

## Response to Hausman's Article

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This fall, I asked my art education class on multicultural and cross-cultural studies to define culture. Some of their definitions included *traditions; ways of behaving, valuing, thinking, believing; ways of seeing and understanding; and patterns for living among a group of people and within a community*. Jerry's reflections that "We learn within a cultural tradition" and that "One's view of oneself (self-image) is inextricably linked with one's . . . culture" convey equally well the foundations of education in culture and identity.<sup>1</sup> The "balance" that Jerry calls for between external cultural factors and developing a "sense of who we are" is a poignant factor in multicultural education.

In calling the period in which we now live a time of "crisis" fraught with "problem[s]" of "differing cultural orientations," Jerry implies, in part, there are cultural wars currently waged over what we educate for. Although former European colonies such as the U.S. and Canada were founded on bringing together people of many cultural backgrounds, the educational ideology of what culture(s) are *ours*, what cultures are studied in school, and what unifies the nation are battlegrounds. The outcome of educating for assimilation, amalgamation, or pluralism—and whether we teach for tolerance or for respect—can alter the next generation's thinking about how to live in the world. E. D. Hirsch's (1988) arguments for cultural literacy, put forth by Smith (1988) in our own field, are persuasive and popular tools in the argument for assimilation. This argument is based on the idea that there is a body of cultural knowledge, mostly based in European traditions, that should be known by all people in the U.S. The amalgamation argument, as put forth by Diane Ravitch (1991/1992), forms around U.S. culture as an accretion of various cultural traditions and concludes that this mix should be the focus of multicultural understanding and education. Pluralists argue that U.S. culture is a mix of cultural traditions and that the cultural content and ideology of pluralism is the foundation of education. Shared knowledge and understandings are built, not on knowing the same facts, but on shared understandings about culture and living in a pluralistic society. In the field of art education, Blandy & Congdon (1988), Chalmers (1996), Congdon (1989), Daniel & Daniel (1979), Grigsby (1979), Lanier (1976), McFee (1998), Wasson, Stuhr, & Petrovich-Mwaniki (1990), many of the authors in Young (1990), and many others (and other articles than those cited here) put forward different forms of this view.

What is the actual (rather than the idealized) cultural content of multicultural education? In approaching how we teach multicultural art, Sleeter & Grant's (1988) study revealed five traditions that have been discussed often elsewhere (for example, Wasson, Stuhr, & Petrovich-Mwaniki, 1990; Zimmerman, 1990).<sup>2</sup> They advocate an approach that is both pluralist and reconstructionist. In this approach, education is based in learning about and coming to respect the plural cultures of the U.S. as well as educating students to take action to change racism, sexism, and

inequity and to create social justice in their schools and in society. In the art world, the most eloquent and persuasive spokesperson for similar views is Guillermo Gomez-Peña (1986) who advocates that “we must learn each other’s language, history, art, literature, and political ideas.” . . . Rather than making distinctions between one side and the other, as though the border [between them] is an ‘abyss’,” Gomez-Peña suggests we regard the border as “a cardinal intersection of many realities” that needs to be understood within a range of “demographic, economic, and cultural” facts (p. 97).

We should not forget, however, as Jerry reminds us, the identity given us in our culture of origin, whatever that may be. I understand this as part of the “balance” he calls for in the title to his paper: a balance between knowing who we are and living as a person in the borderlands, ever open to learning about and becoming involved in realities beyond the borders of our own culture. This is educating for what Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) calls the “new mestiza,” the multiculturally sensitive person caught between cultures, who has learned to separate out that which is important to her beliefs and desires for a better and more just world (pp. 82-83). I find the proposition to achieve such a balance a stimulating guide for approaching art education that lends a sense of possibility that the world can be a better place and that we, as educators, have an important role to play.

## Notes

1. We live within a many cultured country and world, which, as Jerry cautions, should not be thought of as a “global village.” The so-called *village* has much more to do with economic and technological realms than with learning how to communicate and live between and across cultures.
2. Five general approaches Sleeter & Grant (1988) cite in their study were:
  - 1) *Teaching the culturally different*: students from non-European, non-white groups are educated for assimilation into the Euro-American social structure and culture.
  - 2) *Human relations approach*: all students are educated to cooperate together and to build strong self-concepts.
  - 3) *Single Group Studies*: is focused on a specific non-European based culture, without significant attention to building cross-cultural understandings.
  - 4) *Multicultural Education*: promotes cultural pluralism and diversity and social equity for all students and includes study of several specific cultures and building cross-cultural understandings.
  - 5) *Education that is Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist*: promotes social and cultural change in society through positive actions. It challenges the inequality of social structures that deny diversity. The goal is to become analytic and critical thinkers capable of examining their life circumstances and the social stratification’s that keep them and their group fully enjoying the social and financial rewards of the country.

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