

COLOURING OUTSIDE THE LINES:
ART, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND IDENTITY IN THE CLASSROOM

by

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Abstract

The art education literature makes ample claims as to the transformative power of art, and thus art education is often lauded as being the ideal space for dealing with identity issues, and enacting social justice (Chalmers, 1996; Stuhr, 1994; Heck, 2001; Gasman & Anderson-Thompkins, 2003; Ulbricht, 2003). Despite these claims, the exact meanings of these powerful terms are unclear. Using poststructural feminist and queer theories, this research study examines how artists working in classroom residencies conceptualize and teach about social justice and identity. This study also focuses on the influence of the artists' identities on how and what they teach in the residency.

Through a series of one-on-one interviews, this research uncovers that how the artists see themselves is influential for how they, in turn, conceive of and teach about social justice and identity. Consequently, the definitions of 'social justice' and 'identity' are revealed to be unstable and shifting - varying from artist to artist and situation to situation. Furthermore, by dealing with only certain social justice issues and acknowledging only certain identities in the residency, some norms may be disrupted, while other norms and heteronorms are reinforced and perpetuated.

Finally, this study opens up a space for practitioners and researchers in the field to consider how art can be both subversive and oppressive. Art making in no way assures an untainted exploration of social justice and identity issues,

and thus must be explored for its harmful nature, as well as its liberatory and disruptive potential.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Art can be radical. It has the ability to inform, influence and inspire. It has been known to initiate controversy, incite protest, and enact ideologies. Within art, there lies a strong potential for imagining change (Greene, 1995; Chalmers, 1996; Stuhr, 1994; Heck, 2001). The art education literature makes ample claims as to the transformative power of art, and thus, art education is often lauded as being the ideal space for dealing with identity issues, and enacting social justice (Chalmers, 1996; Stuhr, 1994; Heck, 2001; Gasman & Anderson-Thompkins, 2003; Ulbricht, 2003). Despite these lofty claims, the meanings of these powerful terms are unclear. What does 'identity' mean? Why is it important? Whose identity? Which identities are included? Which are left out? Similarly, what does 'social justice' mean? What does social justice in art denote or assume? Social justice for whom?

Volunteering for a social justice-oriented artist residency program sparked my interests in this research topic. Working in the classroom with the artist and the students, I became aware that art was indeed a powerful tool for fostering learning, understanding, and critical thinking centring on social justice and identity issues. However, it also became increasingly clear that the deeper meanings behind the terms 'social justice' and 'identity' varied from artist to artist, as did the outcomes of the residencies. As a self-identified queer person, I was very aware that heterosexuality always remained an unspoken assumption within the artist residencies, even when 'identity' was the focus. Similarly, gender was often addressed; however, male/female binaries remained intact and unchallenged as a natural sort of distinction.

These observations can also be extended to race, ability, and class. It seems that while artists were taking up these very important issues, their strategies for addressing them inadvertently painted difference as the 'problem'. As such, what was considered 'normal' remained unexplored and unchallenged. For example, an artist residency focusing on racism in the school attempted to highlight how students, regardless of cultural or ethnic differences, are all essentially alike. While there may not seem to be anything negative with this approach, there are some definite dangers. By blurring over, or failing to discuss the very real ways in which we are all different (such as skin colour, cultural tradition, language, sexuality) and focussing on our apparent commonalities (being in the same classroom, struggling with homework, and so on), 'difference' is inadvertently portrayed as bad, and as such, the desirability of sameness is reified. Furthermore, while acknowledging racism as a problem, this approach fails to look beyond its effects; thus, foreclosing any examination of the systemic nature of racism. Again, the 'problem' becomes difference, and if difference can be assimilated into sameness – the problem disappears.

It seemed to me that what the students actually learned about and experienced in the artist residency depended, to a large extent, on what the individual artists felt were important or relevant issues. Consequently, I became very interested in researching what 'social justice' and 'identity' means to artists who work in the classroom, and trying to gain a greater understanding of how the artists' own identities and conceptualizations of social justice influence what they chose to teach. In doing so, I hoped this research would be a step towards a more critical understanding of how

artist identities and positionalities influence the work that they do in the art classroom.

This research is in conversation with multicultural art education literature, because it is the body of literature that is most focused on issues of identity and social justice. However, like multicultural education in general, the goals and aims of multicultural art education are often uncertain and vague. In a general sense, art education seems to embrace a liberal/pluralistic (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2001) or human relations (Grant & Sleeter, 1999) approach to multiculturalism, where similarities are stressed over difference, and equality is an overarching theme (Chalmers, 1996; Collins & Sandell, 1992; Stuhr, P., Petrovich-Mwaniki, L, & Wasson, R, 1992). Despite the critiques of these goals (see Review of the Literature), the field of multiculturalism "has been the most effective means of placing large endeavors to study oppression into mainstream institutions" (Zita in Pagenhart, 1994, p. 177), and thus "examining the language and logic of multiculturalism, in order to revise and extend it, is fruitful" (Pagenhart, 1994, p. 177). Therefore, by interrogating the use of the terms 'identity' and 'social justice' within art educational practice and theory, this project seeks to critique and build upon the existing literature in multicultural art education.

Furthermore, within art education, many scholars in the field call for additional research on how the art teacher's "beliefs and preferences" (Bradley, 1990, p. 207) influence what the students learn. Grauer (2001) echoes this necessity by stating that, "in Canada, art education content cannot be defined by a national curriculum or common evaluation criteria. Provincial curricula range from current to almost non-existent and the level of implementation is haphazard at best" (p.78). This indicates

that "the content for teaching art is very much determined by the values, knowledge and expertise of the individual teacher...the teacher has the sole responsibility for developing and implementing the art curriculum" (Grauer, 2001, p. 78). This project addresses these concerns, and the manner in which the artist-in-the-classroom's unique understandings, conceptualizations, and teachings about issues of social justice and identity influence what the students are exposed to and taught about in the art classroom.

Finally, this research reads existing multicultural art education literature through queer and poststructuralist feminist theoretical perspectives. As elucidated in the Theoretical Frameworks chapter, this unique lens allows for the possibility of troubling norms, collapsing binaries, and destabilizing fixed selves through a poststructural examination of identity. Moreover, since "every absence constitutes a particular kind of presence" (Atkinson, 2002, p. 125), this theoretical lens also allows for a critical reading of what is not present in the literature and what is not mentioned in the interviews; Whose 'identity' is left out? What issues are not included under 'social justice'?

Purpose and Research Questions

Using this framework, my research examines how artists working in the classroom conceptualize 'identity' and 'social justice', and how these concepts are explained to and explored with the students through art. In order to address these concerns, my guiding research questions are:

1. How does the artist-in-residence conceptualize/define the terms 'social justice' and 'identity'?
2. Why is art used to critically engage the students in an exploration of 'identity' and 'social justice'?

3. How do norms and heteronorms function in these conceptualizations and explorations of 'identity' and 'social justice'?

Chapter 2 Theoretical Frameworks

Poststructural Feminist and Queer Theories

As an artist, I know that art can be a radically subversive tool for communication and expression; it can be used to push boundaries, bend rules and crumble assumptions. For some reason (naiveté? optimism?) before I dove into the art education literature I assumed that this transgressive creativity would be considered a positive attribute, and thus fostered within art education. I quickly discovered that this was not always the case. As such, I chose to use poststructuralist and queer theoretical frameworks in this research as a way to fill a number of the gaps in the art education literature (See Review of the Literature), which is dominated by modernist theories and humanist sentiments. Unlike these theories, poststructuralism and queer theory are not meant to provide ultimate conclusions, or finalized truths, and as Kumashiro (2002) aptly states, these theories "will not give *the* answer, the panacea, the best practice; rather, they will help us imagine different possibilities for working against oppression" (p.9). As such, I call upon poststructuralism and queer theories, not to find the *correct* way to do social justice art education, but rather I use these theories like a crowbar, to pry open and disrupt the knowledges and answers that are exposed in my research, to uncover the assumptions and silences that inevitably populate the literature, research practices and interviews that I conducted, and to generate the space for even *more* questions to be asked.

In particular, I rely upon poststructural notions of the subject, subjectivity and 'self' throughout this project. These notions are integral to how identity is theorized and critiqued throughout the research. Intrinsically linked to these notions are the concepts of discourse and language, knowledge production and silence, as well as foundationalism and 'unquestionable truths'. Queer theory contributes radically disruptive understandings of sex and gender, which I use to critically explore important intersections of sexuality and gender with race. These theories also provide the tools to problematize equity approaches to social justice, as well as to critically examine norms and heteronorms. Finally, poststructural feminism offers uniquely critical examinations of 'authenticity', 'experience' and 'empowerment' – all of which are popular concepts in the art education literature (See Review of the Literature).

I am drawn to and utilize these theories because of their deconstructive potential to trouble, disrupt, and offer alternative readings of what is considered normal, natural, and common sense in terms of social justice and identity (Butler, 1990; Kumashiro, 2002). I believe that these theories provide the lenses through which to gain a different, and hopefully valuable, perspective on what social justice means, and why identity is so important. Taken together, these queer and poststructural ideas have the potential to provide a focused and critical framework with which to examine these slippery and complex topics.

The Subject

As previously noted, poststructural and queer conceptualizations of the 'subject' are pivotal to the frameworks I utilize in this research. Breaking from humanist

assumptions of a stable, essential and coherent 'self', poststructuralism suggests a subject that is discursively produced (Butler, 1992). As Weedon (1987/97) notes, "poststructuralism proposes a subjectivity which is precarious, contradictory, and in process, constantly being reconstituted in discourse each time we think or speak" (p. 32). It is this reliance upon discourse that radically departs from humanist understandings of identity and the 'self', where one is "endowed with a will, a freedom, an intentionality which is then subsequently 'expressed' in language" (Butler in Adams St. Pierre, 2000, p. 500). Rather than a unified and already 'complete' self who exists prior to language, poststructuralism theorises a subjectivity that comes into existence only through language. As Adams St. Pierre (2000) notes, "the subject does not exist ahead of or outside of language, but is a dynamic, unstable effect of language/discourse and cultural practice" (p. 502). As such, language is reinterpreted as a powerful and constitutive force that is directly implicated in the formation of the subject.

Discourse and Identity

Illuminating the constructive power of discourse is Foucault's (1978) historical account of the term 'homosexual'. He explains that while sodomy had historically been classified as a category of forbidden acts, the person committing them "was nothing more than the juridical subject of them" (p. 43). However, with the advent of the term 'homosexual', "the nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form...nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality" (p. 43). Thus, rather

than simply describing a sexual act, the emergence of the word 'homosexual' in popular discourse in fact *constituted* a new categorization of human. As Foucault (1978) so eloquently puts it, "the sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (p. 43). This not only exemplifies the aforementioned discursive production of the subject, but also introduces the notion of identity as a product of language as well.

Silence and Ignorance

While this example illustrates how language plays a fundamental role in discourse, it is equally as important to look at how what remains unspoken or absent is equally as constitutive. Atkinson (2002) claims that "every absence constitutes a particular sort of presence" (p. 125), and as such, discourses can proliferate from what appears to be nothing. Providing the basis for this observation, Foucault (1978) states, "there is no binary distinction to be made between what one says and what one does not say" (p. 27). Citing eighteenth-century repression of sex talk as an example, he (Foucault, 1978) describes how despite this repressive force, a veritable explosion of discourses on sexuality proliferated in the 'absence' of sanctioned speech. He explains, "rather than a massive censorship, beginning with the verbal proprieties imposed by the Age of Reason, what was involved was a regulated and polymorphous incitement to discourse" (p. 34). Thus, in the silence, or absence of formal discourse, there exists an altogether different but equally forceful kind of 'presence'.

Building upon Foucault's analysis, Sedgwick (1990) looks at this notion in relation to 'coming out' and the closet. She asserts, "silence is rendered as pointed and

performative as speech" (p. 4), and moreover, "ignorance is as potent and as multiple a thing there as knowledge" (p. 4). As such, these gaps in language and discourse must be critically examined and their multiple effects accounted for. As Foucault (1978) states:

We must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorised...there is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses". (p. 27)

This analysis allows for a close reading and critique of what is said, and what is not said within the art education literature, and in terms of my data collection, within the artist interviews.

Unsettling the Foundations

Related to these notions of discourse (including discourses of silence) as constitutive is the notion of 'contingent foundations' (Butler, 1992). As noted, language does not simply describe a pre-existing 'reality', but actively works to construct and maintain it. If we, in a sense, "word the world" (Adams St. Pierre, 2000, p. 483), then it only follows that the 'world' we have so cleverly 'worded' is not necessarily a concrete, solid, singular 'reality'. Adams St. Pierre (2000) expands this notion, stating:

We have constructed the world as it is through language and cultural practice, and we can also deconstruct and reconstruct it. There are many structures that simply do not exist prior to naming and are not essential or absolute but are created and maintained every day by people. (p. 483)

Thus, the foundations that were considered to be so natural and absolute in humanist/structuralist thought are reconceptualized as man-made structures that are mixed, poured and set for stability and endurance. This is useful for my research in

terms of reconsidering how social justice and identity are constructed in the multicultural art education literature.

Critiquing the use of 'woman' as the unified subject of feminism, Butler (1992) exemplifies this notion of questioning foundational assumptions. She states, "foundations function as the unquestioned and the unquestionable within any theory" (p.7). As such, 'woman' as an unquestionable, 'unified subject' is a foundational premise that feminism (in its humanist manifestation) requires in order to function, since if there is no 'woman', there can be no (humanist) feminism. While this may not seem like such a bad thing, Butler (1992) states, "to establish a set of norms that are beyond power or force is itself a powerful and forceful conceptual practice that sublimates, disguises and extends its own power play through recourse to tropes of normative universality" (p.7). In other words, these foundations are not natural, which indicates that they are constructions that have set themselves up to appear unconstructed in order to avoid scrutiny, and in doing so, insidiously reproduce and perpetuate hegemonic systems of power. As previously noted, these poststructural reformulations of foundational tenets are important for interrogating the modernist/humanist assumptions that dominate the art education literature. Similarly, these theories are useful for considering how the artists in my sample conceptualize and teach about social justice and identity issues.

Destabilizing Sex, Gender and Sexuality

Taking these notions into account, a queer theoretical lens is important in crafting how I look at identity, particularly gender and sexuality, in an educational

setting, since it seeks to unsettle normative notions of sex and gender. By exposing sex to be a construct that is rendered prediscursive and therefore unconstructed and unquestionable, and explaining gender to be performatively constituted through a reiteration of norms, Butler (1990) unsettles the scientific 'truth' of sex. She (1993) rearticulates sex as:

an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time. It is not a simple fact or static condition of the body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialize 'sex' and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms. (pp. 1-2)

In other words, Butler troubles something that is considered to be a foundational truth – biological sex. Kumashiro (2002) backs this position by citing the lack of scientific accountability for all forms of life:

Science can normalize only certain ways of being, as when it talks about sex/gender in dichotomous terms, thus reinforcing the notion that there are only males and females and nothing else, despite that significant numbers of human beings and other living beings in the natural world are intersexed. (p.54)

Furthermore, Butler (1993) debunks any notion of sex as a passive descriptor that simply communicates biological reality, and claims, "the category of 'sex' is from the start, normative; it is what Foucault (1978) has called a 'regulatory ideal' ... 'sex' not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies that it governs" (p.1). Here, Butler articulates that the subject is discursively produced, and in that production, is regulated. In other words, the category of sex both produces and controls what is considered to be natural and human. These ideas are important for my project in that they offer a unique way of looking at identity that does not rely on scientific notions of 'normal' to explain gendered behavior, but rather interrogates

the very definition of normal, thus potentially opening up spaces for differences and shifting identities.

Intrinsically linked to these notions and important for the theorisation of identity, is the concept of gender. Warning against the assumption that gender is the cultural inscription of meaning on a biologically determined sex, Butler (1990) states, "gender is...the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed nature' or 'a natural sex' is produced and established as 'prediscursive', prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts" (p.11). Here, Butler explains how gender and sex share a symbiotic relationship wherein sex is rendered prediscursive, and gender is interpreted as its socially constructed (but naturally corresponding) effect. Furthermore, Butler (1990) unsettles the notion of a fixed gender by explaining it to be performative. She defines gender performativity as, "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (p.43). Here, both sex and gender are destabilised as biological 'truths', and any appearance as such is explained as the result of performative repetition resulting in normalisation.

Fundamentally linked to this notion of gender performativity is sexuality, which Butler also theorizes as performative. In *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, Foucault (1978) reveals how the binary identity categories of heterosexuality and homosexuality are not natural distinctions, but rather discursive productions. As previously noted, he uncovers how the modern conception of homosexuality was only brought into being through juridico-medical discourses that classified the 'homosexual' as a distinct 'type'

of human. Building upon this initial work, Butler (1991) contests the supposed 'naturalness' and 'normality' of heterosexuality by claiming it to be performative. She states, "the 'reality' of heterosexual identity is performatively constituted through an imitation that sets itself up as the origin and the ground of all imitations" (pg. 21). Furthermore, the impossibility of such a claim to originality is precisely what perpetuates the construct – "because it is bound to fail, and yet endeavours to succeed, the project of heterosexual identity is propelled into an endless repetition of itself" (Butler, 1991, pg. 21), and thus remains the naturalized norm.

This theoretical perspective on sex, gender and sexuality allows for a clear understanding of the discursive production of identities. By destabilizing notions of 'naturalness' and 'normal', this lens provides the potential for a much-needed examination of how current 'social justice' practices in multicultural art education may in fact reinscribe, rather than subvert, potentially harmful notions of normalcy. Furthermore, instead of simply identifying homophobia or sexism within art education, this queer-theoretical lens allows for an identification of heteronormativity as it may or may not function in the artists' conceptualizations of identity and social justice. Warner (1993) defines heteronormativity as the normalizing processes which support heterosexuality as "the elemental form of human association, as the very model of inter-gender relations, as the indivisible basis of all community, and as the means of reproduction without which society wouldn't exist" (p.xxi). Heteronormativity functions in the unspoken assumption that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual. Within art

education, the absence of mention or theorization around diverse sexualities (explored in the Review of the Literature) is one such example of this.

While these key queer-theoretical notions are instrumental to my project, which studies artists who deal with issues of identity and social justice within an educational system, they must also be combined with an analysis of other intersections of identity.

Sedgwick (1990, in Quinlivan & Town, 1999) explains,

To be inclusive of the multiple possibilities provided through interplays between gender, culture, ethnicity, sexuality, and class, we must reject constraining identities and develop strategies to deconstruct the operation of binary systems of thought. (pg.511)

Here, the aforementioned notions of gender and sexual identity are applied to intersectionalities of culture, ethnicity, and class. Sedgwick suggests the necessity of moving beyond binary discourses that only serve to re-centre the norms (of sexuality and gender, and of race, class, ability, etc.) Echoing these sentiments, Kumashiro (2001) states, "queer movements that are ONLY about sexuality risk complying with other oppressions and excluding their own margins" (p.5). As stated earlier, the complexities of multi-faceted identities are rarely theorized in the existing art education research, thus intersectionality is a key concept in my queer lens, particularly when it comes to examining how the artists engage in the discussion of identity and social justice.

Problematizing Equity

When dealing with intersecting and varying subject positions and identities, it is easy to slip into the civil rights discourses of equality. Summarizing such a discourse, Loutzenheiser (2003) states, "if equal protections are offered to all groups then

everyone will be treated the same" (p.150), and furthermore, "this sameness would be fair and just" (p.150). A poststructural feminist and queer theoretical framework allows a problematization of such equity approaches to social justice and inclusion that are evidenced in the art education literature (see Review of the Literature), as well as commonly enacted by schools seeking to address the problem of homophobia (Quinlivan & Town, 1999). Bryson and De Castell (1997) define 'equity' as:

A term of concealment...it announces the right to be or to become like the idealized subject of human rights; it re-asserts traditional rules, roles, and relations by announcing the right of nondominant, marginalized persons to assume the position of dominance. (p. 87)

Here, Bryson and De Castell problematize equity as a structural tool to re-assert the norm, while 'allowing' the marginalized to attempt, and always essentially fail at becoming *like* the norm. Illuminating calls for equity even further, Loutzenheiser (2003) asserts, "civil rights discourse such as this, assumes a desire for assimilation (and therefore) sameness" (p.150). Consequently, the potential for real systemic change can not reside solely within equity approaches to social justice, since 'equity' represents an attempt to increase the power of the oppressed, without relinquishing the power or troubling the (normalized) position of the privileged.

Troubling 'Normal', 'Natural' and 'Common Sense'

Examining what is considered 'normal', 'natural', and 'common sense' is an essential component of my theoretical framework. As previously mentioned, queer theory suggests a mutually reinforcing relationship, wherein the norm cannot exist without that which is abnormal, and vice versa. Sedgwick (1990, in Quinlivan & Town, 1999) explains; "the normality of heterosexuality is maintained in relation to the

abnormality of same-sex desire and conversely homosexuality is framed as abnormal in relation to the heterosexual norm" (pg. 511). This implies that ascription to a sexual identity, even a so-called subversive one in fact constitutes and reinforces what Butler (1990) refers to as the 'heterosexual matrix'. Instead of concentrating on those who are considered 'other', unnatural, and abnormal, Butler's ideas allow a refocusing of our critical lenses on precisely that which appears to be natural, normal, and unconstructed. This shift offers an analysis that can potentially work to destabilize the norm, and unsettle assumptions that surround issues of identity. By employing a queer theoretical perspective in my research, I critically examine both how the artist conceptualizes 'identity' (including gender and sexual identities), as well as how the artist then encourages the youth to think about gender and sexual identities through art.

Mimi Orner (1992) calls for a similar shift in focus through the problematization of "assumptions regarding what it means to be a student and/or youth" (p.74), stating, "the time has come to listen to those who have been asking others to speak" (p.88). This short sentence articulates a feminist poststructuralist desire to, in a sense, turn the camera around and look at *who* is doing the filming, and what is going on *behind* the scenes. In other words, in order to work against oppression Orner wants to "denaturalize what has historically been constructed as 'natural', 'normal', 'seamless', 'real' and 'true'" (p.78).

Orner turns first to struggles over identity and offers a critical way to view the role that language and terminology play in these struggles. Like Butler, she stresses that identity monikers are not passive descriptors, and furthermore, "the meanings of

terms used to represent social groups which have historically been targets of oppression are continuously undergoing transformation in ways that render as violent and exclusionary any attempt to focus on a singular definition" (p.74). Here Orner warns against static, definitive identities that remain fixed, and explains that meanings "are constantly being renegotiated by groups acting strategically in specific social and historical contexts"(p.74). Instead of viewing this instability of identity as a problem, or site of dissonance, Orner insists that it is, in fact, a strength; "feminist poststructuralists regard the inability to fix our identities and to be known through them in any definite way as a powerful means through which we can 'denaturalize' ourselves and embrace change"(p.74). Here, Orner provides a new way of understanding the fluidity of identity. Orner's theorizing on the oppressive power of fixed identity labels, as well as her notions of problematizing 'natural' and 'normal' are instrumental for a critical examination of how the artists in my research sample socially locate themselves, as well as how they conceptualize identity in the classroom.

Conclusion

Queer and poststructural feminist theory provide the project with a much needed critical analysis of what would normally pass as either innocuous, or unquestionable in the field of art education. This theoretical perspective demands a troubling of the norms of sex, gender and sexuality; collapsing binaries such as male/female, black/white, and dominant/other; and destabilizing fixed gender, racial, cultural and sexual identities. Consequently, this framework also allows for an examination, and destabilization of the 'common sense' goals, and 'good intentions' of social justice in art

education through a critical analysis of 'authenticity', 'experience', and 'empowerment'.

This fusion of theoretical perspectives forms just the sort of contradictory and fragmented lens needed to contemplate identity and social justice through art.

Chapter 3 **Review of the Literature**

Introduction

The research that most closely aligns with this project can be found in multicultural art education - this is the body of literature that focuses on issues of identity and social justice within art education. However, before I review the relevant literature in this field, I believe it is important to briefly situate this work in the broader area of multicultural education. As such, this chapter begins with a brief outline of multicultural education followed by a poststructuralist feminist and queer critique of the relevant literature in multicultural art education.

Multicultural Education

Stemming from the civil rights and early feminist movements in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, and to some extent, Canada, multicultural education was primarily concerned with eradicating discrimination and prejudice in schools (Adejumo, 2002), and providing equal opportunity for learning to all students, regardless of race or ethnicity. Within Canada in particular, increased immigration, and the threat of French separation led to the 1971 Multiculturalism Policy of Canada, which was implemented to ensure equality for all citizens, regardless of their race, ethnicity, culture, language or

religious affiliation. However, because education is a provincial responsibility the implementation of a multicultural curriculum and even the distribution of multicultural programs has and continues to be sporadic in Canada (Ghosh, 2002, p. 25).

Despite this lack of consistent implementation, many different forms of multicultural education do exist in both American and Canadian classrooms. Banks (2003) explains that today, multicultural education is at least three things; "an idea or concept, an educational reform movement, and a process" (p.3). He argues that multiculturalism endeavors to deal with "increasing racial, ethnic, and language diversity" (Banks, 2002, p.ix) within schools, and that all students, regardless of race, class, gender, or ethnicity, should experience equal opportunities to learn in school (Banks, 2003).

Testament to the diversity of approaches to multicultural education, Steinberg and Kincheloe (2001) outline a continuum of five different positions they have found to emerge from public discourse about the topic; conservative multiculturalism (monoculturalism); liberal multiculturalism; pluralist multiculturalism; left-essentialist multiculturalism; and critical multiculturalism. Ranging from the assimilationist slant of conservative multiculturalism, to the mainstream, pluralist view of equal-but-different, and ending with the critical examination of power and oppression, these approaches differ greatly; however, they are in no way mutually exclusive.

While the most common form of multiculturalism is pluralist (Steinberg and Kincheloe, 2001), many educators utilize a fusion of these approaches in an effort to foster a multicultural classroom and curriculum. Pluralist multiculturalism represents

the middle ground of the continuum, and shares many of the values of a more liberal approach. Both share an emphasis on the "natural equality and common humanity of individuals from diverse race, class, and gender groups" (Steinberg and Kincheloe, 2001, p.3). However, a pluralist view also acknowledges and stresses the importance of difference within these categories. Furthermore, a pluralist approach advocates for the study of various different groups, and promotes pride in individual group heritage. It is important to note that neither liberal, nor pluralist approaches to multicultural education engage with the concepts of power or oppression (Steinberg and Kincheloe, 2001).

Without belittling or disregarding the importance of such approaches to multiculturalism, it is essential to examine the assumptions and potential pitfalls that are inevitably present. Within all of the above approaches, there seems to be an assumption that membership in racial, cultural, ethnic, class and gender groups is fixed and unchanging. This can be seen as a problem because it essentializes group members, and only engages with a singular aspect of what is, in reality, a complex, fluid, and intersecting matrix of multiple and shifting identities. Similarly, in failing to address issues of power and oppression, mainstream multiculturalisms have the potential to perpetuate the very system they purport to subvert. Articulating this criticism, Bannerji (2000) states, "speaking here of culture without addressing power relations displaces and trivializes deep contradictions. It is a reductionism that hides the social relations of domination that continually create 'difference' as inferior and thus signifies continuing relations of antagonism" (p. 97). Thus, mainstream approaches to

multiculturalism, while possessing the potential, and perhaps intention, to foster acceptance, understanding, and equality, must be critically examined, and continually altered in order to avoid perpetuating the oppressive structures they seek to resist.

Multicultural Art Education

Troubling the Canon

Branching off from multicultural education is multicultural art education. Desai (2003) suggests that, within art education multiculturalism has "led educators to question dominant assumptions regarding art and challenged its relationship to a 'homogeneous American culture'" (p.148). Thus, in the name of multiculturalism, art teachers began to challenge the canon, and question what had, until then, been considered common sensical assumptions, such as: What/Who defines art? Who are considered artists? Whose art is most valued? Who is remembered in art history? Why? (Desai, 2003; Chalmers, 1996; Adejumo, 2002). These challenges are important because they troubled an until-then unquestionable, hegemonic, ethnocentric, racist, sexist history of what was considered 'art' (Chalmers, 1992). Chalmers (1992) argues that art educators are vulnerable to these powerful and ingrained traditions in art education, and suggests that "we all need to examine our own beliefs and values so that we can effect change in the ways we teach art (p.142). Thus, it is argued that by challenging traditional notions of 'good art' and through critical self-reflection, one can potentially begin to effect change. These ideas open up space for my research in that the project analyzes how the artists engage in such critical self-reflection, and how they perceive their own identities to have an impact (or not) on the work they do in the

classroom.

While troubling the canon of 'art' is a commonality that links the many disparate streams of multicultural art education, there is no singular explanation or definition for this specialized field. Rather an assortment of sometimes contradictory and conflicting, but always well-intentioned goals are what make up the literature in multicultural art education. Desai (2000) claims that a primary concern of multicultural art education is "to provide accurate and authentic representations of the art of racially and ethnically marginalized groups in the United States and of subordinate cultures around the world" (p. 114). Chalmers (1996), however, asserts that multicultural art education exists to prepare all students, regardless of ethnicity or other differences, to live in an "increasingly pluralistic society" (p.5). In general, however, multicultural art education brings with it the goals of equality, liberty and social justice for all students through art (Chalmers, 1996; Adejumo 2002; Stuhr et al., 1992).

Despite these different goals and desired outcomes, art education echoes multicultural education in that the most common approach is pluralist. Collins and Sandell (1992) state,

Most multiculturalists in art education subscribe to pluralism – not only as an accurate description of 'what is', but as a prescription for liberation and a model for teaching about art from other than the dominant culture's point of view. (p.8)

Chalmers (1996), a major proponent for the pluralistic approach to art education, argues that in order to combat prejudice and discrimination, multicultural art education must attempt to use art as a common denominator that has the ability to transcend racial, ethnic and cultural divides. He (1996) claims:

It is possible to implement an approach to art education that respects differences and enhances shared needs...in a multicultural society, we sometimes have to dig for similarities. By respecting our differences and by celebrating what we have in common, we who make up this culturally diverse society can hold it together. (p.2)

While this notion of finding commonality amongst difference is a valuable one, it is also important to acknowledge that difference is often an essential part of our identities. By glossing over difference in favour of similarity, Chalmers risks creating an assimilationist project wherein multiculturalism becomes a synonym for 'melting pot'. Bolstering his point, Chalmers (1996) states:

We may be from different ethnic groups and have different social and economic backgrounds, religions, genders, ages, occupations, sexual orientations, and so on, but in our reasons for making art, for exhibiting and using art, there is much that unites us. (pp. 3-4)

At the same time as acknowledging the vast number of differences that exist between and amongst people and cultures, Chalmers again focuses on the common function of art to bridge cultural difference. While this is a valid and valuable point, there is a risk of simplifying or even nullifying the complex interplays of power and oppression that permeate society, and structure ethnic and cultural divides. Stuhr (1994) argues that with this approach, "meaningful and in-depth investigation into power negotiations and relationships are often sacrificed...conceptual conflict is ignored" (p.174). While it may be true that most cultures hold in common the creation of art (Chalmers, 1996), the purposes, forms, functions, and values attributed to it are directly linked to the intersecting complexities that are often cast off as 'differences' (Chalmers, 1996).

Empowerment and 'Authenticity'

Hand in hand with the multicultural notion of using the 'common denominator' of

art as bridge between cultures are the concepts of using art to 'give voice', and 'empower' all students. Stuhr et al. (1992) cite Sleeter's idea that students can be empowered in and through the educational process. They (Stuhr et al., 1992) explain, "effective multicultural curricula utilize the students' knowledge, experiences, skills, and values in the formation of learning and teaching activities...students become empowered by first recognizing and mobilizing what they bring to the educational process" (pp. 14-15). Similarly, Heck (2001) recalls Goldberg's notion that multicultural arts "empower students and teachers...[and] provide authentic cultural voices" (p.4). Even as these notions of 'empowerment' and 'authentic voice' are encouraging and may seem completely innocuous, they must also be looked at through a critical lens.

Ellsworth (1989) claims empowerment to be a potentially normalizing concept "which treats the symptoms but leaves the disease unnamed and untouched" (p.306). Furthermore, Gore (1992) explains, "the term 'empowerment' often does...presuppose (1) an agent of empowerment, (2) a notion of power as property, and (3) some kind of vision or desirable end state" (P. 56). These presuppositions are dangerous within multicultural art education, not only because they require fixed and stable identities, but also because they "perpetuate relations of domination" (Ellsworth, 1989, p.398). In the art classroom, this may become manifest in a teacher that 'knows' all there is to know about other cultures, and can, in fact, transfer this knowledge to the students.

Illustrating the potential for the perpetuation of 'relations of domination', Stuhr (1994) claims that often within art education,

a curriculum program is constructed and implemented, based on Western formal qualities of art and on adult role models from the contemporary

Western art world: critic, aesthetician, art historian, and artist...knowledge is controlled by the teacher, who dispenses information based on experts from the fine art disciplines. The knowledge that the students or the community may bring to the classroom and the consideration of diverse sociocultural art worlds is largely neglected. (p.172)

This example reveals that inherent in these presuppositions (and therefore in empowerment) are dualisms of knower/known, powerful/powerless, and normal/other. This is problematic because within multicultural art education, these dualisms have the potential to reinforce harmful binaries and maintain the very structures they seek to resist.

Similarly, calls for 'authentic' student voice (Heck, 2001) within art education must be critically examined. Orner (1992) asserts such calls are discourses that "ignore the shifting identities, unconscious processes, pleasures and desires not only of students, but of teachers, administrators and researchers as well" (p.79). Considering this, the call for 'authentic student voice' within multicultural art education can be dangerous because the reality of multiple/intersecting identities and voices is lost, leaving only a monolithic and fixed voice that is deemed to be authentic, and therefore representative of an entire (fixed) culture. The danger here is that 'culture' and 'identity' are understood in stable and fixed terms, allowing little or no room for shifting, changing, or intersecting identities, and in fact, leaving greater norms untroubled and intact.

Furthermore, the call for students to speak 'authentically' of their own cultures and personal experiences "precludes critical examination of the workings of the ideological system itself, its categories of representation...its premises about what these

categories mean and how they operate, its notions of subjects, origin, and cause” (Scott, 1992, p.25). Here, Scott argues that the use of student’s personal experiences (for example, asking immigrant students to share their ‘arrival’ stories in art class) can serve to individualize experiences of racism and exclusion, thus drawing attention away from the systemic nature of the problem, and making it the burden of a sole person, or group of people. Arguing this point further, Scott (1992) states:

When experience is taken as the origin of knowledge, the vision of the individual subject...becomes the bedrock of evidence upon which explanation is built. Questions about the constructed nature of experience, about how subjects are constituted as different in the first place, about how one’s vision is structured, about language (or discourse) and history – are left aside. (p. 25)

In other words, Scott fears that the act of making individual voices or experiences heard renders individual oppressions visible, but simultaneously forecloses any critical examination of the oppressive discourses themselves. This indicates that instead of a bridge towards in-depth analysis of oppressive discourses, these discourses are in fact rendered even more invisible, and therefore insidious. Within the art classroom, this may manifest itself in activities where students of colour and immigrant students are encouraged to share their ‘stories’ or pieces of their ‘culture’, while whiteness and ‘Canadian-ness’ remain the uninterrogated and invisible norms.

Along with ‘authentic voice’, multicultural art education risks being complicit in reproducing the illusion of ‘authentic’ culture. As Desai (2000) points out, “one of the assumptions underlying the display of objects in [major art galleries and museums] is that of authenticity and originality” (p.121). Following from this assumption of authenticity and legitimization, most of the commercially available multicultural art

education curriculum resource packets contain only works from mainstream museums and galleries (Desai, 2000). This indicates that despite multicultural art education's stated desire to represent varied and diverse art forms, it can be argued that only those which are deemed 'authentic' by the major Western museums and galleries are legitimized and shown. This uncritical reproduction of Western notions of authenticity and art inadvertently maintains cultural hegemony, and thus "art forms and artists from diverse sociocultural groups that are incompatible with the loci of Western art forms are rarely discussed" (Stuhr, 1994, p.173). In other words, the hegemony of Western art will not be truly disrupted until multicultural art education can move beyond Western conceptions of what is considered to be authentic art.

Art, Social Justice and Change

The notion of art for social justice, change and/or action is also a key theme found in the multicultural art education literature. Implementation of a culturally diverse art curriculum that represents the ways-of-life and cultures of minorities is lauded to have "life-enhancing impacts on students, such as improved social and cultural awareness and enhanced ability to make informed decisions in the process of social action" (Banks, 1989, in Adejumo, 2002, p.34). Chalmers (1996) sums up the goals of multicultural art education:

The chief aims of art education in a multicultural society should be to foster an understanding of art from a variety of cultures, to enhance understanding for other cultures, to demonstrate for students that art is an important part of all human activity, *and to promote social change.* (p.9, emphasis added)

Here, art is advocated not only as a method for bridging understanding amongst and

between diverse multicultural societies but also as a unifying activity engaged in by all cultures to promote and enact social change.

This rather uncritical affirmation of art education's ability to enact social change is echoed throughout the multicultural art education literature. The focus predominantly remains on 'other' cultures without being accompanied by a troubling of normative culture; the terms 'social justice' and 'social change' are not clearly defined within the literature; and issues such as access to arts and arts education do not appear to be adequately theorized or considered in these claims. In general, much of the literature does, however, agree that changes in the individual imagination are the precursors to changes in society at large (Lowe, 2001; Chalmers, 1996; Heck, 2001; Krensky, 2001; Gasman & Anderson-Thompkins, 2003). Moreover, the arts are credited with providing the opportunity and space in which to express this imagining, and therefore to communicate and initiate change. Dewey (1934, in Krensky, 2001) states, "only imaginative vision elicits the possibilities that are interwoven within the texture of the actual" (p. 358). Building on this theory, it is suggested that the arts create a "possible world that breaks down barriers and allows young people to name themselves, envision alternative realities, and engage in remaking their worlds" (Dewey, 1934; Greene, 1995; Purpel, 1989, in Krensky, 2001, p. 358). This almost supernatural ability invested in the arts to initiate and enact change can be summed up in Heck's (2001) claims that the arts "empower students and teachers... provide authentic cultural voices... transform monoculturalism and realize economic, educational, political, and social equity, pluralism, and justice" (pp.4-7).

While the capabilities for change and the powers for social justice being attributed to art education are deeply encouraging and inspirational, critical analysis is essential in order to interrogate and further push the possibilities of art education. Heck (2001) explains, "the arts not only have the power to transform the creator of the artistic works but also transform the larger social context within which the creator and the works exist" (pp. 355-356). This vision is attractive; however, it is important to remember that, "art and art education are enmeshed in the social fabric and subject to the entire gamut of socio-economic and political pressures" (Cary, 1998, p.64). Put simply, the arts still exist in this world and within discourse, and as such, "art and art instruction provide effective means of reproducing the various asymmetries of the socio-political hierarchy and sustaining the conditions of hegemony" (Cary, 1998, p.64). This indicates that they cannot be thought of as a neutral yet fertile ground for untainted imaginings. The subjects who utilize the arts are discursively produced and the arts exist within discourse. Therefore any art education practice that focuses solely on the subject and their experiences within the arts risks overlooking the deeper, systemic workings behind how the subject is produced in the first place. Thus, the greater norms and structures are left untroubled and, in fact, the 'realities' and 'worlds' they sought to transform are reproduced. Put simply, art and art education do have powerful potential for inspiring change, however; if taken/taught uncritically, the arts like any other discourse, risk reproducing that which they aim to subvert. My research fills this lack, as it *critically* examines how artists conceptualize notions of identity and social justice, thus analysing their ideas and actions to understand how they are

potentially both subversive and oppressive.

Sexuality and Art Education?

Along with uncritically lauding the transformative powers of art and art education, the literature fails to discuss *who* multicultural art education is for and about. Within a field of study that so boisterously claims to celebrate diversity and pluralism (Chalmers, 1996), the absence of consideration for diverse sexual identities is glaring. In explaining the scope of multiculturalism in art, Chalmers (1996) states, "multiculturalism means acknowledging more than just ethnic differences. Differences in gender, religion, sexual orientation, social class, economic status, language, age, and physical ability are also cultural factors to be considered, respected and celebrated" (p.4). Though 'sexual orientation' is given cursory mention throughout Chalmers' (1996) book *Celebrating Pluralism: Art, Education, and Cultural Diversity*, and in other multicultural art education texts (Chalmers, 1992; Garber, 1990), there is very little literature that actually does address sexuality. Desai (2003) observes:

To simply name sexual orientation as one among other discourses and not discuss the complex ways it intersects with race, ethnicity, gender, and social class in particular historical and geographic locations is what de Lauretis (1991) in a different context called a 'constructed silence'. (p.153)

This 'constructed silence' is not passive, but rather constitutive of the heteronormativity that pervades multicultural art education. Desai (2003) suggests that multicultural art education "takes for granted heterosexuality as the unquestioned, naturalized, and universal culture" (p. 148). By listening to both what the artists say, and what they do not say, as well as who their work addresses and does not address, my research attempts to break this constructed silence and to generate some discourse centring on

heteronormativity and how it functions in and through the artist in the art classroom.

Stressing the importance of considering sexuality in research, Sedgwick (1990) argues, "an understanding of virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must be, not merely incomplete, but damaged in its central substance to the degree that it does not incorporate a critical analysis of modern homo/heterosexual definition" (p.1). However, as explained by Loutzenheiser and MacIntosh (2004), "queer citizenship is not part of multicultural or anti-racist teaching as it has been popularly constructed" (p.153). As stated earlier, attempts to fill this gap in the literature are few and far between (Honeychurch, 1995; Lampela, 2001; Lampela & Check, 2003; Check, 2004; Desai 2003), and as such, are important contributions that should be carefully considered and built upon. In its use of a queer theoretical perspective, and consideration for multiple and shifting identities (including sexuality) my research attempts to both incorporate and extend these key writings in multicultural art education. For the most part, this literature advocates and offers strategies for the inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) issues in the existing art education curriculum (Honeychurch, 1995; Lampela, 2001, Check, 2004; Lampela and Check, 2003). The justification for this inclusion is threefold: to revisit and rewrite the history of art to include the sexual diversity of artists, to provide authentic and real representations of GLBT lives in the curriculum, and to make GLBT teachers, youth, and artists feel comfortable (read as normal), acknowledged and accepted.

Inclusion

Making a case for including sexual orientation in the history of art, Lampela

(2001) argues "for centuries information about the sexual diversity of artists who were lesbian or gay has been hidden from the average person" (p.146). She observes, "unless one spent time researching the lives of individual artists such as Michelangelo, Caravaggio, Bonheur, and Brooks, one would not know that these artists had romantic attractions for members of the same sex" (p. 147). Lampela (2001) claims that because the sexual identity of artists is not openly discussed in art education classrooms, the assumption of heterosexuality is maintained. Honeychurch (1995) similarly claims that art history has ignored the sexual orientation of queer artists, and where this was not possible, marginalized or excluded their work. He argues that GLBT artists were either omitted from art history, or subjected to secrecy and distortion regarding their lives, and often, the content of their art (Honeychurch, 1995). In order to avoid stigmatization, exclusion, and marginalization in the art world, Honeychurch (1995) argues that many GLBT artists may have "endeavoured to pass as heterosexual, avoiding completely the subject of sexual diversity"(Honeychurch, 1995, p. 215).

While these omissions are glaring, and do indeed generate social impact (such as the normalization of heterosexuality in the art world), the only step toward reparation offered by the literature is the inclusion of GLBT artists in the art education curriculum. Lampela (2001) claims that one way of acknowledging diverse sexualities is to recognize the contributions of lesbian and gay artists, another way is for instructors to "include information about lesbian and gay issues in their courses" (Lampela, 2003, p.93). Similarly, Gude (2003) suggests;

The import of introducing students to artists like Benning and Wojnarowicz within the context of the students' own explorations of

identity and agency is that all students learn to see queer artists, not merely as marginalized victims for whom we should feel compassion, but as heroic exemplars, role models for all kids coming to terms with the potentials and problems of life... (p.85)

Thus, the literature advocates that exposing students to queer artists through inclusion in the curriculum can be a positive step towards an inclusive classroom.

Problematizing Inclusion

Inserting the GLBT version of art history into the already-established canon can be a powerful tool for drawing attention to assumptions and silences within a heteronormative discourse; however, it can also be an assimilationist move that inadvertently reinforces the (hetero)norm. Britzman (1998) aptly describes the plea for inclusion as a call for the addition of 'marginalized voices' to be added to the already crowded curriculum. She claims, "pedagogies of inclusion, and the tolerance that supposedly follows, may in actuality produce the grounds of normalization" (p.87). Furthermore, "lived at the level of conceptual needs, such hopes are able to offer only the stingy subject positions of the tolerant normal, and the tolerated subaltern" (Britzman, 1998, p.87). Britzman articulates how the strategy to include GLBT artists in the art education curriculum may, in fact, produce and reinforce the exclusion it is trying to remedy. She explains how inclusion does not work to trouble what is already there and considered normal, but instead solidifies a binary between the 'tolerant normal' and the 'tolerated' other. In this sense, a pedagogy of inclusion serves only to reproduce uneven power relations in an already oppressive framework. This provides the opportunity for my research to interrogate the norms of heterosexuality that may be present within art education practices, and to queer the research process to critically

examine not what is considered 'other', but what is considered 'normal' in terms of sexual identity.

Linked to these ideas, Luhmann (1998) explains how inclusion as a remedy against the injurious effects of representational absence, "is grounded in a set of assumptions common to lesbian and gay politics that follows from the notion that homophobia is little more than a problem of representation, an effect of lacking or distorted images of lesbians and gays" (p.145). As such, the 'solution' to this 'problem' is to provide accurate and authentic images and accounts of GLBT lives, and thus teach heterosexuals how to accept those who are different from them (read as different from normal, or in other words, abnormal). Far from solving any 'problem', this strategy risks solidifying an 'us versus them' dichotomy, and reinforcing so-called 'normal' identity against the abnormal other.

Within the art classroom, this strategy is used not only for 'othered' sexualities, but also cultures and ethnicities. Rather than its intended goal of inclusion, this strategy may actually further isolate and marginalize those youth or teachers who identify as queer (or of colour, or both), since heteronormativity (and whiteness) is not challenged, but remains a stable, naturalized identity. The dominant/subordinant, normal/abnormal binaries remain untroubled through this inclusion, thus raising awareness about GLBT identities, but doing nothing to trouble heterosexual identities. Loutzenheiser (2003) refers to this as an "add in and stir pedagogy" (p.162), wherein content is added to be 'inclusive', however "the end result of this is often an Othering which separates out, but does not complicate" (Loutzenheiser, 2003, p.162). As such,

inclusion or 'add and stir' seeks to expand, rather than trouble the definition of normal, thus leaving the structures and processes that work to normalize some and marginalize others untouched and intact.

A deeper understanding of *how* and *why* inclusion fails to interrogate the hidden processes of normalization can be found in Scott's (1992) theorizing of experience. Scott (1992) argues that inclusion relies on the authentic experience of the other to inform and enlarge a limited and skewed history. She posits:

The challenge to normative history has been described, in terms of conventional historical understandings of evidence, as an enlargement of the picture, a corrective to oversights resulting from inaccurate or incomplete vision, and it has rested its claims to legitimacy on the authority of experience, the direct experience of others, as well as the historian who learns to see and illuminate the lives of those others in his or her texts. (p.29)

She explains how experience is given the status of incontestable truth, because "what could be truer, after all, than a subject's own account of what he or she has lived through" (Scott, 1992, p. 24)? This technique resonates with the previously mentioned literature in multicultural art education that calls for authentic representation in order to fill the gap in art history and curriculum. However, as already stated, Scott (1992) argues that this focus on a subject's personal experience "precludes critical examination of the workings of the ideological system itself, its categories of representation...its premises about what these categories mean and how they operate, its notions of subjects, origin, and cause"(p.25). When applied to art education, this indicates that the inclusion of GLBT artists by focussing on 'authentic' representation in the curriculum has a strong potential to, in fact, further articulate the hetero/homo binary, thus

solidifying the dichotomy of normal and other. Despite its liberatory intentions, when looked at through a queer lens this tactic of GLBT inclusion effectively forecloses any attempt to examine, or even consider the ideological systems and discourses that constitute and situate subjects as 'normal' and 'other' in the first place.

Turning the Tables (Troubling the Norm)

As the main strategy offered to combat homophobia, heterosexism, and silence within the art education curriculum, inclusion leaves much to be desired. It is in this area that my research contributes. By using queer theory to, in a sense, shift the focus, this project seeks to examine how conceptions of 'normal' work to signify 'other', and how silence in the art classroom is never passive or neutral. Kumashiro (2002) argues:

Oppression consists not only of the marginalizing of the Other; it also consists of the privileging of the 'normal.' By focusing on the negative experiences of the Other this approach implies that the Other is the problem: without the Other, schools would not be oppressing anyone.
(p.37)

Kumashiro articulates the importance of troubling precisely that which appears to be normal and natural, rather than constantly focusing on the other. In the art classroom this might mean interrogating the constructed nature of heterosexual identity, rather than simply inviting homosexuality to sit uneasily beside the steady (hetero)norm. Incorporating these ideas, Gude (2003) suggests, "good art projects, like much good contemporary art, will encourage the reconsideration of our notions of 'natural' or 'normal' – learning to see these received notions as socially constructed through complex layerings of meanings and metaphors" (p.75). While these notions of troubling 'normal' are briefly mentioned in the art education literature, much more research must

be done in order to establish this as a practical tactic for enacting social justice in the art room. As previously stated, this is where my research engages with and extends the discussion through an interrogation of what 'normal' means and how it is constructed through the artists conceptions of social justice and identity.

Missing Intersections

While research on sexual identity attempts to fill a gap in the multicultural art education literature, it is inevitable that other gaps will remain open. This raises the important question of who else is being left out of the discourse of multicultural art education? It is ironic that the multicultural art education literature that claims to work for diversity and understanding fails almost completely to acknowledge (beyond a token mention) sexual diversity. Conversely, the very limited art education literature that does deal with sexuality almost exclusively ignores intersections of sexual identity with race, ethnicity, and culture. Kumashiro (2001) states, "queer movements that are only about sexuality risk complying with other oppressions and excluding their own margins" (p.5). However, as Loutzenheiser and MacIntosh (2004) explain, "the queer body, in its racialized, class-based, ethnically diverse subjectivities, has few access points in this dialogue" (p. 153). In the single, existing article to employ a queer theoretical perspective and look at issues of race, ethnicity, and sexuality in art education, Desai (2003) argues:

This inclusion of sexuality in the art curricula suggests that homosexuality is the primary difference we are focusing on in art curriculum, which ignores the intersection of sexuality with race, ethnicity, social class, and gender. What it means to be African-American gay, lesbian, or bisexual is not considered nor are the differences among those categories. In other words, the difference between the experiences of African-American queers

to that of Mexican-American queers is also not considered. By privileging sexuality, what remains hidden is the intersection of race/ethnicity with sexuality, thereby maintaining the hegemony of white middle class identity. (p.154)

Put simply, the inclusion of GLBT issues in the multicultural art education curriculum as one among many differences does not necessarily guarantee discussion of the complex ways it always intersects with race, ethnicity, gender, social class, and all other positionalities.

Conclusion

With respect to the work in multicultural art education that I have outlined above, I am suggesting that a much more critical examination of identity and social justice is needed within art education. The notion of multicultural art education potentially providing the effective means of reproducing and sustaining the conditions of hegemony (Cary, 1998) is at the heart of this research. Since my research seeks to uncover how artists working in the classroom conceptualize 'identity' and 'social justice', and how these concepts are explained and explored with the students through art, it engages in an interesting dialogue with the existing multicultural art education literature. As illustrated, the literature often explicates the benefits of art education for working with, for example youth of colour (Gasman & Anderson-Thompkins, 2003): however there is no mention of analysis of intersections of race with class, gender, ability, or sexuality. Important questions have been left out of the literature, such as what is the definition of social justice? Social justice for whom? What is 'identity'? Why is it important? Who is being left out of this literature? Why? I argue that research must be done to problematize the above stated notions of art as the perfect tool for

initiating social justice with youth. My research examines the artist's role in the classroom, and how their opinions, ideas, and conceptualizations of social justice and identity impact on what students are taught about through art.

Chapter 4

Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter I introduce the epistemological foundation of my methodological framework. Following this, I outline the way in which I accessed the research participants and my justification and explication of the interview based research methods I employed. Finally I explain how I conceptualize reflexivity, and its influence on my work and my data analysis process.

Social Location and Reflexivity

Epistemological Foundations

My desire to engage in this project inevitably arises from many different places, and thus has many implications for the work. My personal experiences of growing up queer in a Catholic educational system that presented gender and sexual identities as fixed, stabilized categories that were "natural" and monolithic in meaning served as a backdrop for this work. These rigid representations of gender and sexual identities are partially responsible for my early interest and passion for art. I quickly discovered that art could, at times, offer a place to push boundaries, blur lines and creatively explore the unknown. In art, difference could be considered good.

As such, my desire to look at how artists in the classroom conceptualize social

justice and identity through art and art-making extended from my experiences as both an art student and later, an artist. Art school exposed me to postmodernist and feminist ideas as expressed through art and thus offered me radically different ways of thinking about the world. This initial introduction, albeit superficial and brief, to feminist and postmodernist thought, along with my early experiences with art, serves to inform the various ways in which I negotiate and view the world, and ultimately forms the epistemological foundations from which I began my research.

Situating myself as a researcher would be too easy if it involved only that. Situating myself in relation to the artists I researched is where things can start to get messy. Geiger (1990, in Wolf, 1996) explains, "our positionality is not fixed, but relational, a 'constantly moving context that constitutes our reality and the place from which values are interpreted and constructed'" (p.14). Therefore depending on the different social locations of the artists I interviewed, various aspects of my positionality moved to the forefront, thus creating a research environment of constantly shifting power dynamics that were negotiated along the way. Furthermore, a reflexive relationship with the artists called for an awareness of how "characteristics such as gender, race, class, age, sexuality, or able-bodiedness influence this relationship" (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p.121). This indicates that my own positionalities as a white, middle-class, 25-year-old, able-bodied, queer woman are deeply implicated in this research and thus needed to be accounted for and explored.

While sexuality and gender immediately come to mind when I think of my own positionality, Razack (2000) warns "being aware of my subject position means tracing

the hierarchies in which I am both subordinated and privileged" (p 40), and furthermore "our differences ... are as important as our similarities" (p.39). Thus, I am impelled to examine my own whiteness, class location, and able-bodiedness. These positionalities afford me unearned (and generally unacknowledged) privileges in my day-to-day life. I am in no way forced to look at my whiteness in a racialized way in my daily life, nor am I challenged to think about my class positioning, or my ability to physically and mentally manoeuvre through my environment with relative ease. This does not mean, however, that these positionalities are nullified or somehow unimportant. Contrarily, they serve to locate me as a researcher just as strongly and importantly as all other facets of my identity, thus making it imperative that I recognize how these intersectionalities complicate, shift, and generally affect how we experience the world. These are power positions that need to be acknowledged and negotiated in relation to the folks I researched, as well as the assumptions, observations and conclusions I make in my research.

As Parr (1998) explains, "we all have prior frameworks into which we fit, examine, and make sense of new information" (p.92). Though my sexuality was not likely the first thing that the artists noticed when I walked through the door, I did have to be critically aware of my epistemological foundations, and how my queer positioning was going to affect what I looked for, and what 'prior frameworks' I used in my research. Parr goes on to note "the application of theoretical perspectives can be experienced as either a sharpening sensitivity to research participants' voices, or as shaping and silencing these voices" (p.87). Thus, it was important to be aware that my

personal history and location, combined with my academic goals situated me in such a position that I had the power to either critically discern what the artist was really saying, or 'shape and silence' them by "presupposing the [artist's] situations" (Parr, 1998, p.91).

Access and Recruiting

As mentioned in the introduction, I interviewed six artists who were currently or had recently been involved in an artist residency that dealt with social justice and identity issues in schools. I initially gained access to these artists through volunteer and work experiences in the field of art education. My undergraduate training is in fine arts, and over the past couple of years I gained volunteer and work experience with a not-for-profit organization that advocates for artists in education. This organization put me in contact with many of the artists in the province who work in schools. Through professional development initiatives, conferences and residencies, I became aware of and gained access to the artists who engage with issues of identity and social justice work in schools. My research sample was limited to artists who live and work in or around this city, and as stated earlier, who were currently, or had recently completed an artist residency dealing with these issues. The artists that I invited to participate in this study were a diverse group spanning an array of artistic practices, and also ranging in ethnicity, gender, sexualities, and class (see Results for a detailed description of the participants).

As outlined in the Behavioural Research Ethics forms that were approved by the university, I sent potential participants a letter of initial contact (see appendix A) that

included an overview of the study and an invitation to participate in the research. They were asked to respond within one week of having received the letter, via e-mail or by phone, if they desired to participate in the research. The first six artists that responded are the artists who comprised my sample.

Data Collection

Interviews

After hearing back from the artists interested in participating, I arranged to meet with each of them (individually) in a convenient and quiet location that was conducive to conversation. For the most part, the interviews ended up happening at coffee shops or in outdoor locations such as parks. Before the first interview, each participant filled out a consent form (appendix B) thus allowing me to conduct and tape-record semi-structured interviews that were later transcribed verbatim. My initial plan had been to conduct three interviews each lasting about an hour with every participant. However, due to the open-ended nature of the questions, the interviews consistently went over-schedule and lasted about one and a half-hours. Consequently, I chose to conduct only two interviews with each participant. These were carried out over the course of two months with every participant, with an approximate span of two weeks between the first and second interviews. I found that this two week span provided an adequate amount of time for me to review and expand upon the themes that emerged in our first interview, as well as to incorporate some of the issues that I saw arising in interviews with the other participants.

I chose to interview my participants because I felt that it was the most efficient

method for obtaining the information I was seeking in this research. Interviews allowed for a discussion centred on the artists' thoughts and definitions of social justice and identity, which were essential for my analysis of the language and discourses they used in their conceptualizations of these terms. Furthermore, as the researcher, I was able to guide the interviews in order to address all of my research questions. Following Marshall and Rossman (1995), I attempted to make my interviews "much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories" (p.80). To foster this, I asked open-ended questions (see appendix C for sample interview guide) to help uncover the participant's perspectives and understandings, with the aim of respecting how the participants framed and structured their responses (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). Also, I employed the open-ended question format in order to allow for the participants to direct the interviews where-ever *they* deemed it appropriate, thus focussing on what was most important to *them* as participants, rather than myself as a researcher.

Non-verbal Cues

During the interviews I had intended on taking notes that described how the participant was communicating in non-verbal ways, through for example, body language, pacing of speech and tone of voice (Fontana and Frey, 2000). However, it quickly became apparent to me that maintaining eye contact with the speaking subject was essential to communicating my attentiveness, and thus the relevance of what they were saying. Any time spent jotting down notes served to disrupt the natural flow of our interview. Thus, following Marshall and Rossman (1999) who state, "learning about

society can be enhanced if we study not only what people say with their lips but also what their body movements reveal" (p 126), it became my habit to tape record or hand-write these observations directly after each interview.

Implicating Myself

Along with observations of how the research subject communicated through non-verbal means, I also kept track of my initial impressions of the interview; how I felt the interview had gone, what I felt was lacking, and so on. Most importantly I attempted to record how I, the researcher, had impacted on the interviews process (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). As noted by Fontana and Frey (2000), "interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results" (p.646). Thus, "each interview context is one of interaction and relation; the result is as much a product of this social dynamic as it is a product of accurate accounts and replies" (Fontana and Frey, 2000, p.647).

Consequently, it was essential that I acknowledge and be reflexive of my role in what was discussed and uncovered in each interview.

What really happened...

Despite my best intentions to be 'aware' of my positionalities and to curb any expectations I may have had, I found myself encountering many ethical issues throughout the data-collection process. Many of these situations are discussed in the Results chapter, however I will outline some related examples that have implications for methodology here.

Due to my aforementioned connection to many of these artists through previous

volunteer and work experiences, they were all cognisant of my identity as a queer person. While this does not in itself represent a methodological problem, I do believe that this knowledge had a certain impact on what the artists felt impelled (or obliged) to discuss with me. For example, Betty added 'heterosexual' to her list of positionalities when socially locating herself during our second interview (explored further in the Results chapter). While this may not seem particularly problematic, it is worth noting that Betty in no other way reflected on her heterosexuality. In fact, it was only after using myself as an example to illustrate what I meant when I asked her to socially locate herself, that Betty even mentioned her sexuality. I believe that in stating my positionality as 'queer', Betty likely felt impelled to identify as heterosexual. Based upon Betty's reticence up until that moment, I do not know if she would have considered her heterosexual positioning worthy of mentioning. This illustrates how my presence as the researcher may have directly impacted on what was brought up in the interviews.

In retrospect and flipping this dynamic around I found that I was inadvertently drawn to those in my study that identified as something other than heterosexual. Our shared positionality was something that I unconsciously assumed to be a point of connection. Both Thomas and Amir identified as queer, and I found myself extremely interested in how they negotiated and used this positionality in their school work. I had assumed that for any queer person working in a school environment, sexuality would be an issue of prime concern for any work they did with regards to social justice or identity, and therefore an integral part of their own identities that was of the utmost relevancy. However, as Wolf (1996) argues, "common and shared positions due to

race, class, gender, or nationality do not always, or do not necessarily, lead to common understandings" (p.14). While sexuality was indeed of prime concern to me as the researcher, I had to really struggle in order to comprehend what these queer artists were trying to tell me.

I realized that as the white, queer academic, I had not expected any other positionalities to be equal to or hold primacy over sexuality for someone who identified as queer. In my experience, my queerness had been instrumental to how I conceived of myself and how I approached issues of identity and social justice. This speaks to the un-marked status of my whiteness, and of how I had never had to deal with issues of racism or cultural bias. In fact, when Amir identified simply as an Ismaili Muslim man and Thomas pointedly asked to be described "firstly, as a black man, and then secondly, a gay black man" (Interview with Thomas, May 10, 2005), I almost thought I had heard them incorrectly. In both of these cases, they clearly foreground their cultural/racial identities at the expense of their sexualities. This drove home for me that even though the artists and I may share in common our 'queerness', I must be acutely aware that we likely do not experience this in the same way, nor are we likely to share common ideas, opinions or even experiences on the matter. As such, it was imperative that I work to comprehend how these artists conceive of their identities, and how they understand sexuality to be (or not be) a part of this. As Parr (1998) so aptly states, I needed to ensure that I heard the artist's own stories and not merely a reflection of my own.

All of the facets I have explored illustrate not only how my social location

affected my research, but also how my knowledge is inevitably situated and therefore partial. Haraway (1991) argues that while this critical situating of the researcher within the research and in relation to her subjects may seem to be narrowing and even obscuring (p.191), this is not the case. She contends that "the only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular" (p.196). This asserts the importance of the stated positionality of the researcher within queer, feminist research practices aspiring for a 'larger vision', or I would argue, a more complex and troubled account of what is being studied. By acknowledging an awareness of my epistemology and locating myself critically within my research process, I am not *limiting* myself, or the potential for my research to offer useful insight, rather I am offering a partial perspective, referred to by Haraway (1991) as "situated knowledge" (p.190). Haraway (1991) argues that "the knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and *therefore* able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another" (p.193). This asserts that partial perspective holds the possibility of furthering knowledge by offering a situated knowledge, a tiny piece of the puzzle that, when taken with other tiny pieces, serves to offer a potentially more complex and layered vision.

Data Analysis

Rather than using a computer program, I opted to manually code my data in hard copy. For the purposes of this research, I understood 'coding' to mean "a range of approaches that aid in the organization of, retrieval, and interpretation of data" (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p.27). The physical act of identifying and locating common themes

and unifying threads offered the opportunity to become familiar with and carefully reconsider what information my collected data actually contained. In this poststructural project, coding went beyond simple organization, and was used to "expand, transform, and reconceptualize data, opening up more diverse analytic possibilities" (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p29). Coffey and Atkinson (1996) explain that with the data complication technique, coding "is actually about going beyond the data, thinking creatively with the data, asking the data questions, and generating theories and frameworks" (p.30). Thus, I used this technique to read the data for silences and gaps – to in fact *identify what was not there and what remained unspoken*. Spring-boarding off coding and into data analysis and interpretation, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) echo Strauss in encouraging researchers to, "use our codings and categories to think with, and not remain anchored in the data alone" (p.49). This combination of data reduction and complication allowed for a queer and poststructural interaction and analysis of the data.

Acknowledging that data analysis is in fact an on-going process that occurs throughout the research (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998), there are certain things I had to be aware of at all times, not only during the specific data analysis stage. Stressing the importance of self-reflexivity in the data analysis stage, Mauthner and Doucet (1998) explain: "Reflexivity...means acknowledging the critical role we play in creating, interpreting and theorizing research data" (p. 121). In order to avoid simply fitting what the artists are saying into my own agenda (as illustrated with Amir and Thomas) and effectively silencing their voices, it was essential that I worked to actively listen to

what the artists were saying to me through the data. Mauthner and Doucet (1998) warn: "If we do not take the time and trouble to listen to our respondents, data analysis risks simply confirming what we already know" (pg.135).

Similarly, I worked to locate myself within the analysis process. Through critically locating myself, along with my theoretical perspectives, directly within the research, I strove to achieve a productive balance between the multiple voices and stories of each of the individuals I interviewed, my own voice as the researcher, and the voices and perspectives represented within the theories and frameworks I applied in my research (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998).

Conclusion

Along with a justification and outline of my research methodologies, this chapter covered my access to and contact with the research participants, as well as my methods for data analysis. Perhaps most significantly, however, this chapter set the foundation for a research project that is committed to a reflexive awareness of how my epistemological foundations, positionalities and power as a researcher are implicated in every aspect of the research process. The following chapters explore the results uncovered in this research project.

Chapter 5 **Artists, Identity and Social Justice**

Introduction

As noted in the methodology section, I conducted this research with six artists, Samia, Amir, Lauren, Kiki, Betty and Thomas. I invited these artists because they were

currently, or had in the past engaged in an artist residency dealing with social justice or identity issues. From these interviews, I have identified three main themes: (1) how the artists see themselves is influential for how they conceive of and teach about social justice and identity, (2) social justice and identity are both highly contested terms, with meanings that shift and vary from artist to artist and project to project, and; (3) art has the potential to offer different ways of broaching and exploring social justice and identity issues.

This chapter is organized in such a way as to first introduce the artists who participated in their own words. This self-representation is important to the research, because it is illustrative of how they identify, and what they feel is important about themselves in relation to the work they do. Their self- descriptions are interspersed with my observations and critiques regarding what they did and did not choose to disclose. Spring-boarding from these self-descriptions, I explore the first theme by examining how some of the artists choose to disclose their identities as an integral part of the work they do in the classroom, while others choose to keep certain things about themselves undisclosed. These observations are followed by a critical analysis of both disclosure and non-disclosure.

Secondly, this section explores what exactly the concepts of 'social justice' and 'identity' mean to these artists, followed by an exploration of what topics they choose to address in the classroom. The section begins with an examination and critique of the concepts of 'contemporary culture' and 'critical citizenship' as defined by the artists. Lastly, this chapter examines and critiques the methods used by the artists to decide

what social justice and identity topics should be addressed in the classroom. Chapter 6 provides an in-depth look at (and critique of) how the artists actually explored these issues through art.

In the theoretical frameworks section, it was noted that both poststructural feminist and queer-theoretical frameworks encourage an interrogation of what is considered normal in order to “think differently about that occurrence – to open up what seems *natural* to other possibilities” (Adams St. Pierre, 2000, p. 479). Thus, an analytical thread examining normative and heteronormative assumptions runs through each of the major themes outlined above.

The Implications of Identity

How the Artists Described Themselves

Samia describes herself as an installation artist who is “interested in the beautiful object that comes out of the merging or meeting of cultures” (Interview, April 29, 2005). She is one of the few who experienced no hesitation before locating herself; however her positionality is far from simple or straightforward. In response to my question, she quickly answers, “Okay, let’s see, I am a South Asian, of South Asian origin, Canadian citizen, born in England, and I’m an Ismaili Muslim, um, so that’s it, Muslim brown woman. Canadian. Muslim. Brown. Woman”. She answers with confidence and absolutely no hesitation, and consequently I find myself wondering about her silences and the spaces where she did not feel it necessary to identify. For example, she mentions her husband and children in our previous interview, thus casually establishing her sexuality and family situation to be normative. Similarly, class

was conspicuously absent from her list of identity monikers, which caused me to speculate that this was also likely a non-issue for her (read as her class status probably fell within the 'middle' range). These gaps are worth noting because silences are often as telling as actual statements in terms of social location.

An interesting contrast to Samia's confident self-identifying is Amir's reluctant and temporary positionings. Amir readily identified as a choral singer; however, when I pose to him the question of socially locating himself, I am met with a very long pause. When he finally does speak, it is for the purposes of establishing the temporal nature of this task. He states, "I have to remember that it's only for this research, I don't have to take that on..." (Interview, May 12, 2005). After another long silence, he haltingly states:

I guess, um (pause) in terms of this research, I would socially locate myself (pause) as (pause) a man of colour. (Pause) I would socially locate myself as an Ismaili Muslim. An Ismaili Muslim man (pause) with south Asian, having roots in India. (Pause) Living a Canadian lifestyle. Living in Canada. (Interview, May 12, 2005)

Minutes after this, when we have moved on to another question, Amir blurts out, "There's the queer aspect too, but for me that's not as important". This halting and hesitant manner of speaking is very uncharacteristic, as he had been very open and talkative throughout the entire first interview. This indicates that the question was very difficult for him to answer. Shedding some light onto his hesitation, Amir explains,

I am my own definition, or my own label if I have one. I am not an African, I am not an Indian. But I am an African, I am an Indian, I am a Muslim, I am queer, I am a singer, I am a conductor, I am so many things. (Interview, May 4, 2005)

This reveals that the multiple positionalities that he embodies are so contradictory,

complex and entwined with one another that the 'simple' matter of socially locating proves to be almost impossible for him. Amir does not see himself as fitting into any singular and separate category, and thus he has to struggle to create a satisfactory fusion of labels with which he can feel comfortable.

Showing no sign of Amir's hesitation or uncertainty, Lauren, a community video artist, answers my request for her to socially locate herself with ease. She readily identifies as a white, middle class woman, who is university educated, married, and has a child. She seems very confident in these assertions, and indicates that she feels they are important to acknowledge up front when working on a project in the classroom. She states, "I've got the spiel, right? That's part of my philosophy too, and that's how I would introduce myself, always" (Interview, May 16, 2005). This indicates that Lauren is aware that her own social locations may potentially affect what occurs in the classroom, thus it is important to her that these locations be revealed.

Though not as succinctly as Lauren, Kiki's reveals her social locations throughout both of our interviews. Kiki identifies as a mixed media artist currently working in film and installation. She identifies as an Asian woman, with a Japanese mother and a white father. However, her mother died when she was very young, so she grew up in what she termed, "a white, WASP-y family" (Interview, May 20, 2005). Despite this upbringing, she identifies as "neither white, nor wealthy" (Interview, Apr. 20, 2005), and as such, conceives of herself as a sort of paradox, where she is both, but at the same time neither. This indicates that, like Amir's, Kiki's positionalities are complex, and thus, her answers indicate trouble 'fitting in' to rigid identity categories. For

example, she can not easily locate herself in terms of race or class, as she sees herself as straddling various borders between and within those positionalities. Finally, Kiki inadvertently disclosed her positionality as a parent through frequent references to her young son; however, she made no clear identifications or references as to her sexuality.

From our first interview, I learn that Betty is a ceramic artist. She speaks of her Ukrainian family heritage, and its impact on her ceramic work, yet she does not reveal much else about her identity. When I directly ask her how she identifies, her initial response is to label herself as a cultural worker, and as someone who is interested in community and collective engagement. While this information is important for my research, I also need to uncover how Betty understands herself to be socially located. Consequently, I offer my own positionalities as an example to explain what I am looking for. After this, she finally states:

So I am female, I am middle aged, um, I am middle class, I am heterosexual, I am married, I have a child, I am a parent, um, I came from a working class background. Community has always been a major part of who I am, because of my upbringing in a small city in Saskatchewan, and, um, direct connections to the rural. So community is a major part of who I am in terms of how I socially locate myself.
(Interview, May 11, 2005)

While this provides me with the information I need, I have the feeling that this answer is based directly on the example that I provided. It seems as though Betty is telling me what she believes I want to hear, rather than what she truly thinks of her own positionality. Not only does her list almost perfectly mirror my own (in terms of the identity categories I chose to talk about), but her manner of speaking is inordinately fast and her movements nervous and jerky. Thus, her body language communicates a

sense of urgency, as though she wants to hurry through her reply, tell me what I want to hear, and move on to a different question. This is significant because it suggests that Betty is somehow uncomfortable with my line of inquiry – even though her positionalities fit within societal norms. After the interview I note in my reflections that while there is no way of knowing for sure, perhaps she felt uncomfortable with the notion of underscoring her own privilege.

Finally, Thomas has no problems or hesitations in identifying his social locations. As an artist, he works with photo-based imagery and text. However, he is very specific as to how he wants to be situated in this research. He explains, "I think I would like to be described as firstly, a black man, and then secondly, a gay black man, and an artist whose work is related to mediated images around identity, and current issues around race" (Interview, May 10, 2005). This reveals that race, gender, and sexuality are his primary identity monikers, with his identity as an artist also plays a major role in his self-conception of personal identity. However, Thomas' language also indicates an ability to separate and compartmentalize his various positionalities. Unlike Amir and Kiki, who struggle to find the 'right fit' in terms of identity labels, Thomas simply presents himself in separate incarnations – as though most of the time he is (or is seen as) a black man, and sometimes he is (or is seen as) a black, *gay* man. Though he fails to mention it when locating himself, it surfaces in our first interview that as well as being an exhibiting artist Thomas also has a full-time career, thus indicating his likely middle class status.

Teaching from the Personal

As noted earlier, the notion of choosing to open up in the classroom and share your identity and personal life experiences, or not, serves as a strong dividing line between these artists. Samia, Lauren, Kiki and Betty all share the desire to open up their personal lives in the classroom, whereas both Thomas and Amir exhibit hesitation and a reluctance to do so. In this section I outline the artists' techniques and justifications for opening up (or not) in the classroom, followed by a critique of these strategies.

Explaining her use of the personal in the classroom, Samia states, "So that's the key ingredient, you have to be completely honest, and completely honest from your experience and what you know" (Interview, May 12, 2005). Articulating this perspective further, she explains, "because I deal with social justice issues and I deal with issues of race and representation, voice, feminism, my life experience impacts directly on what I am able to deliver". Here, Samia describes how it is not only essential for her to be honest in the classroom, but also how her life experiences have a direct effect on what she feels capable of addressing while there. Thus, who she is and what she has experienced is going to greatly influence her teaching. Similarly, when I ask Kiki to define what social justice means for her, she states:

it's a really big term, and there are parts of it that each person feels more comfortable talking about, you know, it's kinda like, which part of your life experience have you experienced injustice in? Now if you've experienced some kind of injustice, then you start to be conscious of what social justice is. (Interview, April 20, 2005)

Again, this notion of using your own life experiences in order to deal with social justice

is also the focus of Kiki's definition. She introduces notions of personal experiences of injustice as entry points for understanding. Using the personal is highlighted as an integral component to being able to address and understand social justice and identity issues.

This resonates with Addison's (2005) assertion that "expression is often differentiated from other types of communication such as description or narration because it is associated exclusively with the maker's subjectivity, their inner world" (p. 21). In this sense, personal disclosure is understood as intrinsic to the art making process – and according to Samia and Kiki, especially when looking at social justice. The artists attribute many benefits to opening up their 'inner world' in the classroom, a major one being the students' perception of authenticity. Samia indicates that opening up allows for a certain 'realness', or honesty to occur in classroom interactions, and states, "I think one of the key elements is going up there in front of those kids, cause man they are wily, they spot it when you are lying, they know! So if you're talking shit that you don't believe, you've lost them" (Interview, May 12, 2005). As such, honesty, and speaking from one's own experience and truth are stressed as important means for doing social justice and identity work with the youth.

To this, Lauren contributes an explanation of how the students often feel more at ease when she relates what they address in class back to her own life, and experiences. She states:

Yeah, I talk about it [my personal life] all the time. I mean that's just part of the, it's part of my teaching style that I always try to find ways to relate to them, and so even if it's something that's totally, you know, a goofy, embarrassing story, I will tell them. (Interview, May 16, 2005)

Lauren illustrates how opening up her personal life through stories can potentially provide a means of relating with the students. Using a similar justification for opening up in the classroom, Betty explains how letting the students know she is a parent helps to foster a point of connection. She states:

I always tell them I am a parent. There's something about the age group that's particularly...I work primarily with elementary kids, so, I tell them more about who I am. So the whole parental piece seems to make, because there's that point, that access point for them, "oh, she's also a parent". (Interview, May 11, 2005)

For Betty, her status as a parent allows for a particular relationship to be formed with her younger students. By letting them in on her personal life, she is able to, what she later terms, "demystify the artist", and find some "common ground". These notions of relating to the students and putting them at ease through personal disclosure are significant because they illustrate the ways in which the artists use their own social locations as tools to aid them in the classroom discussions of social justice and identity.

To these ideas of 'authenticity' and 'points of connection', Kiki added:

[Opening up in the classroom] is quite risky behavior, because it's certainly not sanctioned in an academic setting. I just feel like when you do, when you can link it back to something personal, it has so much more meaning for them, because it's kind of like, if you show yourself as vulnerable, it's as like, it's okay to go there, it's okay to talk about this stuff. (Interview, May 20, 2005)

Therefore, according to Kiki, a component of opening up is sharing one's vulnerabilities, which in turn may allow for a deeper connection with the students, as well as an entry point into a discussion of social justice and identity issues. These notions of 'openness' align with Bradshaw's (2003) contention that "to move beyond tolerance and fully

embrace respect and inclusion, it is necessary to incorporate teachers' and students' identities in the art room" (p. 55). Thus, opening up in the classroom is uncovered as a tactic employed by the artists in an attempt to put the students at ease and create an atmosphere conducive to learning about social justice and identity issues through art.

Along with creating common ground with the students and providing entry points into a discussion of social justice and identity, many of the artists discuss the importance of opening up to provide different perspectives, experiences, and ways of being. This echoes Bradshaw's notions of identity in the classroom: "when an environment is devoid of the incorporation of personal identities and signifiers, it is next-to-impossible for children to construct or deconstruct their own identity because a framework does not exist in which to learn to do so" (p.55, In Lampela and Check, 2003). Thus, personal identities are considered essential for social justice work to ensue. In Samia's case, she uses her positionality as a brown, Muslim woman in order to open doors for students and show them that there can be multiple ways of being a brown, Muslim woman. She calls this 'role modeling', and relates an example from the classroom:

I've had classes where little brown girls, first of all cause I'm unusual, I'm not a traditional brown woman, and so for a lot of them, especially when you're coming from more traditional or restrained situations, it's kind of fascinating to see, you know, this woman with a nose ring and the long hair! Like she looks like she should be a certain way! And then she says the word shit! Or you know, whatever it is. (Interview, May 12, 2005)

In this way, Samia demonstrates how her very presence in the classroom, and her ability to 'be herself', or act how she normally would, provides a glimpse of an alternative way of being for the other brown students in the class.

Samia relates another story of how, during one of her residencies, she was approached by two girls, one Punjabi, and the other Orthodox Muslim. She states, "they needed to locate me in their world, right?" (Interview, May 12, 2005). She describes how the young girls "checked out her pedigree" by asking her whether or not she made roti and barotas. Samia explains how "that is one of those things that is the mark of a woman raised right, a brown woman raised right should make roti" and replies, "No actually, my barotas suck, but my husband makes great barotas" (Interview, May 12, 2005). Rather than simply answering yes or no, Samia uses this commonality with the students in a way that troubles their understandings of cultural and gender norms. Not only is Samia presenting an unconventional brown woman by being in the classroom, but by allowing this peek inside her personal life, she also disrupts conventional gender roles for these students.

Kiki relates similar stories about her experiences in the classroom, explaining how her presence provided an example of alternative ways of being. She states:

So I feel like my being there and being a woman is important. My being there and being Asian is important. My being there and not acting in the stereotypical ways assigned to Asian women is important. I am incredibly outspoken. You know, people get really riled up, people get really uncomfortable, because I am acting like a man, or I am acting white. (Interview, May 20, 2005)

Similar to Samia, Kiki felt able to enter into the classroom setting without having to hide anything about herself, or her identity. As such, she was able to 'be herself', and in doing so, disrupt the normative notions of femininity and Asian-ness.

Why 'Opening Up' Can Be Limiting

While opening up to establish common ground and provide different perspectives may be an effective way of approaching social justice and identity issues in the classroom, there can be certain limitations with this approach. When viewed through a poststructural lens, identity, or perhaps more accurately the subject, is not thought of as a fixed reality, but rather, "the subject is considered a construction, and identity is presumed to be created in the on-going effects of relations and in response to society's codes (Adams St. Pierre, 2000, p.503). As such, it is important to look at who felt able to open up their personal lives, and to ask, "who gets to be a subject in a particular discourse, in a particular set of practices? Who is allowed a subject position and who is not" (Adams St. Pierre, 2000, p.503)? In answer to this, it is revealing to note that the only artists who felt comfortable with, and talked of utilizing this approach were the artists who felt safe, and felt that they had nothing to risk by doing so. When asked if there were aspects of her identity that did not surface in the classroom, Lauren illustrated this point by replying:

I don't think so, I mean in terms of intentionally obscuring certain elements of my identity, I'm a middle class, white, straight woman, there's not a lot of danger in me admitting that, and putting that straight out there, right? So I am not risking, or I don't ever perceive that I am risking anything by putting that identity out there. (Interview, May 16, 2005)

Consequently, certain identities become sanctioned through repeated exposure in the schools (Butler, 1993), while other identities remain absent and unspoken – in this case nonheteronormative, or queer identities.

This notion of repetition resulting in sanctioning resonates with Butler's (1990)

theory of performativity (as explicated in the Theoretical Frameworks chapter).

Performativity can be understood as "a set of repeated acts within a highly regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (p.43). Thus, by opening up in the classroom in a way that reifies 'normal' sexuality, the heterosexually defined artists (perhaps inadvertently) enact a performative that can work to foreclose the possibility of other valid sexual identities. When viewed through a queer lens, Lauren's explanation of feeling safe to open up in the classroom exposes a cycle of disclosure wherein heterosexuality can be safely acknowledged, and thus comes to be perceived as the only normal and natural possibility.

A similar situation is exemplified in Betty's answer as to whether or not she feels the need to hide anything about her identity while in the classroom. She states, "I can't think of anything right off the top. You know, whether it's never come up, or that I've been able to couch it in such a way that it doesn't feel like a threat to me, or that it doesn't need to be said" (Interview, May 11, 2005). In a situation like this where something "doesn't need to be said", it is likely that normalized assumptions are being made, and then left unchallenged. Since Betty's identities rest within the range of 'normal', the students assumptions as to her gender, sexuality, and so on, will likely be accurate and thus, according to her answer, need not be addressed. In allowing the students to assume things about her identity, Betty inadvertently participates in "privileging of the normal", and thus in the perpetuation of norms and heteronorms. As Kumashiro (2002) states, "oppression consists of not only the marginalizing of the

Other; it also consists of the privileging of the 'normal'" (p.37). Therefore, the silent assumption of identity can be interpreted as a dangerous act with very real consequences. Rather than using her social locations as a starting point to speak from and disrupt notions of power and privilege with regards to whiteness, heterosexuality, class, and so on, Betty has the (powerful and privileged) option to remain silent about these issues, and leave them untroubled.

Perhaps, not surprisingly, the only artists who felt that they could *not* completely open up in the classroom were Amir and Thomas. As the only two artists who self-identified as queer men, Amir and Thomas acknowledge the usefulness of opening up in the classroom; however, both express a reluctance, or inability to be open about all aspects of their personal lives, and in particular their queer identities. Thomas states:

I can't tell them everything about me. It's just not conducive to, in particular the grades I work with, that might be a little bit more appropriate for high school, but even then it's still, maybe even more so, there's a certain level of vulnerability when we're dealing with queer issues in high schools. (Interview, May 10, 2005)

Here Thomas expresses hesitation at 'coming out' in the classroom, and attributes his trepidation to age appropriateness and student vulnerability. It is interesting to contrast this against the ease with which Lauren and Betty were able to open up in the classroom. Utilizing terms such as, "not conducive to", "appropriateness" and "vulnerability", Thomas justifies his self-censorship with language that suggests his queerness is somehow harmful or too disruptive to bring up in the classroom setting. This exemplifies the regulatory process that Butler (1990) dubs the 'heterosexual matrix (p.42)', wherein "the normality of heterosexuality is maintained in relation to the

abnormality of same-sex desire and conversely homosexuality is framed as abnormal in relation to the heterosexual norm" (Sedgwick in Quinlivan & Town, 1991, p. 511). In this case, the silence on non-heterosexual sexualities in the classroom forms the component part of the cycle that allows (and in fact encourages) heterosexual disclosure (as illustrated with Lauren's example), yet forbids a queer identification. To identify as queer in this situation would be a risk, because queer is set up as the opposite of normal, and correspondingly, the opposite of natural.

When I ask Amir if there are things about himself that he wants to remain hidden in the classroom, he complicates the matter even further by stating:

It depends on the group, and where I feel safe. And, what I perceive to be a willingness on their part to accept what I am going to say as part of the bigger concept, of what we are talking about. And, and this is completely a judgment, but where I feel unsafe I wouldn't bring it up, maybe part of me. Like when I'm in a...let's say I was in a very traditional Muslim community, talking about music, I would re-frame what I am saying in a very different way, and I wouldn't bring up certain things at all, because of what I know how they perceive a certain part of who I am. And that's hard because you don't always know, so I go in the classroom, and in the beginning I might not disclose some things, but by the end...(Interview, May 12, 2005)

Unlike Thomas, whose primary concern in terms of revelation in the classroom seem to rest solely on his identity as a queer man, Amir presents a much more complex and intersecting picture of his cultural, ethnic, and sexual identities. His answer indicates how specific aspects of his identity might come to the fore in certain situations, while others may remain undisclosed. Amir explains this fluid process of shifting and contingent identities to be dependent upon several factors: the perceived relevancy to the topic he was addressing, his feeling of safety with that particular group, and his

interpretation of how that group would perceive him. While this applies to all of his multiple identities, Amir later states, "I would say it's more the queer thing that I hide the most" (Interview, May 12, 2005). This reply indicates that only those identities or lives that are already somewhat mainstream or heteronormative are the ones that can be easily and repeatedly shared in the classroom. Thomas bolsters this point, stating, "It is so easy to talk about race because it is so evident that I am black. It's a lot more difficult to talk about gender identity²" (Interview, May 10, 2005). Thus, sexuality often fails to be addressed, by both heterosexually and queerly identified artists.

It is not my intention to place the burden or responsibility of toppling heteronormativity onto the shoulders of the queerly identified artists, nor is it my intention to reprimand those straight artists for, in a sense, 'coming out' to their students. It is interesting to note, however, that neither subject position attempts or considers the possibility for *troubling normal*. I am reminded of Britzman's (1998) question, "what makes normalcy so unthinkable in education" (p. 80)? In most cases, the artists defend or explain their reluctance to tackle issues of sexuality by claiming to 'speak only from what they know'. Which resonates with educator's resistances to teaching across difference. The notion of being heterosexual, and therefore being able to speak about (and thus de-centre) heterosexuality, however, was never touched upon as a viable option. Consequently, when artists open up (or not) in the classroom, heterosexuality largely remains the unspoken and untroubled norm. This is consequential for a residency on social justice and aimed at exploring identity, because it ends up perpetuating harmful norms rather than subverting them.

¹ Throughout both interviews, Thomas used the term 'gender identity' when talking about issues of sexuality.

The option or ability to remain silent about an issue is linked to privilege and self-awareness. This is another potential disadvantage of teaching from the personal; unless one is aware of how both one's privilege and oppression affects the work one does, one will likely not talk about it. Thus, by leaving particular positionalities undiscussed, the artists inadvertently contribute to their normalization. In imagining an alternative way of teaching, Britzman (1998) inquires, "can a queer pedagogy implicate everyone involved to consider the grounds of their own possibility, their own intelligibility, and the work of proliferating their own identifications" (p.81)? In calling upon *everyone* involved, Britzman indicates that just as it is important for the artists to use their experiences of oppression and struggle as tools for teaching social justice, it is equally as important to recognize and talk about the aspects of their identities that are unmarked, and that they are able to take for granted. In other words, to speak from and about both positions of oppression and privilege. Also addressing this issue, Kumashiro (2002) explains the concept of a social justice education that is critical of both privileging and Othering. This type of education requires a critical awareness of the systemic social structures and ideological forces that position some as privileged, and some as oppressed (and any combination thereof). Citing Britzman, Kumashiro (2002) explains that developing this critical awareness involves "*unlearning or critiquing what was previously learned to be 'normal' and normative*" (p. 46). Thus, the artists would be conscious of both their privileged and Othered positionalities, and thus be prepared to teach about "how they often unknowingly can be complicit with, and even contribute to these forms of oppression when they participate in common-sense

practices that privilege certain identities" (Kumashiro, 2002, p.46). Thus a queering of heterosexual identity might involve owning up to privileged and normative positionalities and using them as a platform to dive into a discussion of gender and sexuality. Consequently, rather than silent affirmation, norms may be disrupted and unspoken assumptions challenged.

Typifying this strategy, when I ask Lauren whether or not her social locations impact on what she does in the classroom, she claims:

It defines everything you do. I think, particularly if what you're conscious of is to get people to tell stories based on their own experience, than you have to be constantly conscious of your own experience. It's an integral part of asking people to share something personal, and creative, and to be creative. (Interview, May 16, 2005)

Therefore, aligning with the aforementioned education that is critical of both privileging and Othering, Lauren stresses that before asking a student to open up to her in the classroom, it is essential that she be aware of her own experiences. Using race as an example, Lauren insists:

I think that is work that I should have to do. And it's my responsibility to do that right? And that's how it should be, actually. I think that's how we deal with white privilege, is that you take that responsibility on. I have a certain responsibility because I am from a middle class, educated – I've got all of these opportunities, and I've had all of these opportunities, well, it's kind of up to me then to do something about it, so I mean that's fine, that's totally something that I take on. I would imagine that a lot of people who do this work are going to have the same opinion that it is important to deal with that privilege. (Interview, May 16, 2005)

As an artist who does believe in sharing her personal life with her students, Lauren explains how her positionalities can be used to expose the flip side of oppression by troubling her own privilege. This is important because rather than opting out of the

discussion and leaving her privileged positionalities unmarked, Lauren actively uses her various social locations as platforms for dialogue.

Slippery Definitions

Social Justice as 'Contemporary Culture'

The previous section explores the artists' self-conceptions and identities, and uncovers the connection between their own positionalities and how they choose to teach about social justice and identity. Continuing in this vein, this section examines the artists' redefinition of social justice as 'contemporary culture', followed by a critique of these conceptions. Lastly, this chapter examines and then critiques the methods used by the artists to decide what social justice and identity topics they will raise in the classroom.

In the first round of interviews, I asked all the artists to explain what social justice and identity means to them. I expected fairly straightforward answers that incorporated notions of identity politics as well as cultural, and gender equality. What I got was far from simplistic, and far from what I had anticipated. As already noted, the artists' specific definitions for social justice and identity are not static, but are contingent upon their own identities, and evolve and change as the interviews progress. Also, as touched upon in the "How the Artists Described Themselves" section of this chapter, each artist has his or her own unique understandings of social justice and identity. There is, however, a unifying thread present in all of their explanations; moving away from singular focus on identity politics such as racism or homophobia, social justice is defined more as a way to critically navigate through the everyday world

of contemporary life.

Exemplifying this move, Thomas states:

I think what it means to me is having different members of society reflect on current issues through any form of safe negotiation, so I think of art, or literature, or music, or roundtable sessions. And I just feel like, again, that contemporary issues can be addressed in ways that allow as many voices as possible. That to me is ultimately a socially satisfying form of justice. (Interview, May 3, 2005)

Here, Thomas stresses the importance of having multiple and different voices speaking to and about contemporary and current issues. Similarly, Samia argues:

I think social justice has to do with understanding society. You have to understand the society which you live in, and within that, you have to be able to understand its history, you have to understand the complexities of the here and now, and then you have to be able to look at where we are going in the future. (Interview, April 29, 2005)

Samia echoes Thomas' sentiment of reflecting on current issues, but also adds a strong focus on understanding the society in which we live. These notions are also supported by Betty, who claims, "you call it social justice issues, but I am starting to think of it more as contemporary culture, and how it is we are in the world" (Interview, April 14, 2005). As such, 'social justice' is evidently redefined as a way of critically moving through and engaging with the world of contemporary life.

Justifying this move towards a critical analysis of 'contemporary culture' and away from single issue identity politics, Betty explains how even the term 'social justice' can be immobilizing for teachers:

Why I want to shift it a little bit for me is because I find that 'social justice' for many educators is a block, "okay I have to talk about racism only". You know, so, the thing is when you take a multiculturalism piece, or a social justice piece, you only take one fraction of one little thing. (Interview, April 14, 2005)

Here, Betty articulates the problem of only looking at a single issue. In her experience, the term 'social justice' has been limiting because of this focus. Echoing these concerns, and explicating why this is problematic, Lauren explains how the notion of a single identity politic is a foreign concept for students today. She claims, "you can't talk about racism with teenagers without it being so much more involved with every other aspect of their life, it just does not make sense to them" (Interview, May 9, 2005).

Furthermore:

...you can't, it doesn't represent their lived experience to tease those things out individually, and it's actually not important to them, which is always what is so interesting to me, is to find out that they'd much rather do something that talks about larger issues, like globalization than racism, because they can talk about racism when they are talking about globalization, but there is this understanding that it's more connected. (Interview, May 9, 2005)

These concerns are also present when Samia states, "...we don't live in a linear fashion, and to be in a school culture, in the school environment being taught in a linear fashion is total bullshit, that's not how we live" (Interview, April 29, 2005). Consequently, the artists' answers seem to point to a more complex and intersecting understanding of both social justice and identity.

These notions resonate with poststructural and queer theories of intersectionality, where the concept of identity politics is viewed as potentially constraining and exclusive of the complexities and interconnectedness of multiple and mixed identities. Identity-based activism and education can function like mainstream society in that they exclude their own margins (Powell, 1999 in Kumashiro, 2002).

Kumashiro (2002) states,

It is a problem, then, to speak of identities always and only in their separate incarnations, which not only denies ways in which identities are already intersected, but more importantly, masks the ways in which certain identities are already privileged. (p. 56)

Consequently, a move beyond identity politics as indicated by the artists' responses hopefully represents a launch from identity politics into a much more complex understanding, where identities can be seen as discursively produced, and as such, contingent, strategic, and intersecting (Weedon, 1987, 1997).

In explaining her use of the concept of 'multiculturalism' to work with social justice and identity issues in the classroom, Betty illustrates these ideas:

Multiculturalism doesn't just reside in race. I think multiculturalism resides in how it is we live in the postmodern world, how we live in contemporary culture. So you know factors around difference play a role in there...I think that's why I see multiculturalism, social justice, and contemporary life all wrapped up into one. You know, religion plays a big role, look at what's happening in the States now, politics plays a role, class plays a role, so it is complex, so it is not about the colour of your skin only. (Interview, April 14, 2005)

Betty complicates traditional notions of multiculturalism. She includes race, religion, and class as important factors to be considered, and stressed the necessity of looking at everyday 'contemporary life' in doing social justice work. This understanding of the interconnectedness of identities is echoed in many of the interviews I conducted with the artists. Kumashiro (2002) explains that shying away from lessons that deal specifically with an isolated 'Other' or 'ism' can "enable educators to address the intersections of these different identities and their attendant forms of oppression" (p.41). This is beneficial, because it offers the potential to be inclusive of many different identities, as well as shifting, changing, and fluid subject positions.

It is important to recognize that while these interview responses indicate a call to move beyond identity politics, they do not call for their obliteration. In the previous example, Betty alludes to the continued importance of positionalities such as race, class and gender, and as such, advocates for the continued, but strategic use of identity politics. Similarly, Lauren continually reiterates, "it's about recognizing the interconnectedness of race, class, gender, sexuality" (Interview, May 9, 2005). Lauren asserts:

The thing that I also find is important is that we've learned something from [identity politics] so that, to not lose, it's the same thing with feminism, to not lose that, even that term. So citizenship needs to actually address, and it needs to use those words, it needs to talk about sexism, it needs to talk about racism, it needs to talk about power structures. Because if we then use this notion of citizenship or agency, it can gloss over that...so I guess that's not to me what exploring notions of citizenship are about, it's not about glossing over those things, it's about recognizing the interconnectedness of race, class, gender, sexuality. (Interview, May 9, 2005)

Consequently, in looking at the broader issues of contemporary culture, it is easy to gloss over certain differences and to leave out or forget about particular issues and identities. Thus, Lauren argues for an activism rooted in identity politics.

These ideas resonate with poststructural and queer understandings of subjectivity and identity as explicated by Loutzenheiser (2003), who inquires, "What might the fluidity of subjectivities offer? Why might relying on notions of identity politics still have a place at the table? That is, why can't it be all and both, rather than either/or" (p.158)? In taking the valuable, and in fact, indispensable tools that identity politics has to offer, these new conceptualizations of social justice attempt to move forward from a grounding in identity politics. Again, this echoes feminist

poststructuralist notions of subjectivity wherein "we can use categories such as 'gender', 'race', and 'class' in social and cultural analysis but on the assumption that their meaning is plural, historically and socially specific" (Weedon, 1987, 1997, p. 178). Rather than doing away with the notions of identity and positionality, these explanations build upon and utilize these tools, and at the same time offer a way to deconstruct and be aware of their limitations.

Taking the Pulse of the School

Within these redefinitions of social justice and identity, I ask the artists how they decide what topics to address in the classroom. This question represents yet another layer that is couched in the initial theme where who the artists are influences how they conceptualize and teach about social justice and identity. Almost all of them explain the importance of doing work that is relevant to that particular class, and in that specific school. The general consensus is that there is no cookie cutter method for teaching about these issues, and that the best way to figure out what to teach about is to, in a sense, take the pulse of the school. Betty explains:

I think, first of all it has to speak specifically to that group, in terms of what they're dealing with at that moment. Is it racism? What's happening in the classroom? What's happening in the school? What have you identified that makes sense, to make that connection? Maybe it is the dirty, filthy playground, you know? Maybe it is that...but to be realistic, and to have you ear to the ground, and be aware... I think, fundamentally for this to work to work, it has to have direct meaning and relevancy to the students' life. (Interview, April 14, 2005)

Here, Betty relies upon her own perception of lack or conflict in order to identify what topics she should raise in the classroom. Since, as already noted, who the artists are, and how they identify is influential for how and what they teach, this is intrinsically

linked to the artists own identity. Thus, the issues that she observes to be lacking or in need of attention will, in some cases, be contingent upon her own positionalities. This notion of picking up on what is happening at the school is echoed throughout the interviews. Describing a similar approach, Kiki stated:

In each case what I try to do is to look at what is the source, the problem, or the source of pain, or the conflict within that school, and then I try and bring work, or bring a project to that school that is gonna spark that, you know, that's gonna get them excited. (Interview, Apr. 20, 2005)

Both of these examples talk about listening for the sources of conflict, pain, and unrest at every school in order to create a project that will be somehow relevant and meaningful for the students there.

Without belittling this intuitive, and no doubt effective, approach to teaching about social justice and identity, it is important to look at what/who gets left out in the process. As just illustrated, by keeping an 'ear to the ground', or 'taking the pulse of the school', the artists feel they are able to accurately gauge what issues will be most pertinent to raise in their residencies: however, a queer understanding reveals some dangerous assumptions inherent in these techniques. By listening and looking for the 'problems', the artists risk dealing *only* with (and thus construing as *the problem*) what is perceived as different. As Kumashiro (2002) points out, "oppression consists not only of the marginalizing of the Other; it also consists of the privileging of the 'normal'" (p. 37). For example, an issue raised by most of the artists was racism in schools. While this is indeed an important issue, the risk is that difference may be construed as the problem, since "by focusing on the negative experiences of the Other this approach implies that the Other is the problem: without the Other, schools would not be

oppressing anyone" (Kumashiro, 2002, P. 37). Thus, whiteness and white privilege (and all things 'normal', for that matter) remain undiscussed and therefore untroubled.

Furthermore, these methods provide no means for the artists to pick up on what is *not* happening at the school (the silences and absences). As noted in the Theoretical Frameworks chapter, silence can be as powerful as speech (Sedgwick, 1990).

Kumashiro (2000) aptly states, "oppression...is not always easy to recognize" (p. 27), and these approaches to choosing what to address in the residency provide no means for recognizing the discourses of silence and absence that are present in the classroom. For example, the heteronormative assumption of the classroom is not something that is spoken or played out in a very obvious manner; however, it is very present and very oppressive (Loutzenheiser, 2004; Kumashiro, 2000). Thus, in utilizing the approaches of 'taking the pulse of the school', or 'keeping an ear to the ground', the artists risk overlooking and ignoring these very real, and very oppressive issues.

"I'm not an expert..."

While the artists agree that above all, it is essential to address issues that are pertinent to each particular classroom, the research uncovered a pattern of avoidance on the issue of sexuality. When I ask the artists if there are any issues that they feel are important but do not feel that they can raise in the classroom, the overwhelming response is sexuality. Betty states, "well I probably wouldn't talk about, um, in terms of the kinds of practices I do, I probably wouldn't take on, uh, uh, sexuality...I wouldn't take on sexuality because I don't know, I don't have an access point into it (Interview,

May 11, 2005). Similarly, Amir explains his discomfort with raising issues of sexuality, stating:

I don't know the rhetoric around ... homophobia, I don't really identify... I have never actually thought about it in my own self. I haven't analyzed it enough to talk ... like I don't even know how to begin talking about that. It doesn't help me define who I am, so I can't. (Interview, May 12, 2005)

Even Samia, who initially claims that she feels comfortable enough to raise all issues in the classroom, hesitates when it comes to sexuality. She states, "because I work from my own experience, it's not that easy, or it wouldn't be that easy for me to like, go to a place of discussing gay or lesbian sexuality, because that's not my experience, I don't live that" (Interview, May 12, 2005). This aligns with the discourse that Kumashiro (2002) designates "Other as expert" (p.42), wherein the 'minority' perspective is sought from those occupying that positionality. Kumashiro (2002) warns that such a situation "reinforces the social, cultural, and even intellectual spaces or divisions between the norm and the Other" (p.42). Furthermore these statements resonate loudly and clearly with the "I'm not an expert" position. This position relies upon the liberal, modernist belief that one can in fact be an 'expert' in a particular identity and as such, know all there is to know about that identity, as well as have authority over all others to speak from that position.

It is important to note that in these examples, the self-identified heterosexual artists do not consider themselves qualified to talk about sexuality. However, perhaps not surprisingly, neither do the self-identified queer artists. This is interesting because again, rather than using their own unique positionalities as entry points into a discussion of sexuality, all of these artists defer the responsibility onto some mythical

sexuality 'expert'. This indicates that once again heterosexuality is being conceptualized as the unmarked and unremarkable norm, from which no meaningful discussion of sexuality could ever ensue. Rather than decentering heterosexuality as the naturalized norm, and launching into a discussion of different sexual identities, these artists inadvertently reaffirm the 'naturalness' of heterosexuality by allowing it to go undiscussed and therefore untroubled. Consequently, the responsibility to address sexual identities in the classroom seemed to fall onto the queer-identified artists, who also did not necessarily feel qualified for the task. As discussed earlier, this represents a deficit model of dealing with social justice issues, where in the perceived 'problem' (i.e. queer sexuality, or homophobia) is addressed, but not the norm (i.e. heterosexuality, or heteronormativity).

"Dropping the Bomb" – Talking about Sexuality

Despite their discomfort and perceived inability to raise the issue themselves, the artists did agree that sexuality was an important topic to discuss in the classroom, and some of them had indeed broached the subject at some point in their careers. While it was encouraging to discover that sexuality was being addressed (even if only sometimes, and by some artists), it is still important to critically look at *how* the issue is being raised, by whom, and to what ends. For example, the only time Samia talks about raising the issue of sexuality in the classroom, she describes using a recent Statistics Canada survey about gay marriage in a classroom discussion about the importance of voting in provincial and federal elections. She shows the survey to the class in order to illustrate the power of a vote to make change, and asks the class, "so

what do you think? Would you agree with this? Does gay marriage bother you? Does interracial marriage bother you?" (Interview, Apr. 29, 2005).

It could be argued that by simply raising the topic of sexuality in the classroom, a positive step is taken. Samia does not ignore the issue or pretend that it does not exist, but chooses, rather, to integrate it into her lesson as an example of the potential for judicial change. Even though she does not disrupt essentialized and binary notions of sexuality, as Loutzenheiser (2001) asserts "if the conversations have been broached, and are returned to again and again as a part of teaching and learning, then the slippages and ruptures still have places to occur" (p. 196). On the other hand, this could also have been a platform from which to address this taboo subject more in depth, as well as to initiate a 'disruptive'² (Kumashiro, 2002) discussion of the issue in the classroom. Instead, however, Samia employs a technique that resonates with the 'Add and Stir' (Loutzenheiser, 2003, 2004) method detailed in the review of literature section. The simple inclusion of queer content into a lesson does nothing to substantially disrupt or alter heteronormativity in the curriculum, but rather "gay and lesbian issues are treated as pedagogical isolates, focused on just long enough to substantiate a politics of Otherness" (Loutzenheiser, 2004, p. 153). Consequently, Samia's questions to the class assume a universal heterosexuality where, even though it is subtle, the presumably heterosexual students are asked if they are *bothered* by gay marriage. This serves to render heterosexuality the norm, and queer identities the potentially offensive Other.

² Kumashiro (2002) advocates for changing oppression with disruptive knowledge, wherein "learning is about disruption and opening up to further learning, not closure and satisfaction" (p. 43).

Complicating the matter further, Samia compares gay marriage to interracial marriage, which effectively separates the two from each other, thus rendering them equally as controversial (i.e. different, weird), and mutually exclusive. This is testament to Loutzenheiser's observation that "the resistance to working with race and sexuality individually, much less interconnectedly, is often powerful" (p. 207). By separating queer sexuality from race, Samia inadvertently reinforces binary notions of race and sexuality, where white/black and gay/straight are construed as separate and disconnected. Addressing a similar situation in relation to her preservice teacher class, Loutzenheiser (2001) notes:

My courses show me that single-issue conversations, such as having one day to speak or read about gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, or including African American perspectives are not nearly as difficult to accomplish as are sustained, ongoing interrogations of how sexuality and race are entwined. (p.207)

By failing to complicate notions of race and sexuality, both remain untroubled, and thus the very existence of queers of colour is negated. As Kumashiro (2001) ironically notes, "our efforts to challenge one form of oppression often unintentionally contribute to other forms of oppression, and our efforts to embrace one form of difference often exclude and silence others" (p. 1). Consequently, by introducing this topic without any discussion or debriefing, and by asking these few questions, Samia does not trouble any of the assumptions surrounding sexuality or race, and in fact may even reinforce not only the heteronorms of the classroom, but also the 'impossibility' of intersecting queer and racial identities.

While Kiki's approach to the subject of sexuality is much more consistent, as she is constantly bringing up sexuality in our interviews, she also opts for an inclusion framework. She talks about the importance of deconstructing the use of the term "faggot" as it is thrown around by students in the schoolyard, and she also mentions using a video that dealt with racism and homophobia as a teaching tool. In fact, Kiki is the only artist who had actually completed a large-scale project with a local high school that dealt directly with sexuality. Despite constantly raising the issue, however, Kiki does not seem to do anything to disrupt conventional notions of sexuality. Since her approach is based on inclusion, she advocates for equality with an acceptance, understanding, and even celebration of diversity, but with no troubling of norms.

The sort of strategy where acceptance leading to equality is the ultimate goal engages a civil rights discourse as its most powerful tool. As outlined in the Review of the Literature, this strategy is strongly advocated and employed in art education. As with any powerful tool, this discourse must be used with caution, and the advantages and disadvantages carefully weighed. A civil rights discourse relies upon an empathy framework, where the argument is; " 'we are just like you,' and if you could just see that, you would *give* us all the rights we deserve" (Loutzenheiser, 2001, p.208). This liberal conception of social justice may not sound like such a bad thing; however, a closer look reveals that this approach may actually reproduce and fuel the very inequities we are fighting to overcome. Britzman (1998) explains:

Pedagogies of inclusion, and the tolerance that supposedly follows, may in actuality produce the grounds of normalization. Lived at the level of conceptual needs, such hopes are able to offer only the stingy subject positions of the tolerant normal and the tolerated subaltern. Put

differently, the subject positions of 'us' and 'them' become recycled as empathy. (p.87)

Adding to this, Loutzenheiser (2001) notes the potential for essentialism when employing this strategy, and argues that "by reducing pedagogy about sexuality and race to a civil rights argument, I am advocating sameness and reinscribing the gay-straight, white-black binaries that erase so much and so many" (p.209). Moreover, "the civil rights arguments want to ignore the hard, uncomfortable conversations, the ones that acknowledge the sex in sexuality, the race in racism, and the race in sexuality, and the sexuality in race" (Loutzenheiser, 2001, p.209). As such, civil rights discourses fail not only to disrupt 'normal', and inevitably deepen the divide between normal and Other, but they also fail to complicate essentialist notions of identity, and thus reinscribe and normalize singular, binaristic notions of identity.

Furthermore, the drive for equality as the ultimate goal will always inevitably come up short. As explicated in the theoretical frameworks section, an equity framework serves only to reify what is normal, and in doing so, also what is abnormal. Bryson and De Castell (1997) define 'equity' as;

a term of concealment...it announces the right to be or to become like the idealized subject of human rights; it re-asserts traditional rules, roles, and relations by announcing the right of nondominant, marginalized persons to assume the position of dominance. (pg. 87)

Here, equity is problematized as a structural tool to re-assert the norm, while 'allowing' the marginalized to attempt, and always essentially fail at becoming like the norm. As such, the systems of power that position queer identities as inferior or Other in the first place, are successfully bolstered in this process.

Flipping this dynamic around, Lauren troubles rather than reaffirms these norms. Along the same lines as Kiki, Lauren seems to have 'sexuality' firmly established in her lexicon of social locations, identities, and issues to be dealt with. Where she differs however, is that she goes beyond homophobia and addresses the role of heterosexuality in systems of domination and oppression. She explains how a big part of her work is teaching youth to be aware and critical of the media they consume, and an integral part of that is learning how to decode the images of 'reality' that we are shown on television. In that she expresses:

We need to talk about gender roles; we need to talk about sexuality. What are the representations of heterosexuality, particularly ...when you are critiquing what a typical guy on television is, he's straight. So being straight means a whole bunch of things, right? (Interview, May 9, 2005)

This acknowledgement of heterosexual privilege is a departure from the unmarked and silent assumption of heterosexuality that was evident in much of the other artists' approaches. In bringing this aspect of sexuality to light, Lauren effectively disrupts the repetition of a 'natural' and 'normal' heterosexuality, and replaces it instead with a positionality that is as implicated in systems of power and oppression as any other positionality. As such, heterosexuality is named and subject to scrutiny and interrogation, and is thus decentred as the natural and unquestionable norm.

Criticism ≠ Condemnation

While not all of the artists achieve this type of subversive activism in their residencies, it is essential to keep in mind that this might not be their original intention, and the work they do is still valid and valuable. It is important to reiterate that the work these artists have done, and continue to do is incredibly positive, and has many

explicit advantages that are both immediately apparent, and that no doubt surface over time. For example, in terms of Kiki's work with issues of sexuality, she makes it evident that she is interested in a very personal approach to social justice. Rather than making general lessons for the entire class, Kiki explains how she feels it is more effective at times to subtly nudge students in the directions that she feels they most need to go. She explains, "I feel like that's my job, is to just say 'see, there's a little chink in this heavy wall over here. Come put your eye up to that chink and see that beautiful place there, you can get there'" (Interview, Apr. 20, 2005). In her view it is more meaningful to reach, for example, the one student who is struggling with his own sexuality, rather than focus on the entire class. By providing him with the subtle guidance he needs to address his questions, Kiki feels like she is giving him the tools to continue on.

I do not wish to discourage the sort of social justice and identity work that Kiki, and these artists have carried out, nor do I wish to come across as condescending or negative. It is evident that they do important work with students, and raise issues and have discussions that otherwise would likely not be had. This research simply seeks to critically examine, in an effort to potentially expand upon, open up, and render even more effective the work that they already do. In critiquing the various approaches to social justice in art education it is my intention to trouble and interrogate with the hope of inspiring even more social justice work. This theoretical 'rocking of the boat' will hopefully expose some of the silences, absences and invisibilities that are maintained and/or constructed in the name of social justice, thus inciting further action, and continued troubling.

Conclusion

Beginning with an analysis of how the artists chose to describe themselves, this chapter explores the relevance of the artists' own identities, and how they see themselves, to the work they do in the classroom. It became clear that how the artists conceive of themselves is influential for how they conceptualize and teach about social justice and identity in the classroom. In fact, the artists reveal their identities (or their expression of identity) to be contingent upon many different and changing factors, resulting in ever-changing and fluid manifestations of self. Couched within this overarching finding are the artists' definitions for 'social justice' and 'identity'. This research reveals that these are, indeed, slippery terms, with definitions that vary from artist to artist, and situation to situation. Despite this elusive nature, their definitions are held together by a common thread that understands 'social justice' to be a way of navigating through the everyday world of contemporary culture. Finally, this chapter examines the methods used by the artists to decide what social justice and identity topics to raise throughout the course of their residency. Consequently, their tactics of 'keeping an ear to the ground' and 'taking the pulse of the school' are examined and critiqued using poststructural feminist and queer theoretical lenses. Although this approach is successful in raising certain issues, other silences and gaps are left unaddressed, resulting in the perpetuation and strengthening of norms. Though this research offers no ultimate solution, the final chapter outlines the conclusions of this project, along with implications for future practice and research.

Chapter 6

"There is something that happens in the creative"

Introduction

One of the guiding questions for this research is why is art used to critically engage students in an exploration of social justice and identity? This is after all, a research project about artists who use art to get their messages across. As explicated in the review of the literature, the question arose in response to what I perceived to be many unsubstantiated and perhaps more importantly, uncritical claims in the literature about the transformative power of art. I wanted to explore why art is often portrayed as the 'perfect' tool for dealing with identity and social justice issues. Keeping this in mind, this chapter explores and then critiques the key factors that contributed to how art and art making were experienced in the classroom; namely, how the artists fostered a 'critical eye', and what/how they actually created art in the classroom.

Learning How to Look

Art can be as much about thinking as it is about making - this is evidenced in how each of the artists describe their residencies. Thomas recounts asking his students, "So just because we can all take pictures, does that necessarily mean we can all look at pictures" (Interview, May 10, 2005)? With this simple question, Thomas complicates the mere aesthetic experience of photography, and acknowledges two very different aspects inherent in a picture – the creating, and the viewing. He continues:

Often when I am in a classroom and I present an image, I ask them to look, and then we talk about it, and then I ask them to look again, and we talk about it some more, and then we look again. I think that's when they start to realize that there's always more there, that the conversation is on-

going, and that's when we can take it to another level. (Interview, May 10, 2005)

Here, Thomas explains the potential for images to provide the fruitful grounds for critical thinking and interpretation. He claims that there is always more to look at, different ways of seeing, and multiple perspectives to explore. Thus, from the very start of the residency, Thomas works to ensure that critical thinking and discernment are intrinsically connected to the students' experiences of making art. As such, this exercise in looking has the potential to communicate to the students that photography is not just about snapping a picture, or capturing colour and form. In fact, the act of continually looking and interpreting what is in the picture reveals the much deeper and socially powerful potential of the photograph.

These cognitive exercises resonate with what Freedman (2003) refers to as lower and higher-level interpretive skills. She states, "lower-level interpretive skills include the discernment of a simple, intended message of a symbolic representation or personalizing a situation that one sees represented" (p.87). Higher-level interpretive skills include "(1) unpacking of underlying assumptions, (2) forming multiple, possible associations; and (3) performing self-conscious, critical reflection" (p. 88). Thus, in arming the students with these critical interpretive tools, the artists encourage the students to actively inquire and reflect upon their observations and interpretations of the world around them.

The notion of multiple perspectives also resonates with these notions of critical thinking as integral to the art making process is. Samia touches on this when describing her method for initiating a residency. She states:

So I think the initial thing is to create the understanding, or foster an understanding of history as not a static, carved-in-stone thing. It is someone's experience, and when you read it in a text book, it is someone's experience, and then along with that, when you turn the sphere around there's going to be a whole other set of experiences on the other side that are not the same as the experiences that you've read. So it lends toward a development of critical thought. (Interview, April 29, 2005)

Using the notion of a sphere to describe the contingent nature of history and experience, Samia emphasizes multiplicity with regards to critical thinking. With her approach, learning to recognize and see from multiple perspectives are the first steps towards dealing with social justice and identity through art. Along these same lines, Betty articulates how the process of making art is particularly suited for such an understanding of multiplicity. She states "it's this idea that there isn't an answer necessarily at the end, and in fact, it's about uncovering and coming to understand in ones own way. The multiple ways of looking at a piece gives you a broader perspective" (Interview, May 11, 2005). Thus, according to Betty, with no single correct answer art allows the possibility for multiple answers or ways of understanding, thinking about, and perceiving social justice and identity issues.

These notions of multiple perspectives and experiences align with Freedman's (2003) discussion of interpretation in the art classroom. She claims:

Interpretations discussed in class are part of a history of discourse from previous social settings developed by artists, teachers, students, curators, and so on. Without an understanding of the importance and influence of this wide-ranging discussion across time and space, students may get the impression that a single answer is correct, preferences are only personal, or that interpretation is solely dependent upon what is depicted in an image. (p.5)

In other words, art, art making and interpretation are neither static nor solid in their meanings, but are imbedded in historical and political contexts. Therefore, by introducing the students to the possibilities of multiple interpretations and multifarious histories, the data exemplifies how the artists have an opportunity to plant the seeds for the critical thinking necessary for dealing with social justice and identity in their own art.

It is not my intention to artificially separate out the cognitive from the manual processes of actually, physically making art. The critical thinking and interpretation described above is an on-going process that is meant to continue through the duration of the residency (and ultimately beyond). I highlight this point because it is, in part, what is missing in the literature in art education, where the physical act of making art alone is labeled a 'free space' for untainted exploration and imaginings. Too often (as explicated in the review of the literature), art is presented as uniquely suited to deal with social justice and identity, without any mention of the critical thinking that is intrinsic to such explorations. Chalmers (1987) states, "appreciating form is not the same as understanding art" (p. 4), and this holds true for making art – just because it is art, does not mean it is somehow 'naturally' social justice oriented. As Freedman (2003) cautions:

The visual arts are not inherently good in their effects. The great power of the visual arts is their ability to have various and profound effects on our lives, but that power can also make them manipulative, colonizing, and disenfranchising. (p. 53)

Consequently, learning to think critically and opening up our minds to multiple perspectives and possibilities is a prerequisite for any sort of meaningful identity

exploration or social justice work to occur in and through the arts. Explicating this notion is Thomas' answer to my question of why art should be used to teach about social justice and identity. He replies "I am not even sure why art...I don't know that art is the only answer, it is just something that works for me" (Interview, May 3, 2005). As Thomas notes – art is not *the* answer, nor is it good for everyone, rather it is yet another tool, which may be utilized in both positive and negative ways.

Furthermore, the skills of critical thinking, interpretation, and seeing from multiple perspectives that the artists (and literature) attribute to learning through and about art are formidable. It is essential to remember, however, that these abilities do not naturally spring forth from art and to the students. It is the responsibility of the artists to use art and art-making to foster these skills in their students, and as explored in Chapter 5, the artists are always already circumscribed by their identities and social locations. As explicated, who the artists are is influential for how they conceive of and teach about social justice and identity. Consequently, without disputing the notion that art possesses some unique attributes that make it potentially conducive to learning about social justice and identity, the students are guided by individuals whose various identities and social locations impact on how and what they choose to teach about during their residency.

Added to this, teachers, school administration and parents all exert influence over what issues get raised in the classroom. Thomas expresses an awareness of this when he explains how in a residency he starts with a critical examination of how students are portrayed in the media, "and then I go right across the board. What are

some of the preconceived ideas about people who are over-weight? What are some of the preconceived ideas about people who are old" (Interview, May 10, 2005)? Thus, Thomas feels able to raise the issues of body image and age. In terms of sexuality however, he states:

Now in certain schools, we can come to [preconceived ideas about] people who are gay, but again with the age group that I've dealt with, we haven't touched upon that yet because it is an uncomfortable issue for the teachers...because they feel they don't have the kind familial support that is necessary to do that. (Interview, May 10, 2005)

It is interesting then, to note that in this case the students will learn to think critically – but only about certain issues. Similarly they will learn to understand multiple perspectives – but only certain 'acceptable' other perspectives. This is an example of how heteronorms are allowed to perpetuate even in an artist residency that deals with social justice and identity.

As such, it is imperative to locate the arts firmly within the realm of discourse. Since "there is and can be no brute vision, no vision totally independent of language" (Copjec in Atkinson, 1999 p.110), the danger of art making being presented as a 'free space', is that it can take on a spirit of independence from the world of language and discursive production. The arts *are* in fact, implicated in discourse and as such, "provide effective means of reproducing the various asymmetries of the socio-political hierarchy and sustaining the conditions of hegemony" (Cary, 1998, p.64). Illustrating this power, Darts (2004) recounts:

From imperial Roman medals, coins and statues which commemorated the rule of powerful emperors, to Medieval monumental works of art that, under the façade of Christian themes, were created to support the

ideological interests of the church, art has consistently been in the tactical employ of leaders and politicians. (pp. 313-314)

This indicates that the arts can and must not be presented or thought of as a neutral and fertile ground for creativity; the subjects who utilize the arts are discursively produced, and the arts exist within discourse. As such, any practice that fails to locate art firmly within discourse, "precludes critical examination of the workings of the ideological system itself, its categories of representation...its premises about what these categories mean and how they operate, its notions of subjects, origin, and cause" (Scott, p.25, 1992). Thus, as explicated in the Review of the Literature, the greater norms and structures are left untroubled, and in fact the 'realities' and 'worlds' they sought to transform risk being reproduced. Thomas acknowledges this by stating, "I think that, sadly, sometimes art creates situations of injustice" (Interview, May 3, 2005). Put simply, art and art education do have powerful potential for inspiring change, however, if taken/taught uncritically, the arts like any other discourse, risk reproducing that which they aim to subvert.

Learning How to Create

Hand in hand with the lessons on learning to look, see, and think critically, are the actual hands-on art projects. Blandy (1987) states, "the making and contemplation of art are, among other possibilities, self-reflective activities" (p.55). An emphasis on self-reflection is evident in the art projects that many of the artists describe to me. Thomas outlines a project with elementary school students that focuses on gender identity. The first step involves having the class investigate the representation of children in the media. He explains:

Where I often go with that is back to what children know around their own stereotypes, around being children. Children are always expected to smile in photographs, you know? Children are considered loud, or lazy, or too much energy. There are already constructed notions around what children should and shouldn't be. So I try and remind them that those things are out there about them, and are those things necessarily true? And even if they are true, are they true one hundred percent of the time? (Interview, May 10, 2005)

Here, Thomas encourages an awareness of media, and its power to portray and construct identity. Following more discussion centering on gender stereotypes in the media, Thomas guides them in a project where they create compact disc covers featuring a self-portrait. In this project, they initially draw their own self-portraits, and then later construct Polaroid photographs where they pose themselves and have the teacher take the picture for them.

This process resonates with Freedman's (2003) notion of art making as a pathway to knowledge. She states:

Artistic production is a critical path to understanding, partly because the process and the product of art-making enables students to experience creative and critical connections between form, feeling, and knowing. It empowers students through their expression of ideas and construction of identities as it gives insight into the artistic motivations, intentions, and capabilities of others". (Freedman, 2003, p. 147)

In working with the class to critique popular media, and then create their own representations of self, Thomas provides some of the rudimentary tools for them to critically grasp the connections between media, identity, and self. As such, the students are encouraged to move "beyond modes of passive spectatorship and towards more active and expressive forms of communication with and in the world around them" (Darts, 2004, p. 325).

Samia describes a similar self-portrait project with secondary students that calls upon a critical reading of popular culture, along with some personal introspection for its inspiration. She explains, "I worked with a digital photography class, and the assignment I gave them was to design a c.d. cover, except they're the star. So again, you work with popular media...and you get them to insert the personal" (Interview, April 29, 2005). With this project, Samia combines media literacy with self-portraiture, and encourages an exploration of identity through the medium of digital photography. The students are encouraged to talk about their lives, and consider what they want to say about themselves on their compact disc cover. Recounting how the exercise evoked strong reactions from some of the students, Samia relates:

I had a kid who was telling me, 'yeah, I know I present a face to the world that's really light, but there are so many shadows, there are so many shadows that I have to deal with and sometimes it's really hard, and sometimes I really think about slashing myself'. (Interview, April 29, 2005)

While this intensely personal disclosure is not necessarily evident in the student's final project, Samia explains how she encouraged the student to explore and express these feelings through her art project. She described the visual metaphors and imagery that the student used:

She took the shadow thing, and she took the conversation about what do you do to cope with it, and she articulated visually as well as verbally that there is a light fairy that protects you. Okay, so the project, the c.d. cover ended up having an image of herself that was fairly dark, she drew a pair of wings that she made glow in PhotoShop, and then there is more darkness around, so she's her own fairy. (Interview, April 29, 2005)

Thus, art making was used not only to explore media representation, but also as a tool for communication and the expression of intense and conflicting emotions.

On the one hand, these processes of self-exploration and expression align with Freedman's (2003) notions of art practice. She states:

Although students' experiences may be private, their method of responding through art is public, and the message is often communal. Through their art, students can express concerns, ask questions, interpret imagery, and make judgements. (Freedman, 2003, p.148)

In other words, art has the potential to provide a safe outlet for young people to 'get out' their emotions, experiences and thoughts. Furthermore, critical engagement³ in the photographic process can open the door for students to explore not only how they can use art as a tool to represent themselves, but also how they themselves are represented and produced in the popular media. Thus, as Freedman (2003) notes, "education is a process of identity formation because we change as we learn; our learning changes our subjective selves" (p.2). By learning how their identities are produced and influenced in the media, and by producing their own images of self, the students can actively engage in a process of identity negotiation and formation.

On the other hand, however, when read through a poststructural and queer framework, nothing is ever that clear-cut. While the above art projects do, to a certain extent, foster creative explorations of self and provide a place to express emotions and ask questions, that is not all they do. As explored in the Theoretical Frameworks and Review of the Literature chapters it is important to interrogate not only what is said, but also what remains unsaid. In critiquing representations of young people in the media, and taking on the task of creating their own self-representations, the students are not

³ Isherwood and Stanley (in Stanley, 2003) define engagement as, "the involvement of the self in the processes of reading and making photographs, the identification of the self in the process of producing photographs and consuming them. It is about what happens when and where the self and the photograph meet. Identification of the

necessarily given the tools to unsettle any of the foundational tenets of identity. By this I mean that modernist notions of identity as a stable, fixed and unchanging entity are not necessarily challenged or disrupted. As such, students may learn that the media portrays untrue images of young people, yet may not receive the training for how to understand or re-imagine identity as something that can be overlapping, intersecting, and fluid in its manifestations. Thus, their creative re-imaginings may end up being nothing more than reiterations of the very discourses the artists were seeking to subvert.

Uncertainty and Subversion in Art

While the artists all provided various descriptions of their respective projects and methods for working with identity and social justice issues, certain concepts and qualities unique to the art process repeatedly come up throughout the interviews - namely the notions of uncertainty, subversion, and envisioning alternatives. Articulating the role of uncertainty, Betty describes:

When you work with art making, ultimately it is about not knowing the end, you don't know the answer...it is about starting with a question. Fundamentally I think that's what art practice is about, you know, it is a discovery practice. (Interview, April 14, 2005)

It could be argued that art is particularly suited to investigating issues of social justice and identity. If there is no set destination, and no right or wrong answer, it has the potential to provide the space in which to simply explore, deconstruct, and reconstruct what we already know about these issues. In other words, art can provide a different way of thinking about, and working with these ideas, without the risk of judgment or

self in the process of looking involves understanding how the self is made to look – and how the self is represented”

failure. Lauren extends:

I would have thought it was flaky before I started doing lots of community based art projects, but there is something that happens in the creative. Like if you think about that in terms of being a thing, an entity unto itself, that creative space that we occupy as a group, but also individually, there's freedom there to think about aspects of our lives that we don't get other spaces, especially in a school environment. (Interview, May 9, 2005)

As explored in the review of the literature, this notion of creative 'freedom' is widely touted in art education theory, where even a blank page of a sketchbook is reconceptualized as an exploratory space. Rice and McNeil (1990) state, "with sketchbooks, one has the power to construct, and may use that power to define for oneself who one is and what art is all about" (p. 109). As such, the so-called 'uncertainty' that the artists insist is inherent in art making can actually be thought of as a potentially productive space for creatively grappling with the tough issues of social justice and identity.

Hand in hand with uncertainty is the concept of subversion. Kiki explained how art and art making provided subversive possibilities to the students. She claimed:

You know and for me making artwork is about finding the creative space to explore the rigidity of the structure that's been laid down, and to show people that the structure is fucking meaningless. It's meaningless on one level. On one level. On another level, it still controls all of society, and all of thinking. So for me, teaching kids these rules and getting them to think about the rules of identity and race and class is one way of showing them how they can transgress or break those rules. (Interview, May 10, 2005)

Thus art can be used to not only identify and examine the systemic forces of oppression, but to also potentially disrupt, or subvert it, through creative imagining.

Kiki continued, "I want them to know, that for me, art has been this way, this road to

my own freedom, to my own liberation, and that it's available to them" (Interview, May 10, 2005). This resonates with Dart's (2004) definition of critical art education, where the goal of "creating an awareness of, revealing, and resisting hidden forms of power" (p. 316) is paramount to teaching art.

While these notions of uncertainty and subversion indeed seem to hold the potential to foster an atmosphere conducive to imaging change, the operative word here is 'potential'. As noted earlier, the arts exist within the realm of discourse and must be regarded as such. The arts are not naturally subversive, but like language, have the ability to reiterate norms, and to "provide the effective means of reproducing the various asymmetries of the socio-political hierarchy and sustain the conditions of hegemony" (Cary, 1998, p.64). As such, the uncertain nature of art making cannot necessarily be regarded as a preface to subversion.

Envisioning Change

This concept of the arts as providing an opportunity to "envision an alternative" (Interview with Lauren, May 9, 2005) is recurring theme in the research data. The notion of envisioning alternatives alludes to an imagination of something different, diverse, and unique. This is exciting for me because, as evidenced in the Review of the Literature, much of the multicultural art education literature stresses the importance of focusing on sameness. In fact, the interviews uncovered that the participants all view art and art making as a method for teaching about difference in a way that goes well beyond the simple acceptance or tolerance that is evidenced in the literature review. Using the choir and choral music as a metaphor for difference and diversity, Amir

illustrates, "I see difference as a way to understand who we are. When we have difference, and when we experience difference, we actually see more of who we are, and without it we wouldn't actually know our full capacity" (Interview, May 4, 2005). Describing how he conveys this message in the classroom, Amir explains how his art (choral music) relies upon diversity and difference for its existence – where each individual with their own unique voice is what makes the art form possible. He notes, "when you sing in a choir you maintain your identity, you never lose yourself, and yet you are one with the community". This individual, unique identity must be cultivated, encouraged, and celebrated within the choir, because, as he so aptly described, "the creation of the difference coming together is the harmony" (Interview with Amir, May 4). Thus difference is portrayed here in a positive, and, in fact, desirable light in terms of its contribution to the creative process.

The theme of difference as not only a positive, but also an essential attribute runs throughout the interviews. Samia relays a story of a student attending one of her art shows, recounting:

I did this installation in Surrey that used saris, and you know, the little brown faces just lit up. They were like, 'I know what this is!' So suddenly they are in privileged positions because they know something that their counterparts don't know". (Interview, May 12, 2005)

Here, the norms are flipped around and as such, difference can be perceived as desirable - something to highlight rather than something to obscure or downplay. Supporting this point, Lauren relays a similar example with high school aged students that also strongly illustrates the potential for art to provide a unique entry into social justice and identity issues. She relates how Craig, a self-identified gay teenager,

suddenly becomes one of the 'cool' students in the art class, because of his queer identity. She explains:

Because all of a sudden you have all this cultural power that you didn't before, and you manage to turn it into something else, right? Because you have this cultural capital, you have access to something that creatively we think is really interesting. I see that happen all the time. (Interview, May 9, 2005)

Here Lauren explains the potential for transforming 'difference' into something that is ultimately desirable in the realm of art. This resonates with Addison (2005), who expresses, "Perhaps in art...the school student can be recognized as an experiential, desiring, willful, pleasure-seeking, intersubjective being, a person capable of negotiating an identity that is both personally affirming and socially enabling" (P.29). By placing value on difference, there is a unique inversion of power where the non-normative identity is recognized not as an oddity or something to be suppressed or hidden, but rather as a culturally significant and creatively important positionality to be asserted and explored.

Even within this affirmation of queer identity it is important to use a critical lens to examine what is actually at work here. In gaining "cultural capital", the queerly identified student is simply included into normative discourses of identity. This aligns with poststructural criticisms of inclusion as a remedy for the injurious effects of representational absence. As such, what it is to be 'normal' is never questioned or troubled - in fact, 'normal', or in this case, heterosexual identity, is simply reinforced against the abnormal other. When the strategy of inclusion is used as *the* solution (rather than as a springboard into a deconstruction of 'normal'), it risks reproducing the

very structures it sought to subvert. Consequently, the realm of art might provide a uniquely fertile ground for this sort of inversion of power through cultural capital or creativity, however this alone is not enough to necessarily enact change.

Some Other Limitations

For the purposes of this research, it is important to critically examine the qualities of being attributed to art and art making, and to locate them amongst the myriad of other factors that ultimately must be present for any 'free' exploration of identity to occur. First of all, it is essential to note that art is not, in and of itself, a naturally accessible and easily approachable medium for expression. As Thomas duly noted:

I think that, sadly, sometimes art creates situations of injustice. And that it's really unfortunate that people put other people down because of what they make or sing or write, or people are left out because of what they create, and I think that creates a kind of injustice and bad will ... I think it is because of the competitive nature that we put into artistic endeavors. (Interview, June 3, 2003)

Here, Thomas calls into question the aforementioned ability of art to allow the space for free exploration, by pointing out that some students can not even access the space in the first place. Like all other subjects in school, art is competitive and possesses criteria for judgment. Echoing Atkinson (1999), I would argue that students' work in the art classroom is classified and graded according to particular expectations wherein notions of 'talent' and 'quality' play a part. Furthermore, "these classifications establish a normative discursive regime which pupils' abilities in art practice are positioned and regulated" (Atkinson, 1999, p. 109). As such, this hardly represents an unencumbered space particularly conducive to explorations of identity.

On top of this, 'talent' in art is often based upon modernist conceptions of a 'natural' talent, or inclination towards self-expression. Addison (2005) states, "the teacher's role is to enable students to understand and embody their emotions through natural capacities, aptitudes, or talent" (pp. 22-23). Consequently, within this system, students noted for their originality are rewarded and promoted. This can be intimidating and discouraging for students who are not believed to possess a 'natural' talent for the arts. It can also be an exclusionary process, whereby the art room becomes "a special place for special students – which [is] good for the talented minority – but it also [makes] it seem foreign and perhaps even forbidden, to the majority of students" (Hoffa, 1990, p.5). Moreover, the concept of a natural talent for expressing the self relies upon the liberal and essentialist belief that there is an innate and stable self always already inside each student, just waiting to be tapped into and expressed through art (Addison, 2005).

Added to this, the history of art from which students are more than likely being taught is itself riddled with conspicuous gaps and gross inequities. As explicated in the review of the literature, the art history and curricula taught in North American schools is often oppressive, ethnocentric and incomplete (Chalmers, 1992). Explicating this point, Addison (2005) states, "at the close of the twentieth century the complete invisibility of lesbian artists within popular stories of modern art was particularly noticeable" (p 25). Thus, in terms of exploring identity, the scope of acceptability is definitely curtailed by what subjectivities 'count' in the history of art. This is important to recognize because even in the spaces where art and art making do provide places for exploration and

expression – these spaces are always circumscribed by what identities are considered normal and what positionalities matter. While a blank page in a sketchbook may allow one to construct and “define for oneself who one is and what art is all about” (Rice and McNeil, 1990, p. 109), the book and the artist still exist within discourse. This means that the sketches and musings that may occur in these spaces are, in fact, limited by many factors, including the scope and depth of what was deemed worthy of consideration within art history.

Conclusion

This research illuminates the notion that when using art to deal with social justice and identity, the creative process is not simply a manual one. Rather, ‘doing art’ that is focussed on social justice or identity is a process that inevitably begins with how the artists gets the students thinking about the topics. This research has uncovered how the steps of discussion, critical thinking, imagining and creating are symbiotically related and thus cannot be separated out from one another. Art, like any other tool of communication and expression, can be used in many different ways. To assume anything else would be irresponsible and dangerous. However, the participants in this study overwhelmingly explicated the benefits and unique advantages of art, and the act of art making in navigating through the tough terrain of social justice and identity work in the classroom. Simply having a paintbrush in hand does not guarantee that a student will create a transcendent work of art that imagines change. However, a student who has been taught to think critically about a topic may in fact wield the brush as a tool for forging new and creative ideas for transformation.

Chapter 7

Conclusions and Implications

Introduction

This project was propelled by the desire to uncover how artists in the classroom doing social-justice-oriented residencies understood the terms 'social justice' and 'identity'. I wanted to know how the artists defined these concepts, and how they explored and taught about these issues through art. The questions that guided this inquiry were: (1) How does the artist-in-residence conceptualize the terms 'social justice' and 'identity'? (2) Why is art used to critically engage the students in an exploration of 'identity' and 'social justice'? And (3) how do norms and heteronorms function in these conceptualizations and explorations of 'identity' and 'social justice'? In this chapter I outline the main findings that resulted from this line of inquiry, and conclude with an examination of the inherent limitations to this study, as well as the implications for future practice and research in the field.

Major Findings

Identities Matter

Who the artists are, and how they conceive of their own identities influences how they teach about social justice and identity in the classroom. All who felt comfortable and safe doing so opted to teach from the personal. That is, the artists who felt that they had nothing to risk or lose by opening up about their personal lives and sharing aspects of their identities in the context of the residency chose this as a method for teaching about social justice and identity in the classroom. These artists felt that by sharing their own identities and personal experiences with the students, they were able

to foster an atmosphere of honesty, authenticity and openness in the art room that was conducive to learning and exploring identity and social justice issues. Furthermore, they felt that opening up about themselves allowed them to make connections with, relate to, and provide different perspectives for the students.

Without denying these benefits, the research also uncovered that this approach can be limiting in that certain (normative) identities become sanctioned through repeated exposure in the schools (Butler, 1993), while other (non-normative) identities remain absent and unspoken. This is made clear in that only those artists who identified as queer felt unable or unwilling to be completely 'open' about their identities and personal lives while in the classroom. As a result, certain issues (such as sexism and racism) and identities (such as binary conceptions of gender and race) were repeatedly raised in the residencies, whereas others were left unaddressed. In particular, sexual identity was almost always left out of the discussion.

As a result, the artists' identities and positionalities greatly influence the topics they feel they can discuss in the classroom. As per Butler's (1990) theory of performativity, a certain limited number of issues repeatedly get raised (sexism, racism, etc), and normative positionalities are reiterated. For example, when all of the heterosexual artists openly reveal their sexuality (usually inadvertently through casual references to marital status), a cycle of disclosure occurs wherein heterosexuality is safely acknowledged and reiterated, and thus comes to be perceived as the only normal and legitimate possibility. Furthermore, since teaching from the personal was favoured as a way to breach social justice and identity issues in the classroom, the heterosexual

artists did not feel like they had the expertise to raise the issue of sexuality in the classroom, and the queerly identified artists did not feel safe or qualified to do so either. Consequently, the artists' identities ended up circumscribing what they felt capable of teaching about.

Slippery Definitions

Couched within this overarching finding are the artists' definitions of 'social justice'. The research revealed that this is, indeed, a slippery term, with definitions that vary from artist to artist, and situation to situation. I say this because the artists each had a slightly different understanding of what exactly social justice meant to them. On top of this, none of the artists had a fixed notion of social justice that they simply applied in each of their residencies. In fact, the definition and enactment of social justice seemed to shift and change depending on the school, the students in the classroom and various other factors. Furthermore, when understood in the context of the first finding, it is clear that the artists' identity negotiation is also influential for how they conceptualize and teach about social justice.

Despite this lack of a concrete definition, there is a unifying thread in all of their definitions; social justice is defined as a way to critically navigate through the everyday world of contemporary culture. Moving away from single-issue identity politics, all of the artists' verbal definitions point towards a much more complex and intersecting understanding of the term. In conceiving of 'social justice' as a way to critically engage with contemporary culture, the artists express a desire and need to move beyond identity politics. For example, Lauren (Interview, May 9, 2005) claims "you can't talk

about racism with teenagers without it being so much more involved with every other aspect of their life". As such, the definition of social justice that surfaces in this research is a fluid conception that somewhat resonates with poststructural and queer theories of intersectionality, where multiple and mixed identities transcend the categorizations made possible through identity politics.

Even while this redefinition of social justice points to a more complicated and intersecting understanding of identity in the art classroom, the research uncovered that the artists did not necessarily enact these more complex definitions in their actual residencies. In deciding what issues needed to be raised in the classroom, the artists often relied upon listening and looking for the 'problems' through 'taking the pulse of the school', or 'keeping an ear to the ground'. These approaches may be effective in detecting certain social justice and identity issues in the school, however they also risk dealing only with what is perceived as different. This means that, for example, racism is perceived as a problem, yet white privilege remains unmarked and therefore untroubled. Furthermore, the silences and absences in the classroom may not be detected with these approaches, wherein, for example, homophobia may not appear to be a pertinent issue, and is therefore left undiscussed. Consequently, despite an expressed desire to strategically utilize, yet move forward from identity-based politics, certain issues were left undiscussed and untroubled, while others often appeared to be raised in isolation from one another and in a very uncomplicated manner.

Why Art?

This research uncovered that within art and art making there is the potential for

different and creative ways of breaching and exploring social justice and identity. Both the art education literature and the artist interviews reveal that art and art making possess some unique characteristics that make them particularly suited for doing social justice and identity work in the classroom. For example, the data uncovered the primary importance of teaching the students how to look. By communicating to the students that there is always more to look at, different ways of seeing, and multiple perspectives to explore in images, the artists sought to foster a sense of critical exploration and thinking. Furthermore, notions of expressing concerns, asking questions and self-representation were explored through the actual hands-on art making process. Finally, it was uncovered in the interviews that the uncertain, exploratory and process-oriented nature of art making made it uniquely suited for envisioning change.

The poststructural and queer frameworks of this research do not negate or diminish these characteristics as they are attributed to art and art making, however they do critically interrogate and expose them for debate. The data shows that the students' experiences with art and art making are mediated by individuals whose various identities and social locations impact on how and what they choose to teach about during their residency. This indicates that even though art may be a uniquely advantageous method for exploring these issues, the artists' identities and social locations influence what issues they will raise. Additionally, teachers, school administration and parents also exert influence over what may be addressed in the classroom. Lastly and perhaps most importantly, it is essential to note that the arts

may provide a space for creative imagining; however, they do not exist outside of discourse. As such, the arts are not naturally subversive, but like language, have the ability to reiterate norms and reproduce harmful systems of hegemony. They must be seen in this way if they are to fulfil the subversive and transcendent potential allotted to them.

Limitations of this Study

While certain questions were answered, and lines of inquiry satisfied, the limitations of this study became clear as the research progressed. Standing out in the forefront is the absence of more in-depth study of actual art practice. In focusing on the artists' definitions of social justice and identity, and their verbal explanations of how and why they use art to deal with these issues, this research neglects to examine the actual art. This could be seen as a limitation because the hands-on doing and making of art is, arguably, where the real, visceral exploration of the issues occurs for the students.

Linked to this, the study is also limited in its use of interview subjects. This project covers only one perspective of the artist-in-residence experience – that of the artist. While the artists are ultimately responsible for the ideas and issues that they bring to the classroom, there are also students (and consequently, parents/guardians) teachers and administration involved in the equation. Their involvement in the project would have added many more voices and perspectives that would no doubt have influenced the research in different ways.

On top of this, there are inevitably limitations with the actual methods used for

data collection. For the purposes of this project I utilized interviews to collect data. It could be argued that a project dealing with art should include some sort of visual analysis of actual artwork. It is undeniable that an examination of the art projects would provide an opportunity to explore the visual manifestations of how students grapple with social justice and identity. Art is arguably about what happens at the boundaries of the un-sayable, and looking at the student work would add a different element to this research.

Finally, there are limitations to be found in the theoretical stance taken in this project. Poststructural and queer theories present some unique issues to the research process that could be construed as barriers or limitations. First of all, in the process of trying to deconstruct identity categories, there is always the risk of erasing the very identities that have had to struggle for recognition and existence in the first place. A fine line exists between deconstruction for the purposes of opening up, and erasure. Furthermore, because poststructuralism does not provide one 'right' answer or 'correct' method for doing things, this theoretical framework is sometimes perceived of as immobilizing. These theories can be interpreted as limiting in that they seem to generate more questions rather than strategies or final solutions.

It is essential to be aware of and consider these limitations, and to recognize that there are undoubtedly others that remain unacknowledged. This is not meant to discredit the research project, or to imply that it is not valid, but rather to acknowledge that the work ultimately provides a situated and partial perspective (Haraway, 1991). Consequently, every attempt at addressing gaps in the research will inevitably open up

new areas of concern, and more aspects to be studied.

Implications for Practice

As noted above, the theoretical frameworks used in this research do not provide any sort of answer, or ultimate solution for artists who deal with social justice and identity in the classroom. What this project did uncover, however, is that despite their best intentions, not all work done in the name of social justice is necessarily beneficial to the students. The findings indicate that by opening up in the classroom and addressing issues such as racism and sexuality, the artists do not always trouble what is considered normal, nor do they disrupt oppressive systems of power. In fact, the opposite might inadvertently occur, and against all of their efforts they may end up reinforcing and reiterating exactly what they are trying to subvert.

With this in mind, I offer as an on-going strategy to artists who do such work in the classroom, a list of questions to be applied to their practice:

- What positionalities are present in your definition of identity? What positionalities are left out?
- How does your own identity impact what you are comfortable discussing in the classroom?
- What identities get raised over and over in your classroom discussions?
- What identities are never raised?
- What social justice issues are repeatedly dealt with?
- What social justice issues never seem to arise?
- What issues do you feel most comfortable discussing in the classroom? What issues make you feel uncomfortable? Why?
- When you bring up issues of oppression, do you also address issues of privilege?

- Do the art practices you use, and the art histories you call upon reflect only a certain cultural tradition?
- Do you talk about artists' sexualities when they fit the norm (i.e. Picasso and the women in his life), but leave the matter undiscussed when they are queer (i.e. Michelangelo and the men in his life)?
- When trying to gauge what issues need to be addressed in a classroom, do you only look for the obvious conflicts and tensions, or do you also seek out the absences and silences?
- Do you always try to deal with the 'problem', or do you look for ways to address what is 'normal'?

Since "every silence constitutes a particular kind of presence" (Atkinson, 2002, p.125), it is imperative that artists develop an awareness of when and where the gaps are occurring both in the classroom, and in their own practice. By constantly interrogating and revisiting their practice, it is hoped that artists will question their own actions, assumptions and silences in the classroom.

Implications for Future Research

Even as this study seeks to fill some of the gaps in the existing literature and research, it inevitably opens up new areas for future inquiry. As noted in the Limitations of this Research section of this chapter, this project only sought out the perspectives and opinions of artists working in the classroom. It would be beneficial to conduct further research in this area that is inclusive of the multiple players involved in artist residencies. This work might include artists, students, teachers, parents and school administrators. Such a project would offer a glimpse of the dynamic relationships that inevitably exist in artist residencies. Undoubtedly, the tensions that surface on issues of identity and social justice are rendered even more complex with

the introduction of so many additional perspectives.

While this research focuses on the discourses that surround and permeate the artist residency, a similar project that focuses on the actual art making process and final art works would also be useful to the field of art education research. The actual process of physically doing/making art can be a very visceral experience with its own complexities and dynamics. A poststructural and queer analysis of the creative processes involved in an artist residency would be a unique addition to the body of literature in art education.

Similarly, more research utilizing poststructural, queer, postcolonial and critical race theory would be a welcome addition to the field of multicultural art education. As noted in the Review of the Literature, this field is dominated by modernist/humanist discourses, with only a very few other theoretical perspectives adding their voices. The introduction of these frameworks would work to complicate the notions of subject and identity that reside in this field.

Finally, while this project centres on gender, race and sexuality, it is imperative that more work be done to denaturalize notions of class, ability, race, gender, sexuality, age, and so on. Just as the unspoken norms of whiteness and heterosexuality were brought to light (and hopefully destabilized) in this research, so to must these other norms be interrogated and troubled with future research.

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Appendix C - Sample Interview Guide – For the first interview

These interview questions are designed for artists who have been in the past, or are currently engaged in an artist residency that deals with social justice and identity in a Vancouver school. It is estimated that each interview will last up to a maximum of 60 minutes. Subsequent interviews will explore themes uncovered during the first interview.

Background/Overview Questions

- When and how did you begin doing residencies on social justice and identity in schools?
- What grade levels do you work with?
- Describe your role in the classroom during the residency.
- Explain what you understand the main purpose of your residency to be.

Questions about their practice

- Explain what 'social justice' means to you.
- Describe what you try to communicate to the students about social justice.
- Talk about how you conceptualize 'identity'.
- Why is 'identity' an important issue to explore with students?
- What do you try to communicate to the students about 'identity'?
- How does your own identity influence your work?
- How do you feel your residencies are perceived by the teacher whose class you are working in, and then by the school at large. (What is the climate at the school?)
- Explain the role that curriculum requirements, pressure from teachers, administration, and parents, and school politics play in what you cover in your residency.
- What types of challenges do you face in doing this type of work?