INTEGRATING MULTICULTURAL ARTS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
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ABSTRACT

Integrating Multicultural Arts Across the Curriculum

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This study is ethnographic interpretive research that seeks to investigate the types of multicultural artworks produced by senior students at the secondary level and discover the reason(s) for this/these form(s) of expression. The literature supports arts education that is inclusionary because of its role in building the self concept of students. There is little or no Canadian research or curriculum design in the area of multicultural arts. This study is the first in a series to be done by this researcher that will seek to integrate multicultural philosophy into the arts and other curriculum areas.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor and thesis supervisor Joyce Wilkinson for her guidance and respect for my vision throughout the creation of this thesis. I thank my husband Patrick for his: love, tireless support, and secretarial skills without which I could not have completed this endeavor while pregnant with our twins. I thank my loving parents Lorna and Telford McCurdy who have always impressed upon me the power of education. I dedicate this thesis to my toddler son Adam who began his life inside me as I developed my research and who continues to enrich and change my life everyday.
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

General Statement of the Problematic

There seems to be consensus in the Arts community that the Arts have an important role in building the self-esteem of students. At the same time, there is an influx of immigrant and ethnic students to the schools of Metropolitan Toronto. The education community has identified these students as ones that need support with regards to the issues of: acculturation, academics, and self-concept. Specifically, multiculturalism and anti-racist education are ideals that are espoused by most boards of education in Metro Toronto. However, the arts community within education has neglected to make connections between multiculturalism, the Arts, and self-esteem. The arts must come in line with what has been happening in Metropolitan Toronto schools over the last twenty years around the areas of multiculturalism and anti-racist education.

What is Being Studied and Why

The Arts curriculum at the Secondary level is balkanized and non-inclusionary. Schools in Metropolitan Toronto are predominantly multicultural. Educators must develop an arts curriculum that is both integrated and inclusionary to meet the
needs of today's learners.

Currently there is a curriculum document on global art education created by Needler and Goodman (1991). This document includes multicultural arts activities and seeks to integrate them into the Visual Arts curriculum. The aim of this document is to construct a Visual Arts curriculum that is inclusionary. More work must be done in the area of inclusion in arts education, especially in Canada. The arts community, outside of the world of educators, is attempting to give voice to groups that were formerly excluded.

An arts curriculum that is inclusionary may benefit marginalised ethnic groups and also may heighten the sensitivity of those students who are part of the dominant culture. Both groups may benefit in terms of improved self-esteem and global view.

Candidate's Background

Conducting this study is a part of my personal and professional journey. As a visible minority raised in Canada but born outside of the country I have a unique perspective in that I have been witness to the positive effects of classrooms that are inclusionary and multicultural and the negative effects of those that are not.
My educational background in Visual Art is both practical and academic. I have received a diploma at the Ontario College of Art and a degree with a major in Fine Art and a minor in Family and Child Studies at the University of Guelph. Also, I completed my B.Ed. studies at the University of Toronto. During my studies I was involved in a community based arts program delivered out of Regent Park that served the African-Canadian community. As the Visual Arts Resource person I organised art shows and events in the community and around the Toronto area. The program was totally arts based in that participants created and delivered works in the areas of Dance, Music and Poetry.

As an educator I have taught Visual Arts, Family Studies and English as a Second Language for 6 years. I continue to be involved in issues related to culture and community. Most recently I have implemented a Black Studies program at my school. At the boardwide level I have been involved in a one-week residential program that heightens students' awareness of multicultural and anti-racist issues while building leadership and interpersonal skills.

I believe I am ideally suited to conduct this study because my experiences academically, professionally and personally have prepared me to do so.
The Thesis Questions

The major question

What types of artworks do students produce in a multicultural classroom and why?

1. What is the value of multicultural arts education for the adolescent?
   a) Does a curriculum based on multicultural arts education foster cohesion in a class?

2. How are culture and ethnicity related to arts education?

3. How can teachers integrate multicultural arts across the curriculum, to foster positive self-esteem in minority students?
   a) How can multicultural arts build self esteem in the basic level adolescent student?

Assumptions/Beliefs

Since there are many students in high schools from multicultural backgrounds, I initially assumed there would be a lot of written information about them. Of course there is! But not in subject areas relating to arts education. Primarily, research has been done in the areas of language learning and acculturation.

Initially, I also believed that Canadian sources would have a lot of information in my area of study. I have found this is not
true. What surely is being experienced in the classroom, is not being written about in Canadian books or research journals. American and British sources contain a significant amount of information about multicultural arts education. This leads me to believe that they have been struggling with the issue for a longer time than Canadians, and therefore are ready to document their experiences.

Since there is not a lot of Canadian sources, it will be necessary for me to interview teachers about their experiences. I believe this is the best route because in my everyday contact with teachers some have related their struggles to the changing composition of their classrooms. These teachers are attempting to adjust their assignments and projects to meet their students' needs.

Limitations

The following are identified limitations to the type of research conducted:

Multicultural arts education is a new area of study in Canada and there is not a lot of existing research to build on.

Multicultural arts education in schools is difficult to analyze since educators are still in a
transitional phase regarding their values and beliefs around the issues of multiculturalism itself. It is difficult to analyze something you are still experiencing.

Although it is the aim of this study to integrate multicultural arts education across the curriculum, it is not possible to include all cultural groups and all subject areas. The study, therefore, may be seen by some to be significant to only a small selection of educators.

A great many class rooms were not available to study; therefore, the sample size was small.

This study is still valid despite the above limitations because it begins to build a body of knowledge about multicultural arts education. Since there has not been a lot of research done in this area, we need to validate what is currently being done in classrooms and what could be done in classrooms with a sound body of research. Other educators and researchers who have interest in this area will be encouraged to build upon what little has been done. Eventually we will begin to move the study of multicultural arts education from the fringes to research that is accepted as legitimate and mainstream.
Background to the Problematic

The Educational Context

There is support in the broader educational context for multiculturalism and an integrated curriculum. The Royal Commission on Learning (1995) cited equity issues to be a priority. Specifically, the document recommends that teaching materials be monitored and reviewed to be free of racism. It is also suggested that necessary resources be made available to support students from under-achieving minority groups. Although the Commission's support of anti-racism is obvious, they should be more proactive. Reviewing materials that have already been produced is a reaction to racism. Educators must be proactive by producing and purchasing anti-racist materials and disseminating them throughout the schools. If we continue to use reactive methods alone, we will always be one step behind in achieving the anti-racist curriculum we seek to achieve.

The document, The Common Curriculum (1995), speaks to the issue of inclusion:

The curriculum in our schools cannot ignore this diversity by focussing exclusively on the traditions of the dominant group; it must draw from a wide range of beliefs, experiences, backgrounds and viewpoints so that all students are included...(p.16)

The importance of building self-esteem in students is also
stressed, as well as encouraging humanistic values such as: social responsibility, human rights, and sense of belonging.

An integrated curriculum is viewed as a vehicle for learning in The Common Curriculum (1995). Students are able to make connections between: what they have learned, their daily lives, what they hope to do in the future, and their backgrounds.

In light of what has been discussed above, there is obvious support in the general education context for an integrated Multicultural Arts curriculum that would encourage positive self esteem in students.

The Arts Context

The arts section of The Common Curriculum (1995) is consistent with the issue of equity discussed in the Royal Commission on Learning (1995). The arts section seeks to acknowledge differences amongst students. Although it does not fall into the trap of the universalist perspective, it straddles the line by making the statement that different peoples have distinctive ways of expressing themselves, but adding that in spite of our backgrounds we are similar in the ways we see things.

The arts also show us that, while people of diverse races and cultures have unique ways of expressing themselves, people of all backgrounds have many similar interests, concerns, and ways of seeing things. (p.38)
Integration of subjects is encouraged throughout *The Common Curriculum* (1995) and The Royal Commission on Learning (1995). Integration of the arts with other areas of curriculum is mentioned in *The Common Curriculum* (1995) but not expanded upon. The main focus appears to be: to keep the Arts together as an integrated package and perhaps tentatively branch out into different areas. Perhaps because the area of integration is still so new, educators are reluctant to make sweeping proclamations.

**Conceptual Framework(s)**

The conceptual frameworks that guide this study are those within the Holistic and Ethnographic Interpretive paradigms. Ethnographic research methods are compatible with phenomenological approaches in that phenomenology concerns itself with perceptions of the world as the subject of the research believes it to be. The researcher is involved in the study as a participant observer, and so, even though the researcher is cautioned to be neutral in his/her observations the perceptions beliefs and interpretations of the researcher are also incorporated and acknowledged.

Holism also guides this study because this researcher believes that the works produced by students and their responses to situations are guided by aspects such as their gender, socio-
economic status, culture, ethnicity, etc. Culture and socio-economic status are tied because we live in a stratified society that has been identified as a "vertical mosaic" in which those of the dominant culture have access and opportunities to better economic resources. Gender and culture are related in that the ways females of a particular culture interpret the world are different from the males of that same culture. In light of this we must realise that all of these aspects make up the whole person in innumerable combinations and should be acknowledged in research.

Multiculturalism as it is viewed from a socio-political context is also incorporated in this study's conceptual framework. My definition of multiculturalism draws from the work of researcher Sonia Nieto (1996). Within this framework multiculturalism is an agent for social change and social justice. Multiculturalism is also anti-racism and anti-discrimination. Multiculturalism affirms all of us within any society because it embraces all aspects of our difference such as: language, religion, and socio-economic status.

We are still in a transitional phase regarding our values and beliefs about multiculturalism. Concrete programs that implement the purpose of multiculturalism are only now being formed. There
is an important need for research and study in this area among Canadian arts educators. Research and study have already begun in this area in the United States and Britain. This research will explore multicultural arts education as it relates to the following areas: self-esteem in students, the relationship between culture and arts education, viewing art in its context, and curriculum integration and design.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Although Canada has been declared a multicultural society since 1971, there is still debate and discussion around the concept.

The role of multicultural arts education in building the self-esteem of students is emphasised by many arts educators and researchers. The impact of negative self-esteem and self-concept can be witnessed in the drawings of children of oppressed minority groups. These children rarely draw themselves; instead they depict members from the dominant culture (Dennis as cited in Ott and Hurwitz, 1984). Chalmers (1992) explains that an arts curriculum that celebrates diversity enhances the students' self-esteem and encourages pride in their heritage. Similarly, Collins and Sandell (1992) have designed a theory of multicultural arts education they call the "repair response". In this model students from the non-dominant culture are alienated and suffer from low self-esteem because they have not been able to learn about their culture. These students, however, feel validated and experience positive self-esteem when they can study their own heritage. An inclusionary arts curriculum builds self-esteem in minority students and in so doing empowers all students in areas
that go beyond the classroom:

They are more able to develop a broader range of cultural perspectives from which to view the world... They are better able to recognize their ability to influence political and social institutions. (Banks as cited in Stuhr, Petrovich-Mwaniki and Wasson, 1992)

The manner in which educators deliver a curriculum that aims to build self-esteem in students through the celebration of their diversity is still problematic. Educators must be vigilant about not trivialising these learning experiences. Care must be taken not to "do" a culture in gimmicky, quick and surface ways (Smith, 1994).

Culture and ethnicity are an integral part of arts education in that the values and aesthetics of the dominant culture are promoted in the arts curriculum. Smith (1994) gives examples of how supposedly secular and universal themes in western art can be viewed from a different and emotionally charged viewpoint by an Islamic student or a Protestant fundamentalist. It is difficult to view art outside of its context because of the role of the arts as "agents for the transmission of culture" (Chalmers, 1992 p.17).

Zimmerman (1990) speaks against the practice of viewing and teaching art outside its cultural context. She believes, for example, that admiring African art solely for its aesthetic power suits fashionable tastes that are interested in the exotic. This
practice, however, minimises the spiritual beliefs and social value system of the culture. Unless we view an artwork in a critical fashion that takes into account its socio-cultural context we fail to help students form connections with artworks in ways that are legitimate. We also fail to make connections and contributions to students' lives (Sthur et al., 1992).

A contradictory view is held by Kindler (1994) who feels that researchers are overstating the importance of studying art within its context. It is her belief that if a young child has been raised within a multicultural society it is not necessary for him/her to acquire the knowledge that contextual analysis gives. This knowledge is necessary only for children who are members of the ethnic group whose art is being studied. Kindler (1994) further argues that children raised in a multicultural society can choose which cultural traditions interest them and construct their own heritage from this. Kindler's (1994) assumption that simply living within multiculturalism means you will absorb it by osmosis is simplistic. Selecting what is interesting and exotic from other cultures leads to a type of artistic tourism. This means we are "romanticising rustic country life or exotic cultures" (Katter, 1995 p.12).

The value of multicultural arts education for children in
general has been discussed by researchers but how these discussions relate specifically to the adolescent has not been established. Little is known about the drawings of adolescents in general regardless of their cultural background. We do know, however, that the practice of drawing decreases throughout the adolescent period. When adolescents do draw, they create works that are self-portraits, portraits of what they are experiencing inside themselves, and in interpersonal situations (Ives and Gardner in Ott and Hurwitz, 1984). It would appear that since the self is such an integral part of artworks produced at this developmental stage a curriculum that fosters positive self-esteem using the concepts of inclusion and diversity is important for this age group.

Adolescents are developmentally capable of producing work that makes statements and carries political, social and historical protest (Ives and Gardner in Ott and Hurwitz, 1984). Students are capable of receiving curriculum that does not view the Arts narrowly. They must be encouraged to think critically about what is produced. Integrating the Arts with the social sciences broadens the scope of the arts and leads to a more inclusive curriculum because students are also critically analyzing issues of power, gender, social class, how resources are distributed as
well as the ways different socio-cultural groups approach the arts (Stthur et al., 1992).

The National Arts Education Research Centre has published a document edited by Ellyn Berk (1991) entitled *A Framework for Multicultural Arts Education* Volume Two. that addresses issues of cultural sensitivity and inclusion. The document is targeted at arts educators and gives them concrete suggestions for multicultural arts curriculum design. The framework stresses an inter-disciplinary approach that encourages the blending of fine art as well as craft and combining the arts with social sciences and the humanities.

The interdisciplinary approach that document recommends seeks to transform the curriculum so that it not only includes multicultural content but also infuses multicultural content across all curriculum areas. The framework goes beyond espousing ideals of multicultural arts education; it also provides strategies for educators to work with. Also, it encourages systematic and comprehensive evaluation of multicultural arts curricula. This document produced by NAERC is important for teachers and researchers because it gives concrete models of interdisciplinary and multicultural instructions with a format of how to deliver this model to students.
An approach to teaching the arts that also goes beyond skills-based and technical methods is promoted by British researcher Mason (1988) who asked a group of student teachers to design an arts curriculum that was integrated and multicultural. Mason (1988) cites the text *Becoming Human through Art* which explains that an arts curriculum that is integrated with the humanities is one that included learning about people. Humanistic learning also brings human beings together socially (Katchadourian as cited in Mason, 1988). These types of arts curricula promote cohesion in the classroom. Stthur et al. (1992) view these learning environments as democratic, collaborative ones that foster positive cross-cultural and inter-cultural interactions.

There are models in Britain, the United States and Canada of arts curricula that are multicultural, integrated and interdisciplinary. British researcher Mason (1988) has identified these types of curricula. One example given was delivered by African artists-in-residence whose programs did not make distinctions or separations between the arts that we do in the West. Their curriculum was dynamic and included crafts, drama, dance, music, visual arts and literature. Mason (1988) also describes one particular educator who was frustrated teaching students whose notions of what art was did not match hers. She
eventually realised that western focussed vision was unproductive in a multicultural classroom. She began to broaden her definition of art and included art from non-western cultures as well as activities that might be considered craft or folk art.

American researcher Zimmerman (1990) also recommends integrating crafts activities such as quilting and patchwork in the arts curriculum. It was reasoned that art history, criticism and aesthetics can be explored through this art form as well as: its origins and significance in Ancient China, Egypt, and colonial America, its importance to African American women and the nature of the quilt as a vehicle for expressing sentiments and values (Zimmerman, 1990).

"Juggling Cultures" is a program based in London, Ontario designed by Wanda Sawicki. The program is targeted at multicultural youth who have concerns around the issues of self-identity. The program uses Visual Arts to help participants communicate the alienation and isolation they are experiencing (Sawicki, 1991). This program is important in that it seeks to address the issues of self-esteem and self-concept. A criticism of the program would be that it has not included arts activities from the cultures of the students that it serves. Also, it falls into the trap of reinforcing the attitude of the immigrant as
victim. The activities may help students emotionally but they do not empower them.

In light of the relevant literature we can see that there is support for arts education that is multicultural and inclusionary because of its role in building self-esteem and self-concept in students. The literature also supports the integration of multicultural arts with other curriculum areas such as the humanities and the social sciences. Further research and study needs to be done within the Canadian school system regarding multicultural arts education since the researcher found that there are few Canadian sources. The focus of this type of study would be on how such programs could be implemented and designed. Our learners need an arts curriculum that enhances their creativity, treats them as whole people and empowers them.
CHAPTER 3

Methods and Procedures

Design of the Study

Definition of the thesis question in operational terms.

This study used a qualitative research design, specifically the concepts and methods of micro-ethnographic interpretive research. One senior class (grade 11 or 12) of Visual Arts secondary students was observed over a period of six to eight weeks. Students were surveyed prior to and after the study experience. The researcher collaborated with the teacher of the course and acted as participant observer and produced field notes. Student artworks were developed around assigned themes. Artworks produced addressed "what types of artworks do students produce?" portion of the major thesis question. The room set up and students at work were photographed in order to gather data related to classroom tone and atmosphere as well as to achieve a triangulation of sources. Emergents from the data were examined for information on student beliefs and behaviours that appear related to self esteem, culture, gender etc. (the "why?" of the thesis question). This study is the first part of a series of other studies to be done by the researcher. The researcher plans to continue the series in her doctoral and post doctoral studies.
The studies will integrate multicultural arts into subject areas other than visual arts. The other subject areas will be the social sciences, humanities, and other arts disciplines such as music and drama.

Methodological Procedures

Study Participants

a. The researcher

The female researcher is of African-Caribbean descent and is both a teacher and participant observer for this study. A pilot study used another teacher who was a colleague and who was similar to the researcher in philosophy and beliefs. Two external reviewers were chosen in a similar fashion. Because of the constraints of time and resources it was convenient for the researcher to study students at her school. The researcher values her relationship with students. She is flexible and open to new experiences in the classroom. Above all she takes into account the social, cultural and emotional background of her students when designing learning experiences.

b. Selection of participants

The group studied consisted of those who had chosen to enroll in a senior visual arts course at the secondary level taught by an associate of the teacher/researcher. The selection process for
subjects therefore was accidental. (An average class size might contain 25 to 30 students.) The school was located within Metropolitan Toronto in the northwest section of the city of Scarborough. Since there was no other criteria for participation in the study other than the participants' having selected this optional course, it was expected that the students would be a random cross-section of students between 15.5 and 22 years who had an interest in visual arts. This group was chosen because they had some exposure to the arts and so their responses were expected to be more abstract and complex than those of an inexperienced junior group.

c. Characteristics of the participants

The study participants were from a middle to lower socio-economic background with a significant number from families dependent on social assistance. The school, population 650 students, in which this study was conducted is located in a suburb with the highest number of single-parent families in Metro. Single-parent families have grown at a faster rate in Scarborough than anywhere else in Metro (Marcovitch, 1995).

Approximately 25% of the school population has undergone the IPRC (Identification Placement and Review Committee) process and were found to need Special education. The purpose of the IPRC is
to identify students who are exceptional in some way (learning disabled, behavioural problems, gifted, etc.) and to place them into appropriate programs. The progress of these students is reviewed throughout the school year to determine if they are properly placed or if changes should be made. Parents are kept informed throughout the school year.

Another 5% were not officially designated but received support from the Special Education department. Students serviced by the ESL/D department had had partial education in their home countries. These students came to Canada from such areas of the world as: the Caribbean, Hong Kong, east and west Africa, central America, Sri Lanka and South East Asia. These students have had their education interrupted because of war and political upheavals or may have lived a rural lifestyle in which they have experienced little or no formal schooling.

As well as the above mentioned students there are also many students who experience behavioural and emotional challenges but are not represented in official statistics. Nevertheless the academic success of these students has been disadvantaged because of these difficulties.

One class of senior visual arts students was selected for the study. As expected, the class reflected the higher male to female
ratio of the school. Approximately 65% to 70% of the school population was male. At the senior level students' ages varied from 15.5 to 22 years old. Class attendance and being late to class were problem issues at this school. A common expectation was that 15% to 20% of the class would not complete enough assignments to pass. This could impact this study in that not all student works and responses to the surveys could be included if students were not in class to complete the work. The students had had prior exposure to visual arts since there was a pre-requisite for any senior visual arts course.

The majority of the study participants had been disadvantaged in some way. For some students it was because their families had been transient and so their educational backgrounds had become weak. Other participants were identified from grade two or three as needing special educational support. These students were also hindered because they lacked the goals necessary to find out what they wanted to be. In general, students were at this school for vocational education and/or because they had not been successful by the end of elementary school or at other academic secondary schools. These students came to school less prepared than their counterparts in other schools. In light of the challenges faced by the clientele of this school, teachers tended to be very
flexible and caring compared to their colleagues in schools of this area.

d. Characteristics of schools/context

There are five other schools in the same geographical area. These schools are located north of the 401 highway from Victoria Park to Markham Road. The remaining schools in the area are academic secondary schools. Two of these schools specialise in arts programs. All of these schools are easily accessible to each other within 30 minutes by public transportation.

The school involved in the study is the only vocational school in the area. This school is 25 years old. It is located in a diverse economic district ranging from low income government assisted housing to upper-middle class homes. The locale is residential and densely populated. Scarborough Board's chief psychologist has found that 65.8% of Scarborough's parents live in rental housing. Scarborough also has the largest concentration of Metro Toronto Housing Authority housing in all of Metro. Additionally, it was found that Scarborough has experienced the fastest family poverty growth rate in all of Metro (Marcovitch, 1995). Scarborough has approximately 500,000 inhabitants.

There is support at the Board and school level for the Arts curriculum. The school has developed an integrated arts program.
that attempts to address multicultural arts in general philosophy, but has not specifically done so in practice. Within the senior arts courses students produce works that are reflective of their culture but students and teachers do not focus on this as an area to develop in depth.

As well as being designated as a vocational school with a high special education population, the school is also very ethnically diverse. Students enrolled in ESL/D courses make up 27% of the school's population. Many ethnic students who are born in Canada and speak and write English fluently maintain strong connections with their cultural background. The school seeks to recognize the contributions of diverse cultural groups that make-up the schools' population through the acknowledgement of various religious holidays, "international days" and African Heritage Month celebrations. This school community reflects the diversity within Metropolitan Toronto and Scarborough. Research has found that of those immigrants coming to Canada between 1992 and 1995, almost 35% chose to live in Metropolitan Toronto. Approximately 13% will reside in Scarborough (Marcovitch, 1995).

e. Description of curriculum/program

The Arts Policy (1994) for the Scarborough Board of Education states that excellence in the arts curriculum is achieved when it
develops the capabilities of students, reflects and addresses racism and the multicultural nature of our society and is responsive to diverse and special populations in schools.

These recommendations complement the ideals of this study and support the needs of students attending the school involved in this study.

The Ministry of Education guidelines identify thirteen goals for Visual Arts. The goals that specifically relate to the objectives of this study are listed below:

Visual Arts courses should contain learning experiences that help each student...

6. develop self-worth

9. develop a sense of personal responsibility in society at the local, national and international levels.

10. develop esteem for customs, cultures and beliefs.

(Curriculum Guideline Visual Arts Intermediate and Senior Divisions, 1986)

At the board and school level there seemed to be general support for a visual arts curriculum which is inclusionary and develops the whole student; however, there was not a specific curriculum document that gives guidelines regarding the implementation of such programs. Each teacher was left to design
his or her own individual curriculum in class. Consequently this study began to design ways to help implement these in the classroom as well as to provide concrete evidence that displays the importance to students' well being of multicultural arts education.

i. Types of Data Collected

The data collected by the researcher consisted primarily of participant observation field notes of the students' and the teacher's attitudes, behaviours and interactions. Photographs were taken of the room set-up and work environment. As well, students' artworks such as drawings, collages, paintings, crafts etc. created in response to the assigned themes were be analyzed and interpreted. Two focus groups, one with six students the other with eight students, were administered throughout the six week period of the research in order to gather data with depth regarding the students' personal values and beliefs about art and culture. Additionally, students' responses to surveys at the beginning and end of the study experience were also collected. The purpose of the pre and post surveys was to determine the impact on students of an art classroom designed to encourage a collaborative and inclusionary atmosphere. The entry survey (see fig. 1) looked at where students stood at the beginning of the research experience.
Entry Survey Questions

What is your cultural background? __________

1. List three (3) things that you think are art?
   a) 
   b) 
   c) 

2. Why do you think people make art?

3. What kind of art do you make? Give three examples
   a) 
   b) 
   c) 

4. Why do you make the kind of art that you do?

5. Do you think it is important for you to represent your culture in your art work?

6. How do you feel when you make art?

7. Give three (3) examples of art or artist from your culture?
   a) 
   b) 
   c) 

8. Give three (3) examples of art or artist from another culture
   a) 
   b) 
   c) 

Figure. 1 Entry survey
The rationale for the entry survey questions is listed below:

- Questions one to three were designed to gain information about the students' personal attitudes and beliefs about art.
- Questions four to six were designed to gain insight into the social and emotional aspects of making art for students.
- Questions seven and eight were designed to determine what students already know about the art of their culture and the art of other cultures.

The rationale for the exit survey questions (see fig. 2) is listed below:

- Questions one and two seek to determine the impact of the collaborative atmosphere and the art projects on the students' feeling of self-worth.
- Question three was designed to determine the impact (if any) of the inclusionary philosophy on class cohesion.
- Questions four and five were designed to determine if students were able to learn about other cultures after the multicultural arts experience.
Exit Survey

1. What was your favorite project(s) in art class this semester?
   Why?

2. How do you think you did in art class this semester?

3. Did you make any new friends in art class this semester?

4. Did you learn about art from another culture this semester?
   Yes ___   No ___
   If yes, state which culture(s) and give examples of art from this/these culture(s).

5. Did you make art from or about different cultures this semester?

Figure 2 Exit Survey
Throughout the study public domain documents and literature were collected to complement and add dimension to data collected in the field.

ii. Data Collection

Students were surveyed prior to the study experience regarding such things as their attitudes, values, aesthetic considerations, backgrounds, feelings, beliefs and cultural situations. The plan was for students to produce artworks during the study experience over a period of six to eight weeks revolving around such themes as: Heroes/Heroines, My Culture/Another Culture, Pattern and Symbol. However the constraints of time and classroom dynamics persuaded me to simplify this plan and have the students produce two projects. In the first project they were asked to investigate the artworks of another culture: the Native culture. They studied the spiritual importance of art to the Native peoples and were asked to create artwork that incorporated Native arts aesthetics. The second project asked the students to create artwork that represented their cultural background or the art from their cultural background.

The teacher wrote participant observation field notes and took photographs that captured students' work, classroom setting and dynamics throughout the study experience. Students completed
an exit survey at the end of the study. Results of the exit survey were compared to those in the entry survey. The above data addressed the major thesis question. Focus group discussions gathered data relating to students’ values and beliefs about art and added dimension to the data gathered through the exit and entry surveys. Students were audio taped during the focus groups and in addition the researcher took notes in order to record salient points and interactions.

Sub-question one and one a) are discussed in the conclusion of the study using data from participant observation field notes and focus groups as well as information from students’ response to survey questions. Thesis question two and three are investigated through process observation of teachers’ classroom lessons, focus group discussions, student interactions and spontaneous discussions with the classroom teacher. Thesis question three a) is investigated through the use of data gathered from student responses to entry and exit survey questions.

iii. Treatment of Data

A predetermined coding system was developed to identify emergent categories from the surveys and other data. From these codes data was sorted into such areas as: aesthetic considerations, values, beliefs, backgrounds, feelings, cultural
situations etc. Two external reviewers were asked to suggest alternative codes and point out biases and contradictions during the data collection process. Student art works produced were interpreted, analyzed and compared to the responses and outcomes of the surveys and participant observation field notes. Public domain documents were used as a basis of comparison and balance.
Focus Group Procedures

The purpose of the focus groups was to discover the students' conception of art. Through taped group discussions in the focus groups I was able to access a deeper understanding of the students' assumptions and experiences that they had brought with them to class.

Focus groups were conducted two times throughout the term. Since student attendance patterns in this school are often erratic the focus groups comprised six students of those in the class who chose to attend on that particular day. Although it was my hope that all of the twenty students registered for the class would participate in either one of the groups, some were either chronically absent or chose not to participate because they were not interested. The two focus groups were shown the same slides in the same order and asked identical questions with equivalent formats.

Students were first shown slides of traditional European fine art. As they viewed each slide they were asked if they felt the individual pieces were art and the reasons for their feelings. Next, the students were shown pieces that are traditionally not
included in the fine arts canon. These pieces were: an African sculpture, a quilt, an example of Japanese calligraphy and a Native Canadian painting. The non-traditional pieces were compared to the traditional fine art that they had viewed previously and they were asked if they felt both pieces were art and to give their reasons. The resulting discussions and debate amongst the students who participated in each focus group were lively, informative and insightful.

Results of Focus Group Number One

The first focus group comprised a mixed cross section of the class’s cultural makeup. The composition of the group was not my design; students were simply asked if they wanted to participate in the focus group on the day that they came to class. The students were: Shane and Sarah, are white Canadian-born students from British Isles backgrounds; Debbie and Devika, are Guyanese females of East Indian heritage; Hamal is an Ethiopian female, an ESL student and a recent immigrant to Canada; Damian is a Jamaican born black male. Within this group there was general agreement that the traditional European fine art pieces that they viewed were art. There was some disagreement whether Michelangelo’s “Pieta” was art. I believe that the students’ prior experience of art consisted of art that was in the medium of drawing and
painting. The more realistic and representational works were easily accepted as art. This was to be expected from basic level adolescents who were only just beginning to move from the concrete in terms of their thinking. However, it was interesting to note that the modernist pieces by Picasso and Matisse were also accepted as art, even though I believe this type of artistic expression was outside of their realm of experience. Modern art is not part of their curriculum at school and most of their families would not have access to resources such as art books or time to visit museums. One explanation may be that they have been exposed to this type of work through the commercial art media’s appropriation of modern art. When questioned why they felt the modernist pieces were art, they responded that the works looked like they were done by a “professional” artist.

The students seemed to connect easily with the Native work as art. They described the Native art as a piece that represented spirituality and culture. I believe that they could easily view this cultural piece as art because they have been exposed to it outside the school through the media and as decorative motifs. Also, they had just finished an intensive assignment about Native art. Their acceptance of the Native art as a cultural piece that was also art did not translate to the African sculptural piece and
the example of Japanese calligraphy. These pieces were dismissed as not art. They were not sure what category they would put the pieces in but it was not art.

The students' response to the quilt as an art piece was negative. Sarah felt that it was a "blanket" and shouldn't be considered art. Other students responded in a similar fashion. Keith argued that the quilt could be considered art because it was similar to the embroidery piece that Debbie and Devika were collaborating on. The girls would not be swayed; the quilt wasn't art. The students' negative reaction to the quilt suggests that they have bought into the societal attitudes that have trivialized women's traditional creative output.

I found the reactions of the girls especially interesting since we had had a class discussion and slide presentation that included information about women's craft as art. At the end of the class Debbie and Devika asked if they could execute their work in embroidery. Sarah also seemed similarly engaged when she discussed her initial ideas for her project which she wanted to execute using knitting or embroidery techniques. Even though the girls had embraced this women's art form as a way to express their creativity they still resisted that type of expression as legitimate. I believe their reaction suggests that any education
that seeks to battle stereotypes has to be persistent and ongoing. Single lessons may inform students but students need time and opportunities to evaluate their assumptions.

When asked about the importance of culture and art there was a general consensus amongst the students that they felt it was important for individuals to represent their culture in their art work. Keith felt it was important because it meant that you could use your art to influence and inform others about your culture. Debbie and Devika felt that when you represented your culture in your art you show pride in who you are. Debbie was especially adamant as she announced at the end of the session, "I would let nobody put down my culture!"

Results of Focus Group Number Two

The second focus group was held about a week later. I followed the same procedure for selecting participants as with the first group. This focus group was comprised largely of the language learners in the class. It consisted mainly of the females of Asian heritage: Jennifer, Becky, Joyce and Kam two males, Ahmed, who is from Somalia and Jehunger from the Middle East. I found that there were marked differences in this group's response to the art works that were revealed when compared to the first group.
Unlike the first focus group, there were mixed responses to the Native art piece, especially from Kam, Joyce, and Becky. I found this surprising since, like the members of the first group, they had just completed an assignment about Native art. These group members also commented that this type of art was unfamiliar to them. The only dissenter in the group was Jennifer who has been raised in Canada. She recognized the work as being familiar to her; she said that she had seen work like it before. She went on to comment that not all art had to look real. Ahmed, like Jennifer, recognized the Native piece as familiar and agreed that it was art.

This second group was also unlike the first in their response to the modern art pieces. They did not feel that these pieces were art. The reasons they gave were that the works looked child like and the colors were overpowering and confusing. Ahmed, supporter of the Native art work, declared that the pieces simply “don’t make sense”! He went on to say that if it doesn’t make sense to him it wasn’t art. Even the Pieta by Michelangelo wasn’t accepted favorably. It got a mixed response. Kam felt it was art; only it was not well composed. Joyce didn’t feel it looked real; Becky voiced a similar response. Once again it was Jennifer who was the only dissenter of the group. She thought that the
piece was art because it was a sculpture. Only the very representational paintings from the Renaissance were considered art without any equivocation. The reasons that they gave were summed up in Becky's answer. She said that the representational pieces were art because "a child could not do it."

Although it seemed that this group only favored pieces that were highly representational and created in the traditional media of drawing and painting, this was not entirely true. The non-objective Japanese calligraphy piece was accepted as art by the entire group. Joyce said that she "understood" it because it was like art from the Chinese culture, even though it was Japanese. The rest of the group agreed that it was a very familiar type of artwork. In absolute contrast to the first group there was not any resistance or debate regarding the quilt's validity as art. It was immediately accepted. I believe the reason for their acceptance lies in the importance that the textile arts hold in the African and Asian cultures, the two cultures represented in this group. Within these cultures art is incorporated into things that have everyday use. Art is not necessarily segregated into the rarefied domain of the museum.

This second focus group, comprised of very New Canadians, responded to the artworks in a favorable or unfavorable manner
according to aesthetic traditions that they had developed in their
countries of origin, just as we in North America have drawn from
aesthetic traditions belonging to the European ancestors of the
dominant culture. Some of the groups’ preferences match the North
American/European tradition. I speculate that the explanation for
the match is the impact of western European aesthetics which have
travelled globally via academic institutions and the commercial
media. Also, highly representational works are easily accessible
to the majority of people.

Regarding the issue of culture there was a parallel with the
first group. As in the first group there was consensus that it
was important to represent your culture in your art. Ahmed
explained that art helps “to keep your culture alive”. Kam’s final
comment may explain why I noticed such definite preferences in
this group of new Canadians. She explained that “it’s easier to
draw about your culture because you know more about your culture
than the other way.” Her comment also points to the need for an
arts curriculum that helps all of us develop beyond what is
easier.

Entry Survey Procedure

Bob, the classroom teacher, introduced me to the students as
a teacher who would be working with them for a few weeks. Bob
explained that the surveys that they were about to fill out related to the cultural study that they were doing in which they investigated the art of the Native peoples.

Before the surveys were distributed to the students each question was read aloud to them. Bob and I gave examples of how we might answer each question. We did this to try to remove as much of the threat that they may have felt and also to clarify the questions in the students’ minds. We felt this strategy to be necessary for two reasons: first, as with many classes in this school there were many ESL students who need this support; secondly, there were students who are of average intelligence but are low functioning readers who do not process written information well. For example to clarify the initial question regarding cultural background, I told them how I would answer the question. I used my ethnic heritage and described for them my perception of what I felt is my cultural identity.

As the surveys were distributed Bob and I helped the students sometimes explaining the questions in a simpler form. We also stressed that there were no right or wrong answers and they were to answer the questions using their first gut-level response. The students busily filled out their surveys individually and in groups. Bob created a stimulating work environment as he gathered
pictures of art from various cultures and displayed them around the room. He did this in order to provide a context or framework that would enable the students to retrieve information from their memories.

Results of the Entry Surveys

The entry surveys were administered after the students had received a slide presentation about multi-cultural artwork and during the time that they were completing artworks based on Native culture. Because of this timing the students may have been prepared to express themselves regarding the role culture and art played in their lives. The results of the survey support the literature which contends that the arts hold an important role in building the self esteem of students (Banks as cited in Stuhr, Petrovich, Mwaniki and Wasson, 1992; Chalmers, 1992; Dennis as cited in Ott and Hurwitz, 1984; Collins and Sandell, 1992). An integral part of the self includes one’s ethnicity and culture. Students identified in their surveys that their culture and their ability to express their culture is important to them. These findings suggest that self-esteem, self-expression and cultural affirmation are all tied together. It also means that as educators we should take these aspects into account as we try to develop and educate the whole student. Below is a description of
the findings from the surveys.

Survey questions that asked students to identify their emotions regarding making artwork were responded to with a degree of commonality. The motivations that the students named as reasons that people made art fell into the categories of feelings, hobbies, culture and self-expression. Students reported that they felt that self-expression, feelings and culture were especially important as drives to create art. For these students, then, it appears that art is important because it touches the inner self.

Almost half of the students who completed the surveys were similar in their responses when asked to identify art or artists from their culture and another culture. They gave vague responses that displayed their lack of knowledge. For example, they would list simply "drawing, music, dance". Similarly, when asked to identify art from another culture they repeated the same vague responses. Only two students of the twenty gave specific answers. Their answers related to Jamaican reggae musicians. Four students answered the question by describing the visual symbols of their culture. A student of Irish heritage wrote: "shamrocks, bagpipes winter". An ESL student from Hong Kong wrote "landscape, dragon". Another four students simply did not respond to the question. These results have led me to reason that the majority
of the students were unaware of the art or artists of their own culture and the culture of others. It is the details of these artists that students are unaware of such as who they are and what they made. In reviewing the results below it will become clear that it was not that the students were ignorant of the existence of other art forms.

Students displayed that they had a broad understanding of what "art" was when they were asked to describe "art". Students could identify art forms outside of the typical Western art canon. Half of the students described the expected categories of Music, Drawing, and Painting. Other art forms that were identified by the other half of respondents were forms of expression such as: "rapping, grafitti, culture, life, fashion". When students described what type of art they made themselves a similar pattern emerged. Slightly less than half identified categories such as Drawing, Painting, Design, and Music. Many other single categories emerged from the remaining respondents, such as: "tapestry, embroidery, rapping, grafitti, cartoons". From these results I infer that although students instinctively know what are the expected art forms they are also aware of many other types of art outside of the canon.

Students didn't (or couldn't) articulate clearly in their
surveys why they, as individuals, made the kinds of art that they
did (and they had already reported above that there were various
kinds that they created). The answers that surfaced were ones
that described seemingly superficial reasons such as "enjoyment" or
something to do in their spare time. The students did not
personalize their art experiences or closely examine their reasons
for making art. Perhaps at the basic level it is difficult for
students to articulate what motivates them. At this level,
students may be more comfortable responding to questions requiring
concrete responses. However, in a previous question in the survey
that asked generally why people make art, students highlighted
the importance of self-expression, the development of culture, and
the inner self.

When asked directly how they felt when they made art all the
students reported only positive effects. They reported that they
felt: "happy", "good", "kind", "calm", "quiet in my mind", "quiet in
my heart". All of these responses point to the importance of art
in developing the self-esteem and the inner self of students. We
can use art to tap into a positive place within students. The
emphasis on the positive is especially important for basic level
students who have many negatives in their lives in terms of lack
of scholastic achievement and disrupted family lives.
Results of Exit Surveys

The purpose of the exit surveys was to discover what if any impact the multicultural projects had on the students.

The exit surveys were administered on the second last day of the semester. As is typical of the school attendance patterns at this time of the year about one third (1/3) of the class were not present. Many of these students had not officially dropped the class but by the end of the semester were attending intermittently and so usually decided it was not worth while to come to class the last few days.

At the end of the 20 week semester half of the students who were present identified the multicultural projects they completed as their favorite project. Some of the reasons that they gave were:

- Because I learned different things about my culture and other cultures.
- I learned lots about my background culture.
- Because it makes me feel good doing art about it.

The majority of students who answered the surveys (13 out of 16) also indicated that they learned something about another culture, other than their own. However, when asked to identify the culture they learned almost half of the respondents (7 out of
16) did not attempt to answer the question. It has been my experience that basic level students do not respond well when asked to give examples. These types of questions are usually answered poorly on exams (so perhaps the question should have been omitted or constructed in a different way). The reason for the lack of response to these types of questions may be because basic level students are poor at retaining information or because they do not concern themselves to give examples after they have answered the major question. One student’s written query asked why I put a “trick question” on the survey. Those that answered the question fully identified the Native Arts project and the library research and art that they completed about their own heritage as cultures that they learned about.

My goal was that the classroom atmosphere would be inclusionary, welcoming and that it would provide a background conducive to learning and creating. The exit survey results showed that this goal was achieved. The majority of students (13 out of 15) described their overall achievement during the semester in positive terms. Only two students reported that they “failed” or that their achievement was “not good”. The vast majority of students (14 out of 16) reported that they also made new friends. I believe that this displays that the inclusionary atmosphere also
contributed to classroom cohesion amongst students that made this semester's art class a positive experience.

Analysis of Field Notes and Participant Observations

Conceptual Framework

Below is an analysis and discussion of field notes and observations of my ethnographic research. My findings will be relayed using Cummins' (1996) theoretical framework to structure and organize my analysis. His framework draws from the orientation of critical pedagogy which centres on power relations between dominant and subordinate groups as an integral element in curriculum development.

In his book *Negotiating Identities: Education for Empowerment in a Diverse Society*, Cummins (1996) describes a framework of coercive and collaborative power relations that are laid out in macro and micro interactions (see fig. 3). Within this framework, the ways in which educators define their roles (educator role definitions) and the ways in which schools are organized in terms of policies, programs, curriculum etc... (educational structures) combine to determine the "micro-interactions" that occur between educators and students. These interactions "form an interpersonal or interactional space within which the acquisition of knowledge and formation identity are negotiated" (p.18). It is Cummins' (1996)
Coercive and Collaborative Relations of Power Manifested in Macro- and Micro-interactions

Coercive and Collaborative Relations of Power Manifested in Micro-interactions between Subordinated Communities and Dominant Group Institutions

Educator Role Definitions → Educational Structures

Micro-interactions between Educators and Students, forming an Interpersonal Space within which knowledge is generated and identities are negotiated.

Either

Reinforcing Coercive Relations of Power or Promoting Collaborative Relations of Power

Figure 3 Coercive and Collaborative Relations of Power Manifested in Macro- and Micro-interactions


Used with permission from Jim Cummins.
assertion that micro-interaction exert the greatest impact in determining students’ success or failure. Cummins (1996) goes on to argue that micro-interactions can either promote collaborative relations of power or reinforce coercive relations of power which serve the goals of the dominant groups in society and disempower subordinated communities.

Within Cummins’ (1996) framework the basic level school in which my research was conducted would be viewed as an educational structure that, because of its function of streaming students, maintains coercive relations of power that are “designed to limit the opportunities that subordinated groups might have for educational and social advancement” (Cummins, 1996 p.18). The “special schools” in Scarborough are designed to educate secondary students who cannot be served by the Collegiate Institutes. These students are directed to special schools because they are "at risk" behaviourally and/or academically. The schools included within the special schools designation are the Business and Technical Institutes (B.T.I.’s) and the High Schools. The B.T.I.’s are designed to deliver vocational and technical education for students who choose to enter a trade, or go on to the work force or on to Community College. The purpose of the High Schools within the “special schools” structure is to educate and
deliver programs to IPRC'd students and other students who are not succeeding academically and cannot be served by the B.T.I.'s.

Scarborough is a very culturally diverse board. The Ontario Secondary Schools Teachers Federation reports that it has been recognised by the U.N. as the most multicultural Board of Education in the world. The B.T.I.'s are very highly represented by minority groups. It is the opinion of some researchers (Cummins, 1996; Oakes 1985 as cited in Cummins; 1996) that the special schools are used by the educational structures to put students from subordinated groups into low ability classes that withhold quality instruction. Parents and leaders within the Black community have spoken out against existence of special schools and tracking. In light of all of this, then, a question that has emerged is: Is it possible within such an educational structure (one that is used to serve the purposes of those in the dominant group) to have interactions between students and teachers that in some way will impact on the lives of students in positive ways? I believe the answer to this question is "yes".

What impacts on the lives of students in schools in any real way from day to day are the relations that they have with their teachers. It is at this level that this study is focussed. The richest experiences that have emerged from my data come from the
interactions that I experienced in the art class I observed. Also fascinating were the interactions between the classroom teacher and the students. These interactions would most likely describe the "micro-interactions" that form the interpersonal spaces as described by Cummins' (1996) theoretical framework. It explains that it is within these interpersonal spaces that educators and students generate knowledge and negotiate identities. If these interactions are positive then students feel empowered and are more likely to be academically successful.

The Students

Below I will describe the micro-interactions within the classroom that I observed. The students were a culturally diverse group. They formed alliances with each other within the class that were often related to their cultural background. I noticed, however, that they did not erect impermeable barriers to other groups. Loosely described, there were basically five small groupings: a group of three to four Jamaican born males, who didn't necessarily sit with each other, but manifested similar behaviour patterns; a group of four to five East Asian girls who sat together and shared information; two Guyanese girls who sat with each other; three East Asian boys who sat together; and three to four white students, representatives of the dominant
culture, sitting at the back of the classroom.

Adrian, Alton and Damian I describe as "resisters". They are Jamaican-born males in their late teens. They exemplify many behaviours that Fordham (1996, as cited in Ogbu, 1996 in press) has identified in black males who feel alienated from the educational system. All three of these young black males have not chosen academic success. Damian has an "in your face" style. As a student he comes late to class and leaves early. He will often work on art projects that are not related in any way to what is assigned. Some of these closely resemble doodles. Adrian, like Damian, comes late and leaves early. He has a mature demeanor and writes well. He is, however, chronically absent. He leaves class intermittently to socialize with his friends. Alton has similar behaviour patterns to Adrian and Damian. He is also chronically absent. He is unlike them in the manner in which he chooses to disengage himself from the rest of the class. He works on his projects in the far corner of the room. When I engage him in conversation he is pleasant enough, if a bit distracted. Damian at one time commented that Alton was a "crack-head". These young men are "resisters" because they have withdrawn from the general educational process that operates around them. At best, they pick and choose what is important to them. Cummins (1996) argues that
the behaviours that I’ve described here have resulted because these young black males feel that they are not valued by the school system. I have observed that Adrian, Alton and Damian have taken on the mannerisms and dress of the gangs. Some researchers have noted (McCaleb, 1994 as cited in Cummins 1996) that they choose this "gangsta’" style because it brings to them a sense of affiliation and belonging. It affirms them in ways that the school cannot.

In contrast to the resistance of the black males, Debbie and Devika conform to most of the expectations of the school system. They are Guyanese of East Indian descent. They are generally present and arrive on time. They socialized with the others in the class although they generally preferred each other's company. Devika could, on occasion exhibit a belligerence and edginess but in general this attitude was tempered by Debbie’s upbeat cheeriness. Certainly, the way that our society socializes girls encourages them to be more compliant and less aggressive than males. However, these girls also exhibit an assertiveness which is common to girls of Caribbean descent.

Gary, Sarah, Kevin and Shane are students who represent the dominant Canadian culture. They are white, were born here and their parents have British Isles backgrounds. They have grown up
during a time when our Canadian multicultural policy has become entrenched. These students sat with each other at the back of the classroom. They were generally at ease with other members of the class and interacted with them freely.

There were a significant number in this class that used English as their second language. I call them the "language learners". They arranged themselves in the class according to gender and cultural background. Becky, Jennifer, Kam and Joyce are ESL students from China and Hong Kong. They always sat together and shared information with each other regarding class assignments. Although they were friendly to students who ventured into their space within the classroom, they rarely interacted with other members of the class independent of each other. Unlike Debbie and Devika, these girls were never assertive and were always soft spoken.

Alfred, Jehunger, Ahmed, and Trung were the male ESL students. As with the females they sat together and shared information. Unlike the females, however, they did not seek the security of the group. They worked independently of each other in all areas of the room. Also, they would initiate contact with other members of the class. Although they were also "language learners" they were assertive and more risk-taking in
their behaviour than were the females. I interpret this difference, again, to be related to ways in which most societies socialize males and females into sex role appropriate behaviours.

The Teacher

The teacher of this classroom has a very open, liberal and an apparently inclusionary educational philosophy. Bob is a visual artist and has taught intermittently in Scarborough secondary schools over the last twenty years. He has taught at this particular school consistently for over six years. Bob came to the education field as an artist trying to supplement his income with supply teaching jobs. He's had no formal teacher education. Through conversations I've had with Bob (as a researcher in his classroom and as a colleague) I've come to understand that for him the inner world of the student is one of the most important aspects of education. Bob defines himself primarily as an artist and so he is not wedded to any particular prevailing educational philosophy. Cummins (1996) elaborates on his theoretical framework and explains that the manner in which an educator defines his/her role includes "a mind set of expectations, assumptions and goals." (p.18). All educators bring their definitions to the task of educating culturally diverse students. Role definitions are influenced by the similarity among the
general teaching population. Since Bob’s background is not typical of many teachers his approach to educating students tends to be different from most teachers.

Using Cummins’ (1996) framework, it is at this point that it is appropriate for us to turn our attention to the interpersonal space created within Bob’s classroom. It is in this interpersonal space in which we attempted to “generate knowledge” that legitimated the students’ self-worth and affirmed the relevance of their cultural identities. As a teacher, Bob is eager to foster a classroom atmosphere that is inclusionary. He tries to take into account what students bring to the educational experience; whether it be emotional baggage or diverse cultural experiences. Because of this mind set, he was eager to collaborate with me on this type of action research. We sought to overtly legitimate artworks from diverse cultures since the traditional secondary school curriculum does not do this. The projects that the students produced drew upon their own cultural backgrounds and gender. Above all, we asked the students to let us know what they wanted to do. Our major task was to find information and use techniques that would enable them to complete work that meant something to them.

The Artworks

The students worked on two projects in the second term of the
semester as part of this research. The first project asked that they investigate artwork from the Native cultures. Bob gave them background information about the culture and the various Nations. Using this knowledge the students were asked to create a piece of artwork using Native aesthetics and symbols. I observed that interpretations of the Natives' work often incorporated the aesthetics of their own culture. For example, the pieces by the students from Hong Kong had a certain delicacy of line. Similarly, the pieces from the males of Jamaican background had a sculptured graffiti-like edge to them. Although the purpose of this thesis is not to provide an exhaustive aesthetic analysis of the students' projects, a few preliminary observations of the kinds of projects produced are appropriate here. The results from the East Asian students' projects point to the influence of a legacy handed down by generations of artists in the East who have executed delicate watercolour paintings on silk and rice paper. Also the liquid quality of their line work might have been influenced by the important position that calligraphy has held as an expressive form in East Asian cultures. With regard to the pieces produced by the Jamaican males, my observations suggest that the type of "street art" approach that they took in creating their work has been influenced by their culture and their
disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Mural painting and graffiti are very popular means of visual expression in the lower income neighbourhoods of Jamaica and Metropolitan Toronto. The Jamaican males in this classroom are members of these communities.

Bob tends to use the teachable moment as a general classroom technique. As the students were working he would discuss the progress of their artwork. The students were informed about the origins of the symbols that they used. Bob also felt it was important to relay to the students the spiritual importance of the symbols and artworks that they used as reference for their projects.

The second project we assigned asked the students to investigate their own culture. Our purpose in designing this assignment was to enable the students to feel that the things they brought to school were as important as the things we taught them. This project was introduced to them after they viewed slides of multicultural artworks. We discussed the works created by those who were not from the dominant culture. It was explained that these artists wanted to make things that embraced their creativity and showed who they were as people, and this included their culture. Also shown were pieces created by women from diverse cultural backgrounds who used methods traditional to women such as
quilting, crocheting, embroidery, etc. As we viewed the slides it was explained that the definition of what is "Art" is being broadened and reinterpreted to include work by those who were formerly excluded. In short: art doesn’t have to be created by a man and come from Europe.

A trip to the library helped us introduce this project. Students were to find reference (visual and written) material for the images they would create. Initially we thought the students would find books that contained artworks from various cultures and use them as stimulation for their own artwork. We found, however, that the library’s Arts section had very few books from diverse cultures. In fact, our search resulted in less than a handful of books. We found one or two books that pertained to African Art and a single book that celebrated the Harlem Renaissance in the United States. Eventually, we resorted to using the Geography section since that was the only area that had diverse cultures represented. The books in this section were also highly visual, which enabled the students to find a copious amount of reference material for their projects.

The works that resulted from this project were exciting in their variety of media and subject matter. The projects were a reflection of the students’ own cultures in their aesthetic
choices and direct depictions of cultural icons such as pagodas and fish. Students also explored media traditional to women's creative genius; a pair of female students executed their vision through embroidery. These students, Debbie and Devika, seemed to quickly connect with the concept that women's "craft" could also be interpreted as Art. Immediately after the slide presentation, Debbie approached me and asked if she could embroider her project because it was something she used to do "back home." Debbie also wanted to know if she and Devika could work together on the piece. From the library visit Debbie and Devika discovered a lush tropical image of waterfalls and greenery. They chose the image because it reminded them of the environment in their homeland. I was informed by Debbie that Guyana was also known as the "land of the many waters". It is important to note here that Bob and I consistently endeavoured to include the students' cultural identities and expertise as sources of legitimate knowledge. The students' extensive creative output as well as the pleasant classroom tone demonstrated to us that they connected with our philosophy.

The library's lack of resources in artworks from diverse cultures that we noticed in this school would be an example of an educational structure that has reinforced the viewpoint of those
from the dominant group in this society. Certainly it is true that school libraries have restricted resources. Libraries cannot purchase without limits. And, of course, one cannot expect that each culture that exists should be represented in every section of the library. However, school libraries should, in some way, reflect the population of the school. Students begin to feel alienated from the school system if they feel that only a token effort is being made to reflect their reality. Including the artwork of merely a single non-European culture in the Arts section of the school library does not help to affirm the identities of students who attend a school as culturally diverse as this one.

The Collaborative Classroom

Cummins' (1996) framework is centred around the discussion of collaborative and coercive power relations. At the most immediate level the teacher I observed for this study promotes collaboration as an important method of delivering the curriculum. Students who have completed their assignments are encouraged to consult with other students about projects that are in progress. When students become aware that they are allowed to collaborate they use this method as a learning tool. I witnessed this awareness being played out in the decisions that students made regarding
their learning. Earlier, during the slide presentation it was discussed with the students that women traditionally collaborated with each other when they created quilts. It was because of this discussion and the collaborative atmosphere that already existed in the classroom, that Debbie and Devika decided to work together in designing and executing their assignment using the medium of embroidery. The belief that an art piece was exclusively owned by a single person was not promoted by Bob or myself. We encouraged students to work together in designing and completing their artwork. In this way a classroom atmosphere was fostered in which there was sharing and collaboration.

This writer has also interpreted collaboration within Cummins' (1996) framework to mean that knowledge is shared and validated. Collaboration also essentially means that we validate the expertise of many cultures and both genders. When we promote coercive power relations we encourage the notion that some cultures' (or gender's) knowledge are more important than others. Within any classroom it is important to encourage a kind of cross fertilisation amongst students. The Arts curriculum will promote cultural and gender understanding when it expands students' visual literacy by including the aesthetic philosophy of those from non-dominant groups. In this study we encouraged students to examine
the importance of the Arts to their own identities and to observe the importance of Art to others who are unlike themselves.

Overall, a general description of this classroom is that it is one in which power relations between student and teacher were collaborative instead of coercive. There were a few instances, however, where Bob didn't listen to what students were actually saying about the meaning and purpose of their work and its meaning within their culture. Instead he would try to impose his own interpretation of their culture and the purpose of art within it. This behaviour could be a natural by-product of the normal student-teacher relationship. It could also be another example of a missionary mentality which "allows" non-dominant groups to be empowered only as members of the dominant group see it. Whatever the reason it exemplifies Cummins' (1996, p.18) assertion that: "micro-interactions between educators, students and communities are never neutral: in varying degrees, they either reinforce coercive relationships of power or promote relationships of power." Further analysis of this data will no doubt yield insights regarding policy recommendations that would initiate multicultural arts education programs in schools. Such policy recommendations could benefit all subject areas, not only the Arts.
When we look at the deep structure of curriculum we must recognize that it is important to examine what we teach students and also to critically analyse what knowledge we are legitimizing. We need to view the students' curriculum in a holistic manner and in so doing we will come to see that societal, political and historical forces impact on the ways in which students can access learning.
CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

After reviewing the results of the data, evidence relating to the initial research questions has emerged. The major question was: What types of artworks within a multicultural classroom do students produce and why?

The data gathered through photographs and classroom observations have shown that students produce artworks that are:

- Concrete visual symbols of their cultural heritage (fig. 4), (fig 5)
- Memories of their homeland (fig. 6), (fig 7)
- Representations of their culture as tied to a sense of family and belonging (fig. 8)
- Art works that incorporate the aesthetic traditions of their cultural background (fig. 9)

The answer to the Why? for the above question has emerged through analysis of students’ responses to surveys, classroom discussions, focus groups as well as short descriptive paragraphs written by students.

What the majority of students in the class indicated was that issues of cultural and personal identity and sense of self have informed their decisions in the types of artworks that they chose
Trung chose to recreate a meticulous architectural drawing of a Pagoda because as a practicing Buddhist himself he felt it was a "holy object" that represents him and his culture.
Figure 5. Keith

Keith chose symbols that depict his Irish Catholic and Protestant mix. Keith wrote that he would like to go to Ireland someday to trace his heritage.
Tavia and Adrian collaborated on this montage that incorporated symbols that reminded them of things they remembered from Jamaica. The montage depicts a graffiti like image Bob Marley, the reggae singer, the Jamaican Flag, a humming bird and a Ackee plant - the Jamaican national fruit that grows widely on the island.
Debbie and Devika created this tapestry after they viewed a picture from a book that reminded them of "back home". They said it reminded them of Guyana which is also known as the "land of many waters"
Figure 8. Ahmed

Ahmed used a reference from a graphic arts book to create this Unicorn which represented a story told to him when he was a child in Somalia.
Kam explained that the carp is an important aesthetic piece in Chinese culture and that many people believe that the fish are a piece of art. Kam wrote that during the Chinese New Year people hang pictures of carp on their walls to bring happiness.
to create and their aesthetic choices. Students also reported that representing their cultural heritage was very important in creating their artwork.

One student, Ahmed, exemplifies how familial and cultural circumstances determined the piece he chose to execute. Ahmed's family came to Canada because of war torn circumstances in Somalia. During a work period in class he told me that there wasn’t a lot of art existing in Somalia and what did exist was "dark". His perceptions may have to do with the fact that he left Somalia very young, in an environment of civil unrest. He drew a Unicorn as a representation of his culture. He wrote a short paragraph about his picture. In it he writes:

My mother told me many things about the unicorn. She told me that it's a peaceful creature that lived before time... She said that it lived in peace but humans thought it evil and they killed all of them. My mother said that she will die happy but I didn't like when she said that but I would say the same thing.

In response to the question: How are culture and ethnicity related to arts education? the data from classroom participant observations have led to the following conclusion: that the ethnicity of teachers in some way will matter to students. As a
visible minority teacher in a school of predominately white teachers, students often ask me where I’m from or other details about my cultural background. Similarly as a participant observer in this research I was asked similar questions by students while conducting this research. During one class as students were filling out their entry surveys I was circulating throughout the class and I asked a small group of Caribbean males if they understood the question that asked what was their cultural background. Initially they resisted answering me in a type of game playing way. Finally, one wrote "Jamaican", another "African". I believe they did this as a political statement and because they wanted to see what my reaction would be.

It has been my experience that students who feel embattled by the system test minority teachers from their own culture to see if they are "sell-outs". They want to see if the teacher is operating for the system or has he/she maintained his/her integrity as a member of his/her culture group. Because many minority teachers are called upon to share parts of themselves in this way, attempting to remain neutral as a generic teacher is often inadequate. This will help to label that teacher as someone who wants to hide away from his/her background.

An example of a situation during this research in which I was
asked to share of myself occurred during a focus group after I had posed the question if culture is part of expressing themselves in art. After the students responded, one of the students (of my cultural background) asked me to answer the question. I was a bit surprised but I shared with the group the multi-racial composition of my heritage and as a hyphenated Canadian how difficult it sometimes was for me to choose what part of myself I want to show in my art. In general I let them know about the multiplicity of things that make me the person that I am.

As a teacher from the dominant culture in a multicultural classroom I noticed that Bob did not hesitate to take risks to reveal himself. During a class he commented that as a Canadian it was difficult for him to put down an identity. He told them he often wondered, "What am I?" As an arts educator who is attempting to teach the aesthetic traditions of another culture he would often talk about the history and spiritual importance of symbols of that culture. I also found that he did not judge the aesthetic choices made by students who were attempting to depict their own culture. What he did was to use his technical skills to facilitate their aesthetic choices.

Researcher Sonia Nieto (1997, personal interview) discussed that with me:
While it is true that students make a connection with teachers of their own background if that group is severely underrepresented in schools [as I have also discussed above], however this doesn't mean that white teachers should teach white kids and black teachers should teach black kids. If there is an engagement and rapport between teacher and student it often has a lot to do with the attitude of the teacher and a lot of those things can be learned. It means teachers have to take risks; putting themselves in the position of the learner, learning from kids...

The results of the focus groups suggest that students bring to their perceptions of art, aesthetic preferences that are rooted in the visual arts traditions of their cultural background. Although the students were exposed to some art works that sought to broaden their frame of reference, not all of the students could make the shift from the stereotypical norm. These reactions were noted in students from dominant and minority cultures. To my mind the above observations suggest that multicultural arts education is for all students and needs to be presented consistently throughout their program in order to battle stereotypical views that may become entrenched at an early age. Likewise, educators must take into account the aesthetic language
that diverse students bring to the arts so that assumptions that are being made by educators and learners are continually challenged.

I believe that the positive learning environment that existed in this classroom existed because Bob and I, arts educators of different cultures, took risks with the students and the standard arts curriculum.

Another research question was: How can teachers integrate multi-cultural arts across the curriculum to foster positive self esteem in minority (and dominant culture) students?

In reviewing the design of the two multi-cultural art projects and the students’ response to two projects I find that integration can be successful if teachers look at the totality of the creative process. In this visual arts course when we presented the Native arts unit we went beyond aesthetics. Instead, we included religion, environment and cultural history through one on one or small group discussions that occurred spontaneously as the students worked through their projects.

Certainly, we cannot contend that we enabled the students to experience the act of creation as the natives themselves do but we approached the process of learning in a holistic manner that actively sought not to trivialize the artwork through the use of
symbols as gimmicks.

Evidence that we achieved our aim with the majority of students was shown in students' comments in their exit surveys. Students identified the Native culture as a group whose artwork they studied. Even though some of the students may not have liked it as art (as was found in the second focus group) they recognized it as art - not as they had known it but art as is experienced by those who produced it.

The second project that asked that students investigate the art of their own culture was also holistic because our focus was to affirm what the students brought with them as people to school - not only what we as teachers within the institution could give them. This project took into account and developed their past and present histories, memories, aesthetic choices, as tied to a sense of family and belonging. Students reported in their surveys many positive emotions related to the arts process. They also identified self-expression and cultural development as reasons that drive individuals to pursue the arts. These insights point to the importance of multicultural arts in developing the inner self which is tied to self esteem.

Another research question was: How can multi-cultural arts education build self esteem in the basic level adolescent student?
This builds on and parallels the above discussion. Basic level students have unique needs because they face many negatives in their lives in terms of poor scholastic achievement, disruptive family lives, behavioral concerns and so on. What this type of arts education does is to tap into a positive place within these students. They are safe to investigate questions about themselves such as: What are the facets of my culture that I do not know? Who am I within this culture? What am I? What is my culture? Schaffer's (1991) research that dealt with the impact of multicultural art lessons on the self-concept of elementary students supports my assertions. She found that there was growth in the students' pride and self esteem after participating in multicultural art lessons. Nieto, (1997 interview) however, cautions that we should not look at the issue of multicultural education and self-esteem in a simplistic and causal way. She contends that we do not raise student's self-esteem by dropping in a few ethnic lessons. We have to help students from subordinated and dominant groups to have a realistic view of the world.

I contend that students will develop the "realistic view" that Nieto mentions if we view their education in a holistic manner that takes into account their total selves.
The Participatory Curriculum

Ettinger and Hoffman's (1990) research depicts a collaborative and integrated curriculum model similar to the one created in this multicultural arts research. The social science of Women's Studies was blended with the Visual Arts. The students in the course had backgrounds in the Visual Arts and the Social Sciences. The primary project for the course asked the students to design and construct a quilt as a group. The researchers used the quilt making experience as a metaphor for what they call "the participatory curriculum". The approach taken by Ettinger and Hoffman (1990) is similar to the design of the research discussed in this thesis, because it includes the domestic arts as part of the students' creative experience; but most importantly it supports collaborative classroom environments.

The findings from Ettinger and Hoffman's (1990) study parallel experiences from the multicultural arts research that has been examined here and it also touches on key aspects of Cummins' (1996) conceptual framework which has been discussed earlier. The researchers' findings complement Cummins' (1996) description of "educator role definitions" when they suggest that teachers should rethink their role as expert and teacher; rather they should move to a mind-set in which they develop "expert
participation rather than expert domination of programmatic development." (Jones 1988, p.48 as cited in Ettinger and Hoffman, 1990). These are roles that Bob and I chose for ourselves during our research.

Ettinger and Hoffman (1990) also discovered that "micro-interactions" are important in classrooms based on collaboration. They found that small classes or smaller groupings within larger classes fostered trust amongst students and therefore a collaborative atmosphere developed. Small groups encourage the formation of positive "interpersonal spaces" between students and teachers. I believe it is important to keep the physical and personal spaces in classrooms fluid so that students feel free to participate. During our multicultural arts research, Bob and I did not disturb the natural physical and personal spaces that students established for themselves in the classroom as individuals and as small groups. I believe this encouraged the positive classroom atmosphere that developed.

The ways in which teachers "generate knowledge" is also addressed by Ettinger and Hoffman(1990). They found that teachers will have to sacrifice some of their course content when they decide to build a classroom based on collaboration. However, they also found that students' growth in developing ownership for their
learning and creating will compensate for the loss of content. As students developed ownership, they were also encouraged to develop and "negotiate identities" as in Cummins' (1996) framework. The experiences of students are described by Ettinger and Hoffman (1990) when they report that the curriculum allowed "students to interpret and give form to their experience both verbally and visually. In addition they learned to value diverse points of view." (p.47). The researchers' above findings are amongst the goals of my research. I believe that the results of Ettinger and Hoffman's study complement and support my findings.

Recommendations for Future Research

The multicultural arts research discussed in his thesis has touched upon the differences between males and females in the types of artwork that is deemed legitimate according to their gender. The creation of the embroidered tapestry by two females in this visual arts class indicates that as educators we can begin to broaden students' concept of art by simply dissolving barriers within classrooms of what separates art, craft, and women's work. Future research could recreate the experience of making a piece of art using the traditional methods of women's craft (i.e. knitting, quilting, embroidery, etc.) If this research was implemented using a more stable group of high school students in which issues
of attendance were not a concern it could further yield illuminating results. We could determine:

- What types of artworks can be created using domestic art forms.
- If males and females create different types of art using domestic art forms.
- How culture and gender intersect to influence the types of artworks that are produced when using domestic art forms.

With regard to the primary orientation of the current research that centres on multicultural arts education, the current study could be repeated using participants in a destreamed classroom. Also, the study should be implemented using a full semester or school year in order that the full impact of inclusionary classroom strategies could be observed and measured from start to finish. Teachers could develop strategies that work with the basic level student that use intuition and self exploration. Higher functioning students could be encouraged to work at this level as well, but also to translate and combine various aesthetics norms to create something truly unique that represents their individuality.

Using a mixed ability class in recreating this multicultural
research could be very exciting because learners with differing abilities would have access to each other's expertise; and with this opportunity, they would be encouraged to expand the parameters of their visual literacy. Teachers who participated in such action research would also benefit in developing a view of students that is more holistic. They would be less restricted by the artificial definitions of our educational structures.

**Significance of this study**

**Contributions to present knowledge in education**

This study begins to broaden the knowledge of how multicultural philosophy can be integrated throughout the curriculum. Also, it expands the meaning of holistic education. Teaching the whole student includes understanding how thoughts, feelings, and emotions are tied to the students' cultural background. Currently in education we need to understand that the ways in which we perceive things are tied to our cultural assumptions. When we are from the dominant culture we take for granted that our perceptions are natural and universal. We need to understand that they are not and adjust our curriculum so that we are flexible to the perceptions of others.

**Contribution to present knowledge in arts education.**

It is planned that in the future this study will be the first
in a series of other studies to be done by the researcher that integrate multicultural arts into subject areas other than visual arts. This study encourages other arts educators to devise ways of integrating inclusion into all arts courses in light of the findings. This study points to gaps and areas of need in the arts curriculum. Possible strategies and tools to integrate multiculturalism into other arts areas are devised by acknowledging students' voices. It is hoped that this investigation will encourage students to value the creative process of their own cultural group as well as those of others.
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APPENDIX

Transcription of Interview with Sonia Nieto, December 1997 at the School of Education, University of Massachusetts

McCurdy-Fagan: The first question I am going to ask you is, Do you believe there is a connection between multicultural education and self esteem in students?

Nieto: I think that the issue of self esteem has too often been looked at as either superficial or in too much of a causal way. I think it's much more complex. For example, I think it's difficult to talk about, or it's impossible to talk about self esteem without looking at society structures, without looking at school structures; policies and practices, and we often look at the child as this person who comes to us with a particular self esteem as if it just came out of nowhere and so I think that just what we need to do, we need to say how did the child develop this self esteem. And the second thing that perhaps related is that self esteem is not a unitary concept it's not children feel bad or good about themselves in general terms, I think that it has to do with specifics. That is, you know, I might not have great
self esteem in science but, you know, in language I have
tremendous self esteem. So it depends on what area you are
talking about. And so I think that if we do look at self esteem,
and I think it is an important issue, that we need to look at it
as a very complex issue. As, for example, the children don't
come to school, many children don't come to school with negative
self esteem off the bat. I think that a lot kids come to school
feeling pretty good about themselves, pretty okay within their
family, the community and the school and their self esteem is
trampled in a lot of ways by what happens in school. And so, or
you know the opposite could also happen. So rather than looking
at kids as bearers of self esteem we need to look at what schools
do to create poor self esteem, to create good self esteem and how
we can improve that. So to answer this question in a complicated
way, yes, I think that multicultural cultural education is
implicated in self esteem but that's it not a very simple matter
of just saying give them multicultural education and they will
feel good about themselves. So I think it is a lot more
difficult and a lot more complicated than that and that's why for
example, I think it's just too romantic or unrealistic. So this
is why I have a problem with what I think of simplistic attempts
at raising self esteem of kids by having, you know....

Oh so, you know, these attempts at trying to raise self esteem in kids by having a few ethnic heroes. I think it is a wrong headed notion. You don't make kids feel good about themselves by talking about the glories of the past necessarily or by talking about the marvelous heroes that they had or the kings and queens that they had and I don't think that will do it. I think that they would feel better about themselves and yes they are grounded in their own history and their sense of connection with that and a sense that there was something positive and good about it. And also something human about it. But also by simply, working on the type of skills that kids need to live in this world and that you need to do both. You need to get them to have a realistic sense of themselves and their role in the world and so on but also to learn to develop confidence they need to live in this world and I'm talking about all kids. And I think given our experience of education most of it has been monocultural education so that kids who are from the dominant culture also have a very realistic view of their role in the world and of their place in the world. They see themselves and their own communities as inordinately important as being the only
ones who make history whereas other kids who come from more subordinated communities feel that they don't have any makers of history or that they don't have anything to be proud of. So I think both need to develop a more realistic view of our reality.

McCurdy-Fagan: Yes, and I agree with you because when I taught the Black Studies course, well, it was a big thing in Ontario schools because there is not any real curriculum guideline. There was one written but I think they wrote it because they felt they had to. When the course was allowed in our school there was a lot of gossip and strange questions. Even as I taught it I didn't think the kids, especially our kids, who had problems with memorization and things like that. I didn't think they were going to get a lot out of it, I taught it with somebody else who is also black and she shared another view of it but I didn't think they were going to get a lot from memorizing who invented this and that. What difference does it make? And so it was a really difficult approach to teaching a type of course like that because you need to teach it with somebody that has the same philosophy and then it's hard to explain that, I don't know how, how to concretely explain that to administration that it has more
to do with just, who invented these things and then it also has more to do with just making kids into wild-eyed nationalists or radicals. In the '70's and 60's we did that so lets do something else now.

Nieto: Yes, I think that, ...you know, and I get a little worried when I see a curriculum that has ... that use adjectives like glorious or mighty or, you know, all of these adjectives to describe the past. Any group of people...I think many of us have been criticizing that in the dominant Western World. So are we just going to replicate the same thing? So that's not going to help kids with their self esteem I think a good solid realistic grounding in their own experience and cultural history along with that of many others is really important.

McCurdy-Fagan: Do you believe that there is a connection between the ethnicity of the teacher and the student response to education or academic achievement or rapport in the classroom?

Nieto: Yes I do. But I don't think, that doesn't mean that I
believe that black kids should have black teachers and Latino kids should have Latino teachers and so on. But I think that there is a connection that kids make particularly if they are underrepresented in terms of the staff in the school. There is a special connection with teachers of their own background. But, see I don't think that those teachers, whatever background they happen to be, be it Black, Latino, Asian, Indigenous...that it should just be their responsibility to teach kids of their own background. I think that they should be teaching kids of all backgrounds. Just like white teachers should be teaching kids of all backgrounds. And that if there is a particular rapport and engagement between teachers and students of the same background, I think it had to do with the attitudes and behaviors on the part of the teacher and that a lot of those things can be learned. But I think that to say....that it means that you have to have kids be taught by teachers of the same background is to not understand the power of education. Because all teachers can learn to be effective teachers of African-American kids and Puerto Rican children and Japanese-American children and so on. But it does take a lot of risks on the part of teachers. It does mean putting yourself in the position of the learner, it does
mean learning from kids, it does mean learning about differences. All those things can be very difficult. You know, so it is easy for me to teach Puerto Rican kids for example, or it might be easier to teach Puerto Rican kids, or I might understand them a little better than I might understand Iranian kids, for example. But that can become too comfortable also. I think that we all need to get a little bit out of our own limited kind of experience...and reach out. So I think that there is something special that goes on but I think that what it means, what the implication really is that schools need to do whatever they can to diversify their staff. Not so that every Black kid has a Black teacher, but that all the kids in the school no matter what their background sees and interacts with Black teachers and any other teachers of any other background and so they have that kind of skill.

McCurdy-Fagan: Have you noticed---one thing I've noticed....the way the schools in Ontario....actually I should say Metropolitan Toronto because that's where I taught. They're making an attempt to diversify their staff. I don't know if you've noticed it here but in a way I noticed, there was a backlash against minority
teachers in schools because, one, perhaps certain teachers from the dominant culture felt they didn't receive their positions fairly, or secondly that if there was a rapport that a minority teacher would have with a minority student it viewed suspiciously by some teachers of the dominant culture.

Nieto: Um....Yeah, this is where it becomes so clear that education is political, that is, that you need to understand it within a socio-political context. That you really can't take it out of that context. Um....I've seen it a lot with bilingual teachers. Teachers who,...umm...in fact I ought to say that if it weren't for bilingual education within the Northeast U.S....uhm...if bilingual education were to be done away with tomorrow, we'd have such a minute number of Puerto Rican teachers in schools....

McCurdy-Fagan: (laughs)....

Nieto: Because most of them are in bilingual classrooms.

McCurdy-Fagan: Oh! Really?
Nieto: You understand? So, in fact, I don't know, probably for bilingual teacher - for every one hundred bilingual teachers - there is two or threeLatinas or Latinos, let's say, not limited to Puerto Ricans, who are in non-bilingual classrooms.

McCurdy-Fagan: Oh wow!

Nieto: Yeah there are very few, I don't know the exact number, but there are very very few. And then many of the others teach Spanish as a second language.

McCurdy-Fagan: Yeah, to the school in general.

Nieto: Right. So I think that one of the things that happens is that it is the nature of the programs, that bilingual programs are often second class programs, that teachers become second class citizens and if you go into teachers rooms you see the bilingual teachers sitting at one table, all the other teachers sitting at another table or in their own clique and so I think that there is....it's a different kind of situation from what you mentioned. I don't think that most of the teachers here feel
that the bilingual teachers didn't get their jobs fairly, although a lot of teachers don't support bilingual education. So they have negative views about the program. They don't associate with the teachers. The programs are often in the basement or really shut off from the rest of the school. The kids don't interact, the teachers don't interact. So...I've noticed things like that.

McCurdy-Fagan: Can you think of any types of integrated multicultural programs that you've found to be successful or ones that have been unsuccessful?

Nieto: Uhm...I can't quote any particular schools that I would say are the epitome of what a successful multicultural school should look like. I've written an article, I'll give you a copy of it, called "Beyond Tolerance" and in that article I develop scenarios of schools that have different levels of support for multicultural education. Let's say an ideal...that's not real...those are not real schools, but that would give you an idea of levels of support that are out there. But I think that there have been very few schools that I know of that have really
taken on the multicultural challenge. That said this is a multicultural school and we're going to do it. Now, I recently came back from Minneapolis and I was a speaker at the Anderson Schools of Many Voices. It is one big school but they have two smaller schools within them. And that school is definitely organizing a multicultural school. They have a multicultural staff. They have a multicultural approach to the materials that they've developed. It's the philosophy that they use. But I don't know what you mean by successful. Do you mean kids learning better? I don't know. Are kids getting along better? I assume that they are, but I don't think that that's the ultimate test. I think that the ultimate test is when all kids learn to learn at the very highest potential and I don't know if that's true or not true.

McCurdy-Fagan: So that would be something difficult to measure, you think?

Nieto: Well, you know, you can measure it with tests but I don't hold much store in tests. I think that too many times kids who don't do well on tests might be very bright kids and that often
happens with kids of color and particularly with kids.... I think that more than race and ethnicity it has to do with social class issues. With kids from working class and poor families haven't had the kid of exposure, training, education and so on about taking tests and I think it's also cultural, you know, there are structures that get in the way of tests, including timing tests and so on. So I think that testing is problematic. I think that portfolios are certainly a way to go. But that's also a complicated issue. It's very labor intensive. Actually I'm writing a book about this. I'm writing a book about multicultural education. I think the bottom line has to be are students learning? It's the most important thing, and to achieve at the very highest level that they can. Which is not to say that I am dismissing other very important issues in multicultural education like how kids get along or whether they like one another. Those things are important but kids can really like each other and get along and still some will go on to Harvard and others will go on to the factories. And you know that some of that has to do with the schooling that they had. So I'm concerned about tests and yet I think we need something to determine how well students are doing in school. But
standardized tests, I don't think standardized tests are going to do it.

McCurdy-Fagan: I've noticed testing is very popular in the school system over here. There are standardized tests for getting into universities here and standardized tests for getting into graduate school. And I think within schools here kids are tested a lot.

Nieto: Here at the School of Education at U.Mass., we have done away with that requirement. But people who apply rather take the GRE test because they are applying elsewhere

McCurdy-Fagan: I often wonder how American Universities feel about how other universities like Canadian Universities, how they pick their candidates. Do they think that we're hampered because we don't have tests in Canada? I'm not sure.

Nieto: I don't know if people have ever thought about it because we're so insular here that we don't even think about those things. I do think, though, what most people don't realize is
that testing is a huge, huge multi-million dollar industry. And so it is to their benefit to push testing and to make the case that without tests you simply cannot make decisions about education, about anything! And that's really a shame. Because I think that those decisions can be made in other ways. The tests give you a score it doesn't tell you too much about a person. You know, the more research is done, the more that the appropriateness of tests comes into question. Take the SAT for example, that's the test that you take before you go into university. It doesn't really determine how well students go through once they are at the university. Because students with very high scores and very low scores it doesn't really correlate with their success.

McCurdy-Fagan: Well, that's interesting. Very interesting. Actually with the testing thing. That's one thing I noticed with teaching basic level kids. They're really bad at tests. I didn't give a lot of tests. I did a lot of other things and they did better.

Nieto: The only problem, then, though it's such a dilemma is
that they didn't have experience with tests. And so then they go on and they're tested. So if everybody felt like you did it would be fine. That's why it's such a dilemma....

McCurdy-Fagan: So...what, if any, systemic types of changes would be necessary to effect a good multicultural curriculum?

Nieto: Well, I want to broaden it from curriculum.

McCurdy-Fagan: Okay.

Nieto: And I think you also mean it broader than curriculum also. Everything that goes on in schools. I have come to the conclusion that if you really want to transform schools it has to be a process of personal change and institutional change and changing the way that we work with our colleagues and teaching as a collective endeavor as well. And I think one without the other two won't get the job done. So when I say personal change or transformation what I mean is teachers' attitudes and beliefs and behaviors and who they think are capable and who deserves the
best education and so on. And by institutions I mean all those policies in schools and philosophies of education that boards of education have that favor some kids over others. Whether it is tracking or testing or all of those. As a teacher I could have a wonderful rapport with my students and I could love them and I could teach them to the best of my ability but if they're still tracked and if they're still tested and if there are still all these inequities. If they have fewer books than kids in other schools have, they don't get as much funding, the teachers in my school are not as well trained as teachers in more affluent schools, you know, and all the way down the line. Then my teaching, my touch, won't really transform the process of education. And then the third thing has to do with looking very differently at how we work with our colleagues. Because I think that teaching has too often been seen as a very solitary endeavor. That you close the door and do anything you want to in the classroom. For some people that might result in very fine teaching. But I think that the result of that kind of attitude is that teachers either get burned out or get cynical or become a kind of charismatic pied piper type of figure and I don't think that any of those are good models for teaching. I think that the
best models for teaching are working with colleagues, or trying to make connections with colleagues so that we make changes not only in individual classrooms but outside as well.

McCurdy-Fagan: So...uhm...I sense that you feel that you can't isolate systemic changes or personal rapport changes, that they have to work together.

Nieto: Yes. Right. I think that they have to work together because I've seen cases where you try one but it doesn't really make change all the way. You know, I could really change my attitude or behavior. I can really believe at the bottom of my heart that all children are capable of learning but if my school is tracked, I can't put that belief in the classroom. In the same way that if I were in another school where I am allowed to put those beliefs into effect. On the other hand I've seen schools, or entire systems, where a systemic change is made but no change really happens in the attitudes of the teachers. For example, a school might decide that it wants to de-track and I would see that as a positive thing but if teachers don't de-track their minds or administrators don't de-track, then what good will
it do? You will find a way....and you will see this when you walk into classrooms of teachers re-tracking in their own classrooms.

McCurdy-Fagan: Yeah...And that was the second school I taught at. Supposedly they were getting rid of tracking in high school. I taught a grade nine class that was not tracked. Well I noticed it with the other teachers how they still wanted to track.

Nieto: Sure.

McCurdy-Fagan: And it had been my experience teaching basic level kids that you still have high, medium and low within basic level. So it was interesting that uhm....many teachers still do feel uncomfortable without tracking, that security blanket of having tracking....

Nieto: I think it has to do with transforming our own attitudes.

End of Interview.