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The editors of the *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education* thank Dennis Jones, Director, and Kelly Leslie, Associate Professor, School of Art, University of Arizona, for editorial and design support in making this issue of the journal a reality.

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Contents

Editorial	8
<i>Elizabeth Garber</i>	
Superhero Comic Books as Frameworks of Inclusivity and Advocacy for Youth with Disabilities	10
<i>Valerie L. Karr and Courtney L. Weida</i>	
Taiwanese Undergraduates' Digital Story Quests for Art Treasures in Second Life	32
<i>Mary Stokrocki and Jin-Shiow Chen</i>	
Public Culture and Heritage: A Beijing Based Field School	60
<i>Doug Blandy and John Fenn</i>	
"How Will You Do This?" Infusing Multiculturalism Throughout Art Teacher Education Programs	83
<i>Joni Boyd Acuff</i>	
Examining Fair Trade as an Art Education Opportunity	103
<i>Amanda Alexander, Connie DeJong, Jen Miller, and James Sanders III</i>	
Asian Immigrant Women's Emotional Reflection on Artworks	127
<i>Kyungeun Lim</i>	

Editorial Introduction

Elizabeth Garber

Is the Tower of Babel to be understood as a curse upon humankind or as a wealth of diversity? In art and visual culture education, were we to discuss it, the latter interpretation would prevail, for we have a long and deep engagement with valuing diverse cultures and differences among individuals, and working for social and educational change that will promote social justice. This issue of *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education (jCRAE)* continues this rich heritage, with articles ranging from empowering youth experiencing disability to a self-examination of teaching multicultural art education to experiences of immigrant women, and from bases in the US, Syria, China, and Taiwan. Each of the authors works for social justice through education, envisioning another step towards social transformation. The authors use field-based methodologies, bringing readers teaching and learning experiences from classrooms, a field school, a gallery, and interviews.

Valerie Karr and Courtney Weida ask what happens when educators bring youth from Syria and the US together to advocate for disability rights as a human rights issue. Through the creation of comic books, the youth promote their own empowerment as well as awareness in readers of disability rights. Mary Stokrocki and Jin-Shiow Chen examine how digital stories based on artworks can be developed as personal narratives in *Second Life*. Working with Taiwanese college students, they note teaching strategies used and themes that emerged from assignments involving this virtual world. Doug Blandy and John Fenn explore strategies to deeply engage western learners in cultural understanding while at a field school in Beijing. They do so across disciplines, geographies, cultures, and technologies. Looking at her own teaching, Joni Acuff weaves multicultural principles across the content of an art methods course for pre-service teachers. Through this exploration, she develops a critical platform for classroom engagement of the ideals of diversity in social justice. Fair Trade in a globalized world is under scrutiny in the contribution of authors

Amanda Alexander, Connie DeJong, Jen Miller, and Jim Sanders. Using a dialogical approach, they engage undergraduates in learning about social and environmental justice through a local gallery that promotes Fair Trade. Kyeungeun Lim explores the experience of Asian immigrant women accompanying their spouses for study in the US. Through showing the women a series of western and home country artworks, she reflects on the women's empathetic responses to the artworks, noting various connections her participants make between their lives and the images.

We launch the 2012/2013 edition of the journal as an online, open source publication. The move supports wide access to the research and ideas brought forth by the authors, as well as a more environmentally friendly approach to journal publication. Both these objectives are in keeping with the spirit of *jCRAE*.

Thanks go out to many people for bringing this issue together. Thanks to authors for submitting your work to the journal, to the *jCRAE* Review Board for working insightfully and diligently to review articles and respond to various queries, to the USSEA Board for their support of the journal and its switch to online publication, and to the past editorial team of Dipti Desai and Kate Brideau for help in the transition between editors. Agradecimientos y gratitud to Ryan Shin for designing the online platform for the journal and launching the *jcræ.org* interface, to Jorge Lucero for designing the *jCRAE* logo, to Kelly Leslie for designing the layout of this issue, and to Erica Richard who has kept editor, reviewers, and authors in communication as well as followed through with the template that Kelly laid out. Finally, thank you to our patient readers who have waited across the many changes the journal has undergone since volume 29, and to all readers who join our community through their commitment to social justice in the arts and education. Junto/as (pero no revuelto/as), lo hicimos realidad.

Superhero Comic Books as Frameworks of Inclusivity and Advocacy for Youth With Disabilities¹

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ABSTRACT

This article explores cross-cultural collaborations between Syrian and American youth with disabilities interested in promoting social change by creating comic books to advocate for human rights of people with disabilities. During participatory human rights education and storyboard activities, youth drew from personal experiences with disability to create comic book characters that raise public awareness about disability issues. These characters and storylines aimed to promote inclusion, empowerment, and the readers' respect for diversity. The authors discuss issues of disability and activism across cultures that emerged from our visual art and human rights curriculum framework. This curriculum and resulting comic book are proposed as tools to promote disability awareness, increase personal empowerment, and raise consciousness around social activism and cultural understanding. From the perspectives of professors of special education and art education, we investigate the transformative aspects of advocacy, representation, and expression for youth cultivated within the comic book creation.

Introduction

During August of 2010, the Open Hands Initiative along with the Victor Pineda Foundation and Liquid Comics organized a three-day Youth Ability Summit in Damascus, Syria. This cross-cultural event generated collaborations between Syrian and American youth with the goal of promoting social change through creating comic books pertaining to the human rights of people with disabilities. Using storyboard and discussion activities, youth created heroes and

¹The authors wish to thank the Open Hands Initiative, Victor Pineda Foundation, Liquid Comics, and Brown Lloyd James for their support.

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villains representing issues related to disability awareness. This artistic approach stemmed from an ethos of inclusion and social participation in problem solving. In this article, we explore disability and advocacy across cultures within collaborative experiences of representing comic book superheroes with disabilities. Our participatory curriculum of storyboard and discussion is introduced as a framework for promoting disability awareness, social activism, personal empowerment, and cultural understanding.

Theoretical Context

According to the World Report on Disability, over one billion people or 15% of the world's total population have some form of disability. Persons with disabilities are among the most marginalized and discriminated against populations, placing them at risk for poorer health, lower educational achievements, and higher rates of poverty than persons without disabilities (World Health Organization and World Bank, 2011). In 2008, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [UNCRPD] was ratified to protect and promote the rights and dignities of persons with disabilities. The UNCRPD provides a new model for understanding disability as an interaction between a person's abilities and various societal barriers. This perspective shifts the focus of disability advocacy from addressing disability within the individual to emphasizing interactions with obstacles that a person with disabilities may encounter (which hinder individual potential to fully realize human rights).

Often people with disabilities encounter negative attitudes (both intentional and unconscious) that are held by members of society. Such obstacles can lead to negative self-esteem and reduced community participation of persons with disabilities (World Health Organization and World Bank, 2011). Finger (2005) notes there are also particular tropes and stereotypes of disability narratives pertaining to injury or trauma, often with a transformative arc lived out by a "spunky cripple, the wounded hero, the tragic but brave overcomer"

(p. 613). Individuals often interact with people with disabilities based on their stereotypes of actions, representations, and discourses that precede or preclude the person with a disability.

Through the creation of awareness-raising tools such as the Youth Ability Summit curriculum, youth gain opportunities to influence their “representation” and develop discourses to help bring more nuance and authenticity to interpretations of disability. Promoting disability awareness is an important aspect of the UNCRPD (Article 8) and contemporary youth with disabilities have indicated a distinctly different approach to raising awareness than their predecessors. Betsy Valnes (2011), an active member of the youth disability rights movement, examined gaps between the first wave of disability activism with today: “Leaders of the disability rights movement seem to want to stay in one wave. But the needs of people with disabilities have changed, and if we want to remain relevant, our vision and understanding of change must evolve” (p. 55). Valnes stressed that while it is important to learn about disability history and culture, the methods of the past may not solve the problems of the future. To achieve “rights that make us equal world citizens with equal responsibilities,” young disability leaders employ “diverse methods by which [they] reach this goal” (p. 55). One approach includes using the arts to combat common stereotypes, discrimination, marginalization, and stigma association with persons with disabilities (Eisenhauer, 2007). The Summit invited youth to consider and revise common stereotypes about disability through art.

To probe social complexities within aesthetics and disability, the comic book medium was chosen for its accessible, youth-oriented appeal. Hewitt (2006) has observed a complex relationship between disability and so-called super powers, wherein exceptionality and disability are deeply linked (as in many characters from X-Men comics). Batgirl (Barbara Gordon) is an intriguing female characterization of superpower, for her mythology includes an injury that transforms her from an able-bodied super heroine into a person with paraplegia. Instead of returning to her life, Gordon chooses to reinvent herself

as a martial artist and computer expert in her second super heroine identity, Oracle. Visually, in the comic book pages depicting Oracle and her wheelchair, there is much visual emphasis on the physical disability and chair rather than the actions, strengths, and abilities of the character. Within our project, we wanted to raise some of these issues of physical disability, shifts in identity, and representation of the body and assistive devices within the experiences of youth with disabilities represented through the Silver Scorpion character.

Derby (2011) notes that disability studies examining first-hand perspectives of students with disabilities and others is sorely needed in art education. While there is a history of disability representation in the genre of superheroes that is well founded, the authors to date have not been representatives of the disability community and at times have served to perpetuate common myths and stereotypes. A need exists for new comic book characters that are representative of the views and experiences of those with disabilities themselves. Just as the comic book medium has historically addressed some issues of disability from an adult perspective (usually mobility impairment), we also found that international comic books have included some Middle Eastern superheroes (e.g. Archer of Arabia, Osiris, Sinbad). However, we hoped to focus upon youth representations of these particular disability and geographical communities from within.

Youth-friendly, user-generated content on Facebook, YouTube, and other spaces of youth culture also provide powerful pedagogical spaces for personalized representations of disabilities. The comic book format provided fluid, accessible frameworks that extended from conversations during the Summit to subsequent Facebook exchanges. The finished comic is also freely available digitally through Facebook, Twitter, and Scribd. Indeed, comic books and graphic novel explorations can also target a wide readership, employing modalities of traditional and visual literacy that are meaningful for diverse learners and/or those with disabilities. The unique narrative formatting in comics has also been observed to improve traditional and visual literacy among students with dyslexia (Weida, 2011).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to chronicle experiences of 23 youth with disabilities in collaboratively creating a comic book superhero, and to explore the following questions:

How does the experience of being a change agent versus passive recipient during the Youth Ability Summit impact youth with disabilities?

How does the collaborative process/experience of creating a superhero with disabilities enable youth with disabilities to a) investigate disability issues and b) develop skills to promote disability awareness?

Methodology

Due to the social nature of our research questions, we drew upon the theoretical research orientation of Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969) to gain an understanding of experiences of the youth during the Summit. Symbolic Interactionism frameworks encourage researchers to use qualitative methods such as participant observations, interviews, and open-ended surveys to study aspects of social interaction. We examined images, videos, and transcripts of activities during the Summit, as well as evaluations and social media from the release of the comic in order to probe youth experiences of self and disability expressed through discussion, writings, and artistic products. Over the course of the Summit, sources of information collected from the participants also included participants' drawings and notes. Three facilitators, one an author of this paper, and two research assistants implemented the Summit curriculum, recorded field observations, distributed and collected daily evaluations, and conducted video interviews in Syria.

Youth Ability Summit Background

The Summit was part of the inaugural launch of The Open Hands Initiative, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving interpersonal understanding and international friendship through dialogue

and mutual respect. The Summit brought together American and Syrian youth disability advocates to share experiences, ideas, and cultures, culminating in a creative product aimed to promote the rights of youth with disabilities. The Open Hands Initiative chose to focus on generating communication between American and Syrian citizens, as a need currently exists for communication and cross-cultural relationships that can withstand political differences. As Desai (2005) suggests, "multicultural curriculum should provide a space for students to explore the ways events in their local communities are connected to the global and their role in this local/global relationship that is always contingent, fluid, ambiguous, and contradictory" (p. 306). We posit that disability may be viewed as a cultural grouping that can transcend some geographic, political, and cultural differences, particularly as a topic of shared experience providing a connective opportunity to build relationships based on common ground. At the same time, this Summit was structured to encourage youth to explore differences and shift perspectives around issues of Syrian and American culture from pre-judgments to more informed understandings.

During the Summit, the youth worked as creative consultants together with comic book and disability experts on the creation of a publishing platform new to them—a comic book—for promoting the understanding and acceptance of people with disabilities. The Summit discussions and presentations served as springboards for Liquid Comics (one of three facilitators) to develop the Silver Scorpion characters and storyline. The activities explored the contexts of disability, cultures (American and Syrian), and shared social values to be addressed in the superhero comic living with and representing these issues. The overlapping experiences youth identified as part of living with disabilities in Syria and in the United States (bullying, discrimination, and self-advocacy) provided context for the comic storyline. In addition, the attributes of superheroes were generated from youths' sketches, brainstorming, and group presentations (Figure 1). For the comic book's origin story, students also drew upon the myth of Zenobia's Crown³ (Winsbury, 2010), a story significant in Syrian culture.

³ Queen Zenobia of Palmyra in Syria was a complex figure in classical antiquity,



Figure 1. Summit participants discuss rights of persons with disabilities at the Open Hands Initiative Youth Ability Summit in Damascus, Syria in August 2010.

Participants

American participants were contacted through a call for participation and selected through a rubric score that evaluated disability advocacy experience, extracurricular activities, and creativity within their overall application. Due to difficulties contacting young people with disabilities in Syria, selection processes were aided by collaborations with three disability organizations. These organizations were sent information about the Summit and asked to nominate five youth participants from their organizations.

heroine to Roman authors and to Chaucer, Gibbon, and the Neoclassical painters and sculptors of the nineteenth century. In her desperate search for the survival of her city, Zenobia fell foul of the Roman Emperor Aurelian. The image of her paraded in golden chains in Aurelian's triumphal procession at Rome has been transformed in modern times into a symbol of women's struggle for emancipation. Zenobia is subject of ancient and modern legends as a beautiful, intellectual Arab queen of the desert. Her crown serves to symbolize strength and intelligence (Winsbury, 2010).

Participants ranged in age from 15 to 24 years old with a mean age of 18 years. Of the 23 participants, 15 were female and 8 were male. Participants represented various types of disabilities, with 36% (8) indicating physical disabilities, 36% (8) indicating sensory disabilities, 23% (5) indicating intellectual disabilities, and 5% (1) indicating multiple disabilities. Types of disability included B/blindness, D/deafness,⁴ autism spectrum disorders, Down syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, brain injuries, intellectual disabilities, and physical disabilities. In terms of creative sensibilities, it was observed that two participants had an affinity for drawing and one was an avid comic book reader.

The Setting

The Summit took place in a hotel conference room equipped with audiovisual technology (laptop computer, projector and screen, microphones), artistic materials (drawing paper, markers, colored pencils, tape), and accommodation supports (translators, sign language interpreters, and e-copies of materials) to ensure the events were accessible to all.

The Summit was led by interdisciplinary facilitators, one an author of this article, who were all experienced in leading participatory workshops. Two of the facilitators were experts in disability rights, youth, and advocacy strategies (one facilitator was a person with a disability). The third facilitator was the founder of an international comic book company aimed at addressing social issues. All three facilitators had higher education teaching experience. The second author of our article served as a consulting collaborator in developing additional Silver Scorpion curricula in the United States, bringing experience teaching visual art in K-12 and special education courses in art teacher training. Throughout the processes of organizing, facilitating and analyzing the Summit, the sharing of expertise in the study of pedagogy, disability studies, and visual art was integral in

⁴ These conventions reflect debates within the disability community. The big D in Deafness relates to people who feel not only medically deaf but culturally deaf from society. Others use deafness (lowercase) as a medical indication of no hearing of hearing loss. There is a similar rationale for B/blindness.

this interdisciplinary community endeavor.

The Youth Ability Summit Curriculum

The facilitators used a participatory approach of designing curriculum with ice-breaking activities, large group instruction, small group activities, and youth presentations. The Youth Ability Summit curriculum employed participatory human rights education to promote the rights of persons with disabilities as defined by the UNCRPD (2008). Activities were adapted from UNICEF's *It's About Ability Learning Guide* (Karr, 2009) to introduce the human rights approach to disability, to provide participants an understanding of human rights, and to introduce tools for becoming empowered social change agents. In addition, the curriculum included the "how to" of creating a superhero. Comic topics included: Creating a Superhero, Creating a Super-Villain, Debating Magneto: Separatism versus Inclusion, and Storyboarding Fun.

Summit Schedule

The sessions took place over three days with approximately 6-7 hours of programming. Following daily workshops, participants were invited on cultural tours of Damascus and dinner outings in the Syrian community. These evening activities were not merely tourism, but rather developed participant camaraderie. In addition, the visible presence of people with disabilities—not as isolated others, but as unique and social individuals—raised awareness about disability within the Syrian community of Damascus. During outings, community members who had a variety of questions about disability often approached participants with interest and curiosity. Rather than being in the roles of minority outsiders, the youth with disabilities represented their own community as a group. This inversion of minority status seemed to create space for some respectful discussions about disability and even shifts in consciousness within the local community. Although these experiences were limited in scope and depth, we believed that they could be foundational in more meaningful conversations across cultures over time.

Throughout the Summit, participants reported that they were able to learn more about each other's disabilities and cultures through the artistic processes of creating a superhero. Campana (2011) advocates such integration of "artmaking and education as vehicles for social justice . . . and, in some cases, for social and political activism [so that] the boundaries between art, education, and activism fade" (p. 278). For the youth with disabilities, these informal community exchanges were part of the process of community awareness and activist development. We believe that such a range of practices of immersion and community-building can be important for those with disabilities and those without disabilities to cultivate understanding and empathy across cultures.

Launch of the Silver Scorpion

The result of the joint efforts of the youth and adult facilitators was a new comic series featuring a Syrian superhero with a disability, the Silver Scorpion. Aiming to promote awareness and acceptance of persons with disabilities, as well as an appreciation for cross-cultural understanding, the first issue of the Silver Scorpion Comic Series (Figure 2) premiered in February 2011 at the Dar al-Assad Opera House in Damascus, Syria (Figure 3) and in San Diego, United States, in July 2011 at the Comic-Con International Conference. Youth continued to develop advocacy skills by speaking publically during various launch events and media appearances.



Figure 2. Silver Scorpion Comic Book Cover Image.

Figure 3. Silver Scorpion Launch at Dar al-Assad Opera House in Damascus, Syria.

Participant Reflections and Analyses

It is not for me alone but for all disabled people because [the comic] gives the ability to defend and claim rights . . . and means of self-confidence and psychological support, and I hope that all the disabled . . . learn about these rights now and that we learn to demand them. – Participant

Multiple sources of data reflecting the nature of communal artistic expression and activism were analyzed to develop a detailed description and thematic interpretation (Creswell, 1998) of participation in the Summit, and to document lessons learned and implications, as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Themes derived from Summit data include: 1) hero transformation, 2) valuing youth presence and participation, 3) tangible tools for activism through art, 4) reflections and realization of rights, and 5) coalitional change: the power of a group. Each of these themes will be explored below.

The Hero Transformation – Becoming Heroes

I can become a hero. I learned that one must start from scratch and [can] reach . . . success. – Participant

Theorists like Campana (2011) prioritize community-based art education that is “community-inspired and driven,” “participatory in nature,” and rich in “dialogue and collaborative inquiry” (p. 280). Similarly, Silver Scorpion was rooted in a community of peers, and set in familiar Syrian cultural narratives and contexts proposed by the participating youth. Over the three days of the Summit and activities that followed, we observed participants’ optimism about their futures and about the future of disability rights. While the facilitators had prepared many “icebreaking” activities to introduce the Syrian and American participants, they proved unnecessary: the participants broke into small and geographically diverse groups and began to communicate through youth translators, rough joined languages, sign language, gestures, and drawings. The camaraderie and excitement was palpable as these groups sprang into creative activities.

Participants indicated in daily evaluations that assumptions that they had about each other’s cultures were often limited and limiting. One Syrian participant summarized, “you’d think that Americans did not like us, but I discovered [they are] people like us and they are simple and humble [and] did not give me the feeling that they are better than me.” An American participant reflected, “I’ve been impressed with how much they have to say and how eloquently they say it.” Although the Summit was an exchange between young people from different cultures and geographies that was limited by its short timeframe within Damascus, we observed that the initial Summit experience grew into additional conversations and collaborations online via Facebook and email.

In addition, the group dynamics that evolved over several participatory activities during the Summit provided opportunities for participants to, in their words, feel “stronger” and “prepared for the task of making a difference in the world.” They indicated “more self-confidence” not only in their willingness to use their voices to raise

awareness about disability issues, but also in their “ability to defend and claim rights.” Core components of this transformative process that allowed youth participants to begin to see themselves as activists and heroes is explored further in the following sections.

Valuing Youth Presence and Participation

We will raise awareness and I feel confident that we will be understood by the entire world. – Participant

Although people with disabilities (particularly young people) are frequently recipients of “trainings” and “special programs,” this Summit took a different approach, inviting youth with disabilities to explore how artistic expression can create space for changes in the perceptions and thinking of viewers/ readers of the comic book series. By approaching youth with disabilities as valued authorities, youth were not only engaged in the program, but were in fact the co-leaders of the Summit. This program sought to honor and build upon their experiences and visions constructively, through dialogue and thoughtful representation. By seeing value in youth with disabilities and in their contributions to discussion and artistic output, we can shift traditional “passive recipient” approaches to “active engagement” approaches that can be considered a more “progressive, emancipatory force at both the individual and social levels” (Eisenhauer, 2007, p. 7).

Additionally, it was noted that the process of participants sharing experiences and opinions during the creation of the comic book characters contributed to their increasing confidence as speakers and leaders. We have found that empowering, creative, and activist work can provide an opportunity for persons with disabilities to begin to shape public perceptions of disability as they develop their voices and advocacy skills. The purpose of inclusive, awareness-raising activities structured around the abilities of persons with disabilities is to promote understanding that persons with disabilities can make significant contributions to society.

In addition, the comic book format was particularly useful as a tool encouraging growth of participants. Pierson and Glaeser (2007) examined how the act of creating visually rich comics around “social stories” can combat loneliness among children with autism (p. 460). Comics become a vehicle for self-disclosure and socialization through a series of “Conversation Symbols” that teach social interaction cues such as listening, interrupting, talking, and thinking (p. 463). Birge (2010) also pointed out that comics can uniquely represent feelings, ideas, actions, and interactions, creating special spaces for empathy for those with and without autism spectrum disorders. As one of the participants in the Summit was identified as on the autism spectrum, we found considerations of communication and empathy through art-making to be of particular interest. Translating their experiences and opinions artistically also helped students to develop a greater range of activist goals and ideals through scenarios of the comic book.

Tangible Tools for Activism Through Art

I learned that you can be an activist and an advocate by speaking to one another about issues[;] you can do it in a creative way by creating a comic book. – Participant

As the preceding quote suggests, there was an inherent seriousness of purpose in planning beyond the walls of the conference room to produce a publication towards the engagement of many others in disability rights and culture through art. Campana (2011) distinguishes between the role of advocate and activist in art education, emphasizing that activism “encompasses a variety of work toward social and political consciousness, empowerment, and change” (p. 281). While many people may approach disability activism and advocacy through more traditional routes of public lobbying or protest, the comic book model can be seen as a non-confrontational and yet meaningful advocacy model for sensitizing the general public about persons with disabilities and their ability to contribute to society. It was our sense that the Summit contributed uniquely to activist work in terms of empowerment of the participating youth.

In addition, the youth began to imagine narratives of development through which a person could encounter personal difficulties with disability, yet emerge as a strong, thoughtful promoter of peace and understanding. It was important to the participants that the superhero should not “cure” his disability, but rather reconcile his strengths and weaknesses around personal goals and values. The storylines developed reflected the first-hand perspectives of students with disabilities, an approach proposed by Derby (2011).

Reflections and Realization of Rights

We discovered that we have no limits and we can do everything.- Participant

In order to develop the knowledge base and confidence to impact social change, participants explored participatory human rights education activities based upon the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As one example, participants were invited to inscribe what they had learned about inclusion and human rights on images of fruit that they then collaged into an enormous, colorful tree (Figure 4). While an understanding that you have the same rights as other members of society may appear obvious to adults within mainstream and/or Western society, many people on the margins of society (such as those with disabilities) have learned not to expect or demand the same rights as others. Participants discussed and represented the interconnections and branches of rights within daily life in education, employment, and political representation.



Figure 4. An American Summit participant helps a Syrian participant attach a piece of fruit to the symbolic tree as the group learns about inclusion and rights of persons with disabilities.

This process also translated into the visual and literary content of the comic book, with characters Bashir (who experiences mobility impairment and becomes the Silver Scorpion) and Tarek (who is Blind) as complex and multifaceted characters with many goals. Rather than focus upon deficiency or pathologize it, as noted by Siebers (2004) when bodily difference becomes a dominant image or symbol, youth participants chose to emphasize that disability can be a source of strength and uniqueness. Transcending what Derby (2011) examined as a sort of feared otherness of disability—for all people are “at risk” for becoming disabled from aging or accidental causes—the youth were able to provide an alternative, nuanced view of disability. Valerie Karr highlighted this stereotype during the Summit, noting the myth that all people with disabilities are assumed to be “brave” or “heroic” for succeeding in life despite having a disability. In this way, she provided youth with disabilities an opportunity to create their own representations that neither stigmatize nor overlook difference.

Coalitional Change: The Power of a Group

I have a partner in advocacy. – Participant

Working as a group, participants exchanged ideas and experiences of how “everyone is different and has something to offer.” Participants combatted isolation by recognizing that “unity is strength.” While creating sketches for their own superheroes (Figure 5), participants also commented upon how the process allowed them to “band together to stop [discrimination].” The facilitators observed participants developing self-confidence as speakers and leaders, particularly as topics of advocacy were discussed. The most striking example of this transformation came from a young woman who stated, “I used to fear my words to speak and hesitate, but now after three days I feel stronger.” She went on to give the opening address at the unveiling of the Silver Scorpion comic series speaking about her experience of disability and advocacy in front of 1,200 members of Syrian society. We felt that group experiences during the Summit particularly contributed to “progressive, emancipatory force at both the individual and social levels” as Eisenhower describes (2007, p. 7)



Figure 5. Summit participant displays her artwork and vision for creating a comic book

Implications

The collaborative efforts of the Summit enabled the Open Hands Initiative to meet its initial mission of promoting cross-cultural dialogue and developing relationships that transcend political differences. This was evidenced by continued communication between Syrian and American youth via Facebook and e-mail despite recent political unrest in the region. This program also has implications for future services or programs that aim to empower youth with disabilities as well as other marginalized populations. Through partnerships with young people, educators, and comic book artists, documentation and extension of the project itself was possible around the comic book, which became an authentic work of activist art. Participation in Summit activities provided empowering information and encouraged contextual discussion of individual experiences for the youth to not only learn about their rights, but also to experience communal strength from their collaborations.

Shifting the power dynamic from one of passive recipient of information to active change agent allowed us not only to talk about empowerment abstractly, but to begin to empower participants as they learned about possibilities and created personal goals around social change. Future programs should foster a learning environment that not only provides information, but also gives opportunities for the voices of participants to be heard and for some action to be taken. We also believe that the artistic format employed is a relevant consideration as a model for re-presenting visual and cultural aspects of disability experiences and advocacy goals.

Concluding Reflections

Creating the comic book hero through the Summit was transformative for the youth involved. One participant reflected, “It is an important initiative and helped us overcome our disability to the point where I felt that I am, we are not disabled, but heroes.” Another added, “I loved learning about the culture and meeting new people, but the most satisfying part was knowing that through learning, I was being

prepared for the task of making a difference in the world.” From our perspective, this process of identification across cultures through positive symbols and icons of disability is particularly valuable. As this was the first intervention and study of which we are aware focusing upon both disability cultures and cultural exchange in this region, we hope that additional work can build upon these models of communication and expression with longer, more in-depth art education and human rights curricula and exchanges.

It may be noted that the Summit’s blending of *It’s About Ability* human rights advocacy models, artistic creation, and cross-cultural collaborations required a tremendous amount of curriculum planning and collaboration. Much pre-planning was successful, whereas ongoing openness to ideas and visions of the youth was equally valuable. In facilitating exchanges of youth with a variety of needs and language capabilities (Arabic and English), we were impressed at how they developed bonds around joined experience with disability. Campana (2011) identifies “compassion and empathy” as key elements of such community arts collaborations. Over the course of Summit activities and the comic book release, we observed participants built upon shared experiences pertaining to disability towards the development of compassion around cultural difference.

As an artist and as a facilitator of human rights education programs under the UNCRPD, we had addressed art and special needs advocacy issues in previous teaching experiences. However, the Summit was the first time that we embedded the creation of an advocacy tool for the public within a workshop intended for those with disabilities. From the beginning of the outreach, Summit goals shifted from a training session to asking participants to serve as experts and share their extensive knowledge and experiences with us. The active engagement and enthusiasm of participants inspired us to avoid curricular disconnect and boredom that can occur in more passive educational approaches. In providing many opportunities for youth with disabilities to share skills and knowledge, we were not only learning about human rights, but also documenting how

attaining these rights are represented by youth communities of disability.

We would like to conclude our reflections by emphasizing the value of authentic expression among creators (whether artists or authors) representing themselves as persons with disabilities, versus mainstream creators representing otherness in ways that unconsciously perpetuate stigmas and stereotypes. As Sideler (2011) points out, “disability artists . . . advance the affirmative model by directly questioning the sympathetic attitudes and assumptions about normalcy that inform prevailing attitudes toward disability” (p. 21). The Silver Scorpion comic models this affirmative framework in its representations of disabilities generated by creators with disabilities whose expertise and experiences are valued.

We believe that developing models of disability representation that are empowering are valuable pursuits for teachers. Alarming, Prater (2003) observed that most children’s literature provides very limited models of those with disabilities in historical figures like Albert Einstein, Winston Churchill, or Woodrow Wilson. And while these representations exist, they may be mysterious or culturally irrelevant to a child (p. 49). This is one area where sources including fictionalized comic book renderings of characters with disabilities (particularly when created by artists with disabilities) can paradoxically become more real and relevant for young students than mainstream historical examples. We have found that in generating a relatable comic book figure such as the Silver Scorpion, students are able to imagine themselves as change agents in cultivating empathy, community, and youth leadership.

Inspired by these experiences and other uses of comics to communicate issues about living with disabilities, we began using the comic book and related websites as resources for our courses in art education⁵, education research, and special needs education

⁵ One of these inspirational sources for us has been the Disability History Museum that features comic book pages among its collections as historical documents (Richards, 2005).

in terms of curriculum and research examples. We hope that the Silver Scorpion series will also provide a foundation to inspire future educators working within art and community activism to explore issues of disability and culture. As a participant noted: "Hearing everyone's passion gives me the confidence that we will continue building relationships . . . and changing the lives of people with disabilities in a positive way."

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Taiwanese Undergraduates' Digital Story Quests for Art Treasures in Second Life

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ABSTRACT

To promote cultural understanding, the authors attempted to discover how Taiwanese students develop digital stories, personal narratives told through words and images in response to quests to find artwork within the virtual world of Second Life [SL]. The undergraduate one-semester course occurred in Chiayi, Taiwan, in “real life,” or life as we usually experience it, face-to-face. Through participant observation, the authors planned, taught, documented, analyzed, and interpreted results of the digital storytelling project. Participant observation in the virtual context included gathering data to identify themes that students used frequently within the stories, interpreting the stories, and determining implications. In the beginning, the undergraduate stories were mostly travelogues and some animal transformations. Frequent themes in Taiwanese undergraduates' digital stories were identified, including such descriptors as “lonely,” “funny,” and “dream.” These psychological transformative themes revealed students' real-life concerns of finding a purpose in life, alleviating loneliness, overcoming fear of the unknown, raising awareness of social enterprises, and struggling to survive in a competitive environment. Implications call for collaboration and social action in negotiating multiple perspectives, respecting and embracing diverse or contrary opinions, creating double entendre examples, and delving deeper into the historical roots of cultural practices.

Description of the Project

Digital Storytelling is a process of constructing a story in a digital experiential space (Sanchez, 2009). In this study, digital stories were constructed in the virtual world of Second Life [SL]. Second Life is one of the most popular 3-D virtual worlds on the Internet in which participants, through their avatars, may globally interact with others, create and build objects, start a business, and attend classes, among other activities. Taking classes in SL is very unusual in Taiwanese education.

Education becomes self-expression and play on Second Life, a virtual world regarded as a giant playground (Steinkuehler, 2008) where participants expand their natural interests. Sanchez (2009) used digital storytelling to engage his students, who reported being immersed in the activity because role-playing enabled them to respond freely as compared to typical physical classroom activities. In his study, we recognized and emphasized this “ennobling” nature of role-play and the humanitarian educational possibilities for a future SL project.

In designing our study, we were guided by this past research in posing our research questions. What character types did students choose to role-play in their stories? What digital story themes/types did they construct? How did their stories develop and end? What artwork did they select for their stories? What evolving hidden significance did the thematic stories reveal? We anticipated that answers to these questions would lead to deeper understandings of cultural concerns. Our goal was to focus on participants' self-reflective inquiry in social situations to improve cross-cultural understanding (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p. 5).¹ In other words, how would students interact with other avatars from the cultural world such as SL? Second Life involves multiple simultaneous ways of communicating, such as text, instant messages, voice, and gestures.

Context

Our undergraduate class occurred at National Chiayi University in Minshiong, Taiwan, a small town about three hours south of Taipei, the capital. Formerly a teaching college, the university merged with an agricultural college and is now famous for its research on orchids and peanuts (National Chiayi University, 2008). Since the first author was a visiting Fulbright scholar from the U.S., students from diverse areas in the University's Art Department also took the course to practice their English. We acknowledged, “Asian students

¹ Stokrocki obtained Institutional Review Board permissions from her university and the National Chiayi University in Taiwan prior to her Fulbright teaching. The Chair of the Art Department at National Chiayi signed the release forms. All participant names are avatar names.

are accustomed to teacher-led, passive and reticent way of learning” (Wang, 2005, 2006). They rarely start discussions, find it difficult to chat online, and do not confront nor question teachers (Jun & Park, 2003). “Their parents expect them to respect elders, study hard, and perform in school. They don’t like to be quoted [give their opinion] for fear of being offensive” (p. 76). While these authors address online learning, the same learning predispositions are brought to the traditional classroom. Therefore, our teaching involved a great deal of real life mentoring in terms of providing models of stories from U.S. students, technical help, and suggestions about some of the most popular art sites in Second Life.

The semester course, called Introduction to Visual Culture and Art Education, met once a week for two hours over the course of an 18-week semester in the computer lab. Our course description and rationale was drawn from several art education scholars addressing the broadening of art education to visual culture through trans-disciplinary study.

Conceptions of art are changing and expanding . . . Recent theoretical and philosophical shifts have emerged in and across various domains of knowledge. Those shifts have been informed by critical theories, such as postmodernism and feminism, and shape analyses of art and culture. New self-conscious trans-disciplinary fields of study have emerged to challenge conceptual dichotomies, such as fine/popular arts. As a result of these changes, it has become necessary to expand the concept and practice of art education to the realm of visual cultureThe use of the term visual culture, in part, reflects the recent global explosion of prolific pervasive visual images and artifacts and their importance to social life. (Boughton et al., 2002, p. 1)

We based the course on these principles of collaboration in social theory. Our activities represented remediation (problem solving) and bricolage (the process of constructing a world from diverse components [Deuze, 2006; Luhmann, 1990]). In so doing, we

promoted students’ freedom to formulate their identity and reform social life politics (Giddens, 1991).

The course provided a set of technological and critical tools for students and instructors to explore art and education in a virtual world. In art education, Chung (2007) introduced digital storytelling using the popular software applications of Microsoft Photo Story 3 and described how to integrate this technology into art education settings by creating life-action stories. Shin (2010) championed using the movie-making software iMovie for its ease in editing SL filmic screen shots in K-12 classrooms. Our technology tools mostly involved Second Life (an online 3-D immersive community environment), as well as Flickr (a public storage and display site for photographs with captions), used to store students’ screen shots, and Photoshop instruments. Critical tools encompassed pre- and post-questionnaires and art criticism investigative strategies of describe, analyze, and interpret. We explored a new cooperative education paradigm, called rhizomatic, in which students’ and instructors’ learning grew together² (Wilson, 2003; Deleuze & Guattari, 1993). Most of this cooperative learning occurred in the virtual world of Second Life.

Assignments

After joining, choosing an avatar, and briefly exploring Orientation Island in Second Life, we gave students two major assignments in the class. The first was to visit the Art Box gallery to view its famous immersive artworks, both historical and modern. Their second project was to search for art treasures of their choice and create stories through writing and screen shots as reactions to these art treasures.

²In our postmodern culture, students can instantly modify and collage images. Similar to a rhizomatic plant or a knotted patch of grass, ideas and images shoot out in multiple directions (Wilson, 2003).

Art Box

Art Box is one of the most popular immersive sites in SL. At this site, students clicked on an artwork of their choice and the program site teleported their avatars into the 3-D scene with props, including clothes, to dress their avatars. The artwork was divided into fore, middle, and backgrounds through which the avatars walked. We expected students to take a screen shot, upload it to Flickr, and add a comment about their character's actions and feelings in this artwork context. Here students could also learn about traditional and contemporary artists through virtual immersion in the scene. They could see and experience the details close-up. We also encouraged students to visit other sites on the Internet to learn about the techniques used in making the artwork they had chosen to study in-depth on Art Box.³ Art Box seemed to be a catalyst for introducing learning about art through SL, and proved to be a further stimulant for our main class project on digital storytelling.

Digital storytelling project

The major class project was to develop a story about art treasures in Second Life and highlight one in a digital story PowerPoint Presentation. We used Sanchez' (2009) SL suggestions, a lesson format wherein information gained comes from other sites on the Internet as well as SL. We provided the following guidelines:

Develop a story to find an unusual artwork. Pose a conflict. Introduce your avatar character and its role (e.g., hero, seeker, detective) in some SL art place.

Focus on one artwork and its form or expressive details. Tell us why you chose it.

Include the name of the artist, artwork, and SL location (i.e., URL), so we can visit it.

Use a screen capture program to capture story scenes, arrange them in a PowerPoint Presentation, and include a creative title.⁴

Include contrasting colors—the background needs to be exciting too!

Add some character gestures (e.g., running, surprise, crying).

Complete pre- and post-questionnaires.

Using art criticism strategies learned in this class (describe, analyze, and interpret), evaluate your digital story⁵.

Methods

Participant Observation. Our major methodology was participant observation [PO], which is a type of qualitative research that exposes the essential qualities of an event (Stokrocki 1997). In this case, the events were educational and cultural. PO methodology involves multiple people, multiple methods, and multiple variables. Research methods unfolded in three stages: data collection, content, and comparative analysis. We concentrated on one class and one project. Four students in the class volunteered to assist in data collection and ongoing analysis by offering additional data and interpreting the situations similar to a focus group (Krueger, 1994). Through these methods, we learned from and with our students rather than merely studying them (Spradley, 1980).

Data collection. Our data included observational field notes, pre-questionnaires (covering first impressions, expectations, and initial problems; see Appendix A) and post-questionnaires (information about digital communication tools, virtual world operations, avatar transformation, preferred art quest site, SL URL address, artwork, selection reasons, information learned, and problems and solution;

⁴ Please refer to examples on the Center for Digital Storytelling website at www.storycenter.org for motivational material given to students in the class.

⁵ Results of student self-evaluations and art criticism answers are not included here because the class was too large, their answers were in broken English, and students never finished the art criticism questions. Ho and Lee (In press) reported difficulty in teaching art criticism to Taiwanese students and needed expanded time, such as a full year, to help students comprehend the processes.

³ See <http://blog.koinup.com/2009/04/art-box-experience-in-second-life.html>.

see Appendix B.) We also collected documents of students' stories, artwork and action screenshots, and follow-up informal interviews conducted by e-mail. We emphasized the context [Second Life] to understand students' participation in the SL community through blogs, events, forums, groups, and SL realms (categorical places, such as art and education), and avatars' performances (Stokrocki, 2004)⁶. These data collection methods also incorporated the authors' and students' practical reflections such as instructional, technical, and navigational problems throughout the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), beginning with the initial project design and continuing throughout the data collection (students' questionnaires and e-mails, PowerPoint presentations, photo elicitation, art criticism self-evaluations) and analysis phases (using a focus group), to final conclusions and becoming active media producers (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). These reflective strategies involved individual and team problem solving and focus groups, also known as collaborative inquiry (Sagor, 1992).

Content and comparative analysis . We selected/condensed the major content categories and then made sense of them. First we wrote an initial synopsis of each student's PowerPoint digital story. For example:

In Mung Sian's story of Catherine the Cat, her father tells her about her birth and that she is not a cat. She goes on a voyage of discovery . . . Climbing up temple steps . . . she meets a wise horse at Machu Picchu that tells her to go west. She jumps in a boat, lands on [an] island, and meets a goddess who opens a door. Catherine finds a luxurious place [seen in bird's eye view]. Her tail disappears, she changes color, and her shape changes into a human The final words are, "returned home."

To analyze the content, we used narrative scale categories (Caldwell & Moore, 1991) and searched for frequent words. These included the elements of story type, setting, character traits, and plot development.

We also analyzed the digital photographs of the SL artwork, the title, type, and details. (See Table 1 for an example of our analysis of students' completed digital stories). In this section, frequent words began to emerge.

Finally, we clustered responses and developed tentative conclusions with our Taiwanese focus group, composed of three self-selecting, cooperating students. In this section of our paper, we also compared our insights with similar studies in art and education. We further triangulated our findings (Creswell, 2013) by inviting notable Taiwanese professors at the university to add their interpretations. We thus negotiated and exposed the complexities of the research (Arminio, Jones, & Torres, 2006), which will be elaborated on in the section below on Future Concerns.

Findings

Our two major projects were exploring Second Life's technological tools of Art Box and the capability to construct digital stories. Students enjoyed their initial experience posing in the Art Box artworks and putting their screen captures on the class Flickr site. They were amazed with the 3-D interpretations of famous artworks that they could walk through or parts on which they could sit. One student exclaimed, "I can jump into the picture to become [role-play] *Alice in Wonderland*." Students thus came into contact with artworks on SL for the first time, became acquainted with them, and could explore them further on the Internet.

Individuals struggled, however, with the second assignment to write and portray digital stories. In spite of computer and Internet problems, forty-five out of 50 students persisted and completed their digital story PowerPoint presentations.

Character types. Every student's digital story had a main avatar character. Throughout the class, students tried different avatar types, such as human warriors (e.g. Swordskey the swordsman), heroes, princesses, cowboys, and vampires. Animals were the next

⁶ Retrieved from <http://secondlife.com/community/?lang=en-US>.

most frequent avatar type that students selected to represent them in SL, including four wolves, three cats, two rabbits, two unicorns, two dogs, and a lizard. Only three students attempted to appear as a robot. In summary, most avatars were humanoid. When we asked students why they chose human character avatars, many students stated that they preferred these human types that resembled themselves in physical life. In contrast, students' avatars in Sanchez's study (2009) were more hero-like.

Story themes and types. In most of the stories, the character started in a familiar art place and traveled to different related sites in search of a favorite or unusual artwork. Stories initially had little drama or resolution. Titles were descriptive actions, such as the "Story of riding a dragon" or "Memory of running on a bridge." Many students failed to include the artwork title, artist name, and URL location (so we could visit the site as well). We surmised that a lack of time and unfamiliarity with Second Life were possible reasons for students' initial choice of artwork. Although we gave individuals additional time to redo their stories, some stories did not improve substantially, due to students' lack of attention to the details of the assignment. Later, many of these episodes evolved to more action and scope and sequences that surpassed simply visiting an art gallery and finding a painting.

We then listed the stories and counted the word frequencies used in the students' stories and discovered recurring thematic terms, such as "lonely," "funny," and "dream." We discovered that these frequent words denoted feelings and formed patterns of meaning (Gee, 2005). Early in the project, students complained that they found no one at the SL sites; the dominant word they used was "lonely," appearing in their stories (9 students). For example, one student whose avatar was a wolf found the *Loneliness of Being* [LOB] site on SL⁷. The student reported, "Art can express missing [someone]." Another student exclaimed, "I feel very lonely to play this game" (see Figure 1). Participants' feeling of "loneliness" in Second Life is a quite common phenomenon, especially for those who interact with few other avatars

(Sanchez, 2009). Therefore, students spent additional time searching for artwork and sites that inspired their stories.



Figure 1. A third student exclaimed, "I feel very lonely to play this game, except for [during] class time."

A second frequent word, expressed by 10 students, was "funny." These student creators determined that their own work was amusing. Perhaps the most amusing example was Peacelai's melodrama entitled *Kick You! Bad Guy*, involving a warrior who chose to rescue his "boring city and add art" and his "bad guy" father (see Figure 2).

⁷ See <http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Isles%20Las%20Avies/153/125/368>



Figure 2. Peacelai's comic *Kick You! Bad Guy* also used Photoshop [pink abstract schema of dad].

A third frequent word category was “dream,” appearing in 11 stories. A dream story deals with thoughts and psychological transformations. Some of these story narratives included “earthquake dream,” “hide/dream in the dark,” “fear of the unknown,” “scary scene,” “cat fantasy/dream,” “rainbow art dream,” and “a dreamy stained glass exhibit.” Other examples involved such dream predicaments as living in an overwhelming strange house that was only a dream, and life as a daydream or reality puzzle. A final example was an underwater dream adventure with political overtones, shown in Shan’s story, with one of the cutout figures identified as Barack Obama (see Figure 3). In all of these dream stories, students were choosing a series of potential settings and art installations for their characters’ unknown future.

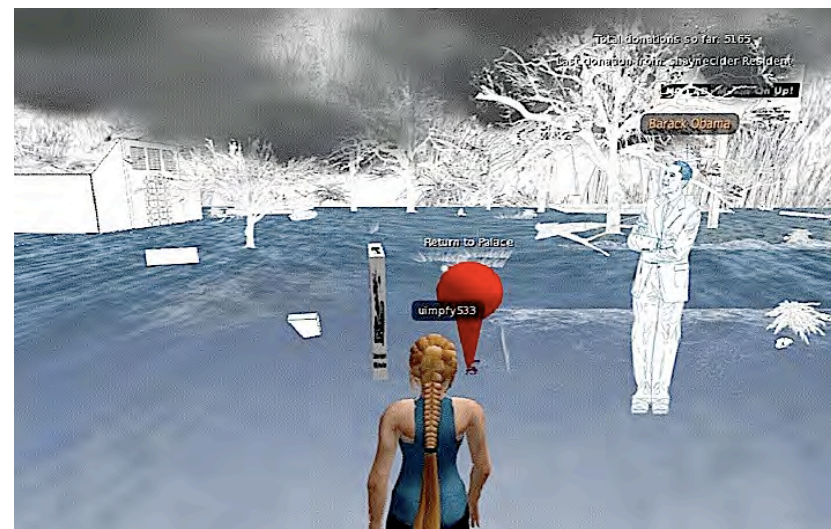


Figure 3. Shan discovered another special installation with hand-drawn cutout figures. She instructed, “Follow our steps, and get into the unknown mist together.” We interpreted his ghosted figure as a possible pun on the state of politics.

Story development

Several students’ digital stories were drawn from Western classical literature SL sites and did not involve visual art, but literature. These sites could be characterized as fashion stores, storybook castles, gardens, and underwater places into which the students’ avatars traveled. Individuals were overwhelmed with possible storyline choices and finally started to ask for help from other avatar characters on Second Life and not in the class, such as Peter Rabbit and Poe’s Raven. One example resulting from this predicament was that Avatar Swordskey, while visiting Art Box, sought the meaning of life from the wise caterpillar avatar in Lewis Carol’s *Alice in Wonderland* site (see figure 4).



Figure 4. Swordskey wrote in his story that the caterpillar revealed to him, "Thinking is not the whole of life. The most important [thing] is action." From ArtBox <http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Klaw/7/21/46>

Other stories involved avatar change. For example, in "Catherine Cat Story," the cat avatar discovers, "I am not a cat" when her father tells her so. In an attempt to discover her true identity, she travels to a castle, meets a goddess, walks across the pentagram floor, transforms into a human, and discovers her sister, a goddess. In another fantasy, a different cat avatar becomes lost and wanders around until she walks through a strange door and meets a surreal woman's head with a bird beak. Like a witch, the woman whispers to the cat, "This is not what you seek" (see figure 5). At this point, the invented story changes: the avatar discovers that she is not a cat but a centaur. Several student avatars also became transformed beings in their stories.



Figure 5. The cat avatar discovered a surreal place and talked to the witch who redirected her.

Finally, one of the most unusual stories was Angela's *Lonely World*, in which she discovers *Empyrean Dreams*, a 3-D installation of Edgar Allen Poe's poem *The Raven*, used to sell Fashions for Cancer in SL (see figure 6). Here the character reveals a different concern or quest beyond her, a need to abate her loneliness in art for a social cause—raising fashion money for cancer victims. Although students' quests initially seemed simplistic, some of their investigations into humanitarian concerns, such as raising funds to combat cancer, revealed deeper commitments. Angela revealed her need to be a hero and to reach out and help change the world as Sanchez (2009) found among participants in his earlier study.



Figure 6. In her story, *The Lonely World*, Angela discovers *Empyrean Dreams*, a 3D installation of Edgar Allen Poe's poem *The Raven*, with floating words and birds. She realized that the artist used the poem with its floating words to sell Fashions for Cancer⁸.

Artwork search

Another requirement of the digital storytelling project in SL was to seek an artwork, its artist owner, and site. Students discovered ancient, classical, modern, and popular culture sites. Because of their limited European art history background,⁹ at first some students didn't recognize the historical importance of their discovered artwork. Robot Rita, for example, found the French Lascaux cave painting but did not recognize its name or significance (See <http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Kalepa/216/30/21>). An attached notecard sent her to Wikipedia to learn about this Paleolithic site, *The Great Hall of the Bulls*, with its primitive perspective that is understood by art historians as progressive for the time.¹⁰

⁸ See <http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Ctrl%20Shift%20H/28/169/22>

⁹ Key informant Art History Professor Liu from this University commented on our findings and informed us that undergraduate art studio majors have limited art history backgrounds and few required art history courses at this University.

¹⁰ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lascaux?>

Lana's story included a pyramid, Sphinx, and King Tutankhamen's throne.¹¹ Yet again, she did not realize the importance of the historical throne, prompting us to coach students to conduct Internet research to learn about the original artifacts. In doing so, they discovered new technical vocabulary, such as when Lana learned that King Tut's wooden throne backrest was an elaborate "gold embossed bas-relief" and it was an important "symbol of authority and prestige."¹² She added this art definition of bas-relief and the throne's importance to her story. Avatar Lana even sat in the chair, but after she "saw ghost like souls float[ing] in the air, [I] began to feel the horror" [the ghost was probably annoyed that she sat in the King's chair], she fled.

Some students found Asian artworks in SL, such as *The Great Wall of China* and Hokusai's 19th century painting *People Crossing Arched Bridge*. After traveling to several art sites, four students also chose the Terracotta Warriors installation because of its overwhelming size in real life and called it their lost treasure. One student started with scary death scenes and transformed them into a comedy with the famous art installation of terracotta warriors and horses. She wrote:

There are some strange buildings and a red-hot sun. Oh! There [are] a few golden trees, maybe I can go under the tree [to] enjoy the shade! Oh my God! It is the statue of Death! I was scared and run away! I ran [in a] hurry, . . . not paying attention to [my] feet. And then ...I fell into a crater, it is so hot and I could not climb out. Here! [I found] the bronze statue, a huge palace and [a] guard [at] the door. I think Qin Shi Huang¹³ lived here! I once heard my friend said . . . When Qin Shi Huang [died], he

¹¹ See <http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Enchantment%20Island/10/123/447>.

¹² The Golden Throne of Tutankhamen. Retrieved from EGY-KING at <http://egy-king.blogspot.com/2012/05/golden-throne-of-king-tutankhamen.html>

¹³ Qin Shi Huang, the king of the Chinese state of Qin from 246 to 221 BCE, was the first emperor of a unified China and considered pivotal in history because his reign marks the beginning of nearly two millennia of imperial rule in unified China.

[buried his effigy] with a bunch of huge terracotta warriors and horses to attack hell.... [Joking, she concluded], Maybe I can join the emperor's subordinates! Terracotta Warriors of the Rabbit Shape would be cool!

She then took a screen shot of one of the terracotta horses, imported it into Photoshop, and similarly cut out her rabbit avatar image with the lasso tool, creating a transparent image, and overlapping the rabbit onto the original horse [image]. This transformation is both technically advanced and an emotionally sophisticated reversal of status and existential state where the dead "warrior" horse is mounted by the "lowly" living rabbit. She summarized, "I am a handsome Rabbit Terracotta Warrior!" (See Figure 7). Students can thus use other digital programs to physically transform their artwork images, not ethically possible in real life, and change their meanings (social class ridicule) through role reversals and double entendres¹⁴



(Cranton, 1997).

Figure 7. Students were surprised to find a replica of the Terracotta Warriors in SL because of the overwhelming size of the Warriors' installation. The student adjusted the horse's size and her avatar rides it in SL. See <http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Dewey/49/214/49>.

¹⁴ Double entendre examples are figures of speech that have double meanings which here ridicule social practices.

[com/secondlife/Dewey/49/214/49](http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Dewey/49/214/49).

A few students also later found modern artwork examples, such as abstract sculptures. In his *Wandering Life* story, Burning Cheese, for instance, first found 18th century realistic stone lion statues in front of the London Museum on SL and wondered what they were guarding. They were similar to the ones outside the temples in Taipei. Later, he discovered elsewhere on SL a modern guardian lion sculpture to which he added an orange blazing light and an intriguing abstract form that guarded his "lonely heart" (see figure 8). We later realized that sculptural installations dominated undergraduates' digital quests. Several students also seemed to infuse their digital story quests for art sculptures with a life purpose, as in Burning Cheese's



case, for protection or the alleviation of loneliness.

Figure 8. Kamilah Hauptmann's *Viceregal Guardian Lion* (at Lionsgate Palace; <http://slurl.com/secondlife/Caledon%20Lionsgate/60/96/52>).

Pre- and post-questionnaire results

Only 34 out of the 50 students returned required pre-unit questionnaires. We speculated that students' limited English could

have curtailed their responses. To our question asking for their first impressions of SL, they reported mixed reactions, such as “mysterious, peaceful”; “beautiful magic”; “cool, like [a] funny online game”; the “avatar can fly, run fast, swim, [and] show another personality.”

The next question concerned what they anticipated learning. Most respondents anticipated learning about computer software, with some specifying digital art and design or computer games. Several students admitted that they had not thought this question through while a few anticipated learning English. Other answers were diverse: “About different culture thoughts,” for example, and “how to use art education.”

When asked about initial problems, over half of the students’ replies were similar to most newbies’ technical concerns: how to start, the length of time it takes to learn to work with the technology, and difficulties with the computer.

In comparison, post-questionnaires (43/50) revealed more elaborated responses. Students wrote that they learned about more artists and many different kinds of artworks. Almost a third of students preferred the Art Box site as compared to other SL art sites, because they could teleport inside an artwork and role-play for their story. Another third of the students valued the Digital Story Project. They reported, “I can make [a] new story myself,” “learn about what Taiwanese student[s] think,” “tell others what I think,” “you [become] a master of this world,” “it’s fun,” it’s “like a picture book.”

Finally, students summarized their Second Life experiences,¹⁵ noting that visual culture is a broad and diverse course, that the “Virtual world [SL] is a textbook to explore,” and that a SL user can role-play in a painting. Respondents suggested the breadth of what can be considered art, and noted learning about specific artworks and places, creating their own spaces to play out their dreams, and meeting other

people. One student wrote simply, “unlimited possibilities.” These responses indicate that students broadened their understanding of virtual world functions and settings and of different art types, and that their communication skills grew as well.

Deeper Meanings Discussion: Evolving Life Concerns

Because of students’ limited English, mostly the focus group students primarily interacted with Stokrocki with Chen providing translations as needed. Little interaction occurred with SL avatars and only two groups of Taiwan students planned their stories together. Students seemed burdened by life’s unpredictable conditions and needed a place to explore possibilities and exchange solutions. Wang’s (2003) research, for example, points to the expansion of Taiwanese higher education as an avenue of economic success that has brought additional financial worries to parents and the government due to rising costs and unemployment rates, worries similar to those experienced in Western countries. Students’ stories showed that they are pondering their life situations and the members of the focus group added additional reflections. Further analysis with the student focus group also revealed the nature of their life struggles.

The stories that represented or expanded on the theme of loneliness were typical of those who begin Second Life (Sanchez, 2009). Several students complained about being lonely because they couldn’t find avatar players on their chosen art sites, a plight typical of beginners on SL. Alien’s title, *Journey of Soul*, for example, began with a theme of loneliness in the loss of her unfaithful lover, continued with a frustrating search with a friend, followed by a loss of Alien’s own body, and culminated in her transformation into a Buddha statue. Alien interpreted her story, “Go travel [the] world, sometimes take a risk; [you] can get more than you think.” Her story, then, moved from loneliness to illustrate her belief that individuals have the power to change their own destinies. Her quest ended, but her soul continued “wandering,” as her body turned into a Buddha statue. Deschene (2013), in her blog *Tiny Buddha*, uses this same quote about taking

¹⁵ We extracted these short quotes from students’ comments, which were written in poor English.

risks as simple wisdom for complex lives. The comment seems to show how an artistic representation [such as Buddha] can absorb one's loneliness at the end of a long search for life's meaning.

Students like Swordsky indicated that they were "confused by life's uncertainty (in both first and Second Life) and, in their Second Life stories, resorted to dreams." These students approached first life as a dream, a memory, or a reflection of the past. Nothing mattered, they indicated, and life scared them. Swordsky consulted the wise caterpillar in Lewis Carol's *Alice in Wonderland*. His story was accompanied by the statement that one "Need[s] inner peace no matter how old you are . . . Because, [I] encounter . . . world pressure, I am tired and unhappy. I want to relax." They also were looking for answers to their problems and projecting their personal views in the process of personal identity formation. Many students' stories really did not end with a resolution from conflict, but in questions about their life's purpose.

Swordsky's *Alice in Wonderland* dream seemed to be about his real life or future plight. Finally he stated, "[In my] mind quest, there is a heart that must be free to fly." Freedom to choose or travel is part of one's life quest. In a similar way, Swordsky expressed, "My avatar story is like Johnny Cash's song, *Walking the Line*." He explained, "I think everyone has [a] question like me, consider[s things] too much and [is] afraid to do whnt he/she wants... if we can't explain it, we feel disturbed." In other words, he was trying to explain his life in a dream, as a delicate balance with too many uncertain and disturbing avenues.

In a similar way, Angela's reflection on her story about finding a site that raised money to help cancer survivors shows the burden of life's uncertainty on her emotions and the escape that Second Life and art provided her.

In real life, I feel lonely or [bored] and [have] lots of thing[s] to do, [I feel] busy, heavy, and nervous. In Second Life . . . I found its inspiration also came from art [i.e., from Edgar Allen Poe's

poem *The Raven*]. I really feel art is important, when you feel lonely or heavy, you can relax.

We also addressed the theme of minor humor arising in a number of students' digital stories, some of which may have initially seemed silly or insignificant. The theme, however, revealed how students explored emotional meaning in their Second Life, which had at first seemed strange to them. Students explored the condition of human existence and their own life purpose. Instead of anguishing over their lives, some students transformed avatar images and changed their meanings through role reversals and ridicule or double entendre⁶ examples (Cranton, 1997).

Finally, Participant Observation demanded comparative analysis with other studies or interpretive frameworks to make sense of the students' digital stories and their interpretations of discovered artworks' deeper messages. We determined that these young adults were expressing decision-making and life concerns with such words as "lonely," "dream," "free," and "funny." Their stories were, as one of the authors found in an earlier study on Second Life, eclectic, interpretive, cloudy, contradictory, and context-bound (Stokrocki, 2010), which could signify the intensity of cultural life experienced by Taiwanese students in an era of financial stress when there are few jobs and declining government resources. Such identity concerns are rampant in small communities (Abulof, 2009), such as this university town of Minshiong in Chiayi County, Taiwan. Students also confronted new media in a different language (English) that challenged their traditional educational expectations. Grauer, Castro, and Lin (2012) expressed the concern that, "New media is . . . laden with issues of equality, diversity, and community that affect aspects of citizenship, democracy, and social change" (p. 139). When teachers offer students the opportunity to reflect on life (even their Second Life), several hidden dimensions of life's struggles may surface. These "personal mythologies," notes Rolling, "have allowed their inhabitants to narrate a coherent story of origin that validates their

presence and trajectory in the current existential cosmology” or state of affairs (2012, p. 114).

We understand students’ life concerns with all their current political and economic stresses. Such myths “encode and encrypt in story form the norms, values, and ideologies of the social order” (Friedman, 1998, pp. 8-9). In interpreting the students’ stories, we “bring to light an underlying coherence or sense” of life or existence expressed in the students’ work (Taylor, 1976, p. 153). This becomes a way of transforming the quest for art and life’s meaning. We summarize the students’ Second Life quests as a form of freedom that enables them to go beyond avatar limits to change their form and re-imagine their future.

Conclusion and Implications

Using participant observation, we re-examined our digital storytelling project to find art treasures on SL. In the beginning, undergraduate story types were mostly about lonely human avatars and some animal transformations. We had to constantly remind students that a quest is a search for something in particular. We asked them to focus on one artwork and explain why it impressed them. Students later tended to base their digital stories on sculptural installations, like the Terracotta Warriors, and literature installations such as Peter Rabbit or Poe’s “Raven.” Students later recognized the importance of these Second Life art forms, not as mere entertainment or decoration, but for life purposes, such as guarding a treasure or raising money for cancer. Deeper investigation of lonely, funny, and dream themes exposed life concerns, such as finding a life purpose, overcoming fear of the unknown, alleviating boredom, raising social enterprise awareness, and struggling to survive in a competitive environment.

Our course was not meant to train future artists, but to liberate students’ thinking about themselves, each other, and the purposes of digital storytelling and art. Based on what we learned from the students and the student focus group, we will, in the future, encourage collaborative problem solving by having participants

author digital stories in teams to produce new knowledge. This could take place through digital stories as practice for first life solutions. Future research for us will shift from a focus on forms of individual art expression to community art involvement. Undergraduates need to become political “transformants” in the areas of social life that affect and concern them, notably education (Jenkins, 2009). Even when learning in virtual worlds, students need to become critically reflective thinkers and adopt skills in negotiating multiple perspectives, respecting and even embracing diverse or contrary opinions, and digging deeper into historical roots of cultural practices (Taylor, 1976). They need to transform their roles as passive media consumers toward becoming active media producers (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). Transformative learning is cognitive, emotional, and at times irrational, a matter of emphasis. No single model of transformative learning occurs in practice, as in this study, when the high literally become low or the [virtual] living reverse the dead as in the case of the Rabbit Terracotta Warrior (Cranton, 1997). In today’s anxious and tumultuous world, students can become a force for change through exploring life concerns and problems via digital storytelling in virtual spaces.

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Appendix A

Prequestionnaire

What is your real name?

What is your avatar name?

What avatar did you choose and why? How did you transform your avatar?

What Freebie attachments did you add? You can find them by searching for them in newbie places.

What experiences on virtual worlds have you had? What worlds?

What were your first impressions of Second Life?

What problems did you have initially?

How did you solve them?

Please give me permission to quote you and use your snapshots.

Name _____, Date_____

Appendix B

Post questionnaire

How did you transform your avatar?

What Art Quest Site did you find rewarding and why? Give me the Island and SL URL.

How has Second Life helped you? (Information, entertainment, networking, etc.)

What have you learned? Information---- Technique-----

What did you specifically learn at one of the art or design museums or art galleries?

What problems did you have and how did you solve them?

Public Culture and Heritage: A Beijing Based Field School

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ABSTRACT

Cultural interpretation using emerging technology and transmedia narratives is transforming field-based education and ethnographic/folkloristic fieldwork. Public Culture and Heritage: A Beijing Based Field School (PCH) was conceived and implemented as a way to involve students and scholars in the transformative and participatory process described above, within an art education context.¹ PCH occurred in Summer 2011 and consisted of a two-week online orientation to fieldwork and transmedia cultural interpretation followed by a two-week residency in two Beijing districts, Jianguo and Song Zhuang. The field school concluded with a two-week online transmedia production experience. Student productions were posted to *Vine Online*.

In this article, based on practitioner research, we describe strategies for extending the traditional place-based model of the field school for the purpose of engaging learners across geographic, disciplinary, cultural, and technological domains. We also describe an approach that includes interaction within and across online and residential environments. Conclusions serving as recommendations for the field are provided.

Introduction

Cultural interpretation using emerging technology and transmedia narratives is transforming field-based education and fieldwork-based inquiry into the arts and culture. The rise of digital humanities as a broadly defined field of inquiry opens up possibilities for innovative research, while pervasive digital media affords flexible, mobile and modular opportunities for cultural documentation and interpretation (Coyne, 2010). Jenkins (2009) describes the “threshold”

¹ The Public Culture and Heritage: A Beijing Based Field School website can be accessed at <http://aaablogs.uoregon.edu/beijingfieldschool/>

of participation in contemporary culture as lowering and articulates the kinds of “literacies” that students, as well as teachers, parents, and citizens in general, need in order to engage fully in the possibilities adumbrated through multi-modal and multi-platform approaches (transmedia) to telling stories.

Strategies for extending the traditional place-based model of the field school for the purpose of engaging learners across geographic, disciplinary, cultural, and technological domains is the focus of this article. We describe our approach in leading the field school titled *Public Culture and Heritage: A Beijing Based Field School* (PCH) during the summer of 2010. This approach includes interaction within and across online and residential environments. We will examine in detail the ways in which ongoing changes in the global mediascape (Appadurai 1990) manifest in our field school. Conceptualizing and implementing the field school was informed by our familiarity with literature dealing with multicultural orientations to art education (for example Erickson & Young, 2002; Stuhr, 1994; Young, 2011), the art education of place (Blandy, 2011; Blandy & Fenn, 2012; Blandy & Hoffman, 1993; Graham, 2007), material culture studies (Bolin & Blandy, 2003, 2011), art education and technology (Sweeny, 2010), and art education in global/ international contexts (Arnold, Delacruz, Kuo & Parsons, 2010). Art educators and students engaged in the study of material culture within a multicultural and global/ international context should discover relevant applications of our approach to the development and implementation of immersive learning environments.

In this article we describe cultural research done within a field school context by participants rather than the process of doing research on a field school. Our method should be understood as based in practitioner research. This methodology provided us with the systematic means to examine and reflect upon our own practice in conceptualizing and implementing PCH, informing our plans for conceptualizing and implementing future field schools of this type in China.

Throughout PCH, students and scholars reflected on the field school experience itself. This reflection occurred in structured and unstructured ways during full group meetings, faculty meetings, student team meetings, as well as in informal meetings over dinner or in causal conversation. Materials as a source of reflection, as well as documentation of reflection, include field notebooks, photographs, video, generation of assignments, responses to assignments, and posts to the field school website, among others. For the purpose of this article we drew on these materials to evaluate and interpret the field school experience and outcomes. However, readers of this article should assume that our critical narrative traces cultural research *as* art education as distinct from cultural research *on* art education. Our goal is to understand how cultural research functions as a means for arts education, and what an immersive field school environment, augmented by emerging digital technologies for interpretation, offers in terms of this goal.

Field Schools, Fieldwork, and Cultural Interpretation

PCH was conceived and implemented through the Arts and Administration Program (AAD) and International Programs at the University of Oregon (UO) as a way to involve students and scholars in the transformative and participatory process described above. PCH occurred in Summer 2011 and consisted of a two-week online orientation to fieldwork and transmedia cultural interpretation followed by a two-week residency in two Beijing districts, Jianguo and Song Zhuang. The field school concluded with a two-week online transmedia production experience. Student productions were posted to *Vine Online*. This blog is associated with *ChinaVine*, a research venture with participant scholars from the United States (US) and the People's Republic of China (PRC). Four undergraduate students and three graduate students comprised the student body of the PCH field school. Of this group three students were Chinese Nationals with a fourth being a second generation Chinese-American, while the other two students were not of Chinese descent. In addition to us as

co-directors of PCH, Professors Lihui Yang and Deming An of Beijing Normal University served as onsite scholars. Willie Smyth, a US based folklorist, participated as a fieldwork mentor.

Historically, field schools have served as practical training opportunities for disciplines grounded in fieldwork. As Walker and Saitta (2002) explain with regards to archaeological field schools, "They are something of a rite of passage, the first experience of what for many is the defining activity of the discipline: fieldwork" (p. 199). While field schools are associated with other disciplines such as geography, geology, and historic preservation, our research on field schools found the most useful information for pedagogy and planning in archaeology.

Perry (2004) recognizes the field school as a place in which knowledge is constructed within a community operating within a specific cultural context. Perry believes that field schools are particularly well situated to promote "authentic learning" within a research community where instruction can be both intense and personal. For Perry, authentic learning "occurs when individuals, both students and professional archeologists, form communities to address real archeological questions, and to negotiate knowledge construction through meaningful social interactions" (p. 239). As a consequence she finds field schools "provide essential components to...intellectual and professional growth that cannot be fully achieved in the formal classroom setting alone" (p. 239). Equally important in this model is the interpretation and communication of knowledge generated in the field school.

Mytum (2012) amplifies Perry's (2004) observations on reflective learning by describing a circular process moving from concrete experience to reflective observation, to abstract conceptualization to active experimentation. Mytum also recommends that assessment guidelines for students be explicit, and that the field school environment balances planning and stability with the flexibility often required by the logistical uncertainties of context. In this regard, Clark

(2012) is particularly helpful in articulating that directors of field schools must consider issues of safety, preparing for the unexpected, facilitating/mediating interpersonal relationships, establishing rules of conduct in the field, and promoting flexibility.

The field school model is traditionally place-based and the fieldwork or training occurs *in situ*, but alternatives or extensions to this norm exist and often commingle with digital technologies for communication and publication. The Cultural Heritage Infomatics Initiative (2011) at Michigan State University offers an annual field school that provides students experience building “applications and digital user experiences that serve the domain of cultural heritage—skills such as programming, media design, project management, user centered design, digital storytelling, etc.” One of the exciting pedagogical aspects of the CHI field school is that participants engage in “building as a way of knowing,” a process that merges data analysis, programming, tool creation, and interpretive strategies in a collaborative environment. While this environment is anchored on the MSU campus, it also transcends place via the digital infrastructure that enables groups to work on materials linked to other sites and generate tools or experiences that engage users across networks of interest and communication, geographies and affiliations. Another example is the Barbuda Field School run by the City University of New York system, which in the past few years has explored use of interactive technology and video documentation about the student experience as means for enriching learning opportunities. In this model, students traverse the traditional archaeological field school terrain of skill building and facilitated training while simultaneously using digital media to track their experience and communicate their reflections and analyses (Kendall, 2011).²

Towards the goal of developing a field school that drew on both standard models of place-based experience and emerging opportunities presented by digital technologies, we imagined PCH as collaborative environment in which all participants learned about arts and culture through digital documentation and production. As

detailed below, we built a hybrid structure with both online and onsite components, designed to extend the richness of a field school via platforms such as WordPress, Facebook, Vimeo and other digital publishing or communication tools (including Chinese equivalents). Thus, in our reimagining of the field school model we sought to embed the use of digital media tools and platforms into the learning experience as a means to encourage participation across multiple modes of social practice.

Given the pedagogical characteristics of field schools as described above, PCH focused on comparative cultural practices and boundaries associated with community identity in Jiangua and Song Zhuang. This fieldwork was part of the ongoing fieldwork associated with *ChinaVine*. *ChinaVines*'s mission is to educate English-speaking / reading children, youth, and adults about the cultural heritage of China.³ This mission is advanced through an interactive website, chinavine.org, along with social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Vimeo, Sina Todou, etc.) in the US and the PRC.

² Ethnographers and folklorists have long used various forms of technology to support collecting data in the field as well as analyzing, interpreting, and communicating data. Surveying the use of technology in ethnographic and folkloristic fieldwork falls outside of the scope of this article. Readers interested in this relationship can refer to Fenn (2012); Holloway & Kononeko (2005); and Sikarski (2011). Additionally, it is important to point out that annual professional meetings associated with ethnographic disciplines routinely include sessions and workshops exploring the use of technology in fieldwork. For example Fenn regularly facilitates workshops with Andrew Kolovos at the American Folklore Society meetings. These workshops focus on digital audio recording and digital archiving. Furthermore, a recent workshop hosted by the folklore department at the University of Wisconsin, Madison paired folklorists with the programming team of an interactive “situated documentary” platform for mobile devices known as Augmented Reality Interactive Storytelling (ARIS). A white paper detailing best practices around folklore fieldwork, cultural tourism, and mobile technologies arose from this workshop and can be found at <http://www.afsnet.org/resource/resmgr/Best_Practices_Reports/ARIS_Final_Report.pdf>.

³ For more information on ChinaVine see Congdon & Blandy (2010a, 2010b).

Since its inception, graduate and undergraduate students in the PRC and the US have participated as research assistants to the scholars associated with *ChinaVine*. PCH represented an initial effort to directly connect undergraduate and graduate student participation, credit hours, and knowledge acquisition with the ongoing fieldwork of *ChinaVine* scholars. PCH provided students with the tools and experiences necessary to independently generate transmedia content for posting on *ChinaVine's* website and various social media sites in the US and the PRC.

The PCH Field School Course of Study

Online Orientation

The PCH field school was structured around three distinct yet interrelated units. The first was a two-week orientation facilitated online via a field school interactive course site built in WordPress <<http://aaablogs.uoregon.edu/beijingfieldschool/>>. This orientation introduced participants to pertinent aspects of China's cultural heritage, the locations to be visited, the *ChinaVine* project, concepts and theories related to cultural interpretation, folkloristic fieldwork methods, and practical exercises in digital documentation and fieldwork.

To assist students in understanding, appreciating, and maintaining a critical perspective to the PRC they read *China in the 21st Century: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Wasserstrom, 2010) and posed questions to the course site for discussion. Issues discussed by students and faculty included historical and contemporary Confucianism and its impact on Chinese culture, the Cultural Revolution, Mao's influence in the present day, the intersection of national and cultural policies, the influence of religion and the adoption of Capitalism in the PRC, cultural misunderstandings associated with both the US and the PRC, how museums construct cultural conceptions, local/global conceptions of the PRC Olympics, and public access to cultural resources in the PRC.

To orient students to *ChinaVine* and the interpretive process they were asked to read "Re-configuring Museums" by Welsh (2005). This article presents a model for understanding and creating cultural interpretation. After reviewing *ChinaVine.org* and reading the article by Welsh, students were asked to respond online to questions associated with the ways in which *ChinaVine* integrates materiality, engagement, and representation into the interpretation of China's cultural heritage. Students were oriented to conceptions of culture by posing questions for discussion to the course site associated with readings on public culture and tourism (Baron, 2010), context (Hufford, 1995), and art (Pocius, 1995).

Students were oriented to fieldwork by being asked to reflect upon their own cultural backgrounds. Because much of our work in the PRC would pair oral narratives with images, students were asked to describe how their families represented themselves through stories and photographs. To expand students' appreciation of what constitutes material culture they were asked to describe distinctive family foods and to post a recipe to the course site. To prepare students to create media associated with their upcoming residency they were asked to read *Visual Storytelling: The Digital Video Documentary* (Kalow, 2011) as a basis for describing a story they found that could be the subject of a video documentary.

Residency

Jiangou is a pilgrimage destination situated near an important temple and has a nascent tourist industry. Song Zhuang is a cluster of villages that have become the home of several thousand contemporary artists. *ChinaVine's* partnership with the Beijing Folk Literature and Art Association permitted access to Jianguo. Professors Yang and An had done previous fieldwork in the village as well. Entry to Song Zhuang was possible because of our previous fieldwork there over the last several years in association with the artist He Xue-sheng.

During the two-week residency, participants, working in two teams, experienced, documented, and began to interpret Jianguo

and Song Zhuang. Each fieldwork team consisted of students from the US and the PRC and was led by a graduate student. Through folkloristic methods students investigated and documented the cultural development of these two districts. In Jianguo fieldwork included hiking to the temple complex on Miaofeng Mountain, observing a fertility offering at the temple, observing restoration efforts, and conducting an in-depth interview with the temple director and a scholar associated with the restoration of the temple complex. Students also conducted interviews with elderly villagers who could remember the pilgrimage traditions prior to the Cultural Revolution. Villagers also talked with students about their memories of the Japanese occupation of the area during World War II. At a “Red Tourism” site associated with the 90th anniversary of the Communist Party students were able to visit a local museum and observe a local performance of revolutionary songs. Villagers talked with students about how difficult life was in the early years of the PRC. Students were also able to interview villagers associated with the cultivating and preparation of food and drink from the locally grown roses.

In Song Zhuang students interviewed local government officials about their plans for the area as a commercial arts district. In addition, students interviewed five artists and one art critic living in the area about their work as well as their impressions of how Song Zhuang is changing from an area of farming villages to an internationally known artist enclave. One of the artists interviewed combined his discussion about his art with a demonstration of the preparation of traditional homemade noodles.

During the residency students were required to organize their audio-visual digital documentation, participate in language training, and engage in unstructured activities. This latter requirement was associated with our accommodations in one of Beijing’s traditional hutong neighborhoods and gave students the opportunity to compare arts and culture aspects of our field sites with those found in and around the urban milieu of a hutong. Throughout the residency component of the field school, we encouraged the use of a variety

of media and devices for documentation, including equipment we brought specifically for the field school and the students’ personal devices. Our approach here revealed the ways in which ubiquitous technologies such as smart phones, digital cameras, and micro video camcorders might fit with the pedagogical goals of the PCH field school. We were particularly interested in the dynamics of comfort and familiarity surrounding digital technologies. Students navigated these dynamics by learning to use technology we brought while also employing their own cameras and phones as fieldwork documentation tools. Beyond the hardware aspect of digital technologies, students also used social media software platforms such as the course site (built in WordPress) or their personal Facebook or Twitter accounts as outlets for documentation and reflection.

The final assignment during the residency was the creation of “treatments” for the web posts each team would compose using the fieldwork materials gathered. For these treatments they identified key photographs and video segments, drafted scripts for editing / assembling materials, and specified important names, concepts, terms, dates, locations, and other details that would be featured. Treatments integrated ideas from relevant readings on interpretation and cultural representation, and also included the division of tasks among team members and a tentative timeline/workflow. Each team presented their treatments to the whole group so as to elicit feedback, refine their approaches, and settle on at least two treatments for final production (one for each fieldwork site).

Post-residency

The final unit of the field school moved back into the online environment, as teams collaborated virtually to build and finalize the posts they were each ultimately responsible for. These posts comprised cultural interpretations from Jianguo and Song Zhuang and were published via both the course site and on *ChinaVine’s* blog: *Vine Online* <<http://aaablogs.uoregon.edu/vineonline/>>. Publication was accompanied by prompts posted on *ChinaVine’s* other social

networking sites within the US and the PRC. Interpretation was to include text and an image gallery and/or an edited video. Posts were to interpret at least one of the following: artist, heritage, and/or place.

Following are one abridged interpretation each from Jianguo and Song Zhong, composed by students in the field school. The first is primarily heritage focused with the second having an artist focus. Our purpose here is to suggest what students accomplished through their fieldwork and some of the socio-cultural issues interpreted by the students. Readers are encouraged to visit *Vine Online* and/or the field school website for the unabridged transmedia rich versions.

Jianguo: Cultural Tourism

The following is excerpted from (<http://aaablogs.uoregon.edu/beijingfieldschool/2011/08/12/jianguo-cultural-tourism/>)



Figure 1. Jianguo Village.

The temple above Jian Guo, a village outside of Beijing, is a location of significance for Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. Until 1986, when a road up the mountain was built and the restoration of the temple began, the only way from the village to the temple was by pilgrim trail on foot... The village of Jian Gou has links to the temple, red tourism and roses cultivated in the area... Mr. Wu, the owner of the restaurant we visited for lunch and interviewed, told us that currently sixty percent of the village grows roses...



Figure 2: Jianguo Restaurant.

The fieldwork team's lunch included a fried type of pancake made with roses from the village inside of it. The team was also served fish, vegetables, stewed chicken and rose tea grown in the area... After lunch, Mr. Wu, the owner and cook at the restaurant, led the team to a bedroom to conduct the interview... The bedroom contained a prominently placed poster of Chairman Mao positioned over the television set... The room we interviewed Mr. Wu in also had a kang in it, which is a bed

historically used because it can be heated from beneath in the winter. Sounds from cooking in the kitchen while lunch was made for the employees, employees cleaning up the dining area and a radio could also be heard...Mr. Wu seemed interested in portraying this interest in his place of business to visitors to his website.



Figure 3. Mr. Wu.

While we documented the kitchen and the adjacent room where food was prepared to be served, Mr. Wu videotaped our group moving through the space.

Song Zhuang: Zhang Jianhua

The following is excerpted from <http://aaablogs.uoregon.edu/beijingfieldschool/2011/08/16/zhang-jianhua/>

Zhang Jianhua is a contemporary sculptor known for being controversial. The subject of his work often involves poverty, exploitation, and death...Before attending the Central Academy

of Fine Arts, Zhang grew up in a small village in the Henan province of China...In his life time, he has worked as a farmer, a miner, and an artist assistant before attending university and starting his own artist career. The main body of his sculptural work reflects his own life and depicts many individuals he has come in contact with.

His first series, the *Zhuangtang Village*, focused on rural Chinese peasants. Using his own hometown as a model, featuring actual villagers in his work, Zhang depicts the hardships facing farmers today. Zhang's second series, *Coal-the black Gold* is about the strife of coal miners in China. To prepare for this series, Zhang visited coal mines in Henan and Shanxi provinces, working and living with miners, even experiencing a mining accident where some of his friends were injured and killed. After exploring farmers and miners, Zhang turned to another social problem, prostitution...Here Zhang created a complete environment with an illegal taxi in front of a store front where prostitutes are waiting inside.



Figure 4. Prostitute Series by Zhang Jianhua.

Further back, there are a series of rooms graphically depicting what the customers are paying for.

His current series, *City Monument*, Zhang focuses on urban development and modern philosophy and religion.



Figure 5: Zhang Jianhua with City Monument.



Figure 6: City Monument / Ai Weiwei by Zhang Jianhua. Hundreds of small figure sculptures are placed within a decaying urban landscape featuring prominent Beijing architecture such as the Bird's Nest and CCTV building.

Reflecting On and Interpreting the Field School Experience

Fieldwork teams successfully produced two transmedia interpretations each of Jianguo and Song Zhuang. Postings included interpretive text as well as photographic and/or video documentation/ interpretation. Consistent with assignment guidelines, posts focused on individual artists, cultural heritage, geographic area or a combination of these. Posts were informed by the online orientation to the field school that explored China's cultural heritage, fieldwork techniques, and interpretation through a variety of media. An important component of this field school was introducing students to the fluid experience of ethnographic fieldwork rife with last minute alterations to plans. Adding extensive technology into the mix increased the need for flexibility, as technical issues (some large, some small) became sudden realities in the field. For example, a particular issue that emerged with the video component of fieldwork was the wide variety of file formats we generated. As students prepared to edit and organize video in the field, file compatibility problems with an editing platform (Final Cut Pro) presented a

bottleneck that ultimately required us to procure transcoding software. Faculty and student participants worked together to navigate such fluidity and generated solutions and strategies that can enrich future field schools associated with *ChinaVine*.

Student evaluations conducted anonymously after the end of the field school by the UO International Affairs office confirms much of what we hoped students would gain from the experience. Comments by participants acknowledged the value of the culturally immersive field school environment as important to professional experience and producing cultural interpretation. In this regard appreciation was expressed for the opportunity to get to know the artists as a part of the interpretive process. Several students commented on the challenges associated with working in the field. They noted the fluidity of the fieldwork experience and the necessity of sometimes building experiences as you go. For one student the most valuable experience associated with the field school was the essay that was written about their own cultural heritage and how that was a point of comparison with what was experienced during the residency. However, this same student questioned the need for pre-residency readings and would have preferred to go to the PRC without pre-conceptions.

Another source of information about the student's experiences was an article written about the field school for a UO blog (Gerdes, 2011). For this article several students were interviewed. Comments were consistent with what emerged in the formal evaluations. It was particularly noteworthy that in this article a student commented on a more nuanced understanding of the cultural influences Chinese artists are bringing to bear upon their work. This included the work of calligraphers that were being influenced by both traditional Chinese calligraphy and American-style painting. One student commented on differences she believe exists between how artists in the west consider "tradition" as compared to the artists she interviewed in the PRC who routinely combined traditional and non-traditional approaches. A Chinese National student commented on how her experience

in Jianguo is assisting her in considering generational differences associated with Mao and the Chinese Communist Party. In this regard she finds it interesting that celebrating history is contributing to the economic development in rural and poor areas of the PRC.

Conclusion

Our purpose in this article was to describe an approach to an existing educational model, the field school, that extends learning and engagement through pre- and post- online experiences using WordPress and other social media tools or digital communications technologies. Integral to this purpose was illustrating how digital technology can be used in collaborative, team-based production of transmedia cultural documentation and interpretation in such a way as to encourage exploration of both content and methods. Student and instructor participation, our evaluation of student work, and post-field school evaluations and interviews support the following conclusions. These conclusions are such that they can also serve as recommendations to others in the field of Art Education directing or considering the field school as a model for engaging with material culture in a cross cultural global or international context.

A mix of emerging and established technologies in a field school context can extend the engagement factor beyond the traditional time frame of a "course" or other academic unit. Combining online tools with face-to-face work and travel permits students and faculty alike to participate in a range of ways that will likely move beyond the official "end" of the field school and locate learning across multiple places and times. In the case of PCH this extension of the learning space manifested in several students expressing interest in continuing to work on producing content for *ChinaVine* that would draw on materials gathered during the field school but do not yet appear in the posts teams created to satisfy course requirements. Continuing to contribute to the *ChinaVine* project beyond the credit-bearing timeframe of the field school speaks to a commitment born out of the intersection of experience, value, and learning embodied in PCH.

Developing a flexible format regarding technology and teaching gives students room to feel comfortable using existing skills as well as exploring new opportunities. Instead of setting out to teach specific technologies. In the case of PCH we built the field school and its assignments in a manner that encouraged students to utilize tools for documenting, communicating, interpreting, and publishing that were both familiar and unfamiliar. As such, peer learning emerged as an important component of engagement throughout the field school.

Engagement can be both transnational and localized in the model we propose. Students gathered online prior to our two-week residency, becoming familiar with relevant materials and each other before gathering face-to-face in Beijing. After dispersing, they came together once more online in order to construct final postings. These postings, as nodes of entry into China's cultural heritage for other learners not affiliated with the field school, continue to extend the cultural engagement beyond the confines of the field school through the use of the interactivity built into the *ChinaVine* project.

The field school model permits learning as an individual and within the context of an interdisciplinary team. As one PCH student observed in a post field school interview:

It was extremely satisfying to see all of our different majors coming together to create something, kind of like a puzzle. I don't think it would have worked nearly as well if we were all the same major. I learned how to work as a team and really liked having a defined role in the group (where I could) give help pertaining to my unique knowledge. (Gerdes, 2011)

Significant to this student's observation, and at the heart of what we intended to accomplish with PCH and articulate in this article, is that experiencing, learning about, and interpreting the arts and culture is a multidisciplinary, multivocal, multimodal, and multi-platform endeavor that may be best realized in an immersive environment that a field school can provide. In noting that our field school model necessarily unfolded across a set of complex and multisensory

environments in Beijing, and that the field work and media content produced by participants attempts to represent constellations of people, practices, and experiences, we recognize the possibility of tensions around concepts such as multimodal or multivocal. Through critical reflection and discussion with participating students, we sought to navigate these tensions by acknowledging the constraints of technological and cultural systems we worked with while offering approaches to balanced and thoughtful interpretation. For example, the material posted online by students draws on text and images (still or moving) to represent cultural environments and practices rich in sensual stimuli. As powerful as the web is for distributing knowledge and media, there are not tools to articulate smells or tactile aspects of experience. Furthermore, we had students work within existing publication templates drawn from the *ChinaVine* project that determine length of text and number of images. Rather than ignore such tensions we were able to discuss with the students ways in which the privileging of visual media (text/images) on the web present us with opportunities for critical reflection on research and interpretation. Other potential tensions between the model we promote here and the actual experience in the field—language barriers, relatively short period of residency, or the various positionalities of students, faculty, Chinese partners, and artists or culture bearers—similarly provided us with teachable moments toward which we could turn ethnographic sensitivity to polyphony (Bahktin 1981) and social practice (Bourdieu 1977) in order to guide critical discussion with students about both content and context of field work.

Our articulation of the PCH field school experience supports what was referenced earlier in this article about archeological field schools. PCH participants were involved in the construction, interpretation, and transmedia communication of knowledge associated with fieldwork experiences in the specific cultural contexts of Jianguo and

Song Zhuang. It is our conviction that students' awareness that their transmedia interpretations would be posted to *ChinaVine* supports Perry's (2004) position on the authentic learning that is associated with field schools. While, testing Mytum's (2012) circular process of reflective learning falls outside of our purpose, our communications with, and observations of, students as they engaged in preparing transmedia interpretations for *ChinaVine* suggest that a circular process moving from concrete experience (in the villages) to reflective observation (review of field notes and digital documentation), to abstract conceptualization (preparation of treatments) to active experimentation (preparing interpretive materials for posting) was involved. Further study is warranted as is looking at the possible relationship between reflective learning and arts-based learning. As the co-directors of PCH, we can attest to the vigilance, flexibility, facilitative skills needed on our part to navigate and negotiate interaction within and across online and residential environments within a multicultural context.

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“How Will You Do This?” Infusing Multiculturalism Throughout Art Teacher Education Programs

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ABSTRACT

The argument that teacher education is unresponsive to critical approaches to multiculturalism is not new (Vavrus, 2011). Some art education programs continually marginalize multiculturalism in social foundation courses (Knight, 2006). Or, if multiculturalism is included in normative courses like methods, it is situated as a “theme” within the curriculum. This marginalization of multiculturalism is not conducive to teaching preservice students how to respond to diversity or to construct a culturally responsive pedagogy. The following article details an action research project in which the author describes, analyzes and assesses strategies used to infuse multiculturalism throughout an art education secondary methods course. This research helps to reframe the initial debate that questions the quality of multicultural competency and visibility in preservice teacher education.

“How Will You Do This?”

During my dissertation defense, I passionately declared that I would create multicultural art education experiences in which students questioned power structures, identified personal biases, promoted equity, and learned empathy. I hoped that my teaching and students’ learning these lessons would inform their future art teaching. As I concluded my novice proclamation, a committee member asked, “How will you do this?” I did not have an answer, and I willingly shared this fact. Fortunately, my “I don’t know yet” did not result in my failing the defense exam. The committee member’s question was not proposed to contest my goals; its purpose was to make me cognizant of how I would have to plan a way to accomplish those goals. Art teacher education programs that thoroughly integrate multicultural goals into normative art education curricula are scarce (Knight, 2006). The committee member knew this and wanted to prepare me, as she was once in my position, asserting similar goals.

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While her interrogation addressed the personal strategies I planned to use in my ensuing professorship, it also raised much larger questions. Why do some art education programs in higher education lack consistent infusion of critical multiculturalism?² And are those art educators who are concerned with multiculturalism relegated to teaching only optional, isolated, special topics courses titled Multicultural Art Education?

This research revisits a previous inquiry explored by art educator Wanda Knight in 2006. In “Using Contemporary Art to Challenge Cultural Values, Beliefs, and Assumptions,” Knight asserts:

Teacher education programs have the responsibility of preparing preservice teachers for a diverse society. Multicultural perspectives should not be limited to isolated courses but should permeate every aspect of the curriculum, the goal of which is to increase respect for diversity, reduce racism, and positively affect student learning. (p. 40)

Knight insists that multicultural perspectives should be integrated into general art education curriculum. Her solutions are discussed in descriptions of the pedagogy, instructional strategies and seminar activities she utilized to teach a special topics course titled, “Using Contemporary Art to Challenge Cultural Values, Beliefs, and Assumptions.” While I use Knight as a point of reference, my research is dissimilar, as it details work done in a course that

² Various critical theorists have critiqued some of the directions multicultural education has taken, arguing that it has deviated too far away from its original goals (Nieto, Bode, Kang, & Raible, 2008; Sleeter & Bernal, 2004); and that its historical roots are grounded in a critical analysis of power (Banks, 2004; Gay, 2004). Simply put, some approaches to multiculturalism fail to identify power and privilege as chief concepts of interrogation. Named as “liberal multiculturalism” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; May & Sleeter, 2010), it is characterized as being “trivialized, taking the form of practices . . . such as holiday celebrations or lessons focusing on self-esteem (May & Sleeter, 2010, p.7). These researchers reject this diluted version of multiculturalism and have returned to their origins to embrace what they now call “critical multicultural education,” based in challenging power structures and cultural subjugation.

is not marginalized in social foundations. My research addresses the query, how can an art educator infuse multiculturalism into “general” undergraduate art education courses such as elementary and secondary methods, which attend to tasks such as curriculum development, assessment, and classroom and behavior management?

Methodology

This inquiry is positioned as action research; it interrogates practices done in the context of my university classroom. Kindon, Pain and Kesby (2007) suggest that action research is focused on “social action, policy reform or other types of social or systematic change” (p. 11). It is “teacher-conducted, classroom-based research whose purpose is to measure the effects of new instructional strategies, activities or techniques; the overarching goal is to improve student learning” (The McGraw-Hill Companies, 2011, para. 4). However, action research can also be a personal examination of one’s own life and professional practice while steadily working to effect change or create institutional reform. The essential steps of an action research are plan-act-observe-reflect (Anderson, 2005). This methodology supports a reflective practice, allows one to try new ideas, and reliably assess their effectiveness. It creates meaningful and lasting change in one’s practice, in students’ learning, and one’s school (The McGraw Hill Companies, 2011). The following section details this action research and is organized under headings *Plan, Act, Observe, Reflect*, the four steps of the action research process. To make conclusions, I use descriptive data collected during candid class discussions, and excerpts from students’ writing exercises.

Reflections on Teaching Secondary Methods

Plan. The official course description for the secondary art methods course, titled Visual Arts Studies: Reflective Visual Arts Practices, communicated that instruction should guide students through the processes that will enable them to construct meaningful visual culture/art inquiry experiences within the larger secondary school curriculum. In course planning, I included the additional goal to

place multiculturalism within the course's agenda. In addition to the four course objectives from past course syllabi, which had no goals of teaching students how to perform in a diverse classroom or teach in a multicultural world, I added: "Students will learn how to navigate a diverse classroom and will be introduced to information that will help establish and maintain confidence in teaching students from various backgrounds." The selected course literature supported this additional objective. The primary texts for the course were Susan Cahan and Zoya Kocur's (1996) *Contemporary Art and Multicultural Education, Rethinking Curriculum in Art* by Marilyn G. Stewart and Sydney R. Walker (2005), and *Assessment in Art Education* by Donna Kay Beattie (1997). To complement these texts, I assigned literature from various art education journals, as well as from journal articles and books outside of the discipline. The articles were specific to topics such as curriculum development, classroom and behavior management, and assessment, but with explicit attention to diversity and cultural variances. Each reading assignment, regardless of its topic, had literature that acknowledged diversity. The goal was to support a continuous, growing acknowledgement of people's diverse cultural frames of reference (Ogbu, 1993). Teachers are responsible for effectively adjusting instruction and pedagogy to satisfy varied perspectives in their classroom. This goal guided my syllabus construction, assigned reading list, and instructional activities.

Act and Observe. The most effective instructional activity used in my classroom was interactive group discussion, a cooperative learning strategy (Johnson & Johnson, 2007). For each reading assignment, there was a corresponding class discussion aimed to elicit self-reflection, as well as to promote knowledge construction. David Bridges (n.d.) writes, "Discussion has been seen as such a central component of social practices deemed democratic...this is why the use of discussion in the classroom is often seen as an especially democratic form of pedagogy" (p. 73). This reciprocal activity helps students identify the diversity in their peers' thinking (Knight, 2006). Additionally, it potentially influences, alters, and/or facilitates a renegotiation of one's personal beliefs. For example, the

students read two articles that encouraged using controversial topics in art curriculum development, Cohen's (2005) "Students living in violent conflict" and Jeffers and Parth's (1996) "Relating controversial contemporary and school art." The articles initiated discussion about religion, racism, and homosexuality. Discussing this text helped the art education students understand how personal biases inform teaching pedagogy, and how teacher beliefs could potentially remove an entire group of people or culture from the classroom. Students' art educational experiences are often shaped by their teachers' world views (Jeffers & Parth, 1996). In numerous written reading responses, some art education students confessed that they never made direct connections between their teaching pedagogy and their personal beliefs and biases.

The art education students in the course (99% of whom were White) talked about embracing multiculturalism; however, they never demonstrated that they held a multicultural perspective that transcended actions such as adding artists of color into lessons and teaching historical cultural practices like African mask making and Mexican Day of the Dead projects. The issue with this additive framework of multiculturalism is that it supports the "Other"- "norm" dichotomy. Steinberg (2009) suggests that White students rarely see themselves as central *within* multiculturalism and diversity. Multiculturalism is always something that is separate from them, something they must "embrace," "accept," or "tolerate"; Whiteness is often an unexamined norm (Tatum, 1997). Encouraging my White students to see themselves inside the multicultural discourse was critical, as "evidence suggests that students learn more, attend more regularly, and participate more actively when they can relate to curriculum by seeing themselves and their communities mirrored in it than when they do not" (Sleeter, 2008, p.151). With this in mind, I assigned readings that made the correlation between Whiteness and multiculturalism visible. One article elicited the following student response:

Reading this article encourages me to not only keep an open

mind to diversity, but to realize it starts with me as a diverse being. We are all different. I must take steps towards promoting respect for diversity from the very start of teaching. This mindset will help me to better engage each of my students individually, as well as aid them in developing efficient ways of interacting with one another.

Another student communicated that his understanding of the teacher's role shifted to include being a "model of multiculturalism, not just a teacher who teaches multicultural art units." While these students' statements reveal a bit of development in their understanding of multiculturalism, I realize that the assigned literature addressed the effects of White privilege, but never clearly defined it and its structural origins. I believe the students needed to understand *why* they initially thought of themselves as racially unmarked (hooks, 1994) and not within diversity. Otherwise, these prospective teachers would not have the intellectual tools to make curricular decisions that disengage the structural, hegemonic practices that initiate and maintain the *status quo*. It is fair to state that race was not salient to my art education students; they did not inherently understand that race is a filter through which people see the world (Sleeter, 2008). In the future, explicitly addressing White privilege in this art education course will be a priority.

To accompany discussions, students engaged in writing activities that allowed them to communicate ideas and ask questions anonymously, without the fear of reprisal. Once, I instructed the students to write one question or comment for Wasson, Stuhr, and Petrovich-Mwaniki's (1990) "Teaching art in the multicultural classroom: Six position statements." One student asked, "Why do we need to discuss diversity in art?" Another student shared her idea that each classroom population is different; therefore, teaching multiculturalism should be based on whether or not the class population is very diverse. She went on to assert that some teachers may simply mention multiculturalism, but it will not need to be the main focus if the student body is not varied. For me, this activity

served as a formative assessment that revealed both explicit and implicit resistances to multiculturalism, as well as misinformed, undeveloped understandings about diversity and multicultural education. I used all of their anonymous questions and comments as discussion prompts. Using the students' inquiries as a platform to build knowledge is necessary for true learning to occur (Freire, 1970) and for re-negotiation of ideas to begin. For example, various students asserted that art was inherently multicultural and diverse, thus requiring art education to follow lead. One student declared the need for multiculturalism to influence every classroom, regardless of the lack of visible (race and gender) diversity in the classroom. In addition, she asserted that an all-White, upper class group of students needs multicultural education even more than "other" groups of people. I was pleased that the students challenged each other to think more critically about multicultural teaching practices. I did not aim to indoctrinate the students; I wanted my students to come "to these positions via their own capacity to think and critically assess the world they live in" (hooks, 2003, p. 8).

I assigned two readings that addressed heterosexism and identified the challenges that homosexual youth face in schools today, Nichols' (1999) "Gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth" and Payne's (2010) "Your art is gay and retarded." I aimed to help the future teachers understand that irrespective of their personal ideals, they would teach students whose beliefs, cultures, and lifestyles conflict with their own. From the students' written discussion responses, I learned that some students struggled with the idea of addressing homosexuality in curriculum or working with youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ). However, it was clear that students had negotiated their beliefs and did not allow their ideals to take precedence over the needs and safety of their future students. For instance, a student shared how only through the article did she realize that not all of her students would be heterosexual. A different student wrote that the article influenced her pedagogy, as she now desires to strive for creating a safe, inclusive classroom environment, not just a well-managed one. According to another

written reflection, the assigned articles helped a student broaden his definition of diversity to surpass skin color. All of these examples exemplify how the literature I chose for the course effectively facilitated the kind of internal dialogue that is required in classrooms with goals of change (Sleeter & Grant, 2007).

Through my observations, I identified a clear need for multiculturalism to be embedded throughout all courses in the art education teacher training program. Some student questions and comments were uninformed and revealed a lack of critical reflection on self and the world. After reading a manuscript titled “Culturally responsive classroom management strategies” (n.d.), from the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education website, the art education students admitted that they did not consider the need for teachers to be cognizant of students’ cultures when attending to classroom management. Upon reading about teaching ESL learners (Eubanks, 2002; Shoemaker, 1998), some art education students stated that they never considered the possibility of teaching this population, and therefore never gauged specific instructional strategies that would be particularly useful in addressing the success of these students. The first time a pre-service teacher considers the concept of working with a population of ESL learners should not be the semester before they student teach. Fortunately, the course I developed facilitated opportunities for self-confrontation and for pedagogical reconsiderations. Instances such as the ones I have observed and described support the idea that programmatic shifts that bring multiculturalism to the forefront all throughout the teacher education program are necessary.

Reflect. As an incoming Assistant Professor, I worried about how students would receive my teaching and scholarship. My scholarship is fully situated in multiculturalism; therefore, I assume a critical pedagogy in which I promote critical consciousness, the recognition of power and engagement with social action. While I am fully committed to these teaching goals, I fear being identified as the cliché Black woman professor who teaches multiculturalism. This internal

conflict persisted as I planned, acted, and observed my infusion of multiculturalism in the undergraduate, secondary methods course. For example, during discussions, I considered whether or not students thought I “played the race card.” As a Black woman in a perceived authority position, information that I present about the critical multicultural discourse is deemed debatable (hooks, 2003). A Black woman who teaches about diversity or advocates for equality is often identified as a person with an “agenda” or being the “angry Black woman” (Bryant, Coker, Durodoye, McCollum, Pack-Brown, Constantine, & O’Bryant, 2005).

According to Steele and Aronson (1995), this fear I experienced is called negative stereotype threat. Negative stereotype threat occurs when one is in a situation in which they may be judged or treated in terms of a racial stereotype. This experience is not novel for women of color in academia (Carter-Black, 2008; Collins, 1986; Jackson, 1998; Souto-Manning & Ray, 2007; Tatum, 1997;). Unfortunately, most women of color take on this relentlessly arduous task (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Carter-Black (2008) adds, “Simply recognizing that a negative group stereotype could be attached to you within a given context may be enough to trigger that threat” (p. 9). This directly relates to the question, how are teachers of color defined by students? Reactions to negative stereotype threat may result in a diminished ability to authentically self-define, as it can manipulate a person and cause them to work hard to distance themselves from central aspects of their identity, like race and gender. I infer that this is why I initially desired my students to receive information that I presented, but not acknowledge that it was filtered through the lens of a Black woman; when at the same time, I was asking them to recognize that their understanding of the world is filtered through Whiteness. Upon reflection, I realize how contradictory my actions were.

In addition, I am positive that this race-related stress influenced the efficacy of my teaching; it is probably why I conveniently disregarded discussing White privilege in a class with a 99% White student demographic. I naïvely wanted to present information in a neutral

way; however, my physical appearance is not neutral, thus the information was never neutral for the students. I now recognize the need to acknowledge my positionality in the classroom. I am more cognizant of how information is perceived in relationship to my skin color. This experience ignited additional reflective questions for me, such as: How do I define myself as a teacher of color? How am I defined by students? How does this influence my work? How does the race of the professor influence classroom community?

In retrospect, I realize that when my dissertation committee member asked me, “How will you do this?” I considered solely the systematic restrictions that would hamper my success in teaching multicultural art education in academia, and disregarded the possibilities of personal challenges. Throughout this research, I found contradictions embedded within my overarching goal to teach critical multicultural art education. If I cannot embrace a true definition of self that places race and gender at the forefront, how can I effectively teach my students to do the same? I had to re-visit this inquiry for 15 weeks as I planned, taught, and reflected on my teaching this course. The more I accepted my position as a Black woman disseminating multicultural information, the more effective I was engaging in constructive, truthful dialogue about diversity with my students. Teachers must know who they are themselves before they can really teach their students (Nieto, n.d.).

Analysis and Conclusions

The analysis of this research is twofold, as an action research study may attend to both social action/systematic change as well as critical interrogations of one’s own practice. To respond to the first of these two goals, I revisit the guiding research question, “How will you (I) do this?” I utilize Knight’s (2006) chart (Figure 1) that details four approaches to multiculturalism.

Approaches to Multicultural Education

The Contributions Approach (level 1) centers on heroes and holidays, and is the most widely used approach to multiculturalism in North American schools. In this approach, art teachers do not challenge the long-established ethnocentric curriculum; therefore, it maintains its fundamental structure, and distinctive characteristics. Art teachers discuss cultural artifacts; however, they pay minimal attention—if any—to their meanings and significance to “minority” cultural and racial groups.

The Additive Approach (level 2) supports art teachers adding content concepts, themes, and perspectives of minority groups to the curriculum without changing its structure. “Minority” students learn little of the history and contributions of other racial and cultural groups to North American society.

The Transformational Approach (level 3): the art teacher seeks to change the structure of the curriculum to enable students to view matters from the perspectives of “the Other.” Changes in the basic assumptions and fundamental structure of the curriculum become apparent.

The Social Action Approach (level 4): students examine key social issues, and take action to help resolve them. Because art teachers help them acquire the attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary to participate in social change, students feel empowered. Students’ self-examination through value analysis, decision making, problem solving, and social action experiences is essential to this approach.

Figure 1. Knight’s (2006) Approaches to Multicultural Education.

I identify “The Transformational Approach (level 3)” as the method utilized most in my curriculum and teaching. I revised the course objectives and added literature that identified diversity as a significant aspect of all teaching strategies. While my adding information to the curriculum may appear to fall under “The Additive Approach (level 2),” the supplementary activities I utilized yielded transformational results. According to Freedman (2010):

Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly

alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race, and gender; our body awarenesses, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy. (p. 3)

To strive towards the transformational learning that Freedman (2010) describes, I guided students in identifying personal biases, promoting equity, and learning empathy. The discussions and written activities generated student reflections that considered the “Other.” To partially support this assertion, I offer a student’s reflection:

While reading this [assigned article], I had time to reflect on the way I view other cultures and how my lack of knowledge might adversely affect my students whose cultural backgrounds differ from my own. I have noticed that I tend to gravitate toward students in my observation classes who I feel I can relate to on some cultural level. This is a natural tendency, but it shows that I am insecure enough to keep myself from branching out—I don’t want to be that kind of teacher. I think that since I’m aware of my own cultural lens, I will [be] more sensitive to and less intimidated by all of my future students who I might not be able to identify with.

This student’s introspection was one of multiple reflexive statements made during class discussions and writings. Some art education students identified and acknowledged their biases based on their understandings (or lack thereof) of various cultures. They also realized how these judgments may affect their teaching. Students communicated their unconscious desire to maintain comfort in the classroom; therefore, they were conveniently inattentive to “Others.” Such self-realization fostered contemplation upon how school students are affected by teacher negligence.

Christine Ballengee-Morris and Patricia Stuhr (2001) write, “All forms of education act as social intervention and the implementation of these forms reconstructs society in various ways” (p. 8). My art education students expressed how the literature informed their working teaching pedagogy. For example, after I assigned an article about how to deal with youth who use discriminating speech in the classroom, a student responded:

It is important that we read and understand these texts because it is information that is relevant to the classroom today. These things (discriminating speech) really do happen and are occurring in schools. So, as a teacher, I am glad to have read these articles so I can be prepared Even though I have observed [hurtful language] in the teacher’s class I am observing, I have never thought about it in terms of *my* teaching or how I might deal with this. Therefore, it [the reading] was an[sic] eye-opening.

Transformational learning is about encouraging students to listen, think, and act upon perspectives that are different from their own. The results of such actions are potentially transformational because young children’s lives and learning experiences are altered by the art teachers’ decisions to make strides to be reflective multicultural educators in their classrooms. This includes their choice to create curriculum objectives that are fundamentally attentive to diversity and maybe even counter-hegemonic in many ways.

I placed multicultural emphasis on a course that has not been traditionally conceptualized as multicultural. This type of mediation is necessary within any transformation process (Ramsey & Williams, 2003). Unfortunately, I am concerned that my efforts did not create sustainable knowledge in students. An authentic comprehension of multiculturalism cannot be achieved in 15 weeks (one semester) of instruction alone. According to Ramsey and Williams (2003):

If a comprehensive multicultural approach is integrated into the 4 years of undergraduate [education] . . . there is clearly

more potential to effect attitudinal change and development of related knowledge and pedagogical skill than if there is minimal or tangential exposure to issues of diversity in teaching and learning. (p. 208)

If students receive only one course that infuses multicultural ideas, understanding, and practices within art education, the knowledge they gain potentially dissolves, especially since their understanding of the multicultural discourse has barely been developed. There must be significant immersion in this topic from all directions in order for multiculturalism to eventually be seen as an inherent component within art education. To generate the comprehension essential to create and implement an inclusive, culturally responsive classroom pedagogy, students must be continually immersed in art education courses that identify critical multiculturalism as essential to teaching.

To analyze the personal, introspective aspect of this study, my teaching process, I revisit the “reflect” stage of this action research. Even as a researcher of critical multiculturalism, I was often uncomfortable infusing multiculturalism into the methods class. My struggle can be attributed to personal fear of knowing that racial lenses shape ideas about “good” teaching (Pollock, 2008) and that Black women usually do not fare well within this framework of identification. Initially, I did not want to acknowledge how my identity influenced how students would receive information. My fear also affected what I did and did not teach; my omitting White privilege from the class conversation is an ideal example of this. However, once I recognized and allowed my positionality to guide my instructional decisions, I was much more effective in my teaching. Positionality is critical in creating authentic spaces for learning and discussing culture (Desai, 2000). According Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, & Muhamad, (2001), positionality can be associated with race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender or any microculture. It acknowledges that your understanding of the world is subjective to your place within it. Positionality places biases at the forefront of conversations and fosters more genuine

dialogues amongst groups. Openly communicating biases to students places teachers in a vulnerable, uncomfortable position. However, in order for art educators to place the present normative teacher education programs into a critical discourse, we must be willing to be uncomfortable with ourselves; this includes troubling and deconstructing our own identities. Without this discomfort, the *status quo* prevails and our future art teachers may learn a narrative that communicates the idea that teaching techniques exist outside of an understanding of culture and diversity (Vavrus, 2011).

bell hooks (2003) writes, “Educators are poorly prepared when we actually confront diversity. Professors and students have to learn to accept different ways of knowing, new epistemologies, in the multicultural setting” (p. 41). This assertion is significant because hooks identifies both students *and* professors as learners in need of a critical pedagogy that supports multiculturalism. My action research supports hooks’ claim, as this study revealed that students’ pedagogies do evolve from multiculturalism being infused throughout “general” art education courses, but it also highlighted the imperfections of the conduit through which art education is fed, which is the professor. Future art teachers will not be prepared for diversity if art teacher educators do not assume an authentic, active, critical pedagogy. I believe this is why programmatic shifts still have not transpired even though this debate is decades old. If we cannot model this critical pedagogy as teacher educators, we cannot expect the individuals we teach to be multiculturally competent or see themselves within the multicultural discourse.

How Will We Do This?

Stuhr, Ballengee-Morris, and Daniel (2008) suggest, “Multiculturalism in art education . . . [consists of] curricula guided by democratic social goals and values that seek to confront the racial, class, gender, and homophobic biases woven into the fabric of society” (p. 83). Curriculum can be a primary contributor to oppression; assumptions can be inferred by the inclusion or exclusion of certain information (Knight, 2006). Therefore, art teachers and art teacher educators

must “critically scrutinize their options...in order to clarify the social information they are conveying overtly or covertly to their students” (Knight, 2006, p. 41; see also Desai, 2000; Wasson, Stuhr, & Petrovich-Mwaniki, 1990). If art teacher education programs do not provide opportunities for prospective teachers to recognize the potentially damaging results of their choices, how can they be expected to have the knowledge and desire to make the responsible decisions we are asking of them?

Steady infusion of multiculturalism throughout art teacher education programs should be a goal of the entire program. The success of such a programmatic shift relies on teacher educators cultivating, nurturing, and being true to their personal and professional identity. There must be a willingness and desire to recognize and acknowledge positionality. This process definitely played a role in how I, although with faults, infused multiculturalism throughout my “general” art education course. Desai (2010) suggests,

Social justice education requires self-actualization to take place in order for students to commit to it for the long haul....It is only through this process of self-actualization that prospective teachers can design art practices and curricula that will allow their students to examine their lives through multiple and critical lens in order to imagine other ways of being. (pp. 174-176)

To extend this assertion, I believe that teacher educators must undergo this same “awakening.” The lack of (or fear of) this personal, internal process may be why more art teacher educators have not committed to infusing multiculturalism throughout their art teacher

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education programs "for the long haul."

Examining Fair Trade as an Art Education Opportunity

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ABSTRACT

Four art education researchers consider how addressing Fair Trade can expand and develop ways to teach students and the community about social justice. The authors first discuss Fair Trade through globalization, (inter)national laws, and the environment. Then through an analysis of Global Gallery, a nonprofit, Fair Trade organization in Columbus, Ohio and an example of incorporating Fair Trade into an undergraduate classroom, one familiarizes him/herself with the potential learning opportunities that surround Fair Trade and its foundations, policies, and practices. The authors advocate for a dialogical approach inside and outside of the classroom through dialogical action (Freire, 1970). Collectively authors reconfirm the need for art educators' sustained commitment to empowering and respectful cultural exchanges between students, educators, and diverse, artistic communities that can potentially lead to social transformation. The authors reflexively reconsider their work in engaging arts patrons, students, and consumers in helping to make that possibility a reality.

Introduction

For decades, art educators have advocated for social justice and equality in the classroom, within their communities, and at national and international scholarly assemblies. As a field we have expanded and developed ways to educate through art about visual culture, various global practices and traditions, and how to critically examine global power structures across social, political, and economic contexts and conditions (Ballengee-Morris, 2002; Delacruz, Arnold, Kuo &

Parsons, 2009; Desai, 2005; Garber, 2004; Stuhr, 1994). Currently, art educators not only teach aesthetics and the principles of design, but also advise students how to use social action skills to participate in shaping and controlling their destinies. Helping shape these destinies, educating students to be critical thinkers, and demonstrating an understanding of how the world is affected by all humans is key to the work we share.

In the field of development studies, particular emphasis is placed on issues related to social and economic research with a focus on commodity systems for which examples include consumption, marketing, and product placement (Goodman, 2004). In art education, one can study issues of commodity systems through the lenses of visual culture and integrated art education. Art educators can critically examine not only everyday images and various cultures through art, but also many of the economic and ecological dilemmas facing society (Duncum, 2000, 2001; Garber, 2010; Jagodzinski, 2007, 2008; Tavin & Hausman, 2004). In this paper, we argue that commerce involving trade of cultural products could be a part of those pedagogical practices as well—examining the social, economic, political, and ecological issues circulating around exchanges of cultural products.

The authors of this article consider how addressing Fair Trade within arts education can open up opportunities for intertwining many disciplines (e.g., development studies, anthropology, and sociology). Through discussions of Fair Trade, educators can encourage students to act in ways that lead them to or reaffirm their commitments to social justice (Freire, 1970). Fair Trade can open up opportunities for discussing indigenous art aesthetics, intercultural power dynamics, personal accountability, and cultural exchange—serving as a subject and space for dialogue.

In this article, we offer our understanding of Fair Trade in global contexts, discuss how we as art educators have connected to a Fair Trade organization in Columbus, Ohio, and offer one example of how a Fair Trade curriculum might be introduced to undergraduate students as a concern for social justice. We discuss the ways art education can chal-

lenge and change how indigenous artists' works might be studied, (re)presented, and taught to multiple populations (Sanders, Ballengee-Morris, Smith-Shank, & Staikidis, 2010). Moreover, we believe much can be learned through forms of art education pedagogy that study the foundations, policies, and practices of Fair Trade.

What is Fair Trade?

Foundations, Policies, and Practices

The inception of Fair Trade was brought about by a mix of post-World War II socioeconomic problems, altruism, and religion. "Some trace the Alternative Trade Organizations (ATOs) or the Fair Traders movement to the late-19th-century Italy and the United Kingdom, when cooperatives began building an integrated economy from production to retail outlet" (Ericson, 2006, p. 13). Contemporary ATOs began during the mid-20th century as missionary projects, humanitarian efforts, or political/economic action statements.

Although many trace the inception solely to Europe, there were almost simultaneous developments underway in both Europe and the United States. In the 1940s, the work of three organizations first emerged: 1) SERRV International, 2) Self Help Crafts (also known as Ten Thousand Villages), and 3) Oxfam. Fair Trade quickly gained recognition in Europe early on; however in the United States, it has taken a slower path (Ericson, 2006).

In addressing the socioeconomic issues of their time, SERRV, Ten Thousand Villages, and Oxfam have sought to help alleviate post war challenges, pain, and suffering. Working for peace and advocating for social and economic justice, they each serve basic human needs and maintain the integrity of war survivors' creations. For 60 years Fair Trade proponents have questioned power structures that have sustained injustices, calling for action, activism, and advocacy on behalf of artists worldwide.

In simple terms, Fair Trade is equitable trade, not "aid" – an idea that

originated in 1968 during the second United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Global development using aid increasingly became distrusted (Valentine, 1999) and critiqued for sustaining ways of trading that keep people poor (Oxfam, 2010).

The international Fair Trade movement seeks to amplify the producer's voice. Bowen (2001) comments,

Fair Trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, disadvantaged producers and workers. Fair Trade organizations—backed by consumers—are actively engaged in supporting producers in awareness raising and in campaigning for changes in the rules and practices of conventional international trade. (p. 24)

This is the definition adopted by all major European Fair Trade groups (e.g., the Fair Trade Labeling Organization International [FLO], International Fair Trade Association [IFAT], Network of European World Shops [NEWS!], and the European Fair Trade Association [EFTA]).

There are no standard definitions for Fair Trade worldwide. Given that European and U.S. Fair Trade organizations are on two different continents, differ culturally and politically, and compete as independent sovereign nations, Fair Trade organizations have yet to come together to form a cohesive definition.

Fair Trade principles, as outlined by the International Fair Trade Association work to:

- Create opportunities for economically disadvantaged producers
- Value transparency and accountability
- Foster capacity building
- Promote fair trade
- Extend fair payments to producers

- Demonstrate a commitment to gender equity
- Ensure safe working conditions
- Limit dangerous child labor exploitation
- Value ecological sustainability and healthy environments
- Promote equitable trade relations (<http://www.ifat.org>)

These ten principles have evolved over time and continue to do so. Fair Trade principles can operate within many different contexts and are subject to a wide array of interpretations and manifestations. Dialogue about Fair Trade extends across many disciplines and discourses.

Why Fair Trade?

Globalization

Fair Trade has come a long way in the past 60 years, but it has not kept pace with the growth of conventional trade. The effects of globalization on Fair Trade have been both positive and negative. Positively, increased access to technology and affordable transportation have allowed for greater communication and ease of trade between Fair Trade producers, wholesalers, retailers, and consumers worldwide. Negatively, the growth of multinational enterprises (MNEs) has further exploited the labors of artisans and those with limited capital or technical means. In our discussion of Fair Trade in relation to globalization, we will explore the inequitable distribution of resources and benefits of trade.

While multinational enterprises exist worldwide, most of these companies are headquartered in developed nations such as the U.S., Japan, and those within Europe (Salvatore, 1993). These companies, primarily committed to increasing their own profits, are often more economically powerful than many small and medium sized countries. For example, if Wal-Mart were a country, it would be the 25th largest economy in the world with its annual revenues outpacing 157 countries' GDPs (Trivett, 2011). MNEs are under tremendous pressure to increase profits and decrease expenses, but one must ask,

should greed, gluttony, and overindulgence really be considered a transnational value? If not, how might we begin to think through the repercussions of *capitalism gone wild*? It would seem an insatiable desire for wealth and its trappings has spread like a disease to other countries. One might therefore consider this not only an “American way,” but increasingly the “global way.”

With increasing pressure on MNEs to raise more profits each year, social concerns at times are framed as a drag on profits. MNEs set up subsidiaries in countries with fewer regulations and are then able to spend less on workers’ wages, their health and safety, and/or the cleaning up of a corporation’s toxic polluted production site (Chow & Schoenbaum, 2005). As early as the 1980s, scholars began describing the actions of MNEs as a new form of colonialism (Charney, 1983).

Since scholars began discussing MNEs’ business practices as a form of colonialism, the international legal system has moved at a glacial speed toward developing regulations for MNEs and their subsidiaries. Without international law, MNEs are only bound by domestic laws. The law of a country in which a subsidiary is located or headquartered may be influenced by the power of the MNE, giving them exemptions or neglecting to establish regulations in exchange for investment in their country (Chow & Schoenbaum, 2005). Those countries with histories of political instability and corruption are perhaps most susceptible to these practices.

(Inter)National Laws

Although international laws are limited, there are some, including those established by the European Court of Human Rights, the U.S.’s Alien Tort Claims Act, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the African Charter on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and The American Convention on Human Rights, among others (Chow & Schoenbaum, 2005). Many of these provisions recognize each country’s responsibility to report criminal acts or inhumane practices that are punishable by law in their country. The United Nations, while having drafted a Code of Conduct

of Transnational Corporations, has never formally adopted it. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises is another voluntary code initiative aimed at developing generally applicable policies and standards to govern the activities of MNEs (Chow & Schoenbaum, 2005). These guidelines are recommendations on responsible business conduct addressed by governments to multinational enterprises operating in or from the 44 adhering countries, one of which is the United States (OECD, 2011).

Recently, globalization and trade agreements have been the subjects of countless debates. Much of the discussion has focused on the trade agreements’ impact on the health of a nation’s economy, environment, sovereignty, and workers’ rights (Model, 2003). These concerns are dismissed in large bilateral or multilateral international trade treaties such as the Free Trade Agreement (FTA), North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA), each seeking primarily to reduce barriers to trade among countries by allowing big business or MNEs easy access to natural and human resources. These agreements offer global protection for MNEs’ intellectual property rights but do nothing to protect workers or the environment.

Fair Trade and Free Trade are interrelated because Free Trade in theory allows producers to trade their products within many countries by reducing tariffs and barriers, but Free Trade is often not fair. According to Ricardo’s economic theory of “comparative advantage,” trade agreements can be beneficial to all parties (Madeley, 1992; Model, 2003). However, this theory only works if trade between countries is roughly equal (Madeley, 1992). The premise of Free Trade is that “if every country produces the goods and services that they produce most efficiently, then everyone benefits” (Model, 2003, p. 112). But countries are not on equal economic footing, and unlike Fair Trade, Free Trade is not concerned with promoting sustainable development. Treaties like NAFTA dismantle barriers so MNEs can reap more profit, often simultaneously pushing small businesses

and local cooperative enterprises out of their local markets. Local economies thus suffer dramatically as profits produced by local laborers are channeled into the MNEs' bottom lines, instead of being reinvested locally.

Over the past 30 years, commodity prices have been "low and unstable" due to the unfair protectionist policies of existing trade agreements benefiting developed nations (Madeley, 1992). Most exports from developing nations are now considered commodities constituting the "perfect market" (p. 9). An "imperfect" market is good for producers while a "perfect" market is bad for them. Trade agreements were never meant to improve the lives of producers, but rather to minimize the rules and maximize profits for MNEs. According to Madeley, the MNEs have thus acted as latter-day colonizers in their expansionist practices.

Post-colonial theory (see Bhabha, 1994; Fanon, 1963; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1988) is at the heart of most of our research. Amanda Alexander's doctoral research involved working with artisans in Cajamarca, Peru, while Connie DeJong's work has involved artisans in Bolivia. As a group, all of us have, at times, employed Participatory Action Research (PAR) through studies that followed Linda Tuhiwai-Smith's (1999) guidance that researchers can best support their research collaborators (artists) by recognizing the artists are the ones best positioned to determine what research would best serve their needs. This research, like Fair Trade practices, is directed towards making a difference in the lives of artisans and supporting them in developing a healthy sense of self-esteem and pride in their accomplishments, as well as addressing both their economic and ecological wellbeing. We collectively maintain that while following such protocols a researcher can, at the same time, educate students and community members about other cultures and Fair Trade as a movement. Due to word count and sustaining a clear focus for this article, we will save the details of these studies for another time.

Ecological Dimensions

Global climate change and its effects on the planet have been

intensely studied and debated for decades, culminating in a February 2, 2007 report by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In this report, the IPCC warns that the earth's average temperatures could climb several degrees by the end of the century, resulting in potentially severe flooding, drought, and widespread disease. And with "virtual certainty," the IPCC places most of the blame for global warming on anthropogenic (human activity) emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO₂) produced by the combustion of fossil fuels. Regrettably, the United States is one of the most culpable for producing climate change pollution, ranking just after China (Each country's share of CO₂ emissions, 2010).

Not only is the United States culpable, but all industrialized nations have contributed to the emissions of greenhouse gas pollution. The growth of consumption in developed nations continues to far outweigh consumption in less developed nations. These consumption patterns have caused most of the environmental degradation worldwide, allowing our "comfortable lifestyles" to flourish, while people in less developed nations remain materially poor and discomforted. The geopolitically northern nations have extracted natural resources such as petroleum products, trees, land, minerals, and water from the south, severely threatening southern nations' biodiversity and ecological health. The extreme imbalances of CO₂ emissions and consumption inequities have led to the concept of ecological debt (Martínez-Alier, 2006; Rijnhout, 2005; Simms, 2001, 2005). Simply put, an ecological debt represents the difference between one's perceived "fair share" of natural resources and one's actual usage. The bottom line is that developed countries' impact on global resources is greater than that which the earth's ecosystem can sustain, creating tension in international conversations about climate change; countries in the developing world, who could potentially suffer the most from climate disruption, argue that the developed countries should foot more of the bill to fight it (Broder, 2011; Simms, 2001, 2005).

Changes to the global climate are proving to be negative for the entire

planet but are hitting the poorest countries hardest (Rijnhout, 2005). Flooding, drought, famine, and disease will cost the poor more than the rich. Plundering by the geopolitical north left the geopolitical south in poverty where injustices continue today as developed countries consume disproportionately large portions of the planet's resources. As Rijnhout (2005) argues, a clean and safe environment is a human right that "should not be denied on the basis of race, class, ethnicity, or position in the global economic system" (p. 3). The recognition of unfair and unsustainable ecological practices by northern countries would create an entirely new context for dialogue between countries (Rijnhout, 2005), but with the power and dominance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), the probability of change looks bleak.

The overwhelming volume of cases of environmental wrongdoing by MNEs has caused the WTO to develop the Code of Good Practice of the Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement, which "offers guidelines on how voluntary standards can be used without being interpreted as a non-tariff barrier" (Blowfield, 1999, p. 755). This code of good conduct along with similar initiatives has been adopted by hundreds of U.S. and European companies. Some MNEs have adopted their own socially and environmentally friendly business principles. However, the key word is "voluntary." There are no international systems or laws to prevent MNEs from contributing to environmental havoc (Chow & Schoenbaum, 2005).

A lack of systemic environmental policies is a major reason why Fair Trade is so important. Fair Trade offers producers and consumers fairer, more sustainable avenues of trade—in essence, bettering a producer's livelihood while fostering social and environmental justice and increasing satisfaction among consumers. Fair Trade does not involve increasing profits at all costs like MNEs (Fridell, 2007). Fair Trade principles encourage environmentally-friendly practices while prioritizing fair living standards for producers. These principles advocate for the preservation of "local cultural traits promoting

environmental stewardship" (Fridell, 2007, p. 127).

Although Fair Trade has been around for years, the movement continues to grow, particularly in the U.S., in which the sale of Fair Trade certified products increased by 75% in 2011 ("Sales of Fair Trade," 2012). Part of this growth is due to people's reactions to MNEs' amoral (in/re)actions to regulations of their practices. As a capitalist society, U.S. consumers have enhanced MNEs' power, but they could also be applying pressure through fairer purchasing practices that encourage (multi)national and political involvement, regulatory practices, and more equitable trade arrangements.

Why Fair Trade through Art Education?

There have been few studies on Fair Trade released in the United States, as most come from European universities and organizations working within development studies, anthropology, business administration, agriculture, and sociology. Scholars in these fields examine Fair Trade in terms of its impact on the environment, economic and trade systems, alternative business models, and its effect on producers' quality of life. Most of these studies examine the producers' side of the system, albeit some have considered consumer grocery fads and the intertwining of the green and environmental movements. It is rare to find any studies dealing with Fair Trade and education or art education. Chambers (1997), Gramsci (1971), Kincheloe (1997), Lincoln & Guba (1985), and Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) have also noted the infrequency of research addressing global inequalities, so it is our hope that this article provides some alternative to that silence.

Some studies (e.g. Commenne, 2006; Krier, 2005; McDonagh, 2002; Moore, 2004; Ronchi, 2002; Schutter, 2001; Tiffen, 2005) discuss and praise how commitments to Fair Trade can alter capitalist systems of trade and benefit producers worldwide. However, there is another side that shows Fair Trade operating both "in and against the market" (Barrett-Brown, 1993; Reynolds, 2002). Fair Trade organizations and we as a research group of art educators are more invested in building

relationships and supporting education for U.S. citizens and for producers in developing countries.

As authors we see a connection between Fair Trade research and art education taught through visual culture, multicultural approaches, and integrated/interdisciplinary studies—those that critically confront various sites of commerce, community, and classrooms. Additionally, we see Fair Trade as a subject through which students can critically analyze social, political, ecological, and economic power structures across societies, and an opportunity for discussing what it might mean to be ethical and moral consumers. We hope the preceding overview contextualizes why an understanding of Fair Trade through art education might be valuable to arts patrons, students, artists, and the public at large.

Fair Trade and Dialogical Action

In essence, Fair Trade and dialogical learning both offer important opportunities for engaging students in the work of social transformation. Fair Trade is very much a political response, just as education is a political act that cannot be divorced from pedagogy (Freire, 1970). If education is known to involve political agendas—as all teachers sustain political positions (Kincheloe, 2008)—then why not include Fair Trade in the conversation?

As educators and learners we can develop our critical consciousness in ways that recognize the gross injustices in the world. With our own consciousness retuned we might better begin to educate students to new ways of taking action to combat injustice. Through a dialogical approach both inside and outside of the classroom, learning can be more freely encouraged. The following sections provide an idea of how art education served as a site and vehicle for educating community members at Global Gallery as well as undergraduate students enrolled in a social justice and visual culture course that included examination of consumerism and Fair Trade. The pedagogical approach undertaken in both the community and the classroom promoted understanding, cultural creation, and liberation

(Freire, 1970).

Global Gallery: The Starting Point

Global Gallery, in Columbus, Ohio, was founded in 1991, just as the Fair Trade movement began gaining strength in the U.S. Global Gallery's history and development parallel the growth of the movement over the past decade. Global Gallery works in solidarity with other Fair Trade organizations that seek to become strong, sustainable organizations and viable alternatives to conventional consumer practices. As both a social and commercial enterprise and a non-profit that is dedicated to the goals of increasing Fair Trade and cultural awareness through education, Global Gallery occupies a contested space between commercial business and non-profit educational enterprise.

Connie DeJong, Global Gallery's Executive Director, considers it serves as a forum for social change through innovative educational programming and profitable cultural arts product marketing. This vision is informed by constituents engaged in the decision-making process and those artisans whose voices have shaped the organization's branding as well as marketing of their own creations. "The idea at the core of the theory of social capital is extremely simple: social networks matter" (Putnam, 2002, p. 6). Global Gallery consistently works to develop its strategic plan to potentially accelerate and expand its transformation of social capital into social change. This transformation begins with Global Gallery's core cultural capital, its people.

Global Gallery's mission is to offer cultural educational programming and to increase Fair Trade sales through marketing of agricultural and cultural products. Global Gallery has chosen to fulfill this mission through marketing of handcrafted products, which embody both a cultural and economic import. Known as "material culture" in anthropology and folklore (Burkhart, 2006; Glassie, 1999; Miller, 1998; Tiffany, 2004), Global Gallery views these pieces as artworks that are developed collaboratively by individuals, communities, and

organizations for the purposes of generating income, increasing cross-cultural understanding, and promoting the wellbeing of the artist and her/his work.

Global Gallery's educational programming enhances the organization's ability to market and sell Fair Trade products, while also increasing cross-culturing understanding. Each year, Global Gallery teaches more than 2,000 middle school, high school, and college students through the Fair Trade lecture series. Through cultural programming such as Tibetan prayer circles, folk dance presentations, women's crafting workshops, video chats connecting patrons with Fair Trade producers abroad, and special events featuring international cuisine and speakers, Global Gallery helps patrons better understand the living cultures, personal experiences, and artistic practices of the producers represented within the stores (DeJong & Miller, 2008).

The educational programming is intentionally diverse, varied and experiential, and changes with its ever-changing community. Global Gallery offers its university level interns and some professionals who volunteer the opportunity to develop a program that fits their interests in the context of Global Gallery's work. This results in programs such as one for HIV awareness that exhibited works from an HIV prevention project in South Africa and featured a local speaker from an organization focused on local AIDS camps for children and another that celebrated The Day of the Dead by featuring young, local bands and drew a new constituency in to learn about this traditional celebration while raising funds for an orphanage project in Bolivia.

One of Global Gallery's more consistent programs is the high school docent program, a curriculum that was funded in part by the Ohio Arts Council. The curriculum, aimed at expanding high school students' experiences with Fair Trade products, has 10 chapters, each focused on a different product and its corresponding community development project. Each chapter allows students to read about the

product and project, view a video related to them, respond with other students in an online blog on the topics, create a craft related to the product discussed, and reflect in journal format on their responses to the information and experience with it. These students then share their knowledge and personal engagement with the products and projects in the store with customers, Global Gallery staff, volunteers, and interns. These experiences often lead to return visits from past high school docents and interns who contextualize their learning experience as they gain experience in life.

Global Gallery's mission is far more than simply providing an economic solution to poverty. The organization is built on a social change mission that values people who have been historically marginalized and facilitates dialogue with them about language, methods, and priorities. While Global Gallery's work addresses international poverty and trade injustices head-on, the organization joyfully celebrates international cultures and craft traditions as well as the local community. Global Gallery's educational programs emanate from these same values and work towards drawing people together across cultures, providing both hope and power to producers and consumers working for a more just, sustainable world. Global Gallery models inclusion and complexity of understanding, while recognizing the challenges inherent in such a commitment. The goal is to balance the need to market presentations of traditions not likely to be seen in other commercial venues without romanticizing the artists, or reinforcing public perception of cultural producers as exotic "others" (Said, 1978).

Part of this balance may be found in the celebratory practices that occur when people perform identity in various artistic forms, like dance, chant, song, on-site weaving, or as a gift to the visitor that cannot be purchased. This foods and festivals approach has been soundly critiqued for superficially addressing the lived circumstances of the artist other (e.g. Banks, 1993), but even more recent reflections have suggested that those who perform stereotypical representations for tourists/consumers may do so to simply put food on the table and

pay their bills (Ballengee-Morris & Sanders, 2009). The artist may then choose or be inspired to sell a related product that creates income and represents the experience for both the performer and the audience. Global Gallery has partnered with several indigenous groups to create this kind of experience in or near its stores with great success, but not without fascinating anecdotes of cross-cultural dialogue and misunderstandings.

Global Gallery has observed that some increases in sales can be explained by the increasing fashion trends in ethnically-inspired mainstream designs. Both cultural objects and performances have the potential to be witnessed by the public, purchased, or consumed without deepening understanding or opening up to a transformative learning experience. "The issue here is therefore less one of authenticity and more one of authentication: who has the power to represent whom and to determine which representation is authoritative" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett & Bruner, 1996, p. 301). Global Gallery strives to utilize its own position of power, gained through social capital, to share decision-making with the communities it serves and to allow artisans and performers to determine their own priorities for presentations and delivery of cultural products and education. The ongoing challenge of creating meaningful educational programming is rooted in the connection each board and staff member and each producer has to the mission and vision of the organization, as well as to the Global Gallery community.

The Global Gallery community includes many art educators who value the principles of Fair Trade and agree with the mission to resolve injustice through poverty alleviation and facilitating intercultural understanding. All four authors of this article have taught within the community where Global Gallery exists and connect Global Gallery's vision and pursuits to the classroom. These art educators, like Global Gallery, seek to contextualize cultural traditions, handmade processes, and diverse people's lived conditions and strengths through cultural education. Incorporating a Fair Trade curriculum in the undergraduate art education classroom can be

powerful.

A Fair Trade Curriculum

Art educator Jennifer Miller investigated how issues of multiculturalism and international social justice could effectively be addressed through a Fair Trade curriculum taught to undergraduate university students at a major Midwestern university using dialogical action and working with Global Gallery. The curriculum was designed to challenge students to critically explore issues impacting international trade, ecological sustainability, and global poverty. Fair Trade and consumerism were initially introduced through film presentations, a chocolate tasting, a field trip to Global Gallery, and dialogue sessions.

Miller's research methods included anonymous pre- and post-teaching questionnaires, analysis of in-class writing assignments, and researcher field notes. Forty-nine undergraduate students participated in the research during the fall and winter quarters of the 2007-2008 school year. Quantitative and qualitative data were then used to assess and explore the effectiveness of infusing international concerns into a U.S. culturally focused course. Findings indicated that a Fair Trade curriculum could affect how students perceived their own privileges, contemplated international concerns, and considered their roles as consumers. The findings suggested that students could connect classroom learning with consumer action and that social interactions through the Global Gallery field trip helped relieve students' anxieties concerning privilege.

The first in-class writing assignment was designed to allow students to process their emotions about the curriculum. Analyzing these writings helped gauge how students were grappling with the material and their dis-ease with recognizing their own privileged status. The assignment was based upon bell hooks' (2003) suggestion that educators honor discomfort when exploring emotionally challenging subject matter.

After the course introduced Fair Trade concerns, some students spoke about taking direct action. “On my next visit to Starbucks, I would like to ask if they have Fair Trade coffee. If they do not have Fair Trade coffee, I will not buy coffee there.” Another wanted to become more civically engaged, remarking, “consumers have more power than we know we have. I am interested in volunteering for Global Gallery.”

A final in-class writing assignment required students to identify three of the most important social concerns covered in the course and asked them to delineate how they could address those concerns. Fair Trade was the second most listed topic, after racial stereotyping—a topic covered far more extensively in class. As one student reflected, “I developed a worldly view of consumer products. As a U.S. citizen with so many privileges . . . I can help by buying Fair Trade products with other consumers and help promote Fair Trade to others.”

One question on the pre-post questionnaire asked, “In the past month, how many times have you discussed or read about globalization, international trade, global poverty, and/or Fair Trade without such activity being required for school?” The results indicated that students increasingly investigated or discussed issues of trade outside the classroom; in fact they reported a 139% increase after completing the Fair Trade curriculum.

At the end of the quarter, sixty-eight percent of the study participants believed that U.S. consumers could have a daily impact on global poverty in comparison to forty-four percent in the pre-teaching questionnaire. The results indicated that this curriculum affected students’ understanding of their own personal abilities to affect change—even across the globe.

While these results are not generalizable nor could they begin to measure the possible long-term effects of the curriculum, we contend these are compelling findings. Incorporating issues of trade injustice and Fair Trade into Higher Education curricula could be considered further and a curriculum based on Fair Trade could potentially

encourage students to critically consider trade injustice and reexamine their own embeddedness in the problem. Many students also appeared to acknowledge their roles and responsibilities as consumers and citizens. Such reexaminations of responsibility were often accompanied by action and changed consumer practices as well as students entering into dialogue with others. Four percent of the survey respondents indicated a greater interest in volunteerism, while others seemed eager to take actions that confirmed feelings of hopefulness and empowerment.

Students extending compassion across borders and cultural barriers became thrilled about cultural traditions expressed through craft, and looked within themselves to find and leverage their economic power for a greater social good. It is not known how long their commitment to Fair Trade will last, but it is believed that many of them will think about trade and international concerns in a new way, thanks to their developing new critical tools and perspectives.

Concluding Remarks

Examining Fair Trade as an art education opportunity through commerce, community, and classrooms can open up dialogue about global social (in)justice. Adams, Bell, and Griffin (1997) assert that educators should help students connect social justice learning to actions that they can take as individuals. Deborah Britzman (1991) advocates teaching about theories of power in ways that are sensitive to our students’ ability to intervene. If the goals of social justice education are to produce a change within students’ perceptions (Banks, 2006; Goodman, 2001) and to propel students into action in their communities (Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001), then effective teaching practices might be our best chance for producing student perceptual changes and deeper community engagement.

As four art education researchers looking through the lens of Fair Trade, we contend that dialogue in curriculum and community engagement designed to more deeply investigate international social justice issues can be highly effective. A Fair Trade curriculum

that offers opportunities for international service learning (Hutzel, 2006, 2007; Hutzel, Bastos, & Cosier, 2012; Russell & Hutzel, 2007; Taylor, 2002) may also be of benefit to Pre-K-12, secondary, and undergraduate students as well as community members who are global citizens and capable of making change. We can all share in working to alleviate poverty and promote economic and social justice by engaging students and the community in helping to make such possibilities a reality.

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Asian Immigrant Women's Emotional Reflection on Artworks

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the personal emotions and empathic responses to artworks expressed by a small group of F-2 Visa immigrant women. Women who follow their students-husbands to the United States are limited in their ability to engage fully in American society, due to the F-2 (i.e. immigrant spouse) status of their visas. Through the mediating screen of art images, the author investigated five Asian F-2 visa status women's feelings of uncertainty about their identities and social positions. Findings showed that the women were able to empathize with the subjects of the images, people in their new environment, and themselves through looking and talking about art.

Introduction

How do you feel when you are a new arrival in a foreign country? You might experience feelings of excitement or curiosity but also unfamiliarity or loneliness at the same time. The number of immigrants in the U.S. has increased from 9.6 million in 1970 to approximately 40 million in 2010 (Oh & Cooc, 2011). While considerable academic discussion has focused on the broad economic and cultural impacts of immigration (Contreras, 2002; De Leeuw & Urban Institute, 1985; Passel & Fix, 2001), there is a need for more educational attention and understanding of the emotional effects of immigration upon individual immigrants and their families.

In particular, immigrant women who are spouses of husbands studying in the United States may encounter difficulties with identity, cultural differences, and feelings of isolation and disconnection from social life (Alfred, 2002; Huisman, 2010; Lee & Sheared, 2002) that go unaddressed because of their marginalized status in the university community. As an Asian woman from outside the United States, these issues are of intimate interest to me. This study was initiated from personal experience. I met a Korean immigrant woman who followed

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her husband in the summer of 2010. She had to quit her job in order to come to the U.S. and often expressed her struggles and difficulties to live in the United States. When the summer ended, I went back my graduate study and couldn't meet her very often. After a few months, I heard she had decided to go back to Korea and considered a divorce. Although there were private reasons for her decision, I felt there was *something* familiar in the experiences of women in similar situations and wanted to know *the something* to help them. This initial impetus expanded into a research project through arts appreciation. I sought to investigate the personal sense of emotional well being expressed by a small group of immigrant women whose husbands are students of a large Midwestern university. These women are holding F-2 visas. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services states, the "spouse and unmarried children of a F-1 visa² are eligible for F-2 status, and may stay in the U.S. as long as the primary student remains in legal F-1 status" (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, n.d.). Women holding these spousal visas do not occupy a stable position in U.S.

In this study, I sought to provide ways of expressing F-2 visa status immigrant women's feelings in a space of relative psychological safety by showing them and asking them to describe their responses to images of works of art from their familiar cultural backgrounds and from U.S. culture. The participant women were encouraged to project their feelings about their lives and the experience of being an immigrant in the United States, on and through their *empathetic* responses to these images.

Theoretical Frameworks

Responses to artworks can highlight some of the emotional issues involved in migration and temporary residence, since each individual's way of seeing and expressing herself through art making is believed to reflect her life experiences and worldview (Foster,

² The F-1 visa defines the legal status granted to students coming from countries outside the U.S.

1999). Particularly during the process of looking at and appreciating artworks, multiple factors can influence the viewer's interpretation. Lanier (1968) describes factors such as social attitudes towards specific works, cultural worldviews of art forms, perceptual skills, recognition of formal qualities, knowledge of specific symbols, personal associations, historical identifications, judgments, and relationship of artwork to life as influencing responses to artworks. When an individual interprets an art image, he or she "absorbs from the many social milieus in which he [or she] matures" (p. 40), such as nationality, cultural background, and social status.

In order to explore research questions such as what the common emotions in the particular social or cultural group are, how their emotions are reflected in ways of seeing artworks, and what types and objects can be discovered through the process of appreciating artworks and popular images, this study utilized artistic empathetic experience. Over the last few decades, the role of empathy in cognition and learning has gained the attention of psychologists and aestheticians (Harton & Lyons, 2003; Lundy, 2007; Riddett-Moore, 2009). Empathy in art works to transfer emotional knowledge gained from viewing phenomena to behaviors enacted in real life relative to similar events (Goldstein & Winner, 2012; Jeffers, 2009). Researchers look, for example, at how art making may increase an artist's feelings of empathy for nature and social phenomena (Curtis, 2009) or her/his ability to draw connections between art images and actual experience (Ridett-Moore, 2009).

Exploring the ability of women to empathize with external and internal phenomena (Yakushko & Chronister, 2005) was foundational to my study. Because immigrant women (a group that sometimes includes refugee women) frequently struggle with emotional, financial, and health problems as well as depression, lack of social support, and social isolation (Barclay & Kent, 1998; Mechakra-Tahiri, Zunzunegui, & Seguin, 2007; Small, Lumley & Yelland, 2003), academics have explored general descriptions and sociological explanations of women's feelings about their struggles to adjust

to uncertainty in terms of their social status. Through this study, I sought to provide insight regarding the complex feelings women may experience as immigrants, as some of these feelings are articulated through empathetic response to works of art.

Methodology

This research is a qualitative case study. The strengths of the qualitative interview method are that it can help to obtain deep, qualified data and related subsidiary information and to identify reliable responses (Merriam, 1998). One-on-one interviews with five participants holding F-2 immigrant visa status in the U.S. were conducted.

Interviews

The interviews, which were conducted over a seven-month period of time, were held either in the interviewee's home or in a quiet space near the university where their husbands were enrolled as students. Each interview was conducted individually and lasted from one to one and one-half hours. Each interview was audiotaped and later transcribed. During the interviews, each woman was shown art images from Europe, the United States, and their home country, as well as images from popular cultural life in the United States. The participants were asked to describe the atmosphere, characters, related emotions based on color, structure, and objects of the artworks, and indicate how they understood the artworks in particular ways relative to their social and individual situations as spouses of university students living in an unfamiliar cultural or geographic country and community.

This flexible yet structured, open-ended interview method was used in order for a comfortable bond to be formed between the participants and myself. The method was intended to provide the participants a sense of psychological safety about expressing their feelings and emotions (Kvale, 1996). The interview responses were coded separately for each interviewee. Then all responses were organized

into categories that naturally arose from the data (Lebowitz, Vitulano, & Omer, 2011). Having reduced the data to categories, the similarities and differences of the responses within each category were reviewed for cross-case patterns. After reviewing these patterns, a series of key themes were identified.

Participants

The five participants of this inquiry were all Asian women with spousal visa status, living in the United States with a spouse who was a graduate student of a large university. The participants were limited to Asian women: one Chinese, one Taiwanese, and three Korean women. The women ranged in age from 30 to 37 and, at the time of our interview, had been living in the U.S. for one to four years. Two of the participants had prior experiences living in the U.S. for up to a year during their youth or adolescence. One had experienced living in many countries outside her homeland and the other two had not lived outside their homelands prior to coming to their current experience. One woman was the mother of a small child; none held jobs outside the home or studied at the university. All of the participants graduated from a university in their homeland and their majors were various but none of them was an art major. Three of the participants expressed that they had not been interested in the arts. One expressed her interest in the arts and had visited art museums frequently. The other one's spouse was studying art education and she had interests in the arts. She had also visited art museums many times. These last two participants took art classes at universities or art centers before coming to the U.S.

Instrument and Data Elicitation

Each participant was shown a series of seven visual images.³ Images of paintings by two 20th century U.S. artists, Jasper Johns and Edward Hopper, were first shown. Johns' *Flag*⁴ and Hopper's *Morning Sun*⁵ and *Hotel Room*⁶ were chosen to elicit participants' attitudes and thoughts toward life in the United States. Jasper Johns' *Flag* worked as a symbol of the U.S. to facilitate the participants' expression of their thoughts about the U.S. Although the interview questions didn't include any word of allusion to "loneliness," Edward Hopper's images were selected to see how the participants considered loneliness and how their emotions might be reflected in ways of seeing.

Next each participant was shown an image made by very well known eighteenth-century artists from her homeland. Each participant saw one image from her home country.⁷ The intent here was to explore how the participants' attitudes and emotions about their home country compared to their feelings about U.S. culture. Responses to Western society in general also were sought by showing the participants Auguste Renoir's *Le Moulin de la Galette*⁸ and asking them

to describe feelings that his work inspired. Finally each participant was asked to explain how she perceived her own experiences in the U.S. compared to two realistic visual images presented in *People*⁹ magazine. The cover images of *People* magazine were randomly selected. The interviewees are asked to expand upon reasons for their responses. In addition, extra questions were sometimes asked in order to more comprehensively interpret their reasons.

Findings

Although the interviewees were asked to begin responding to the images by describing what they saw in the images and then move to analysis and interpretation, as is recommended by Barrett (2004) as a method of talking about images, analysis and interpretation sometimes occurred simultaneously and often referred back to description. The participants looked for details in the images and tried to figure out what these might mean. In the process of interpretation, the participants conjectured situations for the images, imagined social and cultural backgrounds of the figures in the works, proposed the reasons that artists may have had for making the paintings, and postulated why other viewers from the United States might like or dislike the various images. In this section, I categorized the interviewees' responses into five parts: their perception of U.S. society and life, their thoughts about themselves and their current lives, empathetic understanding of the artists or the people in the artworks, preferences for certain artworks, and inhibitions in discussing artworks.

Thoughts about U.S. American Society and Life

In general comments about images of art by Jasper Johns and Edward Hopper, and photographs from *People* magazine, the women expressed a complex mixture of positive feelings and neutral or negative emotional responses to U.S. American society and everyday life. They were knowledgeable and familiar with images of the

⁹ Cover images of *People* magazine, June, 2011 (Vol. 75, No. 22) and July, 2011 (Vol. 76, No. 1).

³ Five of the series of images were fine art painting images chosen to make the participants feel at ease in describing art. I felt that paintings would be more a comfortable medium than sculpture, video arts, or other media to people who were not familiar with art and art appreciation. Also, the images were from well-known artists in the U.S., Europe, and each participant's home country. Each artwork was selected because of its recognizability across cultures, ease of understanding and describing it, and popularity, although the era when the artworks were produced was varied.

⁴ Jasper Johns, *Flag*, 1954-55, encaustic, oil, and collage on fabric mounted on plywood.

⁵ Edward Hopper, *Morning Sun*, 1952, oil on canvas.

⁶ Edward Hopper, *Hotel Room*, 1945, oil on canvas.

⁷ Hong-do Kim, *Suh-dang*, 18th century, watercolor on paper, was shown to the Korean participants. Wang-Hui, *Datei*, 18th century, watercolor on paper was shown to the Chinese and Taiwanese women.

⁸ Auguste Renoir, *Le Moulin de la Galette*, 1876, oil on canvas.

U.S., such as Jasper Johns' *Flag*, referring to the symbolic meaning of its color, and recognized it as a spirit or symbol of U.S. American life. They conjectured the meaning of the flag based on their own experiences and knowledge of U.S. culture. For example, Jean¹⁰ stated,

I know this is the American flag. The stars and lines are beautiful. I already have enough information about this flag. The colors are pretty and make me feel good. I think [people] of Asia already [are familiar with] this flag image. We've been exposed to a lot of American culture. I think that we [Asians] have good feelings about America. (Jean, personal communication, October 27, 2011)

However, these images also prompted critical, neutral, and negative attitudes and opinions about life in the U.S. For example,

I don't dislike American life or society. I like the images that I saw today. I think I'm living well in this country but I still feel like an outsider. (Kim, personal communication, January 6, 2012)

[My attitude] would change when I go back my home country. Maybe I'll follow [the] general public's ideas toward America when I'm in my hometown. But these days, I want to see the positive sides of America when I'm in the U.S. (June, personal communication, May, 10, 2012)

One theme that the interviewees repeatedly mentioned in responding to the images was patriotism. For example,

This image [of Jasper Johns' *Flag*] seems to have been created to encourage

Americans' patriotic spirits. I think that it is important to strengthen patriotism in America because America is not a homogeneous country. (Jean)

Individualism was also identified as a theme, evidenced in statements about Edward Hopper's paintings and the *People* magazine images.

I think Americans like individualism. Americans look like they want to protect [their] individualism, like the women in this image [Edward Hopper's *Hotel Room*]. (Kim)

[T]his image [Edward Hopper's *Hotel Room*] represents the fact that Americans think that their own life is the most important one, rather than [being] tied up [by] household chores or families. (Lee, personal communication, January 13, 2012)

Individualism in America seems interesting. They [Americans] seem to know about other people's private lives, similar to other nations' people, but they don't want to [personally] dig into other people's life . . . individualism and chatting about gossip topics are interestingly combined in American life [Comment in response to a photograph from *People* magazine.] (Laura, personal communication, November 20, 2011)

Yet, the interviewees' emotions may have been projected onto and reflected by these images of U.S. American life. When people experience visual images, they tend to express their emotions and find meanings through externalization (Petrillo & Winner, 2005). In the following section, I explain my interpretations of the participants' thoughts and emotions and how they expressed them directly.

Emotions Regarding the Interviewees Themselves and Their Current Lives

Viewing images may have allowed the women in this study to project their inner emotions and thoughts onto the subjects in the images and further onto the people of the United States in general. It also permitted the study participants to directly describe their own thoughts and feelings. For example,

The flag image [Jasper Johns] could not be mine because I'm not a real member of this society. (June)

These images [Edward Hopper] make me think of my family in

¹⁰ All names are pseudonyms.

my hometown. It makes me miss them. I'm [a] little lonely when my husband goes to school. (Lee)

This image [Edward Hopper] is uncomfortable to me . . . Maybe the reason is that the woman looks like I do when I am depressed. (Jean)

The participants expressed the feelings of alienation, loneliness, depression, and willingness to communicate with others. Beyond expressing their emotions directly through art appreciation, the participants reflected their inner thoughts about the artists or the women in the artworks.

Empathetic Understanding of the Artists or the People in the Artworks

The interviewees expressed empathic understanding of the artists and people presented as content of the images. The interviewees used words such as "understand," "like me," "similar to me," or "empathize with" in guessing at the artists' situations, purposes, or emotions when creating the artworks. For example:

This artist [Edward Hopper] had similar emotions to me about American life. It seems that the artist wanted to express the sense of loneliness in American society. (June)

On the other hand, the interviewees also conjectured or created stories related to the situation portrayed in the artwork or the characters' feelings, and incorporated the imaginative stories and situations from them into their own experiences:

[Referring to two of the people in Renoir's painting] They look like mother and daughter, like my mother and me. I really miss my mother. (Kim)

The woman [in Renoir's painting], who is wearing a white dress and dancing with a man, represents me. I'm relying on my husband now because I have the F-2 visa. (Lee)

This woman [in Renoir's painting], who is at the center of the group and wears a blue striped shirt, seems to make her own space. I don't want to count on my husband, even though I followed him [here]. I want to build my own life and space wherever I am. I want to be the center in any group like her. (Lee)

This [Renoir's painting] is a situation of a social gathering. Living in [a] foreign country sometimes requires this type of social gathering. If this image really reflects this type of social gathering, I totally empathize with it. I am also under pressure of the needs-based social gathering to avoid being lonely. (Lee)

I think people reflect their feelings when they are reading books or seeing artworks. [Reflecting on both Renoir's and Edward Hopper's paintings] (Jean)

While expressing empathetic understanding with the artists or the people in the artworks, the participating women addressed their own sense of loneliness, isolation, homesickness, and desire to communicate and belong.

Preference Among the Artworks

All of the interviewees expressed emotions of familiarity, comfort, and happiness when they saw images made by artists from their home country. They had experiences of seeing the images when they were in their home country. Each participant compared the image from her home country to other artistic images made by U.S. American and European artists; however, each interviewee showed their preference for different artworks. For example:

Although Hong-do Kim's art feels like mine, the situation is not similar to my own life. But the second and third images [Edward Hopper's image] show women like me, and I found myself and my current emotions and situations in the second and third images. I can see myself reflected in them. They also seem to represent current days. (June).

I've seen this image [Hong-do Kim's image] so many times when I was in my home country. Feels like I'm home. This makes me smile. (Kim).

I'm so pleased to see Wang-Hui's artwork here. But the colors of fifth image [Renoir's image] make me more comfortable though it is not very fancy. I don't know arts well but the colors make me happy. (Laura).

It was difficult to find thematic similarities among interviewees' preferences although the participants described their choice of preference based on colors, the situation in the images, or familiarity.

Inhibitions in Discussing Artworks

Responding to works of art did not seem an easy or spontaneous task for the interviewees. The interviewees also expressed a greater level of difficulty in discussing fine arts than discussing popular visual images.

Art is difficult and makes me have a headache even though the images are funny. It makes me feel to avoid them. (Lee)

It is difficult for me to say "I don't like this artwork" because saying it like that means to me that I'm not smart. (Jean)

I think it is difficult for people to say that they don't like [an artwork] even though they can't understand it. Because people think they have to pretend to understand or like art in order to not be ignored. However, I think people can present their preferences for gossip magazine images easier than for fine arts. (Laura)

This [visual cultural image] is funnier than fine art images. When I look at fine art images, I feel I'm under pressure, that I have to comprehend the artist's purpose, but this [magazine image] doesn't give me that pressure. (June)

Regardless of the participant's age, nationality, educational

background, or prior experiences in looking and talking about artworks, the interviewees sometimes asked to be appraised of "right answers" in terms of their responses, even though there was no right answer implied. In addition, they expressed fears about demonstrating ignorance regarding the artists or artworks. Although the participants were sometimes hesitant to impose their interpretation on works of art because they did not feel knowledgeable about the artists or the artworks shown, they described, interpreted, and analyzed well. Other research indicates a similar finding, that ordinary people have the ability to critique artworks with profundity and astuteness when reflecting upon and filtering these critiques through life experience (McLaughlin, 1996).

Reflections

The process of appreciating art can influence viewers positively or negatively, pleasantly or unpleasantly (Petrillo & Winner, 2005). The visual images' various features and elements of a work of art might call forth feelings about one's current situation. Viewing specific art works can provoke individuals to remember experiences in the past or present, regardless of whether or not the experiences are obviously or directly related. In this study, for example, seeing flag image symbols of the country in which they currently live triggered memories of the interviewees' childhoods or lives when they were in their home countries. The flag symbol also inspired thoughts about their current life situations. Lee, for example, who has experienced life in several countries besides the United States, not only recalled her past when she saw Jasper Johns' flag image, but also described the flag as a symbol of the unstable situations influencing her current life in the United States.

The process of art appreciation encouraged the interviewees to recognize their unconscious feelings and thoughts (Petrillo & Winner, 2005) and externalize them in the process of responding to works of art (Pellegrini, 2010). There may have been an intuitive awareness among the interviewees that they might reveal themselves and

their true emotions as they responded to these artworks, which might account for their initial cautiousness about doing so. In their hesitations, they sought clues for “right answers” and expressed reluctance to speak about artworks and artists with whom they were unfamiliar. Nevertheless, when they did respond to the works, they gave voice to their inner thoughts and feelings. When one of the participants, Jean, spoke about the flag image and Edward Hopper’s images, she suggested that U.S. Americans seem to be lonely people. “Americans look lonely,” she said, after which she stopped speaking and looked at the art image for several seconds without saying anything. When she began speaking again, she said, “But no... Maybe I’m lonely. I think I am okay but maybe it is wrong. I’m not okay.” She stopped and looked at the images again. “I just keep telling to myself I am okay and I’m not lonely. But maybe I’m lonely so I keep finding that [loneliness] in these [the visual images].”

After declaring “I’m lonely,” and acknowledging that feeling, she continued by adding that she felt better. She was able to externalize her internally conflicting emotions through the experience of talking about works of art, and perhaps empathize with herself by identifying with the figure in the image. Thus, art can provide an empathetic interaction between what is seen externally and what is experienced internally. In this way, engagement with works of art might help viewers ameliorate or come to terms with conflicting emotions and enhance mood valance (Petrillo & Winner, 2005). This may be because visual art images present elements such as colors, symbols, or brightness; imply stories; or suggest the artist’s intentions, any of which might resonate with moods, vignettes of experience, or life scenarios that are deeply and personally relevant to the viewer.

Symbols can be individually and privately analyzed by individuals, regardless of whether the method of interpretation is endorsed by the art world as an academically appropriate way of reading or critiquing visual art. Features of a work that are noticed and the way they are interpreted indicates what resonates with the viewer, or what stimulates in the viewer an empathetic connection. Further studies

can be conducted to explore how ways of seeing artworks reflect viewers’ cultural and social situation and how artistic empathetic connection works in other cultural and social groups.

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