of Africans around who could help with the music and dance instructions. 469 (S. 30)

> **Sarah**: We need an African community centre where we can meet and do all sorts of things. The MFC need to include Black cultural studies in the weekly youth programs. They should hire more tutors. 464 (S. 30)

The students offered many insightful comments that demanded the attention not only of school authorities but people in government. Such suggestions were directed at eliminating racism, hiring more Blacks and minorities as teachers, ensuring job equity, implementing multicultural education, constructing an African Canadian community centre, and involving the Black community in decision making.

Perceptions of Parent/MFC Cross-cultural Facilitators

In the interviews, I heard from the Black parents and the MFC Facilitators that they have always viewed education as important and a critical tool for breaking the cycle of poverty and racial discrimination in society. They acknowledged that they have responsibilities to play in the education of their children:

SAP: What is your level of involvement in your children's education?

Cephas: We are very much interested in our children's education. For our own selfish reasons, we guide and impart our values onto our children. . . . If parents do not get involved in their children's education, they would be destroyed psychologically and emotionally. I am personally unsatisfied with my level of involvement in my children's education. I need to spend a lot more time with them in spite of my tight work schedule. Unlike Africa where parents have time to instruct their children as they work in the garden and on the land, parents in Canada get up early and go to work while children go to school. By evening time, everyone is tired and there is less time to spend with children. 85 (P. 10)

Mark: In a limited way I ensure that my children do their homework and become punctual at school. However, with regard to the content of education, I have no input in curriculum. I think it would be difficult for an individual parent to influence the school curriculum, which is often from top down. Schools should attend to the needs of children since parents don't have the time and training to handle some of the technical issues affecting the child's development. 83 (P. 10)

Fatia (MFC): I am involved in my children's education by ensuring that they do their homework and attend school regularly. My girl is already mature, self-motivated and performing quite well at school, but my boy is no fan of homework. The teenage thing seems to be worrying him. I have also been attending PAC meetings when I have time. I spoke to the school during an incident that involved my son. Getting involved as a parent is important because you would serve as the first role model for your child. 89 (P. 10)

Cephas, Mark and Fatia described how they discharged their responsibilities as parents by guiding their children and ensuring that they fulfilled their commitments to the school in the areas of school attendance, participation and home learning. Fatia commented that parents through their active involvement could motivate their children to learn as well as serve as role models. The parents also acknowledged the difficulties involve in the participation of their children's education. Cephas spoke of the constraint on parental time, negative teacher attitudes and unsupportive school environment. Mark also spoke of the inability of individual parents to influence the school curriculum. He called for a united front of Black parents and communities to channel grievances to the school boards. Gina declared that she has been very proactive in the education of her children. She made a decision to move her children from their school to a different one when she could not persuade the school authorities and teachers to address peculiar problems pertaining to her children.

Another area where parents demonstrated their support for their children's education was through their expectations for their children. Education is highly valued and sought after by Black parents regardless of their socio-economic background. This is demonstrated through parent's expectations of their children's educational future:

SAP: What are your expectations about your children's future in Canada?

Mark: I expect them to perform their best in school and achieve their goals. I want them to be competent individuals, be responsible to their community and to themselves. [Miss G] wants to become a doctor, but she is not sure which type of specialization . . . [Miss E], I think, may become an artist. There are a lot of opportunities and advantages for our children in attending school in Canada, yet they do not always have positive experience of the education systems. 218 (P. 25)

Gina: I want my children to have good education up to the university level and get good jobs in future. I try to tell my son about existing discrimination in Canada, especially in the employment market. I make him aware that, as a Black person, he should be prepared to work twice as hard as others in order to succeed in this society. But he does not seem to understand me. He thinks he is the same as his White counterparts and should be treated the same in school and in society. But that is not the reality. 219 (P. 25)

Marcia: My expectations are that our children should become productive and capable citizens, and be in places of responsibility. I tell my children that as Blacks, they should work extra hard and go to the grassroots and get involved in community and voluntary work. By the time they are at the College level, they would have a network of friends and knowledge in many fields. Their social interactions would enable them to relate with all kinds of people. 222 (P. 25)

Fatia (MFC): Educationally, I expect that my children would all attend university. The more education they acquire, the better choices they would have in life. 224 (P. 25)

Eugenia explained how her initial lack of involvement has negatively affected her children's educational progress, and how she is trying to redress the problem.

Seven of the parents including Eugenia, an MFC Facilitator, reported the existence of some levels of cultural conflict that have negatively effected their children's participation in school. Children get confused when they receive conflicting messages from the school and home. For instance, Eugenia (MFC) observed that:

. . . there is a conflict between the home culture and the school culture. Parents may encourage their children to aim high for academic laurels, but once they are in schools, teachers inject different ideas into their minds. When it comes to academic work they are systematically discouraged through various means, but the school is ready to encourage them in sports by letting them play in their school teams. 243 (P. 27)

Some behavioural problems emanate from such conflicting messages. One way by which such conflicts could be addressed is to encourage communication and partnership between parents and the school. Parents of Black students should have their inputs listened to and respected by the school. Teachers need to be sensitized to the importance of parental involvement. At the school board level, this should include both staff in-service and pre-service teacher education programs.

Some parents were of the view that the African Canadian community must take the initiative in addressing the problems of Black students. They suggested that through community-based programs such as the MFC, ACABC and the various African national associations, the community could support homework clubs and provide volunteer tutors. They should send a message to the children and Black youths that education is a priority for the community. These views coincide with Bernard Young's (1999) position that African communities need to reflect on their past in order to gain some useful insight and strength to confront their future rather than rely on the promises of multiculturalism and democracy that are trapped under current institutional structures in North American society: Cephas, a parent, intimated that the African community in Vancouver needs to repair the damage they have done to themselves in the past in order to advance their own interests rather than relinquish their responsibilities to organizations and agencies that do understand the needs and values of the Black community. He also stressed the need for a partnership between the school and the community:

> . . . I think it is high time the school and the community dealt with positive aspects of African culture and history in order to help children understand their identity and enhance their self-esteem. . . . 13B (P. 02)

> **Mark**: Some programs from the communities could be integrated into the school curriculum. There should be communication between the schools, teachers, communities and families. I believe there should be some encouragement from the Ministry of Education for some community-oriented programs to be integrated into the school curriculum. 101 (P. 12)

Stella, a grade 11 student and Tom, a parent, reiterated the need for an African Canadian community centre in Vancouver where all kinds of activities and events could be organized for the interest of the Black community. A community centre could serve as a rallying point for the Black community to address issues pertaining to their community.

Perceptions of Teacher/Principal

Like the Black/African-Canadian students and parents, the Principal and Art Teacher found parental involvement as an important and positive element in students' educational success. They shared this view when I asked about their view on school, home and community partnerships:

> **SAP**: In what ways can the school, family and community coordinate their efforts to enhance the achievements of Black students.

Principal: We have an open door policy where parents and other stakeholders are welcomed to the School to participate in some aspects of school activities. We have a vibrant Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), which we must sustain. 50 (T. 17)

Teacher: Depending upon the type of children you are dealing with, the parents have to be involved at a certain level if the children are to benefit fully from their education. The family, the community and the school are all stakeholders in education and agents of socialization. They have to work hand in hand to enable learners to get the full benefits of education. 51 (T. 17)

That the School has an open door policy cannot be questioned. I experienced this through the warm reception and cooperation I received from the Principal and teachers during my negotiations for access to the School as a research site. The Principal and the Art Teacher indicated that managing children with such diverse cultural backgrounds require continuous collaboration with parents and the ethnic communities from where these children originated.

<u>Summary</u>

Black parents acknowledge that they have important roles and responsibilities in the education of their children. The data indicated that schools have not yet reached out into the resources of the local communities to assist parents to overcome some of the structural barriers and constraints to meaningful partnerships. Schools have to become open places where parents can feel welcome and valued. Educators must develop a model of parent education and advocacy, which empower both the parent and the student. The main objective should be to develop parent confidence in providing home education support to their children and to talk with teachers and administrators about academic issues.

Gender Issues

Throughout the study and analysis, I have given only superficial treatment to gender considerations because I focused on overwhelming number of issues relating to Black/African-Canadian educational experiences and multicultural education. It is not my intention, however, to underplay the significance of gender in multicultural education and on Black/African-Canadian educational experience. In fact, gender interacts with other cultural identities to influence children's education.

In our discussions, the parents felt that the socialization process of Black males and females in

Canada should be re-assessed. Many Black/African-Canadians grew up in environments dominated by males. They were socialized to believe that boys and girls were destined to fulfil distinctively different roles in society – boys as future leaders, husbands, breadwinners, politicians, modern sector workers and soldiers; girls as future wives, mothers, petty traders and domestic workers (Adu-Poku, 2001). Although attitudes are changing towards gender in African societies, many immigrants still arrive in Canada with cultural mindsets, which conflict with the host culture.

Due to structural inequalities and the dynamics of race-relations in Canada, many Black males grow up to feel powerless with diminished self-esteem. Some often try to regain a sense of power by rejecting mainstream values, rules, norms and buying into the popular youth culture and peer pressure. In the interviews, a parent explained that some Black youths display negative attitudes at school and at home as a reaction to the feeling of powerlessness and social rejection. Parents stressed the need for role models for Black children. They pointed out that boys needed the caring interaction of a male to develop appropriate gender behaviours. On the other hand, girls needed opportunities to verbally interact with caring males in order to develop interactional skills that can be transferred to teen and adult relationships. When students were asked whether their experience at school would be different if they were of a different gender, the overwhelming response was in the affirmative. Both male and female students felt that teachers were more sensitive to girls than boys, and that boys tend to get into trouble at school, especially Black males. Boys, rather than girls, have the tendency to interact freely with both genders.

> **SAP:** Do you think your experience at school would be different if you were a male or a female?

> **Hannah:** Yes, my friends are mostly girls but Black boys tend to have more friends from both genders, especially White girls. They are more active in sports than girls . . . 524 (S. 34)

> **Gifty:** Maybe, I may have more friends. This is because there are many White girls in the school who like Black boys. I do not know why. 525 (S. 34)

> **Sarah:** . . . The only difference is that the boys tend to have more friends at school. They also get into trouble easily, unlike girls. I am not sure if there would be any difference or not. 528 (S. 34)

> **Ronald:** My friends are mostly girls – Euro-Canadians, Asian-Canadians and a Scottish. They like me and I interact with them easily. Many Euro-Canadian girls tend to like Black boys who are only a few in Vancouver. 59 (S. 04)

Inter-racial bonding between White students and students of colour, challenges racist stereotypes and

discourses against interracial relationships. It demonstrates that people are not born racist, but they acquire racist attitudes and tendencies through socialization.

Many of the students spoke of differential treatment of boys and girls at school:

Dixie: Yes, some teachers mostly favour girls in our school because they give them more chances so as not to hurt their feeling. They take it harder on the boys because their feelings are stronger. Males can talk back to teaches, stand up to them, and most teachers do not like that. 531 (S. 34)

Ronald: Yes, if I were a girl, I think teachers would be a little more gentle and sensitive toward me. I may not encounter many troubles at school. 536 (S. 34)

John: Probably yes. Boys tend to get into more trouble than girls do. Teachers are less harsh on girls than on boys who are often seen as troublemakers. 536 (S. 34)

Students are acutely aware when some of their classmates are treated differently or provided more opportunities and encouragement than others. If Black students, particularly males, are to excel in school, they must have an environment that nurtures their individual potentials. When students are treated with indifference, they are likely to become indifferent to themselves and to school.

Young Black males are often constructed as aggressive, intimidating and violent. Media images reinforce these stereotypes. As a results many Black males students are labelled as potential troublemakers as they progress through high school. Black girls are not seen as threats or troublemakers; however, they encounter other kinds of racial name-calling and discrimination at school. The parents and the two MFC cross-cultural facilitators generally felt that Black boys are unfairly treated at school. They corroborated the views of the students that gender influences schooling, and that Black boys were misdirected to focus on sports:

SAP: Do you think your child's experience at school would be different if s/he was a male/female?

Mark: Gender? Obviously gender matters in educational participation in British Columbia. Females struggle in academics, especially in math and science. Blacks boys tend to struggle with trust of society. Meeting a group of 10 teenage boys together would be labelled a gang, especially if they were from minority ethnic cultures. Their intentions would not matter. It would be less different for girls, maybe. 65A (P. 08)

Cephas: Yes. Gender, class and race affect children's experience in school. Black teenage males are often labelled as troublemakers even before they get into trouble. Their White counterparts are not labelled as such; they are giving the benefit of the doubt. Black girls may walk away with that but they are not insulated against racism and discrimination in society. Black teenage boys endure the most of this hostility, which affect them in their schooling. 67A (P. 08)

Marcia: Our girls tend to have less trouble in school than our boys. That may be because the girls are less prone to react harshly to act of intimidation and racism against them. The boys tend to be tough and resistant to racially motivated bullying. They incur the displeasure of their teachers in course of their resistance. White students have more acceptability than Blacks or visible minority students because of the predominantly White teacher population. 69A (P. 08)

Clara: I do not think gender matters when they are children, but as they grow older, boys have more difficult times than girls, especially minority kids. Boys are already associated with violence and guns. I have heard about gangs of Chinese and Vietnamese youths but I have not heard of a gang of black children in Vancouver. Nevertheless, Black boys are labelled as troublemakers. Probable images are taken from the media and from the United States. It is a pure racial bias to prejudge young Black males as troublemakers, criminals and drug pushers when there is no evidence of crime. 70A (P. 08)

Fatia (MFC): In the early grades, the school system is designed more for girls than boys. Girls can sit quietly and work but little boys do not like to sit quietly; they learn differently. As they progress to the higher levels, boys tend to do well in math and science. 71A (P. 08)

Eugenia (MFC): Many mothers say that their girls are more focused than their boys who tend to play a lot. 72A (P. 08)

Young Black males encounter enormous pressure in schools because they are stereotyped around issues of behaviour, intellectual abilities, sports and athletic abilities. They internalize notions that Blacks are violent, sports heroes and intellectually incapable, making it difficult for them to transcend these negative stereotypes:

Cephas: . . . the attitude of the police toward Black youths is a concern. Due to stereotypes, Black males have become targets of police harassment. The police have accosted my friend's son three times for standing at a particular place for a long time, and for running along a pavement in the night. In each of these incidents, they had imputed acts of criminal intention. My children too have had a similar encounter with the police before. 229 (P. 26)

Eugenia (MFC): My worries are that my boys are not focused on higher achievable goals. They are brainwashed to focus on sports and other less important things. Parents may encourage their children to aim high for academic laurels but once they are in schools, teachers inject different ideas into their minds. . . . My boys have been trapped into the youth popular culture, which often get them into trouble with the police. 234 (P. 26)

Another area that gender was played up was in the context of students' aspirations. With the exception of Gifty and Susie, all the girls interviewed had aspirations for professions that are traditionally female. The aspirations for the seven girls included: three nurses, two teachers, one paediatrician and one lawyer. On the other hand, the boys generally opted for traditionally male-dominated careers. Out of the eight Black students interviewed, three wanted to become engineers, two sportsmen, one pilot and two undecided. While half of the boys aspired for sports or were undecided, all the girls had decided on what

they wanted to do in future. This situation confirmed the assertion by some parents that their daughters were more focused in school than their sons. There were gender differences in terms of what students perceived to be their greatest concern in growing up in Vancouver. While the girls generally worried about how they could achieve their life aspirations in the midst of structural inequalities in school and society, the dominant concern of the boys was about youth violence and police harassment.

The perspectives of the School Principal and the Art Teacher on gender, like race and ethnicity, were shaped by accounts of their own lives, their goals for multicultural education and their views of teaching and learning. The School Principal perceived gender as a non-influential factor in the education of children in her school because, she believed, the School provided equal access and opportunity for all students to excel, irrespective of the gender, race or cultural backgrounds. The Art Teacher, however, was of the opinion that the socio-cultural and economic locations of children influence their schooling experience. The Principal was largely concerned about equal access and opportunity. In other words, her philosophy on teaching was to treat all students "the same," even as she acknowledged the differences in students' backgrounds and abilities. Critical multicultural education, however, empowers educators to focus not merely on educational access, but on educational outcomes. This is important because educational access is mitigated by gender, racial and social disparities to affect outcomes. Therefore, it becomes difficult to separate school from the politics of social identification.

The Art Teacher, on the other hand, was concerned about how individual students could be motivated to succeed because of her view that gender and cultural differences influence learning. Gender equity should be viewed as valuing and respecting differences amongst boys and girls, and as challenging male domination. There are possibilities for pedagogical transformation when teachers become conscious of gender issues and begin to question the assumptions of everyday life in schools.

Summary

Gender intersects with racial, ethnic and other constituted identities to influence children's educational experience. Black learners, especially males, are often stereotyped around issues of behaviour, relationships, intellectual abilities, sports and athletics. The social construction of young Black males as

trouble makers, sports heroes and having weak intellectual abilities have negative implications for their education as they internalize those subtle messages from their teachers, the media and society. The response to sexism in schools often reflects the dominant discourse of value neutrality. Issues of gender bias are left unquestioned and the school's contribution to their perpetuation is ignored. Nevertheless, the social positions that students bring into the classroom locate them within a socio-cultural and economic hierarchy, which is accompanied by multiple forms of privilege or deprivation in their educational experiences.

CHAPTER SEVEN

REACTIONS TO THE AFRICAN ART AND CULTURAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

In this chapter, I examine the reactions of participants to the implementation of the African Art and Cultural Education Program (AACEP), with special reference to the responses from the Black/African-Canadian students and students from an east Vancouver School. In the attempt to present an African-centred approach to multicultural education, I have described extensively in the previous chapter, participants' perceptions of the education system and its impact on students, particularly Black/African-Canadians. Black/African-Canadians share the view that adequate cultural education has not been available through the public school system to Black learners. The implementation of the African Art and Cultural Education Program (AACEP) therefore, was an attempt not only to draw attention to this omission but also to demonstrate in practical ways how to address the problem. The chapter is organized into two sections. Section one explores four issues drawn from the responses of Black/African-Canadian Students to the AACEP: 1) Review of students' knowledge from the African Art and Cultural Education Program; 2) Views about program facilitators and their teaching strategies; 3) Exploring cross-cultural characteristics of art; and 4) Effects of participating in the various aspects of the AACEP. Section two deals with the reactions and responses of students at the east Vancouver School to the AACEP.

Responses of Black/African-Canadian Students to the African Art Cultural Education Program

The AACEP provided knowledge and information about Black/African-Canadians and their heritage as reflected in visual art, history, oral literature and geography. The program sought to foster understanding of African art and cultural awareness among Blacks and students from diverse cultural backgrounds, thereby, promoting healthy inter-group relations. Students participated by working individually, in small groups and as a class. Discussions of ideas, historical information and art projects formed a critical part of the program. Each lesson was preceded with a brief discussion of what students already knew about the topic. Previous research indicates that a culturally relevant curriculum could provide effective means of inducing positive attitudinal change among students, particularly those from

ethnic minority backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 1994; King, 1991; Nieto, 1999). Visual arts education has been found to provide a good basis for the development of programs focused on the development of positive inter-group attitudes (Andrews, 1984; DiBlasio & Park, 1983; Boughton, 1986). Findings from this investigation suggest that comparable results can be achieved with respect to students' attitudes towards cultural diversity and inter-group relations. While no empirical assessment of cultural/ethnic attitudes took place, the excitement, pride and satisfaction displayed by students, parents and teachers toward the AACEP made a positive impact on participants.

Review of Students' Knowledge from the African Art and Cultural Education Program (AACEP)

In order to investigate the impact of the AACEP on Black/African-Canadian students, it was necessary to examine how much students could remember from each of the seven lessons in the curriculum unit. Although the group interview was conducted during the course of the presentation of the program, the individual interviews began three months following the completion of the program, and continued for another six months. There was the risk of some students forgetting details of what was presented during the workshops at the MFC, after allowing so much time to elapse. Part of the intention of the face-to-face individual interviews was to test students' memories and verify the extent to which the program influenced their lives. In this section, I will present, in their own words, a brief summary of what was shared from a sample of students.

As shown in Table 4.1, all the students who were interviewed attended all seven lessons with the exception of Lillian who missed one lesson. They spoke generally about what they remembered from various lessons of the curriculum unit:

> **SAP**: Describe the various aspects of the workshops that you remember?
>
> **Estella**: I took part in all activities of the art and cultural workshops. I remember that Africa is a continent with 54 independent countries. It has a rich history that includes ancient Egyptian and Nubian empires and the kingdoms of Western Sudan. I also remember the *ananse* stories, the *kente* weaving, mask making and the printmaking projects (She left for her room and returned with her printed T-shirts). 269 (S. 18)
>
> **Maryam**: I participated in all the African workshops. I learned that ancient Egypt and Nubia were African civilizations that had advanced technology, powerful kings like the Pharaohs. They created many beautiful art objects including, mummies, pyramids and sculptures. I remember the *ananse*

stories that you shared with us. In the past, Africans educated their children through stories and folktales but now children are being educated at school and at home with TV and movies. I also learned how to weave *kente* from Ghana. 272 (S. 18)

Sarah: I attended all lessons, but was more interested in the storytelling and *kente* weaving. I learned that African stories and folktales contain useful messages that are important for the safety of children and society. I know that *kente* is the cloth for kings and queens of West Africa. I do also remember that Egypt and Nubia are the birthplace of civilization. We also learned how to print *adinkra* graphic symbols on T-shirts. 273 (S. 18)

Don: I remember that we studied the 54 independent African countries and their capital cities from the wall map. I learned that Africa has a lot of resources including minerals, forests and Sahara Desert. I also took part in the mask making project, *kente* weaving and story telling. We learned that ancient Egypt and Nubia were African civilizations that influenced the world through science and technology, art and the pyramids. African artists created great art works like the European artists such as Michelangelo, and Picasso. 278 (S. 18)

Judas: I participated in all activities. I remember that Africa is made up of 54 countries with big cities and villages. I learned about the history of ancient empires of the Nile Valley and Sudan. We had African mask making, Ghanaian *kente* weaving and *adinkra* printmaking projects. 282 (S. 18)

The above statements demonstrate how much students could recollect from the AACEP. Although a significant number of students could not remember all the details of what was done, many of them could recollect specific details about some aspects of the program long after it was completed and spoke favourably of it. This is worth noting because many of the Black children had very limited knowledge of African art, history and culture before the program. This became evident when I brainstormed with students prior to the beginning of the session to determine what they already knew about each of the lessons of the curriculum unit. It is ironic that while a few students could name some well-known Western artists, none of them was able to mention the name of any renowned Black/African artist.

Students were asked specifically about what they learned from African Oral Tradition and history:

SAP: What lessons have you learned from African Oral Tradition presented at the AACEP?

Gifty: Oral Tradition was a means by which Africans and other traditional cultures educated their children in the past. In many of the *ananse* stories from Ghana, the lesson in it was that patience and perseverance were virtues to pursue. *Ananse* always ended up a victorious hero. He was hopeful and never gave up trying. The stories also teach us not to be greedy and lazy but to be brave, obedient, hardworking. 286 (S. 19)

Lillian: Children in the olden days learned their culture and history through stories told them by their families but now, we like to watch TV and movies to educate and entertain ourselves after school. . . . 287A (S. 19)

Dave: I learned that before Africans could read and write, they taught their children through stories and visual arts. Many other societies also taught their children by words of mouth before

they could read and write their history. Ancient Egypt and Nubia were great African empires along the River Nile. They made art; built huge sculptures, and pyramids on the desert. They developed the hieroglyphics, numbers, the calendar and many school subjects. 291 (S. 19)

Dixie: I know from the *ananse* stories that it is wrong to be greedy and vindictive. We should not be so big headed. We should be proud and humble at the same time. The history made me aware that Egypt and Nubia were African empires that initiated the birth of civilization. The ancient Egyptian Nubian Pharaohs ruled as gods and created dynasties. They built pyramids and temples to bury the Pharaohs. I learned that Africans are great achievers. 292 (S. 19)

Eden: The African Oral Tradition enabled me to understand how Africans taught their children in the past. Other cultures like the First Nations in Canada did the same. African history is over 5000 years old. It began with ancient Nubia and Egypt, and continued with the empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhai to the slave trade, European rule and African rule. 295 (S. 19)

From the foregoing statements, there is indication that students understood that Oral Tradition was not peculiar to Africa alone but to other traditional cultures in the past before people could read and write. Thus the emphasis on cross-cultural similarities was highlighted. Infusing a sense of ethnic pride was one of the goals of the interdisciplinary curriculum unit. The students were able to recollect that their history spans about 500 years from ancient Egypt and Nubia to the kingdoms of Western Sudan, the slave trade, colonial rule until today. This was an important outcome of the program.

Students were also encouraged to openly express their views about the program in order to assist with its evaluation. Students are people most affected by school policies and programs, but they tend to be the least consulted about them. Critical pedagogy, however, insists on the inclusion of students' voices in multicultural education:

SAP: What did you find to be most rewarding/interesting or less rewarding/interesting to you in the AACEP?

Estella: The *kente* weaving project was the most interesting activity to me. I was able to make beautiful patterns by combining different strips of coloured paper. It was even more beautiful when we assembled our works to form one big piece of cloth. It resembled the real *kente* cloth [see Figure 7.1 for a sample of kente by a student]. 317 (S. 21)

Gifty: I found all the lessons to be useful. Your program and the African youths camp at the Simon Fraser University occupied us during the summer school break. The map study enabled me to figure out all the countries in Africa, about 54 of them, and their various cities and art forms. I enjoyed the stories and the weaving. The story about Western Sudanese empires was boring and too long for a single day. The story of ancient Egyptian and Nubian empires was a little bit interesting. 318 (S. 21)

Maryam: The story telling lesson was interesting. They were funny and provided useful lessons to everybody. I like activities with less talking but I really enjoyed the *ananse* stories from you and my friends. The historical stuff was boring to me. I could not relate it to myself, and it was not as fun

Figure 7.1
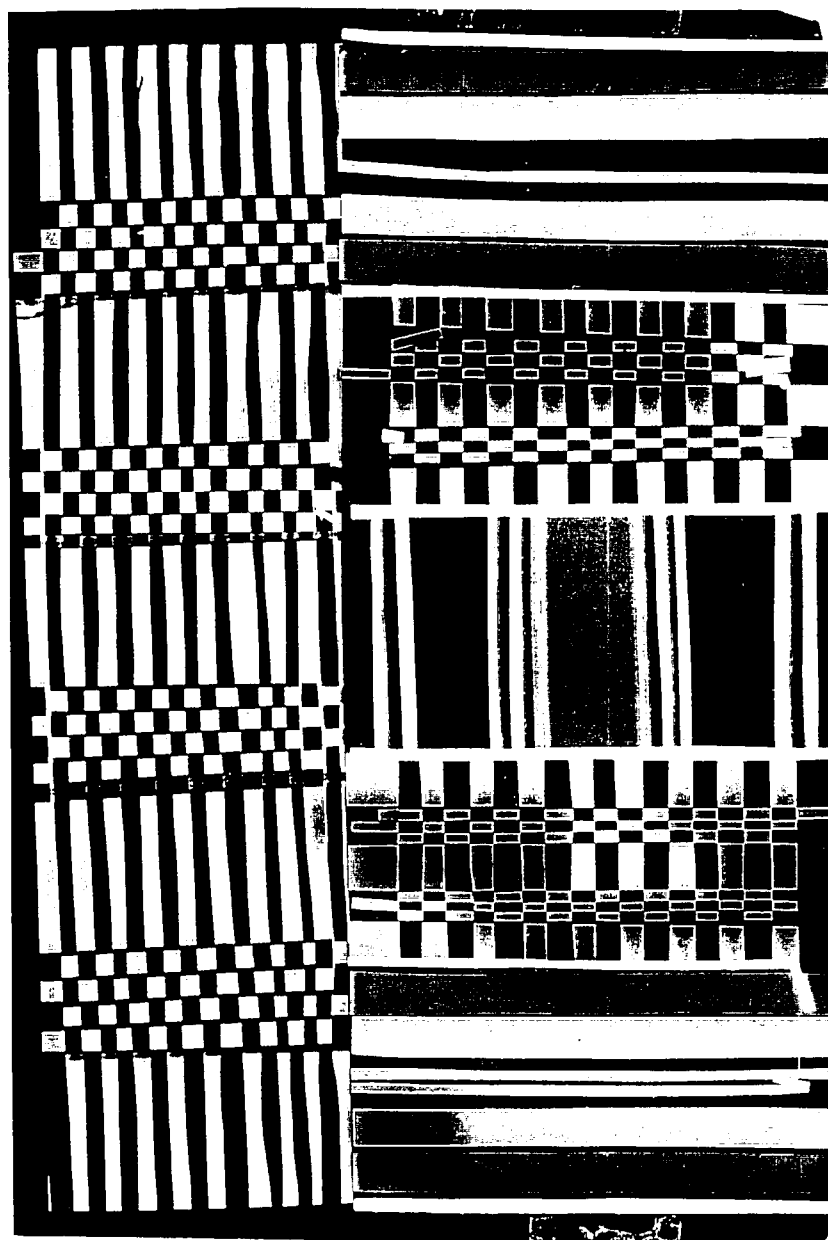
Sample of Two-Strip K*ente* Woven by a Student

as the other activities. Overall, I enjoyed the hands-on activities. 320 (S. 21)

Emma: I found the printmaking with *adinkra* symbols useful. I was able to design a complete T-shirt from it. The mask-making project was also fun. The geography and history gave me information about Africa that I did not know. The visual arts projects were of course more enjoyable than the history lessons. 327 (S. 21)

Dave: The lesson on *adinkra* printmaking project was awesome. I wore my T-shirt for a number of weeks and I was proud of it. I told my friends that I made it myself and they wanted to come but we had finished by then. I enjoyed the mask-making project and the funny *ananse* stories. I told three of your stories to my friends and they thought they were cool. I liked everything. 323 (S. 21)

It is useful for students, as direct beneficiaries, to share their views about a program that seeks to address their needs. Despite the overwhelming reception and satisfaction with the AACEP, a few students complained that the presentation of the history lessons were boring and too long. Although I had anticipated this, and through the pilot study made adjustments by interspersing the practical art activities with the historical presentations, the strategy was not fully successful in sustaining the interests of all the students in the history lessons. What can be deduced from this is that teachers should not assume that students will automatically show interest in African cultural studies or multiculturalism simply because it affirms their cultural backgrounds. What is crucial is how compelling the pedagogy of a particular instructor should be in multicultural education. In spite of this, the general tone of the students toward the program was positive. Given the "deculturalization" that has generally characterized the schooling of Black/African-Canadians in Canada, the response to the AACEP that affirms their cultural backgrounds is understandable. Students can teach educators enormously important lessons about unquestioned pedagogical practices when their views are sought about their education.

As a confirmation of what students shared about the program at the group interview, students discussed the new things they learned from participating in the program.

SAP: What new things have you learned about Africa?

Eden: Africans communicate through artworks, stories and cultural festivals. Symbols in *adinkra* and *kente* cloths have meanings. I learned that there are some common functions of art in all societies. I now know that in the past, Africans recorded their history through Oral Tradition. 358 (S. 23)

Dixie: I learned some *ananse* stories, studied the map of Africa and designed my T-shirt with *adinkra* graphic symbols. I know that Africa is a continent with rich mineral resources, but many people are poor. Africa was the source of the slave trade in America. It has a history that includes ancient Egypt, Nubia, Ghana, Mali and Songhai. 355 (S. 23)

Don: Before the program, I did not know that Africa is a continent of 54 countries, with many modern cities. Africa is rich in mineral resources and culture. Africa has kings who are custodians of culture. Africa has many art forms, beliefs, tribes and over 1000 languages. We were informed that not all events in Africa are reported. The newspapers and TV news often choose to report mainly the negative events. 357 (S. 23)

The responses from five other students, Hannah, Maryam, John, Emma and Sarah, highlighted many aspects of the geography of Africa they learned at the AACEP. They described Africa as the second largest continent after Asia with 54 independent countries and a population of about 750 million. It has diverse ethnic groups with over 1000 different languages. The students spoke of Africa's rich mineral and other resources, vegetation, topography and geographical size in comparison with the United States and the rest of the world. Africa is about four times the size of the United States. The three largest countries in Africa, Sudan, Algeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, put together is about the size of the United States. Furthermore, they shared their knowledge of Africa in terms of its rich art forms which span from the ancient Egyptians and Nubians until today. Not only did the students speak of the positive things happening in the continent, but they spoke about the civil wars and poverty also.

From the responses of the students throughout this section, one can conclude that the African Art and Cultural Curriculum Unit had an impact on students. The expressive and eloquent responses from these students indicate that they are conscious of the socio-political realities of the Black/African-Canadian learner and the context of education. Students accept much of what is presented in the media and what is taught in school as factual knowledge. If it is found in a textbook, it acquires even more authenticity. Yet as Banks (1995) reminds us, "Hegemonic knowledge that promotes the interests of the powerful elite groups often obscures its value premises by masquerading as totally objective" (p. 15). Maryam, Susie and Don appear to be aware of this when they indicated that the news media, knowledge from school and textbooks do not always provide accurate and balanced representation of Africa and Black people in the diaspora. While the AACEP focused on the positive aspects of Africa and Black people, students were made aware of the economic realities in the continent and the circumstances that have created widespread poverty, disease and hunger. Multicultural educators need to encourage students not only to acquire knowledge from many perspectives but also to be critical of the sources of knowledge in order to challenge hegemonic knowledge in all its forms.

Views about Program Facilitators and their Teaching Strategies

In this section, I will analyze students' views about the backgrounds and instructional strategies of facilitators of the AACEP, as part of the attempt to explore the impact of the program on its participants. As already indicated, all three facilitators including myself had some teaching experience. In fact, Carol and I are professionally trained teachers. Dan and Carol, currently acting as community activists, volunteered to participate in the AACEP due to their prior interest in multiculturalism. Thus, as facilitators, we were motivated to have the unit succeed. Aware of the socio-political realities of Black/African-Canadians, we approached this project with passion and dedication. The pedagogy was to employ African cultural concepts as a bridge to the dominant culture, and to empower students to think critically and to work for transformation in their own lives.

The community workshop environment was different from a school classroom setting; Africentric and multicultural education perspectives influenced the curriculum and instructional strategies. The pedagogy was tailored to meet the Black community's need for a culturally compatible education component. Different techniques and methods were employed to manage the art studio setting. Classes were held outdoors or indoors depending on the nature of the lesson. The architecture of the classroom reflected student autonomy rather than instructor hegemony. Seats were organized in different configurations – in rows, in single or multi-circular mode, and rectangular mode – to fit different activities. For example, if students were to share their stories with one another, they sat in circles in order to see one another. Although each lesson was planned for two and half hours, actual class time was event-oriented rather than clock-oriented. It was clear that simply imparting facts to students would not promote inter-cultural understanding. Therefore, role-playing was important in all aspects of the program. Instructors were dressed in traditional clothes to demonstrate their pride in African culture. Students were required to consult with their parents or members of their community to learn some folktales, which were shared with the entire class. Emphasis was on group-centred learning. Most schools favour a highly competitive and individualistic instructional mode, which tends to favour children from the dominant cultural group, particularly males (Nieto, 1996). In the community based Africentric model, the facilitators combined different styles with emphasis on a more cooperative mode. Hierarchical student-teacher relations gave

way to dialogue between student and instructor, and between student and student. The Africentric model stresses group unity, collaboration and community. These ideals were reflected in students' comments about the pedagogy of the AACEP:

> **SAP**: How do you feel about the instructional strategies of the AACEP?
>
> **Don**: . . . The lessons were fun. I enjoyed the group work, group discussions and the outdoor storytelling. It was different from what we do at my school. We listened to African music, watched African videos and printed African designs on our T-shirts. . . . The instructors were good; they were like parents to me. 263 (S. 17)
>
> **Sarah**: . . . We worked together like one family during the African cultural program. Everybody's culture was respected. The instructors were all Africans; two of them were Ugandans. I understood them and I believe they understood me as a Ugandan. They made us feel proud. 258B (S. 17)
>
> **Judas**: . . . I felt very happy with the instructors, perhaps because they were also from Africa. The stories, the history and the art activities made me proud of Africa. 266B (S. 17)

Don, Stella and Judas felt motivated and proud that their cultural identities were affirmed at the cultural workshops. They emphasized aspects of the instructor's pedagogy they found compelling. The group-centred collaborative approach being referred to here enabled students not only to learn the subject matter from each other, but also real life knowledge of themselves and others which they were exposed to, as they applied the lesson at hand. The context and subject matter demanded an approach that encouraged interaction among students in and outside the classroom. Through inter-personal and group interactions, students acquired respect for, and bonded with, each other. The group-centred approach also developed the skills of listening, negotiating and compromising. Students were encouraged to develop attitudes and skills that were important for transformative education. In general, the students found the AACEP to be naturally meaningful to their lives.

Students expressed views about cultural education and the backgrounds of instructors. Out of the 15 students interviewed, 12 of them, including all the girls said they preferred a person of African descent to teach African history, because of their background and potential to serve as role models. Three students, however, felt the ethnicity of an African studies instructor was not an issue as long as they were knowledgeable in the subject. Hannah argued that a non-African could teach African art, history and culture, but might not possess the practical experience of living the culture:

> **SAP**: Does the background of an instructor for African art and cultural education make a

difference to you?

Hannah: Yes, I believe an African instructor would know more about African art and culture because s/he practices it . . . Also, an African makes you feel like you belong to one family. You get more interested and can ask more questions. I enjoyed the summer program because all the instructors had knowledge of African culture and encouraged us. They served as role models to me. 411B (S. 27)

Estella also pointed out that she could better relate with instructors from her own ethnic or racial group than those from other groups. She felt that the instructors' strategies to the AACEP were encouraging and positive about Africa. Lillian commented that her public school teachers were ignorant about African art and history, and this could explain why they are unwilling to make them part of classroom discussions. Sarah and Dave also affirmed the view that Black instructors would be more effective in teaching African studies. Sarah also felt that:

Yes, an African tutor would probably know more about the culture by way of studying it and living the culture. An African tutor would also serve as role model to me since I don't have any African-Canadian teachers in my school. The teachers at the workshop served as role models for our community. 416 (S. 27)

Shared cultural background or shared norms and experience can have positive influences on classroom interactions. Black/African-Canadian students held the view that Black students could benefit more in classrooms with teachers of the same background as their students. Nieto (1999) points out that when students share a common cultural background with teachers, they are often on the "same wavelength" simply because they have an insider's understanding of cultural meanings. This situation could facilitate classroom interactions and thereby influence students in positive ways. The presence of facilitators who looked like them, and who were competent, caring and responsible and with university degrees was very assuring to most of the children. They felt confident to talk and share their feelings freely. Including students' voices in multicultural education is a central tenet of critical multicultural pedagogy. This process enables teachers to question the content, form and pedagogy of their subjects of study.

On the other hand, Dixie, Eden and John were of the opinion that what matters to them was the knowledge of the instructor: Their argument strikes at the heart of racial essentialism. What they are saying essentially is that one does not need to inhabit a Black or African-Canadian body to have the knowledge and experience that makes her/him an Africentric scholar or teacher. This is certainly true

because through practical experience and academic study involving the use of textbooks, anybody could acquire the knowledge needed to teach African cultural studies. However, a number of questions need to be examined in relation to African cultural studies: Who are the authors of the textbooks on African art and cultural studies? Who decides which textbooks to use in social studies, for example? How authentic and balanced are the contents of the textbooks? What motivation or particular contribution could a non-African instructor bring to the Africentric art and cultural discourse? These questions are legitimate in view of the evidence of Eurocentrism and continuous marginalization of the lives and experiences of people of colour in school textbooks, curricula and participation (DePillars, 1990; Grant, 1992; Nieto, 1996; Parry, 1974; Pieterse, 1992). Thus, it is important to place the question of the background of an African art and cultural instructor in proper historical and socio-political perspective in order to understand why the greater majority of Black students in this study opted for an African instructor. As a disenfranchised group, these students may be demonstrating their solidarity with Black instructors for a common quest for emancipation from a system which, historically, has colluded with the status quo in maintaining Euro-Canadian hegemony in education.

Some mainstream Canadian teachers are reluctant to embrace multicultural education because they perceive it as undermining Eurocentrism in the curriculum, and the unity of the nation (Solomon & Levine-Rasky, 1994). The instructors for the AACEP, on the other hand, perceived multicultural education as a positive educational ideology offering possibilities and hope for transformation in the lives of Black/African-Canadian learners. As a result, they were able to discuss with students issues that have been untouched in the public school setting, but which had profound effects on students' lives. A critical multicultural perspective demands that schools become sites of freedom to encourage students to learn even more about controversial issues.

Exploring Cross-cultural Characteristics of Art

One of the goals of the African Art and Cultural Curriculum Unit was to create an awareness of the similarities and differences between cultures through activities in African art and cultural studies. Instructional programs that focus on cultural similarities have proven to be successful in promoting

positive inter-group attitudes (Cipywnyk, 1987). In the presentation of this unit, an attempt was made to highlight some cross-cultural similarities between African culture and the cultural practices of other ethnic groups. McFee (1986) states that in all cultures art is used to objectify, by making beliefs and superstitions more sensuously tangible, so that they can be seen and felt. She points out that, across cultures, art enhances celebration and ritual in human events. Chalmers (1980) also presents a case "for the study of art as cultural artefacts and the cultural anthropologist as a model for both art teachers and art students"(p. 6). He argues that dealing with the "why" of art and the "comparative study of the arts, of response to the arts, and the production of art forms which matter, can help us understand each other" (p. 9).

Clothing and story-telling were important components of the curriculum unit because of the vital role the study of dress and personal adornment can play in cultural learning, as well as the importance of stories to the well-being and survival of all people. Adornment is a universal concept and therefore it provides a basis for comparison between groups. Based upon the African art and cultural activities, students learned to identify some cross-cultural similarities and characteristics in visual arts and culture:

> **SAP**: Give examples of the characteristics of African art and culture that are common to Euro-Canadian and other cultures.

> **Sarah**: Many people including East Indians, Chinese, Africans, Europeans, Canadians and Native Indians practice cloth weaving. Clothing is used to beautify and protect people against the effects of the weather in all countries. It can tell a lot about a person's social status. *Kente* and *adinkra* cloths from West Africa used to be worn by those from the royal family, but African-Americans, Caribbeans and many people now use it in homes and churches. Africans use masks in cultural celebrations. 305 (S. 20)

> **Hannah**: Many groups in Canada also practice all the African art activities we learned. In Ghana men usually weave *kente* and make *adinkra* cloths while women make pottery, but in Canada, women from Euro-Canadian, First Nations and other ethnic backgrounds mainly practice quilting. This is just the opposite. Africans communicate in many forms. The First Nations, West Indians and Chinese people also communicate through their own cultural symbols on their totem poles, textiles and cultural objects respectively. 300 (S. 20)

Stella and Hannah identified cloth weaving and mask making activities as common human activities. They spoke of the functions that clothing, masks and other art forms play in many societies. For students to be able to make these cross-cultural connections in art required a skilful and purposeful guidance. This is because, as pointed out by Neil Bissoondath (1993), "Differences are easy to find. It's the similarities you really have to dig for" (quoted in Chalmers, 1996, p 2). For a deeper understanding of the place of African

art in multicultural art education, art educators need to look beyond the aesthetics of art and focus more on the cross-cultural functions of art, which have the potential to uncover the common elements and characteristics of different ethnic and cultural groups.

Maryam and John emphasized the importance of art as a vehicle for transmitting cultural heritage, for cultural celebrations and aesthetic enhancement in all societies:

> **Maryam**: Africans can pass on their culture through art, just like Canadians, Europeans, Americans, Chinese and Japanese. In every country, art objects are kept in museums to allow people to get to know their past. In Africa, palaces and shrines are decorated with wall paintings, engraved patterns and symbols. In Canada, the United States and other countries, people visit the museums to learn about their art. Wealthy people and celebrities decorate themselves with rich art objects, clothing and jewellery. Church buildings and government buildings are also decorated with art objects. Africans produce drums and other musical instruments for entertainment; Canadians also use electronics instruments and games for entertainment. 304 (S. 20)

> **John**: In every country people tell stories and write fairly tales to educate and entertain their children. In Africa, people celebrated puberty with art objects and festivals. In Canada, when people turn 18 years and become adults, they can celebrate with their school graduation ceremonies, parties, a new car or by moving from their parents' home to start a new life. Africans celebrates festivals, funerals, rites of passage, Christmas and Easter. In Canada we celebrate Halloween, Easter, Christmas, Chinese New Year and Thanksgiving. 313 (S. 20)

Gifty, however, explained that every culture has a way of passing on its heritage. Canadians pass on their heritage mainly through written literature, text and art works in the museums. Africans used to pass on their heritage through oral literature, art objects and cultural practices. She emphasized the interdependence of cultural groups by referring to the influence of Egyptian and Nubian civilizations and the Christian festival of Christmas to the rest of the world. Judas, Don and Ronald also compared some cultural practices from different ethnic groups and argued that similar art and cultural activities take place in all societies. The major themes from their responses include the assertion that the use of masks is a universal phenomenon. Masks are associated with religious and spiritual beliefs yet they entertain people in all societies. They are used to teach social values and for cultural celebrations like puberty initiation in Africa, Halloween and Potlatch in Canada and the United States, and New Year in China. Again, they indicated that while Africans produce wood, stone and ivory sculptures for decorative and religious functions, the Pacific Northwest First Nations of Canada are associated with totem poles, just as Europeans, Americans, Japanese, Russians and Chinese make large statues and monuments to commemorate their heroes and events. Finally, they compared *kente* weaving, embroidery and basketry in

Africa with quilting, embroidery and basketry from North America, Australia, Asia, Europe and South America.

As noted by John Judas, Don and Ronald, the celebration of cultural festivals is universal, and has widespread appeal among children. Teachers could enrich students' knowledge by leading them to generate deeper information about different cultural festivals. For instance, Thanksgiving in North America has similar characteristics with the Festival of Harvest among Africans, South Americans and Native Indians. Halloween in North America conveys a theme of superstition that is also embedded in many ethnic festivals in Africa, South America, India and China.

A cross-cultural approach to the study of the social functions of art has many implications for curriculum in multicultural art education. In this study, students were made aware of the similarities in the cross-cultural functions of art and cultural practices. They were able to understand the inter-connectedness and closeness of various ethnic and cultural practices even as they acknowledge their differences. They understood that perceived cultural differences essentially constitute differential manifestations of similar human values. This approach had positive transformative effects on students' attitudes toward their own ethnic cultures and other cultural groups. This is particularly important for children living in Vancouver where many inner city schools are multicultural in terms of population. It is essential to multicultural art education that while we celebrate diversity in developing instructional programs, attention should also be focused on cross-cultural similarities, which have the potential of achieving positive inter-group attitudes among students of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds.

Specific Effects of Participating in the Various Aspects of AACEP

Perceptions of the AACEP were useful for investigating the extent to which the program affected students' attitudes toward African art and culture, as well as inter-group relations. Although views from students were diverse, there was a consensus that the program afforded students an opportunity to gain knowledge about their cultural heritage that has been virtually absent from the public school curricula. Emma, Ronald, Maryam, Estella and Hannah emphasized that the program was a rare opportunity for them to engage in hands-on art activities and knowledge that affirmed their cultural heritage.

SAP: How did your participation in the African art and cultural workshop influence your life?

Emma: . . . I participated in the art workshops and acquired some knowledge about Ghana, Sudan, Nigeria and the rest of Africa that is not available from my school. For example, I now know that the size of Africa is about four times bigger than the United States. Three Nations of Africa – Sudan, Algeria and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) combined, equal the size of the U.S.A. Africa provides the world with gold, diamond, petroleum, timber and many other important minerals. The program changed my views on Africa: that it is not made up of only sick and poor people. 265 (S. 17)

Ronald explained that it was his first experience in African art and cultural education of this scope. He felt that his cultural awareness was enhanced because of his participation in the program:

. . . It is important for me as an African to know my history and culture. I cannot only be an African through my skin colour but through the knowledge of my history and culture. 262 (S. 17)

Maryam declared that she established new and lasting friendships and acquired positive knowledge about her cultural heritage. Estella acknowledged that the knowledge of African art and history was important to her because it was not part of her school curriculum. However, she criticized gender bias in Ghanaian *kente* weaving and stated that: "I don't understand why only men and boys can weave *kente* cloth in Ghana. It is unfair to women and girls" 253 (S. 17). Hannah also felt that the program increased her cultural awareness. She expressed her desire for the workshop to become a regular feature at the MFC:

. . . It made me aware of my culture although I grew up partly in Saudi Arabia. . . . It is important for me to learn my culture and celebrate my heritage. It would help in my adult life when I have to face all kinds of responsibilities. I can teach my own children about Africa. I think the program should continue. 252 (S. 17)

Many Black youths, because of assimilation into Canadian culture have been deprived of their parents' cultural heritages. While most African-Canadian parents, like members of other ethnic groups, want to maintain their cultural values, the school, as a socializing agent, is predisposed toward the dominant cultural values and practices. This often deprives children from non-mainstream cultures of other cultural values, skills, and knowledge, history, language and learning styles in the academic environment. For the participating students, it is noteworthy that they continued to express interest and commitment to Africentric knowledge, values and norms, long after the program had ended. Statements like: "I cannot only be an African through my skin colour but through the knowledge of my history and culture," "the AACEP changed my views of Africa: that it is not made up of only sick and poor people," "I was proud of the achievements of ancient African empires and the Egyptian and Nubian civilizations" and "I don't

understand why only men and boys could weave *kente* cloth in Ghana. It is not fair to women," coming

from Black-African-Canadian students are compelling testimonies of the power of a curriculum approach

that contests hegemonic knowledge. A critical multicultural education demands that all knowledge, not

only from the dominant culture, be scrutinized in order to achieve emancipatory, non-hegemonic curricula.

Susie, Dave and Judas expressed how the program has helped them to acquire positive views

about Africa and Blacks. One objective of the unit plan was to redress some misconceptions about Africa

and its peoples, and to celebrate the positive aspects of the continent. There were many indications from

the responses of the students that this objective was met:

> **Susie**: I am proud to be a Sudanese and an African. The art and cultural education workshop made me proud of my culture. Everyone has a culture, and my culture is very important to me. 369 (S. 24)

> **Dave**: Some people say bad things about Africa and Blacks most of the time. The art and cultural workshops helped me to learn many positive things about Africa that I didn't know before. I am happy that my Dad registered me for the program. I am excited that my parents will send us to Uganda for a visit next summer. I would learn more things about Uganda. 370 (S. 24)

> **Judas**: The program helped me to learn some things about Sudan and Africa. It helped to know that information from books and the news on TV sometimes wrongly represent Africa. I learned that my descendants were kings and queens from Egypt, Nubia, Ghana, Mali and Songhai. I enjoyed the workshops because the teachers were very nice. They encouraged us to feel proud. 266 (S. 17)

Most of the students felt that they benefited from the AACEP by way of deepening their

friendships with participants, some of whom already knew each other. They expressed satisfaction that

they could occupy themselves with something useful and enjoyable during the summer school break. One

objective of this study was to use the AACEP to encourage healthy inter-personal and inter-group

relationships among participants. There were indications that this objective was met among the

participants.

> **SAP**: Did you make any friends at the AACEP? Are you still in touch?

> **Eden**: I had friends at the workshop already. They invited me to the program. They are still my very good friends. I feel safe with them. My friends at school are also nice, but they are not interested in African art and culture. 438 (S. 28)

> **Susie**: I didn't make any new friends. I already had friends within the group. We visit each other's home for sleepovers. During the summer, my friends and I discussed the lessons every night. 433 (S. 28)

Dixie: It was fun. I met many of my friends and we learned many new things about Africa. I wish that we had a similar program every summer break to keep us occupied. There is nothing to do during weekends and school holidays except hanging out with friends and watching TV and videos. It was a good thing to see many African youths all over Vancouver coming together to learn about their culture. 260 (S. 17)

Dave: I made one friend at the workshop. I knew some of the people who came to the workshop, but we became much more closer after the workshop. Some of my friends at school are mean. They tease you and pick up fights with you. The guys at the workshop and the S.F.U. camp were very nice. 259 (S. 17)

One of the problems of Black youths is boredom, as rightly described by Dixie. Often there are no pograms to keep them positively occupied after school or during school holidays. The MFC's weekly tutoring program is not a regular feature for youths. Their programs are geared more toward women (mothers) and children than on Black youths. Without any programs and activities, some Black teenagers are tempted to experiment with sex, alcohol, smoking and drugs. Others hang around pubs, malls and along street corners at night where they are seen as threats, and are harassed by security guards and police. Unfortunately, there are facilities available at the various community centres where Black youths could be mobilized to utilize them, but the African community is so scattered and its members so much occupied with many activities that it becomes difficult to organize the youths for meaningful cultural activities. The students therefore, saw the program as filling a gap in their lived experience. It should be noted that, since the completion of this study, the MFC has began a regular program for Black youths.

The AACEP was not meant to impart knowledge as a one-way-street to students, but to empower them to get involved in their own learning. Al Hrytsak opines that the best way to learn is to teach someone else. According to Hrytsak, we learn 10 percent from what we read, 20 percent from what we hear, 30 percent from what we see, 50 percent from what we see and hear, 70 percent from what we discuss with others, 80 percent of what we experience and 90 percent if we are able to teach what we learn. The best way to study is to teach it to someone else.[8]

Students, who are empowered to develop positive cultural identity through interactions with their teachers and peers, experience a sense of control over their own lives. They develop confidence and pride in themselves and the motivation to succeed. When students were quizzed about whether they had plans to

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[8] Al Hrytsak, Director, School of Cooperative Education Programs, Manitoba, Canada. In Black Learners Advisory Committee (1994). *BLAC report on education: Redressing inequality – Empowering Black learners (Vol. 3): Participatory Action Research* (p. 50). Halifax: Nova Scotia.

share their African art and cultural learning experience with their parents and peers, eight out of 15

indicated that they had either already shared their experience or were planning to do so:

> **SAP**: Would you like to share your African art and cultural experience with your parents and friends?

> **Estella**: I have already discussed the workshop with my friends and parents. They were very interested. My friends expressed their desire to join me next time for the *ananse* stories. They also shared their culture with me. 380 (S. 25)

> **Emma**: Yes, because not all of them are aware of African art and culture. My friends only know Africa from what they hear and see from TV. 391 (S .25)

> **Dave**: I would be glad to teach my friends the truth about Africa. Some of them are misinformed. I think art teachers need to learn about African art in order to teach multicultural art. 386 (S. 25)

> **Don**: Yes, sharing my culture would enable me to ask them about their own culture. I can compare the various cultures and see what is common or different. In this way, I would understand various cultures. 389 (S. 25)

Four students, Gifty, Susie, Dixie and Judas were not sure if their non-African friends would be

receptive to discussions of African art and history since their friendships centre on activities other than

learning about culture. Maryam, Ronald and Eden however, expressed the feeling of inadequacy to teach

other children about their culture:

> **Maryam**: No, I do think I know enough to be able to teach African art and culture. Besides, they won't listen to me. They are rude. They are only interested in youth pop culture, not ethnic culture. They wanted to discuss movies, video games, sports and the likes. 383 (S. 25)

> **Eden**: No, I can't remember all the things we learned. My friends would not be interested to learn about African art and cultures. They are more interested in video games and sports. 390 (S. 25)

> **Dave**: I don't think they would be interested. I tried sometime ago, but they changed the subject. They think Africa is a great place to go and see animals. 388 (S. 25)

Schools are not usually organized to encourage students' involvement. A majority of the Black students

who participated in this study indicated that they wanted active, rather than passive, learning

environments. They demonstrated this through their work in small group discussions and their motivation

for hands-on art activities rather than theory. This message should not be lost on teachers and schools.

The Black/African-Canadian students were not the only ones who expressed reactions to the

program. Many parents including the two MFC cross-cultural facilitators also reacted positively towards

the program.

SAP: What did you like or dislike about the AACEP offered at the MFC?

Eugenia, a mother and an MFC Facilitator indicated that:

> I liked the entire program. The children were very excited and wanted more. It incited their feelings. There was nothing about this program that I did not like. 180 (P. 20)

Fatia, also a mother and MFC Cross-Cultural facilitator pointed out that she liked the concept of exposing children to their heritage through art, history and oral literature. She concluded that the program was successful in achieving its goals and therefore expressed her wish that it could be sustained. Marcia also spoke favourably about the program:

> . . . During the workshops, I kept asking my children about their views on the program. They were positive about what was happening in each of the activities. 177B (P. 20)

Clara also expressed similar sentiments about the program:

> I think this is the sort of thing that should be going on in the schools rather than the celebration of food, clothing and dancing. Schools could hire qualified cultural experts from various communities to provide cultural education if they are not equipped with qualified staff. 178 (P. 20)

Tom praised the organizers of the program and suggested that it should be maintained.

> I am proud of what you and the MFC accomplished through the program. Our children lack role models and cultural education in their schools. Therefore your program was very useful in addressing some of those needs. I could tell from the enthusiasm that my children displayed toward the program that they enjoyed the program. I hope you can continue with such programs quite often. 176 (P. 20)

Mark declared that what was important to him about the program was that:

> The children liked it. It connected them to their home countries and Africa. They talked about it most of the time. I think it should become a regular program for the youths in every summer. 173 (P. 20)

Two other parents, Gina and Cephas thought that the program was a good beginning and a good effort to redirect Black children to their roots. Like the parents, the students expressed an overwhelming desire to have the art and cultural program continue in future. The statement by Maryam captures the general view of the students regarding the future of the program:

> Yes, I think the AACEP was a very good program, which should be continued so that we would understand our culture better. For some of us, it is through the MFC that we are getting positive endorsement of Africa and learning about African art, history and Black-African contribution to the society and the world. 399 (S. 26)

Though the students endorsed the program, they suggested that it should be held during summer school break when they are at home. Some preferred that the program be integrated into the African youths summer camps where they can combine cultural education with sporting activities and games.

From the stories of the Black students, it was evident that their group's culture, history and individual lived experience became a source of their motivation and pride, but those were missing from the school curriculum. Multicultural art education can foster pride in students if their artistic and cultural heritage are treated with respect. It is evident however, that the school alone cannot achieve academic success for Black learners. What is needed is a committed and purposeful activity both within and outside the classroom by educators, parents and the community. It must be emphasized here that cultural identity is dynamic and always in transition. Therefore, the multicultural curriculum and pedagogy need to be transformative instead of focusing on superficial elements, or on cultural titbits and celebrations in schools.

Summary

For young Black/African-Canadians, the African Art Cultural Education Program was a process of reflection, learning, intervention and development of cultural self-awareness. Their willingness to learn about their own cultural reality was demonstrated through the excitement, enthusiasm and satisfaction displayed towards the African history, oral literature, art and cultural activities. It was a process of restoring the missing link – African history, art, culture and individual experiences missing from the school curricula. The community-based multicultural art education model encouraged collaboration, friendships and enabled students to learn from each other. The emphasis on a cross-cultural study of the social functions of art enabled students to understand the inter-connectedness and similarities of diverse ethnic and cultural practices. The approach had a positive transformative effect on students' attitudes toward their own culture and other cultures. In addition, family-like ties were developed with the facilitators. The Black/African-Canadian students who participated in the workshops enjoyed the African art and cultural learning experiences. It served as a positive agent for implementing multicultural art education. It was not an end in itself, but a means for guiding students to understanding who and what they are, where they have been, and where they are going.

Responses of Students from an East Vancouver Elementary School to the AACEP

The idea of expanding the study to include students from a public school was important for encouraging understanding of African art and culture among diverse group of students. Expanding the scope of the study also encouraged the inclusion of students' voices in multicultural education, and for the promotion of healthy inter-personal, inter-ethnic and inter-group relations among the students and the instructor. Critical pedagogy recognizes the fundamentally political nature of education and the need for inclusion of students' voices in multicultural education.

The basic premise upon which the AACEP was developed was that positive attitudes towards Black/African-Canadians and other ethnic groups could be induced through multicultural art education that focuses on cross-cultural similarities. Due to scheduling restrictions from the east Vancouver School, I could implement only three out of the seven lessons that had been planned after providing a brief geographical background of African countries to the students. In an effort to generate as much interest as possible and make the greatest impact within the limited exposure, hands-on art activities, including *kente* weaving, *adinkra* printmaking and storytelling with focus on *ananse* folktales were presented to the grade seven visual art class at the east Vancouver School. Twenty-nine grade seven students made up of 15 girls and 14 boys participated in the lessons and a group interview at the School. The average age of the class was 12 years. In addition to Canada, the children traced their cultural roots from 13 different countries namely: Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Canada, China, Vietnam, Finland, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Philippines, Thailand and Uganda (see Table 7.1).

The group interview examined students' reaction to the abridged version of the AACEP. Responses from the students raised questions about the fit between traditional ethnic/racial stereotypes and student's lived experiences in Vancouver, Canada. Generally, students felt that it was a positive experience to be part of a class with backgrounds from 13 different countries.

> **SAP**: What do you think about having students from many cultural backgrounds in one class?
>
> **Evelyn** (Hong Kong): You learn more about different cultures and different people from your friends at school. 90 (N. 04)

Table 7.1

	Background Information of Students from an East Vancouver Public Elementary School		
No.	**Name & Gender**	**Age (Years) & Grade**	**Country of Origin**
1	Belinda (F)	12, Grade 7	Finland
2	Chang (F)	12½, Grade 7	China
3	Diane (F)	12, Grade 7	Canada
4	Evelyn (F)	13, Grade 7	Hong Kong
5	Jennifer (F)	12, Grade 7	China
6	Lydia (F)	12½, Grade 7	China
7	Mary (F)	12, Grade 7	Canada
8	Nancy (F)	12, Grade 7	China
9	Patricia (F)	13, Grade 7	Taiwan
10	Ronnie (F)	12½, Grade 7	India
11	Rose (F)	12, Grade 7	Vietnam
12	Ruth (F)	12, Grade 7	Taiwan
13	Samata (F)	12½, Grade 7	Uganda
14	Sara (F)	12, Grade 7	Vietnam
15	Solidad (F)	12, Grade 7	Philippines
16	Bob (M)	12, Grade 7	Vietnam
17	Danny (M)	12½, Grade 7	Fiji
18	Dave (M)	12, Grade 7	China
19	Fella (M)	13, Grade 7	Vietnam
20	Fred (M)	12, Grade 7	Thailand
21	Jason (M)	12½, Grade 7	Canada
22	Joe (M)	12, Grade 7	Vietnam
23	John (M)	12, Grade 7	Malaysia
24	Lee (M)	13, Grade 7	Hong Kong
25	Nii (M)	12½, Grade 7	Hong Kong
26	Nii S. (M)	12, Grade 7	China
27	Rajiv (M)	12, Grade 7	India
28	Singham (M)	12½, Grade 7	Cambodia
29	Thomas (M)	12, Grade 7	Hong Kong

Belinda (Finland): It's great. You can learn new stuff from your friends' home countries. You can share your family's experience with your friends. 109 (N. 04)

Fred (Thailand): It's cool. It's like you get to know so many countries without actually travelling there. Everyone has a different culture, language and food. 115 (N. 04)

Lydia (China): It shows that people from different cultures can live together in peace. 101 (N. 04)

Ronnie (India): I think it is good. I have many friends from many countries. It helps me to learn to know my friends and to accept them and respect their culture. 112 (N. 04)

Singham (Cambodia): I think Canada is a nation of immigrants. Everybody came from somewhere. 110 (N. 04)

Jason (Euro-Canadian): There are so many people from different countries in our school. I think we are multicultural. 95 (N. 04)

The above responses and the ethnic composition of the students confirmed the School Principal's assertion that the School was, by default, multicultural. While the children share positive views about the diversity of the School's population, teachers and the school administration viewed diversity as a challenge that demanded serious attention. The multiplicity of colours, languages, backgrounds and learning styles, places tremendous demands on teachers to impart appropriate social values to students in order to improve their self-esteem and to develop positive attitudes towards various groups. Unfortunately, the background preparation of many teachers is inadequate to deal with multicultural issues. Without adequate teacher preparation and institutional support, multicultural education could result in superficial changes that may not have significant influence in the life chances of students, especially those from ethnic minority backgrounds. This became evident through my interviews with students and teachers from the School. Although the students acknowledged that some aspects of multicultural education were being implemented, it became increasingly evident that it was a piecemeal effort by individual teachers:

SAP: Is multicultural education being implemented in visual arts and other school subjects? How?

Nii (Hong Kong): Yes, we learned about Japan in social studies. We learned about their culture, religion and work. 178 (N. 07)

John (Malaysia): We learned about some of the groups in Canada such as Euro-Canadians, Indo-Canadians, Chinese-Canadians and the First Nations in social studies and visual arts. 181 (N. 07)

Bob (Vietnam): Yes, we have studied about some groups that live in Canada. We learned about the Europeans, Americans and the Japanese in social studies. In visual arts, we produced masks and drawings of totem poles by the Haida and Inuit. We celebrated multicultural festivals and potluck, Halloween, Christmas and Chinese New Year. 194 (N.07)

Samata (Uganda): Yes, in grade six visual arts class, we made masks, drawings and pictures of totem poles from the First Nations and some Chinese art projects. We don't do "multicultural" in other subjects. 203 (N. 07)

Solidad (Philippines): Yes, we celebrate Halloween, Christmas and Chinese New Year and the First Nations' potlatch. We also have the multicultural day when all the parents come to our school for potluck dinner. 201 (N. 07)

Joe (Vietnam): Yes, but not much. We don't learn anything about Vietnam, Africa and India. We learn a bit about other groups only in visual arts and social studies. 193 (N. 07)

There is no doubt that this School, like many other schools in Vancouver, is making some effort in multicultural education, as is evident from the students' statements above and statements from the School Principal and Art Teacher. Due to its receptiveness toward multiculturalism, the school had already entered into a partnership with the MFC to introduce a program focused on Africa before I requested to conduct my study. Thus, it was due to the progressive and open door policy of the School, coupled with its commitment to multiculturalism that enabled the administration to grant me access to the School to conduct this research. Despite their sincere intentions, numerous factors mitigate against the curriculum mainstreaming of diverse cultural traditions. Apart from the lack of institutional support and inadequate teacher preparation, multicultural education continues to be trapped under the liberal, pluralistic or human relations perspective. Under this conceptualization, multicultural education seeks mainly to foster cultural understanding and positive inter-personal and inter-group relations among students of diverse backgrounds. However, institutional discrimination and real conflicts between groups are glossed over in lieu of supporting the "Everybody is OK" ideology (Sleeter, 1992). My concerns about the multicultural education approach at the School involved in this study should not be misconstrued as teacher bashing. Teachers are equally trapped in Eurocentric structures and institutional processes within which they operate. As Weiler (1988) points out: "schools are not isolated from the dynamics of the wider society; quite the contrary, they magnify the contradictions and tensions of a society so marked by inequality and oppression" (p.148).

On the issue of inter-racial relationships, students indicated how they interact, or would interact, with their Black/African-Canadian friends. Eight of the students made known that they already have Black/African-Canadian friends from school and home:

SAP: Do you have African-Canadian friends? What would you expect to do with them?

Jason (Euro-Canadian): Yes, I have two African- Canadian friends from Ghana and Kenya. We play basketball soccer and video games together. 240 (N.09)

Nii (China): I know some African-Canadians but they are not my friends because we don't live close to each other. If they become my friends, I will play soccer, basketball and do sports with them. 247 (N. 09)

Belinda (Finland): No, but if I have African-Canadian friends, I would respect them. We would talk about our families and friends together. 254 (N. 09)

Dave (China): I play with some African-Canadians from time to time at home but they are not my close friends. We would learn something about each other if we become close friends. 245 (N. 09)

Samata (Uganda): Yes I have Black friends in Toronto and Vancouver. We play together, talk on the phone, communicate by e-mail and letters, and explore the internet together. 261 (N.09)

Rajiv (India): Yes, I have two African-Canadian friends at school and two at home. We play Nintendo games, watch movies and play soccer together. 258 (N. 09)

Children seldom harbour deep-rooted racial or ethnic prejudice against each other, unless they have acquired the trait from adults. As children grow, they acquire racial and ethnic attitudes from parents, families and society. The innate desire for children, irrespective of cultural backgrounds, to socialize with their peers may be hindered by cultural norms, values and racial/ethnic stereotypes that are constructed to serve the interest of some parents and groups in society. From a human relations perspective, multicultural educators could capitalize on the children's innate desire to socialize in order to foster positive inter-personal and inter-ethnic relations at school.

In the context of the focus-group interview, the students described their favourite projects in the AACEP. Out of the 29 participants, 13 students, representing 45% found the *kente*-weaving project to be much more rewarding than other aspects of the program. This was followed by the *adinkra* T-shirt printing project that was the favourite of 10 students representing 34%. Six students, representing 21% of the class, endorsed the story telling lessons. The above statistics demonstrate that this public School students, like their African-Canadian counterparts were receptive to hands-on art activities. It is also clear from the above that students were more interested in practical projects that could generate products for display and for home.

Students were introduced to the African Oral Tradition. Through *ananse* stories they learned some

moral message from African tales. In virtually all the stories, the characters that disobeyed, wandered, lied or engaged in evil deeds learned a hard lesson from the consequences of their actions. Conversely, the characters that did well were rewarded accordingly. The students cited examples of *ananse* stories that were parallel to stories from their home countries:

> **Solidad** (Philippines): . . . the story of *"ananse* and the whipping cord" is similar to a story my mother told me from the Philippines. In her story a little boy lost all the privileges he enjoyed in life because he was greedy and disobeyed the spirit who provided him with everything. 636 (N. 22)

Rose, a Vietnamese-Canadian, hinted that she learned a story from her parents that was very similar to "How *ananse* won a kingdom with a grain of corn." Other students also spoke about fairies, monsters, UFOs and witches as characters in the stories that helped them to appreciate fantasy, and develop their imagination and artistic creativity. The ability of students to identify similarities between *ananse* folktales of West Africa and tales from their own cultural heritage was essential. Students had to look beyond the confines of Africa onto their own cultural heritage to dig out similarities to the African Oral Tradition. In doing so they became aware of the similarities in cultural values among ethnic and cultural groups of the world.

In describing their other African art and cultural experiences beside the AACEP, 14 students, representing 48% of the class claimed to have little or no such experience. Therefore, this group could only speak of their experience from the AACEP. On the other hand, 15 students, representing 52% of the class, spoke about experience outside the AACEP. These students spoke of things like: "watching animals from African jungles on TV," "listening to Black/African music and watching African dance shows," "watching African soccer and African-American sport stars on TV," "watching videos and playing games with my Black friends," and "seeing African villages and poor and sick children on TV." There is little doubt that the views expressed by these children have been shaped by stereotypes perpetuated in the media. For example, one student from Taiwan, pointed out that while she was fascinated by movies and documentaries on African wild animals like snakes, monkeys, elephants, tigers and lions, she was scared about going to Africa for fear of being eaten up by these animals. Another student, Fred, from Thailand also indicated that he enjoyed watching African soccer and African-American sports stars on TV. He went

on to say that "Black guys do better than any other group in sport," thus confirming the perception of Blacks as sports heroes. Although to be labelled a sport hero may seem satisfying, these stereotypes distort people's ability to see things in their proper perspective and create the tendency to think and act in rigid and discriminatory terms.

In an effort to draw attention to cross-cultural similarities, students were asked to determine the links between African art and culture and the cultural artifacts from North America and other societies:

SAP: Provide examples of African art and cultural activities that are common to other cultures. Mary, a First Nations student, found some connection in the abstraction and cultural symbolism in African carvings and masks:

> I saw some African woodcarvings in a shop in Vancouver, some of their symbols look like those found on totem poles by the First Nations. 647 (N. 23)

Solidad and Rose provided examples of stories from the Philippines and Vietnam respectively that resemble some *ananse* folktales from West Africa and the Caribbean. Rajiv also drew attention to India where, among the Hindus, Sikhs and other groups, clothing and adornment could determine people's social and religious status just like *kente* and *adinkra* cloths from Ghana. In her contribution, Diane made mention of the celebration of Canadian festivals like the Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas of which other countries also celebrate or have their own versions (e.g. Chinese New Year). Lydia and Ronnie supported Diane's example and confirmed that the Chinese and Indians have their own national, cultural and religious festivals like Canadians and people from other countries.

Students also discussed what they have learned about Africa that they did not know before:

SAP: What new things have you learned about Africa from the AACEP?

Danny (Fiji): I learned that the African continent has 54 independent countries with many big cities like Vancouver and small towns and villages. 720 (N. 25)

Lee (Hong Kong): I did not know that Africa has so many countries. I learned that Ghanaians could produce beautiful cloths like *kente* for special occasions. 698 (N. 25)

Singham (Cambodia): I learned that there are 54 countries in Africa. Africa is not made up of only Blacks; there are Whites and people from other countries living in South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Egypt and other African countries. People in Ghana and Togo also produce *kente* and adinkra cloths. 719 (N. 25)

Ronnie (India): I know that Africans used to educate their children through stories and folktales. They produce beautiful art objects such as masks, *kente* and *adinkra* cloths. 721 (N. 25)

> **Lydia** (Chinese): Africans educated their children through stories, oral history and apprenticeships in *kente* weaving and *adinkra* printmaking. Many Africans celebrate Christmas, Easter and the New Year just like Canadians do. 6-4 (N. 06)

By recounting and memorizing what they have learned about Africa, students were encouraged not only to juxtapose the new knowledge with their received knowledge but also to interrogate them in order to determine the fit between them. Thus, the issue of misconceptions and unbalanced representation of the continent was brought to the forefront of our discussions. In doing so, students were encouraged to develop positive views and attitudes towards Africa and Black people.

On the issue of the background of instructors in African studies, the overwhelming response was that an African would be the best instructor in African art and culture by virtue of living the culture. The African-Canadian participants in the study also shared this view. Despite this general feeling and their support for inclusive curriculum and instruction, the students were divided over the suggestion of recruiting qualified African-Canadian instructors to teach a number of subjects in their schools. Out of the 29 students interviewed, 14 representing 48% felt that it was a good idea. Eight students, representing 28% took a neutral position on the issue. Seven students representing 24% of the class did not subscribe to the suggestion. Two students from the latter group felt that some African-Canadian teachers may have accents that would make it difficult to understand them. On further probing to find out whether my own accent posed a problem for them, they all responded in the negative. Although I least expected the issue of instructor accent to be raised in a class with such a diverse ethnic population, I understood that most of the children have been assimilated into mainstream culture, and might have identified with some mainstream views regarding people with English as their second language. It is evident from the responses that the presence of the Investigator and the focus-group environment did little to suppress students' ability to speak on this issue. Even though a significant number of students could not endorse the idea of hiring more Black/African-Canadians as teachers, the majority felt it was a great idea, thus lending support to the demands of the Back community for fair representation of other cultural groups in the teaching field. For those that were unsure, some of them expressed their wish for schools to hire teachers from their own ethnic or cultural groups instead. When I rephrased the question to include the recruitment of teachers

from all ethnic backgrounds, the response was overwhelming support for the inclusion of teachers from

diverse ethnic backgrounds. The desire by some students to have teachers from their own ethnic

backgrounds in their schools, while it could be a genuine demand for an inclusive staffing, raises some

disturbing issues. The demand for the representation of various ethnic groups in the teaching field is an

indication of the nation's failure to achieve our multicultural goals as outlined in Canada's

Multiculturalism Policy. The challenge for us as a society is to work toward inclusive teacher preparation

and hiring, and a truly comprehensive and multicultural perspective that works for all of our students,

while at the same time responding to the special educational needs of some of our students. Given the

history of education in British Columbia and Canada, an all-inclusive teacher population might not be easy

to attain until teacher education is re-conceptualized towards diversity.

When students were asked if they would like to travel to Africa, 27 children responded in the

affirmative. Their reasons were diverse:

SAP: Would you like to travel to Africa? Which country and why?

Thomas (Hong Kong): Yes, I want to see the animal safari in Kenya. 378 (N. 14)

Sara (Vietnam): Yes, I would meet new people and make more friends from Africa. 395 (N. 14)

Belinda (Finland): I would like to see the way of life of people in West Africa and South Africa. 399 (N. 14)

Fred (Thailand): I want to visit their towns and cities and see how they build their houses and what they eat. 405 (N. 14)

Rajiv (India): I would like to see the animal safari, the jungle, snakes, elephant and wild animals in Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa. 403 (N. 14)

Jennifer (China): I would like to visit my African friend's country in Nigeria, eat their food and go shopping. 389 (N. 14)

Ronnie (India): It would be fun to visit their schools . . . and learn about African people. 402 (N. 14)

Samata (Uganda): I want to go to Uganda and meet my extended family. I would also like to travel to other African countries and check out things I have seen and heard from TV. 406 (N. 14)

The above sample of responses demonstrates how enthusiastic students were in expressing their intentions

to travel to Africa. The implication is that when children are exposed to positive information about a group

of people, they respond positively toward the group and vice-versa. The excitement with which the

children responded to the program attested to the fact that, despite the existence of negative stereotypes about Blacks in our society, children were still interested in learning about, and connecting to, the continent through art and culture. Two students with dissenting opinions were misinformed when they believed that they would be hurt by wild animals or would contract diseases if they travel to Africa.

Students also made suggestions about what their schools could do to promote multiculturalism.

SAP: What suggestions can you give to your school in order to promote multicultural education?

Lee: (Hong Kong): We should celebrate more multicultural festivals. 466 (N. 17)

Jason (First Nation): Teachers should learn more about the First Nations and other cultures in order to teach multicultural education. 472 (N. 17)

Ronnie (India): Invite guest speakers, artists and cultural workers to share their experience with us. 489 (N. 17)

Danny (Fiji): Hire more teachers form other ethnic groups and include books from other cultures in the school library. 488 (N. 17)

Rose (Vietnam): The teachers should talk to students about the importance of multicultural education and teach it in every class. 481 (N. 17)

Diane (Euro-Canadian): The school should include different cultures in social studies, visual arts, science, math and other subjects. It should celebrate multicultural festivals by inviting parents to school. 474 (N. 17)

Singham (Cambodia): Teachers should respect all their students and their cultures and encourage students to respect one another. 487 (N. 17)

The sample of suggestions above uncover a number of important themes: the need to promote multiculturalism by diversifying curricula to serve the needs of all children; the need to honour and respect students' cultures and identities; and the need to celebrate diversity through cultural festivals. A critical multicultural lens should, however, be applied to unveil oppressive structures concealed within the existing curricula and multicultural education discourse. It is through a critical multicultural education that we can hope to bring about changes in teacher education, curriculum and pedagogy, representations in textbooks and opportunities that would lead to positive educational outcomes. Considering the age, grade level of students and the nature of school curriculum, this is understandable. Nevertheless, without a critical perspective, multicultural education could remain a token response to liberal education demands, rather than a much-needed transformative change.

Summary

The exploration of cultures and cross-cultural similarities as related in visual arts can assist in the development of more healthy ethnic attitudes than are generally found presently. The ethnic composition of the class and school challenged the students and teachers alike to question ethnic stereotypes and racial boundaries in the classroom. Students' interactions were extended beyond the limits of ethnicity and nation groupings. Through multicultural art education, students had the opportunity to explore sensitive issues of race, ethnicity, gender, power, identity, privilege, difference, culture and inequality, which have been absent from their public schools, but which have relevance to their educational outcomes, especially for those from minority backgrounds. By digging for cross-cultural similarities between African art and culture, and other cultural traditions, the students became acutely aware of the inter-connectedness of cultures and common human values. At the same time, they improved their knowledge base of Africa and began to raise questions about attitudes toward Blacks and other ethnic minorities.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS: IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MULTICULTURAL

ART EDUCATION

This chapter provides an overview of the study and suggests implications for art education and multicultural education curriculum and pedagogy. Conclusions and implications are drawn from three major perspectives: 1) the challenges of inclusive education; 2) the African-centred art and cultural education program; and 3) a community-based approach to multicultural education. It also addresses several methods, and possible directions, for including Black/African-Canadian perspectives in multicultural art education and general education.

Overview

This study describes the development and implementation of an African-centred art and cultural education program as an alternative art education curriculum and pedagogy. It was developed in response to the lived experiences of Black/African-Canadians and research data that revealed systemic exclusion of their artistic and cultural perspectives from school curricula, textbooks and the general school organization. In order to achieve the research objectives, I set out to investigate three major research questions relevant to art education, multicultural education and the educational experience of Black/African-Canadians in Vancouver, Canada:

1) In what ways do school curricula, textbooks and general school organization affect Black/African-Canadian children's participation in visual art and general education.

2) How do Black/African-Canadian children react to an African-centred art and cultural education program at the Multicultural Family Centre (MFC) ?

3) What impacts do the African-centred art and cultural learning experiences have on students at an east Vancouver Public School?

These initiating questions shaped the research process, including the review of the literature, the African Art and Cultural Education Program, methodology, specific interview questions and the mechanisms for data collection.

The research confirmed that Black/African-Canadians in Vancouver encounter a host of cultural,

institutional and educational barriers that negatively affect their full participation in art education and the general education process. It was also revealed that the issue of inclusive schooling transcends the calls for curriculum and pedagogic reforms. It has socio-economic and political dimensions that raise wider public policy questions. For example, it calls for engaging in the task of reconstructing schools to ensure that the faces of school decision-makers reflect the diversity within the Canadian population. Fundamentally, it calls for a transformation of power relations in the school and in the society (Dei, 1996). Black/African-Canadian children's educational under-achievement is a cumulative process. This process, from the perspectives of Black parents and students, is influenced by factors such as curriculum deficiency, inappropriate pedagogy and learning materials, lack of cultural continuity, teachers' insensitivity, devalued status of students' cultural experience in school curricula, lack of positive role models, inadequate family and community support and lack of representation of Blacks in the education process. This implies that any strategies, recommendations and plan of action to confront these issues must be inextricably linked to the needs and experiences of Black/African-Canadians.

Conclusions

Based upon the conceptual framework, I drew conclusions and implications from three major perspectives: The first is about the challenges of inclusive education; the second concerns the African-centred art and cultural education program; and the third, a community-based education program.

The Challenges of Inclusive Education: Multicultural Curriculum and Pedagogy

The curriculum context, teaching materials, school texts, classroom pedagogies, communicative practices, as well as the overall school environment, are critical in affecting the learning practices of students. In Chapter One, the systemic exclusion of Black/African-Canadian perspectives from school curricula was documented and discussed (Alladin, 1996; BLAC, 1994; Hamilton, 1997). The review of the literature in Chapter Two revealed the needed exploration of several issues, namely: the socio-historical realities of Blacks in Canada; their invisibility in the education system; inadequacy of theories in multicultural art education to explicate the art and cultural experiences of Black peoples; and the

predominance of Euro-Canadian hegemony in the education system. Black/African-Canadians, informed by the realization that the mainstream education system has not succeeded in providing Black students with culturally relevant education, called for sweeping reforms to the education system.

Multicultural educators have the responsibility to ensure that the experiences of all students, especially students of colour, are brought from the fringes into mainstream academic discourse and school experiences (hooks, 1984, 1994). The conclusion drawn from the study indicates that cultural continuity or immersion into the African culture can help Black/African-Canadian students to develop more positive attitudes towards learning. The finding turns on its head not only conventional educational thought, but also assimilationist policies and practices in schools that have contributed to the neglect of students' native cultures and knowledge systems with the promise of ensuring success in school and mainstream society. Rather than attempting to erase students' cultural, artistic, historical and linguistic heritage, Africentrists have stressed the importance of locating learners within the context of familiar cultural and social reference to enable them to relate socially, emotionally and psychologically to the learning process (Asante, 1990, 1992; Dei, 1996). This means that educators should target individuals and groups for attention by centring the lived experiences of a diverse student body as a starting point for education. The role of the teacher in this process is to make the student's world and the classroom congruent. Black children should be provided with the opportunity to experience an appropriate cultural education which gives them an intimate knowledge of and which honours and respects the history, art and culture of their heritage. Multicultural educators need to create truly democratic learning experiences to provide students with some pride of ownership and control over their own learning process. Learning must start from an "inside out" rather than an "outside in" perspective. The student must start with what s/he knows through experience as a bridge to understanding other forms of knowledge and cultural perspectives.

Although dismissing the existing curriculum is seldom either feasible or practical, several strategies involving the use of "modified" versions of existing curricula and an emerging one may help to facilitate curriculum reform. For example, when studying history of British Columbia, the contributions of

pioneer Europeans, Jews, Chinese, East Indians, First Nations and Black pioneers must be acknowledged. Black pioneers played a significant economic and political role in the early years of the province. For instance, the African Rifles – the first militia unit of the province, contributed to the defence of British Columbia against American encroachment in the 1860s. Again, when studying the history of Canada, teachers should include how communities of slaves and free Blacks, First Nations, Chinese, Japanese, South Asians and Jews met the challenges of unequal treatment and survived against the odds. In the study of African history, efforts should be made to link contemporary African history with all of the fragments of its classical past, as well as its relationship to Europe and the rest of human history – from ancient Egyptian and Nubian civilizations to the forgotten empires of Western Sudan, and from the horrendous history of slavery and colonization to independence and contemporary era.

When studying world art history, students should explore the experiences and contributions of Europeans, Euro-Canadians, First Nations, Chinese, Japanese, Black/Africans, diaspora Africans, East Indians, Hispanics, women and others whose perspectives have been marginalized or generally excluded from art history. Exposing students to the art of ancient Africa including Egyptian and Nubian art, Benin art and material culture, Ashanti gold ornaments and royal paraphernalia, Zimbabwean architectural ruins, traditional African art, contemporary African art, and the arts of diaspora Africans will send a positive message that Africans, like other cultures, have contributed to the advancement of world art production. Educators need to re-conceptualize the ways cultural holidays are defined and celebrated to better reflect student diversity. For instance, in dealing with a culturally diverse group of students, Thanksgiving could be conceptualized as a Festival of Harvest; Halloween as a Festival of Superstition; and Christmas as a Festival of Lights (Nieto, 1996). In this way a common theme in many festivals of the world is emphasized, thereby making it more inclusive. It is also necessary to recognize other interpretations of cultural festivals such as the perspective of Native Americans and the First Nations of Canada who consider Thanksgiving to be a day of mourning because of the history of North American colonization (Nieto, 1996).

Art education has the potential of becoming a leader of democratic multiculturalism by staunchly working towards removing barriers to an inclusive curriculum. Developing curricula which effectively

integrate cultural diversity into the art disciplines has been a long-standing goal of art educators such as Blandy & Congdon, 1987; Chalmers, 1992; 1996; Fehr, 1993; Grant, 1992, McFee, 1986; Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001). Presently, a variety of curriculum and pedagogical approaches have been suggested for teaching art in a multicultural classroom. In Chapter Two, I discussed these curriculum models (i.e., DBAE, MDAE, feminist and post-modern approaches to art education). Although these models focus on the socio-cultural aspects of art education, they have not responded effectively to the artistic and cultural needs of the Black/African-Canadian student. African-centred art education immerses students into the context of African art and culture in order to facilitate understanding and appreciation of the art of the African peoples. The Africentric approach to art education is one of the many centres or approaches for achieving a multi-centric art education. The findings from this study indicate that a culturally relevant art curriculum could provide an effective means of inducing positive attitudinal change among students of all backgrounds.

Finally, this study vividly describes how Black/African-Canadian students, in their own words, describe and interpret their educational experiences; what factors they believe have helped them; and what barriers have held them back in their schools, families and communities. Including students' voices in multicultural education can be constructive for learning, since teachers would be in a better position to learn from, and understand, students in order to provide appropriate academic environments for them to learn. Nieto (1999) points out that if students' views are sought through a critical and problem-posing approach, their insights can be crucial for developing meaningful, liberating and engaging education.

Many of the students in this study mentioned particular traits they look for in the choice of their favourite teachers. The most important characteristic students valued in their teachers was "caring." Students evaluated their teacher's level of caring by such factors as subject knowledge; effective teaching and motivation of students; sense of humour; use of multiple teaching strategies, including application of technology; commitment to the success and well-being of students both at school and beyond; fairness, patience and level of affability. Multicultural art educators should expand their repertoire of pedagogical skills in order to reach out to all students, particularly those whose voices are marginalized.

African Art and Cultural Education Program: A Journey Toward Cultural Awareness and Multiculturalism

That many young Black/African-Canadian learners are alienated, uninvolved and discouraged by school are evident from this study. Although schools are supposed to be places where a lot of interactions occur, Black/African-Canadians and other students of colour are often passive participants in the school experience. Teachers often miss the opportunity to learn first hand from students about their needs and experience, and how best to assist them. As one Black parent from the study pointed out, "Our children are endangered species. There is very little understanding of Black children among the present crop of teachers" (Parent). Rather than being organized around issues such as collaboration, consultation and democracy, most schools are organized around issues of control and benign dictatorship in which decisions are made for students in what is perceived to be "their best interests" (Nieto, 1996).

Wurzel (1988) describes multicultural education as a qualitative process of thinking and feeling with the potential of fostering healthy interpersonal and intercultural relationships. Wurzel maintains that it is necessary to go through various stages of the multicultural process to attain multicultural consciousness. These processes include: 1) reflection, learning and development of self-awareness; 2) acceptance of conflict for its educational potential; 3) learning about one's own cultural reality through interaction with others; 4) fostering healthy communication with people from other cultures; and 5) recognizing the universality of multiculturalism. Relating this ideology to the real life experience of middle and high school students was a complicated process. This became clear from the implementation of the AACEP at the Multicultural Family Centre and the east Vancouver School.

For Black/African-Canadian students who participated in this study, the AACEP was not merely an instructional product, but a continuous process of critical reflection, learning and intervention; it was a journey toward cultural self-awareness and understanding of others in historical, cultural and contemporary contexts. For participants from the east Vancouver School, it was a process of restoring the missing link; non-Western art, history and cultural knowledge absent from school curricula, and an opportunity to see things from a different perspective. In the process of developing self-awareness and multicultural consciousness, journeys might vary depending on an individual's experience, yet in all transformative journeys a person encounters a variety of experiences, challenges and perspectives which

expand her/his horizon.

Like the physiological and sociological stages of African rites of passage (from infancy and adolescence to adulthood), the journey to critical self-consciousness and multiculturalism is a transformative process with socio-political and educational implications. At infancy, a person embarks upon life journey with a sense of naiveness and accepts everything placed before her/him at face value (e.g., water is water and a mountain is a mountain). At this stage, a person is exposed to only one reality and acquires a mono-cultural perspective. S/he acquires what Freire (1970) calls "banking" education, that is, a process by which teachers "deposit" knowledge into students who are perceived as empty receptacles. It is education for powerlessness. Students are not aware of who they are, where they have been and where they are heading. Many Black/African-Canadian youths find themselves in this situation in their educational pursuits. Schools deprive them of the necessary preparation to take ownership and control over their own learning and access the cultural capital of society.

As the life journey continues to adolescence, a person encounters real life conflicts and challenges. S/he will be puzzled, confused, overwhelmed and sometimes lost in the cacophony of voices competing for his/her attention. Due to both physiological changes and social pressures, adolescence becomes a very unpredictable stage in the life of a person. At this stage, things are perceived differently from how they used to be. Water is not as a person is used to seeing it, and the mountain is no longer the mountain. The person experiences conflicts and resistance. S/he does not accept everything placed before her/him. S/he makes decisions, most of which, owing to physiological and social pressures, are more instinctive rather than thoughtful. For many Black/African-Canadian immigrant children, the process of acculturation can bring about conflict. Blending their home and Canadian cultural experiences can be confusing, ambiguous and full of bittersweet tastes. Cultural incongruence between the home and school cultures creates a sense of conflict and alienation among many Black/African-Canadian youths exploring their self-concepts and identities. This contradiction comes about because of incongruence between the official multicultural policy of Canada and the assimilationist policy and practices of the school. After a period of struggle, reflection and intervention, a person's life journey reaches adulthood. The experiences from life's struggles and interventions enable one to gain wisdom and became more mature. At this stage, one

becomes more open and capable of accepting an imperfect world and playing one's role in it. The passage from adolescence to adulthood symbolizes a higher state of awareness in which one no longer sees only one reality or perspective of things. This new perspective of "seeing" enables a person to acquire deeper recognition of what the meaning of life is.

In *The Enlightened Eye*, Eisner (1991) discusses his philosophy toward qualitative inquiry, which demands an enlightened way of seeing. He explains that, "seeing, rather than mere looking, requires an enlightened eye: this is as true and as important in understanding and improving education as in creating a painting"(p.1). Many of the students involved in this study might have been at the beginning of the processes of "seeing." They might have gone through the first and second stages of the journey toward cultural awareness and multiculturalism. However, it cannot be guaranteed that they will reach the third or adult level of "seeing," in view of the socio-political realities of their lives in Canada. The AACEP provided an opportunity to bring them closer to their cultural heritage and assisted them to envision through their enlightened eyes. When they have the opportunity to discover who and what they are, this learning experience may serve as a guiding light for exploring and seeing where they have been and where they are heading. The AACEP initiates a long process of soul searching which may not be evident in the public school learning environment. Nevertheless, it is essential that students be provided with the knowledge, attitudes, skills and tools necessary to function in a multicultural society and the "global village" during this new century. Art experience can open doors for students to know who they are and to determine the roles they can play in Canada and the world.

Like the journey toward self-awareness and multiculturalism, developing a truly comprehensive multicultural education takes time and effort. Because many art teachers share a pervasive Eurocentric culture and practices, there are limits to the extent to which they can change without a corresponding change in the institutional structures and society within which they operate. Becoming a multicultural person requires a transformation of oneself. The process requires that we re-educate ourselves more about other cultures and participate in activities that emphasize pluralism. Second, we need to confront our own racism and biases. Because we are all products of a society that is stratified by race, gender and class, we have all internalized some of the messages in one-way or another. Our actions sometimes reflect, or

reproduce, the messages we have learned. An example is a stereotype commonly held among many

Canadian teachers that Black males are heroes in sports but not in math. Self-transformation in

multicultural education means not only learning new things but also unlearning some of the old. Thirdly,

multicultural consciousness means envisioning reality from a variety of perspectives. Because we have

learned that there is only one "right answer" to every problem, we have also become accustomed to

perceiving the world from only one perspective. Re-orienting ourselves towards multicultural perspectives

will demand a dramatic shift in our worldview. Although the transformation of individuals and teachers

from being "monocultural" to "multicultural" will not guarantee that schools would become multicultural,

it will certainly lay the groundwork toward multicultural education.

Community-based Cultural Education Programs

Community-based groups and organizations can play important roles in cultural education, and in

curriculum reform and implementation as schools try to embrace multicultural curricula. The most

important and successful ethnic group and cultural education has depended on the initiative of the groups

involved with limited support from other sources. In Canada, examples of ethno-cultural groups that have

successfully established separate ethnic specific programs include the Ukrainian, Hutterite and Mennonite

schools in Alberta, Chinese and Greek schools in Ontario and Quebec, and Punjabi, Chinese and Hebrew

schools in British Columbia (Moodley, 1995). The goal of these ethnic-based schools and ethno-cultural

programs are generally to provide and affirm cultural experiences of students who have been marginalized

or isolated by the traditional schools.

The Black/African-Canadian community must take the initiative in addressing the problems of

Black youths. Through participation in community-based programs from socio-cultural organizations such

as the Multicultural Family Centre, the African-Canadian Association of British Columbia and the various

African national associations, the community could provide useful outlets for Black children to participate

in meaningful programs such as homework clubs, sports clubs, cultural music and dance clubs and

volunteer clubs. When the youths are involved in meaningful activities outside of the academic context,

they find support not only to keep them away from negative peer pressure but also to reinforce their

leadership and critical thinking skills.

Art educators such as Stuhr, Petrovich-Mwaniki, and Wasson (1992), Ballengee-Morris and Stuhr (2001) advocate community-based research in support of art education curriculum development. For the children, the MFC was a setting where they experienced a large number of Black/African-Canadians congregating in a limited space on a regular basis. As many of them indicated, the MFC was one of the few places where their African identity was salient and where they had opportunity to practice and affirm African cultural identity as well as engage in academic exercises in an informal setting. The MFC was not only a place to learn about African culture and behaviour but also a place for acting out tensions involved in being bicultural.

This study shows that a community-centred education processes can serve an important role in facilitating multicultural art education. In particular, the bilateral cooperative relationship between MFC and the east Vancouver School demonstrated that local community groups could serve as resources that are both culturally relevant and have the potential to generate inquiry into multicultural art education. The AACEP not only provided cultural learning experience for Black/African-Canadian students but also community resources for local public schools to utilize.

Recommendations: Possible Approaches and Directions for Multicultural Education

Teacher Education Challenge

It is clear from this study that asking teachers to teach in ways and/or perform in settings for which they have not been duly trained may create a problem or a backlash. To this effect, we need to reform existing teaching, pedagogic and communicative practices. The Ministry of Education, school boards, colleges/universities and schools have a moral and ethical responsibility to prepare teachers and all educators to be culturally responsive to the educational needs of their diverse student populations. The responsibility demands that the culturally diverse nature of the student body of British Columbia and Canada is reflected in the curriculum, teacher demographics, faculty and the practices of the profession (Banks, 1995; Dei 1996; Grant & Sleeter, 1993). Every faculty of education or teacher education institution needs to incorporate mandatory coursework on multiculturalism in teacher certification

programs. To meet the challenge of inclusive education we need to make available to teachers and students educational materials that deal with people and societies of colour and their contributions to knowledge and society.

Obtaining educational materials and resources on African-Canadians or Blacks can be a difficult venture in British Columbia and Canada. At the onset of this study, I had difficulty gathering reading materials in the province. I had to visit libraries in Washington, DC, and Washington State in the United States in order to search for pertinent resources for the literature on Africentrism. A serious attempt therefore is needed to ensure the availability and accessibility of appropriate learning materials on Africa and other cultures. This should including teaching guides, journal audio-visuals, children's literature, textbooks with Black/African authorship and resources on African art and art history.

Teachers must learn about the cultures of their students. They should be knowledgeable about how to use multicultural learning materials and guide their students to learn about the achievements of all groups in Canada in ways that address inclusion and validation of alternative knowledge. In art education, the cultural diversity of teachers may be expanded by examining the nature of visual arts pre-service teacher education programs and their effects on teachers' beliefs, knowledge and teaching practices with diverse students. Multicultural Discipline-based Art Education (MDAE) can be useful for the preparation of pre-service and in-service teachers, as well as other art education practitioners because it identifies with a multicultural agenda by assuming a more cross-cultural perspective. MDAE requires art teachers not only to accommodate all the artistic and cultural perspectives represented in their classrooms when examining the art but also to guide students to critically examine the epistemic inequalities embedded in the representation of various art forms in society. MDAE will embrace Africentric knowledge and cultural perspectives since it reaches across cultural boundaries to examine cultural influences, differences and similarities without looking down upon any culture. Finally, MDAE will enable art teachers to tap into each student's culture in order to provide him or her with opportunities for self-expression in unique ways.

Critical Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist Model

Various models of multicultural education have been advanced and practiced in Canada (i.e., Coombs, 1986; Fleres & Elliot, 1992; McLeod, 1981; Quellet, 1992; Young, 1979). These models are described in Chapter Two. The human relations approach, which is the most popular model in many schools, seeks to foster positive interpersonal and inter-group relationships among students. It is a liberal pluralistic view that sees diversity as intrinsically valuable and beneficial to society. This model, however, glosses over institutional discrimination and real conflicts between groups. It focuses on tolerance, which is the lowest level of multicultural education in a school setting. Teachers are encouraged to "tolerate" diversity but not necessarily to affirm and integrate it into school curricula. The cultural pluralistic approach, however, moves multicultural education beyond the level of tolerance to acceptance and respect for differences. In this model, students' cultures are visible in school curricula and other practices. Frequent and positive interaction with parents would take place. Critical multiculturalism or social re-constructionist perspective takes a proactive approach to multicultural education. To bring about any real change in the lives of Black/African-Canadians and other minorities in the middle and high school levels, I recommend an eclectic approach that incorporates elements of a transformative political agenda of cultural pluralism and a social re-constructionist or critical multicultural education approach. In culturally pluralist curricula, art teachers will pay attention to equity issues in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, social class and other social differences. Critical multiculturalism will actively involve students in critical thinking and empower them for social action.

Interdisciplinary and Blended Approach

One conclusion drawn from this study is that an interdisciplinary and blended approach to multicultural art education can be responsive to diverse students' cultural needs. To reflect the present realities of Black/African-Canadian students, a blended curriculum of both African and Canadian styles of learning can achieve greater social relevance. An interdisciplinary art curriculum approach will facilitate multicultural learning not only by dealing with common issues from different academic perspectives but also by responding to the various interests and motivations of students, in order to achieve a more balanced

and broad-based art education. African and many other cultures are inter-disciplinary in their creative endeavours. Awareness of this fact may prove to be necessary when placing a work of art into its proper cultural, historical and socio-political context. Africentrists believe that all academic disciplines (mathematics, language, geography, science and philosophy, art and history) are interconnected. They are taught as separate disciplines only by distortion (Verhaven, 1995). Art educators need to embrace interdisciplinary models of art teaching to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds. An inter-disciplinary approach to art education will expand our understanding and appreciation of artistic production from many cultures. Chalmers (1996) points out that art educators can learn a lot from related disciplines of anthropology and sociology of art education.

Collaboration

An important theme recurrent in this study is the notion that no single approach to multicultural education can meet the needs of the Black learners. The most successful approaches are multi-faceted, and cooperatively involve the student, parents, the community and the school. Multicultural education demands that teachers be able to recognize students, parents and community workers as genuine partners in the production and dissemination of school and social knowledge. Local community knowledge is an important pedagogical tool and source of cultural information which art educators can tap for the benefit of their students and the school. Africentricity emphasizes the values of group unity, mutuality, collective responsibility, community and social bonding. These values can enrich multicultural art education by shifting the emphasis away from individual competitiveness to that of the group and social issues. Teachers should uphold and promote strategies for co-operative learning that also stress collaboration and bonding among students, administrators, teachers and parents. In the visual arts classroom or studio, assignments should be structured to provide students with group and collaborative learning skills. Such projects should permit meaningful dialogue and collaborative work between and among students and teachers. Teachers should encourage students to set their own priorities for their learning.

Africentric values of group unity, collective responsibility and mutuality, when applied to the teacher/student relationship in multicultural education, would emphasize a relationship based on cooperation and harmony. This would require the teacher to assume a non-elitist posture and view students

not only as active learners but knowers as well. Learning should be viewed as interdependent and bi-directional rather than dependent and unidirectional. African-centred multicultural education emphasizes mutual exchange of information between students and teachers with the teacher acting as a guide or facilitator of the information exchange process.

Multicultural Education as Praxis

Role-playing was crucial in all aspects of this study. Facilitators of the AACEP led by example by way of advocacy, showing pride in African cultural values and identities, clothing, participating in African cultural festivals and programs, showing interest in the well being of the students, and assuming a more affable posture in relating to students. Multicultural education cannot be effective if teachers and schools do not value the confluence between the principles of multiculturalism and practices (Dei, 1996). Effective multicultural education connects theory with reflection and action. This is what Paulo Freire (1970) refers to as *praxis*. Critical multicultural pedagogy requires that we teach students to apply what is learned. Teachers should model to students by setting appropriate examples. Students should not feel any contradiction in terms of what their teachers teach theoretically in the classroom and what they actually practice in and outside the school. Progressive educators match their theoretical pronouncements against exclusive educational practices, their intellectual criticism of social injustice and their political affirmation of social difference with action for social justice (Nieto, 1996). While it may be unrealistic to expect all teachers to be open to multiculturalism (given existing structures and backgrounds of teachers), multicultural educators must capitalize on those progressive teachers who are genuinely open to reform in order to move their agenda forward, while they also strive for institutional support.

Issue of Race and Representation in Schooling

Many schools often avoid dealing with issues of race. Teachers often refuse to engage their students in discussion about racism and anti-racism because it is perceived as a "dangerous discourse" that challenges existing structures of public schooling (Nieto 1999). The challenge for developing a critical multicultural curriculum and pedagogy requires that we address issues of race, representation and identity in the education system. Many educators assume that simply ignoring racial issues, or by having lessons

on getting along, and celebrating Human Relations or Multicultural Week will make students acquire healthy inter-group and interpersonal attitudes. Unfortunately, this conceptualization and practice of multicultural education is not enough to making curriculum and pedagogy genuinely transformative. This became evident through the narratives of the Art Teacher, the School Principal and nine Black/African-Canadian students in this study that did not support such an assumption.

The fear of naming racism in school practices is part of the system of silencing in public schools. The AACEP, however, created a forum for the students to discuss issues that had not been touched in their schools. As uncomfortable as these issues might be for teachers to discuss, they are meaningful focal points for student learning. In a society that is stratified by race, class, gender, ethnicity and other social identities, it will be unrealistic to expect that people's attitudes will not be affected by the embedded inequalities that flow from social stratifications. The school is a reflection of society. It magnifies and reproduces the contradictions and tensions of society marked by racism, classism, inequality and oppression (Apple, 1979; Weiler, 1988). Therefore, part of the mission of the school is to create the space that legitimates dialogue on racism and discrimination in school practices including representation of minorities in curriculum, textbooks, teacher recruitment and decision-making.

Limitations and Future Study

In this research, I was a witness to the joy and emotional satisfaction, as well as the pain, anger and frustrations of many Black/African-Canadian students, parents, social workers and teachers as they struggle to secure appropriate cultural education for themselves or for others. Having listened to many young people I could hardly ignore the deep sense of frustration and alienation which some of them feel in society and in school. The interview texts present the multiple voices of participants and indicate a range of positioning. For instance, I discovered that not all Black/African-Canadian children are having overwhelming difficulties at school. In fact, my investigation reveals that some students have been quite successful at school. Nevertheless, I believe that every student must be equipped with the necessary tools to think critically and creatively, solve problems and participate fully in the educational process and in society. Finally, I believe that issues of race, class, ethnicity and culture should permeate educational

discourse so that the alienation experienced by many students of colour in Canada's public schools is eradicated.

It should be reiterated that the experiences of students presented in this study are not meant to represent all other Black/African-Canadians students. As an ethnography, this study provides vivid portraits of the lives and experiences of particular students. They are examples of the complex interplay of relationships within families, schools and community that define students' struggles for identity and survival. Therefore overarching claims from the education of all Black/African-Canadians cannot be made. Furthermore, due to scheduling difficulties and timetable problems in the east Vancouver School's visual arts curriculum, I could not implement all seven lessons in the AACEP as planned. While the study is limited in scope, the outcomes are promising, and provide a clear indication that the development of curricula in the visual arts based on multicultural perspectives is a legitimate and worthwhile pursuit. It can be helpful in illuminating some key issues about culture and power relationships and schooling in a multicultural society. Because the stories of these students have been placed in the socio-political contexts of their families, schools and communities, useful information can be found for teaching and learning in similar circumstances.

There is very little research on Black/African-Canadians in British Columbia in terms of their participation in education and society. In addition, there is a paucity of research in community-based approaches to multicultural education. More studies that involve ethnic groups of students and community-based education programs should be conducted. As the AACEP through the MFC has demonstrated, community-based groups can function in powerful ways to enhance the efforts of multicultural art education and education in general in Canada. There is a need for more in-depth research from real-life situations in community-based ethnic settings and interactions with school contexts, to build holistic theories of multicultural education.

In conclusion, my journey through this study was not at all like taking a trip filled with stunning excitement; in contrast it was a lonely and slow process. There is still a long road from theory to practice. There are many issues that cannot be solved in one study. The study was not only about the two terms, "Black/African" and "Canadian" that connect each other using a hyphen. Neither was it solely about

"schooling" and "inclusion" of perspectives of people of colour. Rather, it dealt with broader concerns of human experiences and conflicts that raise wider public policy questions. I hope this study will affect how we think about each other, and ourselves and, especially, how we think about multicultural education and Black/African-Canadian students.

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APPENDIX I

AFRICAN-ART AND CULTURAL EDUCATION: AN INTEGRATED UNIT

Activity I: The Land of Africa

<u>Introduction</u>

The portrayal of Africa and its people in reading materials, historical textbooks, curricula and the mass media and in Western popular culture has often been a far cry from the Africa that really exists. As a result, a vast majority of students are ignorant or misinformed about the continent of Africa: the various countries, the landmarks, the rich mineral resources, the people and cultures. One of the goals of multicultural education in Canada is to educate students to understand and embrace the increasing ethno-cultural diversity in Canadian classrooms and the ethnic minorities that form the mosaic of Canadian society. Schools are called upon to preserve diverse cultural heritages through multicultural approaches in the disciplines of language arts, studies in history, geography, art, social studies, music, or drama to remind us who we are today and from what culture we once came (Sullivan, 1994). Multicultural literacy is essential for all students to function effectively in a democratic/pluralistic society. For this reason, the objective of the *Land of Africa* unit plan is to encourage students to learn, through written work, artwork, map study and verbally the individual countries comprising the African continent and their geographical features.

The Land of Africa is a multidisciplinary unit that integrates art, geography, history and social studies. The unit will be taught using a combination of methods including lecture format and cooperative learning format. There will also be a lot of cooperative learning, using brainstorming techniques, discussions and even group work. Most assignments may be worked on cooperatively but each student must have their own completed work to put in their workbook. The instructor will ask many leading questions during the lesson to get students to think about the topic. The procedures of teaching used by this unit are great for grade seven students because the information that they have to assimilate and analyze enhances their multicultural literacy, develops their artistic skills, critical thinking and summarizing skills.

<u>Objectives</u>:
- To describe Africa's geographical setting in relation to other continents and bodies of water.
- To identify all the countries comprising Africa, its major cities and regions.
- To define the major rivers, climate and vegetation of Africa.
- To identify major metals and minerals in Africa.

<u>Estimated Time</u>: (150 minutes).

<u>Materials</u>: African map handouts, overheads of maps, wall map, overhead projector, coloured pencils and

pens, globe, video deck and TV Monitor.

Procedure:

Introduction (time 15 min):

- Show a short introductory video about Africa (10 min).

    Explain to students that they will be doing a unit on the continent of Africa.

- Brainstorm with students about different things they already know about Africa and write them on the chalkboard.

- Test student's knowledge about North America, Europe, Asia, Australia and South America in relation to Africa.

Body (time 120 minutes):

- Using a large wall map of the world and a globe, get students to point out the geographical location of Africa in relation to North America and other continents and bodies of water.

- Hand out blank maps of Africa to students and tell them that they will be drawing or tracing the outline and labelling the various countries of Africa.

- When they are correct, they will be colouring them to use as a title page in their drawing or workbook.

- Discuss with class and model by using an overhead of the maps they have, where to label the various countries in Africa (Use a wall map as a guide).

- Have students label their maps the same.

- Have students exchange their maps with a partner so that they can peer-edit errors.

- Hand out a reading list of African countries and their capital cities.

- Discuss with class and model, by using an overhead of the map they have, the major rivers, climate and vegetation of the various regions in Africa.

- Discuss with class and model, by using an overhead, where the major metals and minerals are located on the continent.

Conclusion: When their maps have been checked for correctness, have students colour their maps while a tape of African music is playing softly in the background.

Evaluation: (time 15 minutes)

- Evaluate entire class to see how much they know about Africa during the brainstorming session.

- Evaluate students to see if they understand where Africa is in relation to other continents and oceans.

- Evaluate students to see if they understand where individual countries and their capitals are in relation to the various regions (i.e., North Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa,

Southern Africa).

- While students are working on maps, walk around class to ensure their maps are correct.

Evaluate the lesson for yourself by asking: was the lesson effective for teaching the geography of Africa?

Activity II: Kente Weaving

<u>Introduction</u>

Kente, a cloth of many strips, rich colours and geometric patterns is the dress of royalty, honoured gods and many ordinary people of West Africa and throughout the world. In Ghana, it is worn on joyful occasions as symbol of pride among the Asante and Ewe; nevertheless, it finds expression among African-Americans and Africans in the diaspora as a symbol of African identity and cultural heritage. Kente has travelled from its birthplace in West Africa and found its way into homes, churches and government buildings in the United States and throughout Africa and the world. The geometric patterns woven into kente or printed on *adinkra* cloths are frequently proverbial, conveying messages to individuals and society. Clothing as an adornment is a universal theme that provides the basis for cross-cultural learning.

A story is told in *Bonwire*, a town in Ghana that, a long time ago, two men saw a spider weaving a web. They watched it for a long time, observing how individual threads were added and the different geometric shapes and patterns. The men wondered if they could make cloth in the same way. They told no one what they were doing until they had finished a piece of cloth. The geometrical patterns in their cloth resembled the spider's web and the threads glistened like spider silk. When they showed their cloth to the chief of *Bonwire*, Nana *Bobie* and the Asantehene, or the King of Asante, they were so pleased that they encouraged them to weave more cloth. Since then, kente weaving has become the most important work in *Bonwire*.

Kente is woven in strips of about four inches wide and three yards long. The woven strips are sown together side-by-side to produce a large cloth (see Figure 5.1 for a sample of kente cloth). Among the Asante and Ewe, very few women traditionally become weavers because it was considered a man's profession.

<u>Objectives</u>:

- To enable students explore some of the functions kente cloths may serve among Ghanaians, Africans and the diaspora.
- To help students learn how to weave kente patterns and colours with paper, through experimentation and imitation.
- To express observations, reactions and judgements on analysis of traditional kente clothes using contextual information and the language of design.
- To help students recognize both cross-cultural similarities and differences in practices and values

as reflected in woven fabrics.

Estimated Time: (150 minutes)

Materials: Photocopy paper (all colours), paper cut-offs, hard paper, knives, scissors, glue-sticks, rulers, paper cutter and samples of kente cloths (If you do not wish students to use a utility knife or paper cutter, prepare the paper strips in advance).

Procedure:

Introduction (15 minutes):

- Show physical samples of kente cloths to students and demonstrate how they are worn.
- Teacher should dress up in kente to motivate and generate students' interests.
- Provide a brief history of kente weaving at Bonwire in Ghana and Togo.
- Involve students in group-discussions of what can be learned from kente cloth.
- Compare and contrast kente with adornments from other cultural groups in Canada.

Suggested Questions: Who might wear the different variety of kente cloths? What are the cultural meanings for some of the most popular kente patterns and colours (e. g., *Oyokoman, Adweneasa, Ntokosie, Sika Futuro, Asaase ne Abuo, Akyempim*)? How do you think a person might feel wearing kente cloth? What does kente cloth tell you about the wearer values, culture and environment? What are the difference between kente designs from Asante and Ewe? Are there any common characteristics between kente and adinkra from West Africa and quilting or textiles from Canada, East India, China, Japan America? Introduce the rules and demonstrate methods in kente weaving on the chalkboard with paper strips.

Body (120 minutes):

- Divide the class into groups with each comprising six (6) students.
- Provide each student with an already cut out strip of red hard paper to avoid the risk of students cutting themselves) to be used as the warp and each group with sufficient pieces of paper cut-offs to be used for weaving the weft.
- Demonstrate by combining and alternating weaving with glued patterns of coloured, paper strips (cut-offs) in horizontal and vertical arrangements.
- Have students weave their own kente with the provided materials.
- Guide students through the weaving process to enable them achieve the patterns and colours of kente cloths.

Conclusion/Evaluation (15 minutes): Have students display and view each other's final kente work.

- Students should reflect on their works by discussing artisanship, differences and similarities in

patterns and colours based on design principles and in relation to those of their classmates and to kente cloth.

- Students should assemble their kente side-by-side to form one large kente piece (like completed kente cloth.

- Students should collectively review the project by paying particular attention to each strip, colours and patterns. How is kente weaving and quilt making similar or different?

- Students should identify commercial products that are inspired by kente design from Africa (i.e., cups, quilts, key chains, wallets, handbags, dolls, men's tie, games).

- Students should consider ways in which the clothing of Canada and other countries are influenced by the social and physical environment.

- Instructor evaluates the lesson for self by asking: Was the lesson effective in achieving the intended objectives? How enthusiastic are students about African kente?

Activity III: Printmaking from African *Adinkra* Symbols

Introduction

In many societies, cultural symbols exist as artefacts for interpreting and codifying knowledge and experience. Traditional African fabrics were often hand woven, decorated with stamped symbols or dyed patterns. Besides the oral tradition – the passing on of traditional histories and stories from one person to another and from one generation to another – many African cultures also developed visual ways of telling their stories. Graphic symbols (i.e., *adinkra* symbols from Ghana and the appliqué art of Benin) embody cultural knowledge and convey messages of socio-historical significance (see Figures 5.5 and 5.6). The study of *adinkra* symbols and clothes can thus tell us a great deal about the Akan culture and people of West Africa.

Although no one really knows the origin of adinkra cloth, the Asante tell a story about how it came to Ghana. Long time ago, Adinkra, a neighbouring king infuriated the King of Asante by imitating the *Golden Stool* of Asante, a symbol of Asante's unity and power. To the Asante, this was a terrible offence. Copying the Golden Stool was an insult to their leader and to their religion. The Asante went to war with Adinkra. Adinkra was defeated and killed and the Asante took the printed cloth he was wearing as a trophy of war. This was the first adinkra cloth of the Asante people.

The term, *adinkra* means farewell or good-bye, hence the adinkra cloth was traditionally used for funeral occasions to say good-bye to the departed. Today, however, it is worn for a variety of occasions. The adinkra cloth is made the same way as block-printed fabric by dipping relief-carved wooden blocks or stamps into natural dyes and pressing them onto a woven cotton cloth. The stamps are cut into over 60 designs, each bearing an Asante name of historical and cultural significance. Each symbol may tell a story about the authority and power of the *Asantehene*, the Ashanti king in relation to his subjects. They may tell

a story about the history and status of the Akan state, a geographic area, an event, a family or an individual. Some convey messages about ethics, morality and traditional values; others are proverbial, wise sayings, or reinforce beliefs. A black dye used for printing is made by boiling special type of plant barks, *Kuntunkuni* or *Badie* in a large kettle into which lumps of iron slag have been placed.

Objectives:
- To introduce students to adinkra cloths and stamped patterns.
- To help students recognize the various adinkra symbols and their cultural significance.
- To help students learn to make prints on T-shirts using Adinkra symbolic patterns and instant heat transfer paper.
- To help students recognize both cross-cultural similarities and differences in practices and values as reflected in cultural symbols.

Estimated Time: (150 minutes)

Materials: Printed copies of adinkra stamped patterns, samples of adinkra clothes, pencils, felt pens (permanent), drawing paper, Copy-trans Instant Heat Transfer Paper, T-shirts or plain fabric, scissors, electric iron and newspapers.

Procedure:

Introduction (15 minutes):
- Show samples of adinkra clothes and/or printed adinkra stamp patterns to students.
- Teacher should dress up in Adinkra cloth to motivate and generate students' interests.
- Explain the significance of each symbol.
- Give a brief historical account about the origin of adinkra stamped cloths.
- Involve students in a discussion of what can be learned from adinkra cloths.

Suggested Questions: Who might wear the different variety of adinkra cloths? What are the cultural meanings for some of the most popular adinkra symbols (e.g., *Gye Nyame* – Except God (I fear none), *Nsoroma* – a child of the sky, *Fofoo* – symbol of jealousy, *Biribi wo sore* – a symbol of hope, *Funtunfunafu denkyem funatu* – sharing one stomach yet they fight over food, *Sankofa* – return to your roots)? How do you think a person might feel wearing adinkra cloth? What does adinkra cloth tell you about the wearer's values, culture and environment? What other cultural symbols are peculiar to people from Canada, First Nations, East Indians, Chinese and South American? What are the difference between adinkra symbols and any other cultural symbols you know? Introduce students to procedure for printing adinkra symbols on T-shirts using Instant Heat Transfer Paper.

Body (120 minutes): Provide students with printed copies of adinkra stamped patterns, drawing papers and sheets of instant heat transfer paper.

- Demonstrate the processes for printing adinkra symbols on T-shirts.
- Each student will choose his/her preferred symbol or combination of symbols and make an initial design/drawing on drawing paper.
- Students will turn their drawings upside down and trace the negative image onto the glossy/waxy coated side of the copy-trans instant heat transfer paper.
- Students will colour their image on the instant heat transfer paper with markers or felt pens while ensuring smooth outline.
- Cut away blank unpainted area of transfer paper.
- Place final image/symbol upside down onto T-shirt/fabric on an ironing board/table.
- Place newspaper over your design, T-shirt, use two-hands and body pressure to heat press iron over the entire surface of the T-shirt.
- Remove newspaper; beginning from one corner, peel transfer paper from garment while hot.

Conclusion/Evaluation (15 minutes): Students will wear their T-shirts and talk about them.

- Students should assemble their completed prints side-by-side, choose their favourite prints and explain what they like about them.
- Demonstrate the procedure for washing garment to avoid damaging print (i.e., turn garment inside out; wash in cold or warm water without bleach; and spread newspaper over image before ironing).
- Instructor should discuss the final products with students paying particular attention to strengths and weaknesses of designs.
- Evaluate lesson by asking: Was the lesson effective in helping students appreciate adinkra cloths and understand their cultural significance? Could you achieve other learning outcomes set out for the lesson? Were students enthusiastic and interested in the lesson?

Activity IV: The African Mask (Papiér Mâché)

Introduction

Masks play an important role in African culture. They are widely used during initiation ceremonies, entertainment, agricultural festivals, funeral rites, ancestral veneration and other religious ceremonies. They are symbols of social control employed for protection and maintenance of law and order. Masks of all kinds are frequently seen in schools and art studios. Aluminium foil, paper mâché, clay, paper, mosaic, wire and many other materials are employed to create them. In North America, masks

are used to disguise ones personality during celebrations such as Halloween and Potlatch. Masks that are used in Africa have a hierarchy that extends from the highest "great spirit masks" which appear only in the perilous moments of the tribe through smaller ones that may act as judges, peace-makers, tax collectors, law enforcement officers, nocturnal expellers of witches, right down to those used in entertainment. Generally, masks imbue upon their wearers the authority of the spirits or vital forces, which reside in the masks. There are different types of masks namely: headdress masks, helmet masks, face masks, shoulder masks, body masks, venerated masks and masks used as badges. In this unit, children will explore general themes of disguise, fear or mystery. They will be introduced to a wide variety of masks across Africa and elsewhere and will learn the skill of using papiér mâché to fashion their own masks.

Objectives:
-   To understand and appreciate the functions of masks in African cultures.
-   To explore the general themes of disguise, fear and death in Africa cultures.
-   To plan a mask based on a theme related to an African cultural event (i.e., initiation, funeral, entertainment and agricultural festival) and demonstrate how this will be communicated through the elements and principles of design.
-   To accurately recall and follow papiér mâché mask making instructions.
-   To make an African mask following the plan.

Estimated Time: (150 minutes)

Materials: Videos (*Masks for Today's World* or *African Masks*), samples of masks, poster on African masks, news paper, scissors (15-20), bowls, modelling clay (re-usable 1– 2 lbs per student) flour, water, storage trays, sponges, paints, shoe polish, ink, sand, brushes, small strips (1"-2") of newspaper, stages of papiér mâché mask, clay form, partially finished and completed finished paper mâché decorated masks.

Procedure:
Introduction (15 minutes): Show video (e.g.,:*Masks for Today's World* or *African Masks*).
-   Show physical samples of African masks and/or posters of African masks.
-   Brainstorm and web questions such as: What do we wear them for? Why do we wear them? When do we wear them? How can you tell when someone is wearing a mask? Who wears which masks? Where in Africa are masks worn? What are the common characteristics of African initiation or ceremonial masks, Halloween masks, Chinese Dragon masks and First Nations' Potlatch masks?
-   Describe the various emotions exhibited through these masks.
-   How do the artists achieve those emotional effects? How do they conform to formal

design elements and principles?

- Use the emotion exercise for vocabulary development (horrifying, sad, wild, happy, scarify, devilish, disgusting, smiling, serene, frowning, dreadful, frightening).

<u>Body</u> (120 minutes): Discuss the influence of African religion on the form and aesthetics of African masks.

- Examine, compare and discuss photos, posters and masks from real life in Africa, North America, Asia, Europe and South America.
- Draw/design an African mask based on general themes (i.e., disguise, fear or mystery) or event (i.e., imitation, funeral, entertainment, agricultural festival, etc.).
- Teacher demonstrates with examples at different stages of the papiér mâché mask making process.
- Model clay to make a mould; exaggerate by focusing on a theme of an African cultural event.
- Mix floor and water – have all students observe and feel for the correct consistency of the paste.
- Demonstrate by dipping small strips of newspaper, wiping off the excess paste and smoothing the strip on the partially done mould.
- Work systematically to keep your mask of even thickness.
- Thoroughly dry before removing from mould.
- Decorate with paints, inks, sand, etc.

<u>Conclusion/Evaluation</u> (15 minutes): Display completed masks.

- Students analyze and judge the most successful masks.
- Instructor checks understanding of the procedure through informal questions and observations during demonstration and the mask making process.
- Instructor evaluates students' masks to determine how the African cultural elements and principles of design are employed to communicate African cultural themes and events.

  Evaluate lesson by asking: Was the lesson effective in helping students appreciate African masks and their cultural significance? In achieving other learning outcomes set out for the lesson? Were students enthusiastic and interested in the lesson?

Activity V: African Mythology and Folktales

<u>Introduction</u>

Throughout time, people have told incredible tales of heroes, monsters, animals, magical creatures, great adventures and quests, gods and goddesses. Myths and legends are different ways people explained

phenomena they did not understand. Together with folklore, they form the core of the *African Oral Tradition* or the unwritten literature of informal education. In addition to being enjoyable stories they contain themes and powerful messages, which highlight issues that are of vital importance to the well being and survival of all people no matter what their culture or religion. For example, a common theme is that of the protection of children from known and unknown dangers. Children are told of the conflict between good and evil. They are warned not to lie to their parents, wander from their homes or be disobedient to their parents. The tale of "The Forest Boy and the Parrots" or "Abena and the Python" from West Africa have close parallel in the European story of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears." Like Goldilocks, Abena and the Forest Boy disobey their parents' instructions only to learn a hard lesson from the consequences of their actions. Myths and folktales show how people who sin rarely escape the wrath of the gods and, at the same time, how good people are rewarded. Some myths and legend such as the story of the heavenly origin of the Golden Stool of the Ashanti of Ghana are told to unite members of the Ashanti ethnic group under the authority of the Ashanti King. Creation myths about God and the origin of humans abound all over Africa. Generally, they imply that humans belong to God and that God has the power to do what He likes with humans. Also, they may imply that even though God is far from us, He takes a keen interest in our affairs.

Some African tales help people to overcome their fears. They prove that strange monsters such as *Sasabonsam* (forest monster) and *Moatia* (dwarfs) are not invincible. Others examine human relationships, exploring sensitive issues while also softening them to avoid offence. For example, *Ananse*, the Spiderman, a hero from the folklore of West Africa and the Caribbean is a witty rogue. Many of his actions are quite wicked but appealing. Even *Nyame*, the Sky-God, admits that he is the cleverest of all the animals. So popular is he that he has given his name to the whole rich tradition of tales on which so many Ghanaians children are brought up – *Anansesem* – or spider tales. The heroes of these tales are the forest animals or chiefs and people of the village.

For several centuries, Europeans, North Americans and Africans sold people from Africa as slaves. Many of the slaves came from West Africa, the area along the Gulf of Guinea, which came to be called the Slave Coast. Men, women and children were uprooted from their homes in Africa and forced to take a terrible trip across the Atlantic. Many of them died in the "middle passage" and later, through the inhuman treatment they underwent in the plantations in America and the Caribbean Islands. Those who survived tried to keep their culture alive by telling stories that were an important part of West African culture. Many of the stories we know today, as Brer Rabbit stories are similar to the stories told by people in West Africa. The only changes are the names and the settings.

Storytelling and folktales can inspire children to develop their listening skills, imagination and artistic creativity. The need for children to appreciate fantasy is no less important than the virtue these tales entail. The natural impulse of children to tell stories or make, art should be harnessed by educators as it can be inspiration for some exciting class work.

Objectives:

- To learn to listen to and enjoy some African folklore and myths.
- To identify vital themes, key decisions, dilemmas and moral issues in African mythology and folklore.
- To enable students to tell their own stories and figure out their embedded themes and significance, using the stories told in class as a model.
- To use drawing and painting to express the moods and roles of characters in their tales.
- To study the relationship between myths and folklore of Africa and those of other countries and cultures.
- To emphasize the cross-cultural similarities between African folktales and myths and those from North America and other countries.

Estimated Time: (150 minutes).

Materials: Books on folklore and *Ananse* stories (i.e., *Tales of Ashanti Father* and *Ananse the Spider* by Peggy Appiah; *A story, A story* by Gail Haley), Flashcards, wall chart.

Procedure:

Introduction (15 minutes):

- Familiarize thoroughly with at least five African folktales and myths.
- Prepare and show flashcards where necessary to enable students to follow the story, understand the context and the role of the characters.
- Serialize long stories with each episode finishing on a cliff-hanger.
- Gather students around in a circle in or outside the classroom, under a tree in a park to create a story-telling atmosphere similar to that of an African traditional village where grandparents tell stories beside an open hearth.
- Discuss the cross-cultural similarities and differences in folktales, stories, fairytales myths.

Body (120 minutes):

- Tell at least five tales and myths from Africa including the stories of: *Ananse* the Spiderman and the myth of the Golden Stool of Ashanti.
- Explain how *Ananse* manages, by his wits, to fulfil the Sky God's three impossible tasks and wins the golden story-box containing all the stories of the world.
- Explain to children why the story is still told among Africans in America and the Caribbean.
- Show how African slaves took their stories with them to the new world.
- Tell the story of the most famous myth of Ghana – the story about the heavenly origin of the Golden Stool of the Ashanti.

- Show how King Osei-Tutu I of Ashanti worked with his most powerful priest, Okomfo Anokye by calling an assembly of all the chiefs of independent states of Ashanti at Kumasi on a Friday during which Okomfo Anokye miraculously commanded the Golden Stool from the sky to fall on the lap of King Osei-Tutu.

- Explain why the Ashantis came to believe that their collective souls reside in the Golden Stool, which destruction would mean the destruction of all Ashantis.

- Finally, show how the Ashanti Confederacy has stood the test of time with the Golden Stool serving as the symbol for Ashanti unity.

- Divide the class into groups of four after each story and discuss the dilemmas, moral issues, key -decisions and other vital themes in the story.

- Record the common characteristics of folktales, mythology and fairy tales across cultures of the world.

Suggested Questions: What lessons can be learned from the stories? What was the role of the main character(s) of the story? What kind of theme vibrates through the story? Can you think of a different ending to the story? What is it about the story that makes it worth remembering? How would you describe the setting or context for the story? Why do you think fairy tales from different countries have some common themes or resemblance? How would you describe your thoughts and feelings at various stages of the story if you were one of the major characters? Is there any link between the role of the mythical animals or human characters represented in the story and their physical traits in real life?

- Ask each group to share their responses and main arguments to the class.

- Assign students to consult their parents, relatives, adult friends and members of the African community for a tale that will be shared with the class.

- Students will draw and paint the major mythical characters in their stories in order to keep the stories in their memories for a long time.

- Design and make a model of the Golden Stool and other traditional stools of the Ashanti palace.

Conclusion /Evaluation (15 minutes): Evaluate the impact of the African story-telling sessions on students' attention and listening skills.

- Evaluate students' enthusiasm, imagination and creative skills and story telling abilities through their personal stories.

- Students should write down the various messages myths and folktales could carry and discuss them in class.

- Display and discuss with students their drawings about the various characters in their stories and the stools from Ashanti.

- Outline the relationships between African myths and tale with those of other cultures such as African-Canadians, Europeans, Chinese, East Indians, First Nations and Latin Americans.

Activity VI: Ancient Egypt and Nubia

Introduction

Many Canadians have roots in cultures from other parts of the world. For this reason, it is important to know about one another's past to better understand the peoples of the world and their cultures. Unfortunately, because of slavery, imperialism and its aftermath in the Americas and elsewhere, much of our knowledge of Africa's past has been distorted by cultural bias and racial prejudices that we are only beginning to correct. The empires of the Nile flourished in Egypt and Nubia from about 3500 B.C.E. until 400 B.C.E. Nubia, Egypt's rival, stands as one of the earliest known African civilizations that flourished in the Nile Valley. Studying Egypt (Kemite) and Nubia (Kush), the two earliest known African civilizations will therefore help lead us toward an overdue reassessment of Africa in terms of its contribution to world cultural history. Additionally, awareness of ancient African artistic and cultural achievements will not only inspire and empower young people of African descent but also challenge other youths to be critical of their "received" knowledge.

Egypt and Nubia should mean more than myth, legend and the fabled kingdoms of the Kemites and Kushites. As the birthplace of civilization, ancient Egypt and Nubia present a legacy of art and knowledge and of the growth of a people in the five thousand-year course of this civilization. Although unlike Egypt, the archaeological picture of Nubia, as a whole, is very incomplete, evidence available suggests that the Greeks, Romans and the Egyptians wrote about the Nubians and depicted them in art. The Nubians themselves left us their own art and written records. Nubian (Kushites) and Egyptian histories are closely intertwined. They shared the same river, the Nile and a common frontier over which contact and interaction ebbed and flowed for thousands of years. Geographically, Nubia extends from the Sixth Nile Cataract, from the confluence of the Blue and White Nile in modern day Khartoum, to the First Nile Cataract. Egypt, on the other hand extended from the First Nile Cataract to the Mediterranean (See map, Figure 2.5). Though Egypt and Nubia interacted in several ways, including trade relationships, the two civilizations were distinct from each other; each demonstrated a unique cultural character (Haynes, 1992). Nubia was typically the rival of Egypt, as the two powers shared a past of conquering and being conquered by each other in their endless pursuit for control over territory and trade routes.

Objectives:
- To interpret maps by locating ancient Egypt and Nubia on a Map of the world and Africa.
- To encourage students to demonstrate a willingness to inquire about ancient Egyptian and Nubian history, technology and political systems.

- To enable students to learn the physical features of Egypt and Nubia, including the Sahara, the Nile and their impact on transportation, agriculture, shelter and artistic achievements.
- To enable students to learn about the cultural practices of ancient Egypt and Nubia, including their belief systems and art forms.
- To enable students to explore the similarities and differences in art and cultural practices of ancient Egyptians and Nubians.

Estimated Time: (150 minutes).

Resources and Materials: Wall map of North Africa or atlases; maps of Ancient Egypt; Video – "Egypt: Gift of the Nile;" Books – *Nubia: Ancient kingdoms of Africa* by Haynes (1992); *Ancient Nubia: Egypt's rival in Africa* by O'Connor (1993); *World history: Perspectives on the past* by Krieger, Neill, &Reynolds (1997); and *Africa in antiquity: The arts of ancient Nubia and the Sudan* by The Brooklyn Museum (1973).

Procedure:

Introduction (time 20 minutes):

- Explain to students that they will be doing a unit on ancient Egypt and Nubia.
- The class will brainstorm what they know about ancient Egyptian and Nubian civilizations.
- Show the video – "Egypt: Gift of the Nile" as an introduction to the lesson
- Explain why ancient Egypt is referred to as the birthplace of civilization (i.e., astonishing architectural, artistic, political, technological and scientific achievements.

Body (100 minutes):

- Help students to make predictions about the impact of the Sahara and the Nile on Egyptian and Nubian ways of life (food, shelter, clothing, trade, population distribution, transportation, values, skills, technology and defence).
- All predictions, offered by the class will be written on the board where they are visible all.
- Show how closely intertwined Egypt and Nubia were in terms of geography, usage of the Nile, trade relations, artistic accomplishments, belief systems and political organization. Also, point out the antagonism that existed between these two ancient rival empires, particularly the struggle for control over territory and trade routes.
- Point out the similarities and differences in the way the Egyptians and Nubians represented themselves in their art, crafts and writings.
- Explain how technological advances such as the invention of the plough and irrigation systems, hieroglyphics, artistic and architectural expertise enabled ancient Egypt and Nubia to modify their physical environment, as well as satisfy their needs more

effectively.

- Show how the Egyptian Pharaohs and Nubian kings ruled as gods and passed on their royal crowns to their sons, or sometimes to maternal nephews (as was the case of the Nubian pharaohs) in a single succession called dynasty.

- Point out that beliefs in life after death, the immortality of the Pharaohs and divine kingship of Nubian royalty, influenced the funerary cult, mummification of Pharaohs and kings, the creation of sculptures and pyramids, artefacts.

- Show why the pyramids were more important than palaces for Egyptians and Nubians.

- Let students know that the Nubians used hieroglyphics long before the ancient Egyptians developed it together with number systems, the calendar and many academic subjects.

- Describe the role of women in Egypt and Nubia. Show how important women's roles were as they held many of the same rights as men. Some served as government officials and priests. In the Kushite culture, women played an important role in establishing who was going to be the next king or queen just like the Ashantis of Ghana or the Akans of West Africa today.

- Show the connection between the practice of matrilineal succession in some African societies today and the matrilineal succession that was practiced in ancient Egypt and Nubia particularly, under the Nubian Pharaohs.

- Explain what excavations at Egyptian and Nubian royal cemeteries have revealed in terms of sculpture, paintings, pottery, clothing and jewellery (circlets, hair ornaments, necklaces, armlets, bracelets, finger rings, girdles, anklets and beads).

- Discuss how archaeologists learn about and date ancient cultures by studying their pottery, sculpture, jewellery and other artefacts.

- Give examples to demonstrate that many aspects of ancient Egyptian and Nubian cultures survived today, unchanged for more than 3500 years in parts of modern day Egypt Sudan, Ethiopia and Africa.

Conclusion/Evaluation: Evaluate students to see how much they have learned about ancient Egyptians and Nubian civilizations.

- Mentally evaluate students to see if they understand the factors that sustained the growth of Egypt and Nubia for more than 3000 years of their existence.

- Students will draw maps of Africa and indicate the locations of Egypt and Nubia Nile Valley.

- Evaluate the lesson for yourself by asking; was the lesson effective in achieving its intended outcomes?

Activity VII: The Royal Kingdoms of Ghana, Mali and Songhai

<u>Introduction</u>

The royal empires of Western Sudan – Ghana, Mali and Songhai rose to power in the savannah, between the Sahara and the tropical rain forest. Their wealth and power were largely based on rich gold deposits of the region and their control of the trans-Saharan trade. The kings of the empires of Western Sudan were renowned for their lavish display of wealth. Until about 1350, at least two-thirds of the world's gold supply came from West Africa (Krieger, Neill, &Reynolds, 1997). Gold, ivory, cola nuts, forest products and domestic servants (slaves) came from Sudan, from the West Coast and the forest region between Niger and Senegal rivers (see Figure 2.6 for map), while salt, copper, slaves and other luxury products for privileged and wealthy people (i.e., horses, fine cloths, silk garments, leather goods, blankets, steel weapons, manufactured goods and books for Muslim scholars) came from the Berbers of the Sahara oasis who had contacts with Arab traders from North Africa and the Mediterranean. Camel caravans carried goods across the Sahara for many years.

The trans-Saharan commerce in products of West Africa helped to build the comfort and splendour of large North African cities such as Carthage, back in the times of Phoenician, Egyptians Nubians and Roman rule before C.E. 400. But the main expansion of the trans-Saharan trade came after the Muslim conquest of North Africa in the C.E. 800. This trade was to everyone's advantage. The Berbers sold the goods they bought from the Mende-speaking people of Western Sudan to the Arab traders of North Africa and the traders of North Africa in turn resold their products to Europeans and Asians. European and Asian goods came to West Africa by the same methods. Because of the thriving trans – Saharan trade, many trading centres and cities were founded across the Sahara. These cities and ports, some of which exist today, include Agades, Awdoghast, Gao, Ghat, Jenne, Kumbi-Saleh, Murzuk, Sijilmasa, Taghaza, Tichitt, Timbuktu and Walata. These cities became centres for learning and for artisans who worked in leather, wood, iron smelting, ivory, gold and other precious metals. Trading centres such as Jenne and Timbuktu became popular for their unique and fascinating barter trade known as "silent trade," under which traders secretly swapped salt for gold or other items without either group meeting the other. In the late 1500s, Moroccan invasion coupled with a severe famine devastated the Sudan and put an end to the desert kingdoms. The trans-Saharan trade lost much of its importance after the rise of a big coastal trade (trans-Atlantic trade) across West Africa, Europe and America after about C.E. 1600.

One of the greatest travellers in history was an Arab named Ibn Batttuta. Born in Morocco, he spent his entire adult life traveling through Muslim lands. He visited Mecca and Baghdad, Mombasa and Kilwa. He travelled to India, Southeast Asia and China. In 1352 Ibn Battuta visited the kingdoms of Western Sudan and provided much of the first hand information we have on West African kingdoms including their customs, religion, laws, political organization and human relations.

Ghana Empire

The first of the Royal empires of Western Sudan to emerge was Ghana, peopled by the Mende-speaking group called the Soninke. The Soninke kings' title, *Ghana*, was applied by the Arabs to refer to the entire Ghanaian territory. The origins of Ghana date back from about C.E. 500. Ghana reached its golden age in the ninth and tenth centuries C.E. Its capital, Awdoghast was later moved south to Kumbi-Saleh, about 320 kilometres north of present day Bamako. After conquering the Sahara Berbers of Western Sudan, Ghana gained control of the important trading town of Awdoghast. Like the Ashanti Kings of present day Ghana, the Soninke kings of Old Ghana became known for their grand court and lavish style including the wearing of elaborate gold ornaments. Ghana, like Mali, practiced the matrilineal system of inheritance whereby inheritance to the throne was passed from a ruler to a nephew. Ghana's rulers demanded taxes on both import and export trade as well as from its subject chiefs of surrounding lands. Although many of the North African and Berber traders of the Sahara accepted Islam after the Arab conquest of the eighth century, the emperors of Ghana maintained their indigenous Mende customs and religion of their ancestors. The system of government expanded with the success in trade and the strength of Ghana's armies, equipped with iron-fashioned weapons. The ruler of Ghana acted as chief priest, judge and military commander. As it expanded, it became more complicated to control distant provinces. To deal with this, the kings of Ghana appointed lesser kings or governors for the provinces who in turn gave loyalty and paid taxes to the central government. Ghana controlled an area from the Senegal River to the Niger River. In 1056, Muslim Berbers from the Almoravid kingdom from the northwest, from the Mauritanian Sahara, invaded Sijilmasa, the main northern trade centre for West African gold. From there, they went further to the north and conquered Morocco as well as Al-Andalus, or Muslim Spain. A southern section of the Almoravid movement led by Abu Bakr waged a long war with Ghana. The Almoravids made an alliance with the people of Takrur and took the city of Awdoghast leading to the disruption of the gold and salt trade. With this conquest, Ghana began to lose its power and prestige. In C.E. 1076, after many battles and stiff resistance, the Almoravids finally, seized the capital of the Ghana Empire.

Mali Empire

A long period of confusion came between the fall of Ghana and the triumph of Mali. Some smaller states such as Takrur, Diara and Kaniaga, tried to build small empires of their own. After C.E. 1200 the Fulani of Takrur (in the northern part of modern Senegal) under their most successful leader, Sumanguru took control of the kingdoms of Diara and Kaniaga (once provinces of Ghana) and tried to build an empire out of the ruins of old Ghana with its capital at Kumbi Saleh, Ghana's last capital. Sumanguru's attempt at building an empire was met with resistance by Muslim traders of Kumbi Saleh who opposed his harsh taxation and bad government. They rejected his over-lordship and resettled northward, to form a new trading centre at Walata, far beyond the reach of Sumanguru's soldiers. Another Mende-speaking group

called the Mandinke from a small state of Kangaba, near the source of River Niger also challenged Sumanguru' ruthless rule. According to Mandinke legends, Sumanguru crushed any hope of rebellion by executing 11 out of 12 sons of a powerful Mandinke rival. He spared the twelfth son Sundiata because he was badly crippled and seemed unlikely to survive. Sumanguru, however, had made a mistake, as Sundiata gained strength and became a popular leader. In about 1240, Sumanguru was defeated and killed by Sundiata's armies. Sundiata, sometimes called Mari-Djata, established his capital at Niami and promoted agriculture and trade. *Mali*, a Mandinke word, meaning "where the king lives," absorbed the name of Kangaba and the empire of Mali was born.

Sundiata died in 1255. Influenced by Arab traders, some of Mali's next rulers became Muslims. The most famous of these was Mansa Kankan Musa I, Sundiata's grandnephew. When Mansa Musa came to power, Mali already had firm control of the trade roots to the southern lands of gold and northern lands of salt. He pushed his armies northwards as far as Taghaza and to the east, beyond Gao to the borders of Hausaland. He pushed his borders westward into Takrur and imposed his rule on southern trading towns such as Walata. Under his leadership, Mali became a powerful empire with its size as large as all of Europe. A 100,000-man army, which included 10,000 cavalry troops, maintained order and protected Mali from attack (Davidson, 1977). He appointed governors for all parts of the empire and ministers for his administration. As Mende, the Mandinke had many things in common with the Soninke of Ghana – their food, clothing, art forms, houses, system of inheritance and patterns of beliefs and customs. Weavers, blacksmiths, potters, carvers, leather workers and other artists were highly regarded. Craftspeople were thought to possess magical powers, which allow them to accomplish the unfinished work of the Supreme God.

Like the Mali kings before him, Mansa Musa became a devout Muslim. But he also supported the religion of the Mandinke to which many of his subjects practised. His glittering pilgrimage to Mecca in 1325 captured the Arab world's attention. Mansa Musa took with him so much gold and gave away so many golden gifts, that it affected the value of goods on the Cairo market. On his return, Musa brought back with him a number of learned men from Egypt who settled in Mali and Timbuktu. One of them, called As-Saheli is credited for designing new mosques at Gao and Timbuktu as well as a palace for the emperor in Niami. For a long time Timbuktu became a centre of trade and learning in the Western Sudan.

Following Mansa Musa's death in 1332, Mali remained an important Kingdom for nearly a century. Nevertheless, his successors were not skilful enough to hold this vast empire together. There were constant revolts for independence, especially from the Songhai people of Gao. With difficulties over the rules of succession, the kingdom was seriously weakened, opening the way for the rise of the kingdom of the Songhai.

Songhai Empire

Songhai developed along the Niger River in the 14th century. By the end of that century, it had gained control of the trading centre of Gao. Songhai expansion took place under Sunni Ali, who lived from 1464 to 1492. In almost forty years of continuous warfare, he conquered and held much of the former lands of both Mali and Ghana. His conquests were consolidated by his successor, Askia Muhammad, who created a professional army. Askia Mohammed also made a pilgrimage to Mecca, like that of Mansa Musa two centuries before. This action strengthened relations with the Maghrid or Arab states and renewed stories of the wealth of the kings of the Sudan.

As with the kingdom of Mali, there was no effective rule for succession in Songhai. After Muhammad lost the throne in 1528, a number of civil wars were fought to gain control of the kingdom. By the end of the 17th century, Songhai was seriously weakened by these wars. In 1591, a Moroccan army crossed the Sahara and defeated the Songhai army. The Moroccan troops had one important advantage - they were armed with *muskets*, which were much superior weapons at the time. The Moroccans were unable to maintain control of the region because of the vastness of the desert. Around this time, a severe famine devastated the Sudan and put an end to the striving desert kingdoms. It was also during this period that European merchants became active along the Guinea Coast. Thus, the once profitable trade of gold, salt and slaves that had formerly gone north across the desert now turned south to the coast.

Objectives:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the empires of Western Sudan - Ghana, Mali and Songhai, including their geographical locations and territory.
- Identify and compare the characteristics of the empires of Western Sudan with present day West Africa.
- Demonstrate understanding of the "silent" (barter) trade and its impact on the people of ancient West Africa.
- Show how Islam influenced the development of these empires.

Estimated Time: (150 minutes).

Materials: Maps of West Africa (depicting the kingdoms of Ghana, Mali and Songhai). Books (i.e., *The Royal Kingdoms of Ghana, Mali and Songhai* (1994) by McKissack, P.; *A History of West Africa, 1000 - 1800* (1977) by Davidson, B.).

Procedure:

Introduction (30 minutes):

- Explain to students that the lesson will be a history of the ancient kingdoms of Western Sudan - Ghana, Mali and Songhai.

- Brainstorm with students about what they already know about these kingdoms and write them on the chalkboard.
- Show a short introductory video about the royal kingdoms of Western Sudan by Basil Davidson or Ali Mazuri.
- Divide the lesson into two parts (50 minutes each), with session one covering the introduction to Western Sudan and ancient Ghana and session two dealing with Mali and Songhai empires.

Body Part One (50 minutes):

- Give a lesson on the ancient empires of Western Sudan focusing on the factors that contributed to the rise and fall of these great kingdoms.
- Students should be divided into three groups; each group will develop an interesting retelling of the stories of Ghana, Mali and Songhai respectively at the end of the lesson.
- Explain the similarities and differences among the three major empires in terms of their wealth, power, trade, political organization, religion and culture.
- List the items of trade and show why gold and salt became the most important trade commodities.
- List the groups that played active roles in the trans-Saharan trade (i.e., Soninke, Mandinke, Berber, Tuareg, Mossi and Fulani).
- Explain why modern Ghana adopted the same name from ancient Ghana (i.e., the belief that the Ashanti of Ghana migrated from old Ghana; common cultural practices such as chieftaincy and matrilineal system of inheritance; and the abundance of gold in both old and new Ghana).
- Demonstrate how the Moslem conquest of North Africa in the eighth century influenced the trans-Saharan trade.
- Explain the circumstances that caused the capital of Ghana to move from Kumbi Saler to Awdoghast.
- Show how Ghana began to lose its power and prestige after the Almoravids' invasion in C.E. 1050 and how Mali emerged as a dominant power.
- Show how Arab writers of West African history, like later Christian missionaries, demonstrated biases toward customs and ideas that were different from their own culture and religion.

Part Two (50 minutes):

- Narrate the story of Sumanguru, a powerful Susu king, who resisted Islam; who fought for the control of the salt and gold trade and began a reign of terror; and who was eventually defeated by Sundiata Keita, the founder of the Mali empire.

- Show how the reign of Mansa Musa (1307 - 1332) is viewed as the golden age of the Mali Empire.

- Talk about the political organization of the three kingdoms, including the administration of provinces, status of the army, governors, inspectors and revenue collectors.

- Discuss the work of Ibn Battuta, the prolific Arab scholar from Morocco who visited and wrote about Mali in 1353, a few years following Mansa Musa's death.

- Describe the most famous pilgrimage undertaken to Mecca in 1324 by Mansa Musa including his lavish display of wealth and power that shocked the Muslim world and provided scholars with some insights about West African rulers.

- Point out the importance of Timbuktu toward the training of ancient African and Muslim scholars and artisans.

- Show how the Songhai Empire was established under Sunni Ali and Askia Muhammad in the 15th century.

- Describe how Askia Muhammad's pilgrimage to Mecca in 1495 helped to strengthen relations with the Arab world as well as renew stories of the wealth and power of West African kingdoms.

- Explain how Songhai expanded beyond the areas of old Ghana and Mali by employing similar methods that the Romans used in their conquest (e.g., by studying the people they defeated, adopting many of their laws, customs, legends and myths).

- Describe how Songhai ruled the vast empire through a centralized system of government with representative governors for its five provinces.

- Point out how Askia set up his counsel of state and relied upon them for important decisions; how he developed Gao, Timbuktu and Jenne to reach new levels of economic and educational centres that attracted visitors from as far as East India.

- Describe Sankore University at Timbuktu; its courses in astronomy, mathematics, ethnography, medicine, logic, music and literature; and show how one of its professors, Ahmed Baba, wrote 40 books and kept 1600 books in his personal library during the 16th century.

- Point out that after 35 years rule and at the age of 85 Askia's eyesight began to fail and his sons engaged in rapid succession of revolts and struggle for power until Askia died in 1538 at age 97.

Evaluation: (time 20 minutes): Mentally evaluate each of the three groups to see how much they have learnt about Old Ghana, Mali and Songhai empires.

- Mentally evaluate students to see if they understand the factors that contributed to the rise and fall of these ancient African empires.

-   Students will draw maps of Africa and indicate the geographical locations of the kingdoms of Western Sudan including their major economic centres.
-   Evaluate the lesson for yourself by asking; was the lesson effective in achieving its intended outcomes?

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

1. What is the status of multicultural education in your school?

2. Do you think multicultural education should be fully integrated into school curriculum?

3. In what ways can multicultural education be used to improve inter-group/inter-cultural relations in school?

4. What are some of the most common concerns of parents of visible minority students over the operations of the school (i.e., curricula content, textbooks, audiovisuals, extra-curricula, teaching methodologies, discipline) and its impact on their children participation in school?

5. Has the implementation of ESL been a source of any concern for parents of ethnic minorities and new immigrant?

6. The IRP recommends that visual arts education should be approached from a variety of contexts; how does African art/multicultural art education fit into the goals of your visual arts program?

7. How would you, as school principal/art teacher, describe your philosophy of teaching/administration?

8. What do you see as your greatest challenge in teaching such a culturally diverse group of students?

9. In your view, how do such factors as race, ethnicity, gender and class influence schooling and education?

10. In your view, what pedagogical styles could facilitate learning for Blacks and visible minority students?

11. What effort is made by you to understand and meet the cultural needs of your students, especially minority students?

12. What special contributions do you think Blacks and minority children bring to the classroom?

13. Do you think the experiences of students are different for: boys/girls, students from families of higher socio-economic status/lower socio-economic status, Euro-Canadians/visible minorities.

14. What are your views about celebration of cultural festivals such as Chinese New Year, Halloween, Black History Month, etc. in school?

15. Do you perceive art and cultural education as essential components of the education of Black learners and indeed all learners? Why?

16. How do you feel about the under-representation of Blacks and other visible minorities as teachers, school administrators and policy makers in BC?

17. What other practical steps should be taken to make schools more inclusive?

18. In what ways can the school, the family and the community coordinate their efforts to enhance the achievements of students.

19. How are teachers prepared to deal with racial incidents?

20. What do you think should be the role of galleries and art museums in fostering multicultural art education?

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND MFC CROSS-CULTURAL FACILITATORS

1. What are your perceptions and opinion about Black children and the education system in Vancouver?

2. Do you have any specific concerns about your children's school programs, textbooks and the general school organization?

3. When you hear the term 'multicultural education', what does it mean to you?

4. What is your opinion about the increasing calls for inclusive education in BC and other parts of the country?

5. Do you think that the education system has responded satisfactorily to these calls?

6. Do you think that your children are receiving the necessary knowledge about their artistic and cultural heritage in their schools?

7. What are your views about how ESL is organized for new immigrants and those whose first language is not English?

8. Do you think that your child's experiences at school would be different if s/he was male/female, from a wealthy/poor family, from European/non-European background?

9. Can you think of any reason why a disproportionate number of Blacks and minority children "drop-out" of school?

10. It is said that, the more parents participate in their children's education, the better they are likely to perform at school. What is your level of involvement in your child's education?

11. What do you think teachers can do to encourage learning for Black students, in particular?

12. In what ways can strong partnership be built between the school, family and community to enhance the achievements of Black students?

13. As a Black/African-Canadian parent, what do you think are the special contributions that Black children bring to the visual arts classroom?

14. What are some of the daily experiences you go through that you think may have significant impact on your children's education?

15. Do you think that the activities at the MFC are significant to the cultural education of Black/African-Canadians? Why?

16. How have you been involved in the activities at the MFC?

17. What do you suggest should be done to improve the services of the MFC?

18. What other African cultural activities have you been involved with outside the MFC?

19. In what ways have you assisted your children to understand and respect their home culture.

20. What did you like about the art and cultural program offered at the MFC? What did you not like about the program?

21. Can you think of any reasons why learning about African art, culture, history and geography is important to your child's education?

22. Why do you think non-Western art forms are marginalized in the curriculum?

23. What do you think should be the role of galleries and museums in fostering multicultural art education?

24. What do you think are your child's aspirations in life?

25. What are your expectations about your child's future in Canada?

26. What is your greatest concern/worry for the Black youth in today's society?

27. Do your children encounter any problems in their efforts to adjust between the home and school cultures?

28. What do you suggest as the best way to deal with value conflicts and cultural maladjustment encountered by some Black/African-Canadian children?

29. In your opinion, what is racism? Has your child encountered any experience of racism in his/her school?

30. How would you deal with incidents of racism if they happen to your child at school?

31. How do you feel about the under-representation of Blacks and other visible minorities as teachers, school administrators and policy makers in BC?

32. What can be done to address the problems of under-representation of Blacks/Africans and other minorities in the education system, including the problem of negative references of Blacks in learning resources (i.e., TV, ads, posters, magazines, videos)?

33. If you have a magic wand to change something about the school curriculum, what would that be and why?

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR BLACK/AFRICAN-CANADIAN STUDENTS

1. Introduce yourself with your name or pseudonym, your place of birth, your original home country or the culture you are identified with, when you immigrated (if you did), your age, school, grade, your brothers or sisters (if any) and anything else you might like to add.

2. What is the occupation of your parents or guardians?

3. How do you feel about your social life in Canada compared with your home (or original) country; what are the advantages and disadvantages of living in Canada based on your personal experiences?

4. What do you like or dislike about going to school in Vancouver?

5. Do you speak any other language apart from English/French at home or school?

6. Do you know the origin and culture of your closest friends? Why are they your closest? Which activities and hobbies do you share in common?

7. When you hear the term 'multicultural education', what does it mean to you?

8. Is multicultural education implemented in your school visual arts, social studies and other subjects?

9. What aspects of Black/African history, art, culture, geography and politics are you familiar with? Where did you learn them?

10. To what extent are Black/Africans represented as contributors in art history, in your school textbooks and in the art curriculum?

11. Does your visual art class include multicultural art activities from the First Nations' art, African art, Chinese art and South American art?

12. Have there been any celebrations of art and cultural festivals (i.e., Halloween, Black History Month, Chinese New Year) in your school or community?

13. What do you think your school needs to do to promote multicultural education, including the knowledge of Black/African art, history and culture?

14. Who is your favourite (art) teacher? Why?

15. Describe your art and other learning experiences at the MFC?

16. How long have you been participating in the activities at the MFC?

17. Who encouraged you to patronize the MFC?

18. Do your parents participate in African activities and programs in African language, festivals, concert, cultural associations, Black history month celebrations, etc?

19. Do you have any other African art learning experience besides those at the MFC? If yes, what is it and where did you learn it?

20. Describe your favourite African art and cultural experiences (e.g., African literature, games, music, clothing, food, dance, art and craft, language, politics, religion, festivals and socialization). Why are you interested in them?

21. How and where do you get information about Blacks, your homeland and Africa?

22. What do you feel about the African Art and Cultural Program? What impact has it made on you?

23. Describe the various aspects of the workshop that you participated in and remember.

24. What lessons have you learned from the African *oral tradition* (*Ananse* stories, folktales and legends) and the history lessons presented as part of the African art and cultural workshop?

25. Based upon the activities in which you participated in the African art workshop, can you give examples of the characteristics of African art that are common to Western art and other art forms?

26. What did you find to be most interesting and rewarding in the African Art and Cultural Program presented at the MFC? Which art activity was less interesting to you and why?

27. Was there any difference between the way you interacted with your African friends at the MFC and friends at your regular public school? If yes, what is the difference?

28. What have you learnt about Africa that you did not know before?

29. In what ways is your knowledge of African art and culture useful to you?

30. Would you like to share your African art and cultural learning experiences at the MFC with your public school classmates or friends? Why or why not?

31. Would you like to continue the African art and cultural program at the MFC? Why?

32. Does it make any difference about who teaches African art and culture to you?

33. How many friends were you able to make during the workshop? Are you still in touch?

34. What do you think should be done to improve future cultural education workshops?

35. What other cultural education programs would you suggest to the MFC or other immigrant settlement service agency to offer?

36. What do you understand by 'racism'? Have you ever encounter racism in your school? If yes, how does it feel to experience racism at school?

37. What do you feel about the portrayal of Black people and visible minorities in art history, literature and school textbooks, curriculum and the mass media (i.e., TV, magazines, newspapers, radio, advertisements, movies and posters) in North America?

38. Have you ever contemplated dropping out of school? Why?

39. Do you think your experiences at school would be different if you were male or female?

40. Do you think your experiences at school would be different if you came from a wealthy or poor family?

41. Do you think your experiences at school would be different if you were White?

42. How do you feel about the under-representation of Blacks and visible minorities as teachers, administrators, principals and policy makers in the educational system?

43. What should be done to address the problems of negative references to Blacks in curriculum materials, textbooks, pop culture and mass media (i.e., TV, magazines, newspapers, radio, posters,

movies and ads)?

44. Is there any strong line of communication between your parents and your teachers?

45. What are your future aspirations in life?

46. How do you hope to accomplish these goals?

47. What do you know about the roles and responsibilities of your school's guidance counsellors?

48. Under what circumstances have you seen your school's guidance counsellor?

49. If you were given a magic wand to change something in your school, what would that be?

50. As a Black youth living in Vancouver, what four things worry you most?

51. How hopeful are you that these concerns/worries will be resolved?

GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH STUDENTS FROM A PUBLIC SCHOOL IN VANCOUVER.

1. What is the average age of participants?

2. How many were born in Canada or outside Canada?

3. What are the ethnic and cultural make up of the class?

4. What do you think about having students from so many cultural backgrounds in one class and school?

5. What languages, other than English and French, do students speak at home?

6. When you hear the term 'multicultural education', what does it mean to you?

7. Is multicultural education being implemented in your visual arts class? How?

8. How many have best friends from ethnic and cultural backgrounds other than their own?

9. If you have an African-Canadian as a friend, what would you expect to do with her or him?

10. Describe the ways you are able to express your own personal and cultural identity at school?

11. What do you like most about your present school in Vancouver?

12. What do you dislike about your schooling in Vancouver (if any)?

13. What aspects of Black history, African art, culture, festivals and politics are you familiar with? Where did you learn them?

14. How many of you would like to travel to Africa? Which country and why?

15. Can you describe some of the visual art lessons you've taken at this school?

16. What do you feel about the amount of African art and multicultural art content in your visual art curriculum, as well as other subjects at school?

17. What will you recommend your school to do in order to promote multicultural education, including the knowledge of Black/African art, history and culture?

18. Who is your favourite art teacher? Why?

19. Do your parents participate in multicultural festivals and other cultural programs in your community?

20. Do you have any other African art learning experience besides those at your school?

21. Describe your favourite African art and cultural experiences (e.g., African literature, games, music, clothing, food, dance, art and craft, language, politics, religion, festivals and socialization). Why are you interested in them?

22. What have you learned from African *oral tradition* by listening to *Ananse* stories, folktales and legends?

23. Based upon the African art activities in which you participated, can you give examples of Western art, First Nation's art and other art forms that have similar characteristics to African art?

24. What did you find to be most interesting and rewarding in the African art program that I offered at this school? Which art activity was less interesting to you?

25. What have you learned about Africa that you did not know before?

26. Do you think that learning about Africans, Blacks, African art, history and culture can help improve inter-racial relations? In what ways?

27. Would you like to share your African art and cultural learning experiences with your friends? Why or why not?

28. Would you like African art, First Nation art, Chinese art and other art forms to become regular parts of the content of your visual art curriculum at school?

29. Does it make any difference about who teaches Africa art and culture to you?

30. What do you feel about having some qualified African-Canadian teachers and instructors teaching certain subjects at your school?

31. Do you think your experiences at school would be different if you were male or female; if you came from a wealthy or poor family; if you were visible minority or White?

32. How do you feel sometimes, about negative references to Blacks and visible minorities in curriculum materials, textbooks, pop culture and mass media (i.e., TV, magazines, newspapers, radio, posters, movies and adds)?

33. What do you think make some students "drop-out" of school?

34. What do you think galleries and museums should do to foster multicultural art education?