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Exploring Whiteness and its Implications for Art Education

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I ask white art educators to consider race and racial identity as important aspects in education. Based on teaching experience and the study of theory in contemporary art and social science, my research indicates that pre-service and practising teachers may need to re-examine their cultural assumptions and identify their racial bias and the ways these may impact on their teaching practice. For white teachers, that involves understanding the concept of whiteness and white privilege.

I argue that it is especially important for teachers to consider their racial identity when working with a culturally and racially diverse student population. Through analysis and discussion of social theories concerning whiteness, multiculturalism, and education, I make recommendations for the adoption of an anti-racist approach in teaching art.

I conclude by suggesting that training programs should assist teachers in understanding how their values and assumptions may be informed by race, and how unexamined beliefs can affect their selection in curriculum content, pedagogical approach and impact on student performance.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis responds to the idea that white individuals may have difficulty in acknowledging and appreciating their position of relative privilege in our society's racial order. It is my experience that many white people feel they have no racialized identity or assume their whiteness to be reflective of a universal experience. Consequently, white people may (1) fail to consider their whiteness as influencing the way they see and experience the world and, (2) lack understanding of (racial) perspectives other than their own.

In this thesis, I reflect on my personal experiences abroad and in academia that gradually lead me to explore the topic of whiteness. I discuss theories related to whiteness and examine ways of encouraging white individuals to acknowledge their white privilege. I argue that white teachers may need to be aware of the implications of their racial identity particularly when teaching in multicultural and multiracial contexts.

I recommend that teachers be trained with the skills and understanding required to address race-related issues in the classroom, and I demonstrate how this is relevant to art education. I show that through the careful selection and presentation of racial imagery, art teachers can provide students with opportunities to critically examine concepts of race in popular culture and art.

ORIGINS OF RESEARCH

I grew up as an immigrant in Canada, and I was aware of the differences that set me apart from those I considered to be 'real Canadians'. Although, I was deeply connected to my country of origin, and was proud of a heritage that was Middle-Eastern, North African, and East-European, I struggled with some insecurities about the way I did not look or the things we did not have. I envied the girls at school, for example, who had blonde hair, blue eyes and pretty Anglo-Saxon names.

At school, I learned that the English and French founded Canada. It was the story of Cartier and Champlain, the Plains of Abraham, and Upper and Lower Canada. I was never taught about the contributions of Chinese Canadians who built the Canadian railway system. I was never taught about the Indian Act, nor residential schooling for Aboriginal children, nor that Black slavery was practised in Canada. If we were learning about racism as a topic in class, it always involved a questioning of how racial discrimination impacted on people of colour. The question of whether white people benefited in some ways from racism was never addressed.

During my undergraduate years at a French language university in Montreal, I worked with 'high risk' youth in the economically disadvantaged and predominately Francophone district of Hochelaga-Maisonneuve, and soon after at a woman's centre that advocated the rights of migrant domestic workers.

In both my school and work environments, as 'progressive' as they were, I still stood out amongst my peers as 'la p'tite Juif' (little Jewess). Even when intended with humour and affection, being regarded as "la p'tite Juif" reinforced my sense of feeling marginalised as a Jew and, in this context, outside the norms of a culture that was predominately French Quebecois or 'pur laine' (a French colloquialism meaning pure wool, and referring to individuals of 'pure' colonial French descent).

Like many other minority groups, Jews have learned that having white skin does not always shield against racism.¹ Although some white Jews may be able to 'pass' for 'the norm' in terms of skin colour, they may still be marginalised because of their perceived 'differences' in terms of culture and religion, for example. The ambiguity and contradictory nature of a white Jewish identity in the North American context results in, what Train (2000) describes as, " the experience of difference and sameness simultaneously, or the interwoven experience of white privilege and Jewish experience" (p.136).

¹Jews in Canada have faced discrimination in areas such as housing, education, business, as well as through government policies that, for example, virtually denied entry to Jewish refugees during the Nazi era. Up until the 1960s, McGill University, for instance, used quotas to restrict the number of Jewish students, and imposed higher academic admission standards for Jewish applicants (Bauer, 2001).

There were a few influences and experiences in my early twenties that gradually moved me toward understanding the concept of whiteness² and recognizing how as a Jewish woman, I could be discriminated against, while as a white woman I could be privileged.

Among the influences were the writings of feminist authors such as bell hooks (1984) and Audre Lorde (1984) who argued against the absence of a critical analysis of race, and the lack of representations of multi-racial perspectives within mainstream feminism. These authors challenged the popular concept of a 'global sisterhood' which, in both their views, denied the divisions amongst women in areas such as race³ or class privilege.

Recognizing those divisions was part of my learning when I travelled to Costa Rica as part of a women's exchange project in social work, and a few years later, to Mali where I worked on an educational and cross-cultural initiative.⁴

In Costa Rica, a group of rural women welcomed my Canadian colleagues and me into their homes. Their homes were built precariously and illegally on vacant land owned by an American fruit company. For several days, my colleagues and I worked alongside

² I refer to 'whiteness' as a marking of difference situated within a system of racism and constructed by factors other than, but not excluding, the evaluation of skin colour. See Appendix A for a more detailed definition.

³ I use the term 'race' as a social construct. As Roediger (1994) argues, "Race is given meaning through the agency of human beings in concrete historical and social contexts, and is not a biological or natural category"(p.2).

⁴For an edited version of a story of my experience in Mali written in 1998, see Appendix B.

some of the women in a nearby clothing factory cutting loose threads from the seams of men's' slacks.

I found the work disheartening. It was repetitive, tedious and demanded long hours. For the women it provided much needed income. The poverty rate in the region was high. The economic gap between the women and myself was vast, and demonstrated that I did get more than my fair share in terms of material benefits.

A significant part of my training for working abroad involved learning about the history and effects of European colonization in Central America and Africa, and how concepts of white dominance and the subordination of peoples of colour developed.⁵ Issues related to cultural sensitivity and adaptability were emphasized. White people, I was told, had not always acted with great respect to the local cultures they were working with. A false sense of (racial and cultural) superiority was viewed as characteristic of many whites who had the desire to 'better the world'.⁶

My training and experiences abroad moved me to question my values, behaviour and cultural norms as a white woman living in Canada. I began to be more conscious of

⁵During the late nineteenth century anthropologists introduced an 'evolutionary' or 'developmental' view of culture in which colonized peoples were categorized as 'savage', 'barbarian' or 'civilized' . This view of culture served to justify European expansionism, slavery and the exploitation of people of colour (Shweder, 2002).

⁶This may be, in part, because people from the Western world are influenced by the negative stereotype that the Western media has projected of the developing world with images of famine, disaster and dependency on Western aid. The Western world is portrayed as giving while there is little or no recognition for the ways it benefit from maintaining an unbalanced relationship to the developing countries.

how my identity in terms of race, gender and class, for example, influenced the way I perceived cultures other than my own.

It was during my years as a graduate student at Concordia University that I began to uncover the significance of race-related issues in art and education. This was primarily as a result of some experiences that I had that same year. The following three experiences were pivotal: A professor's presentation of his collection of Black memorabilia, the works of aboriginal artist Lawrence Yuxweluptan⁷, and Charmaine Nelson's exhibition entitled, "Through An-Other's Eyes: White Canadian Artists-Black Female Subjects".

At that time, I was also influenced by the concept of 'situated knowledge' whereby viewers are urged to locate their own viewing position and to acknowledge the social identities and interests which inform their readings (Stephenson, 1997). I became concerned with the questions of how my location as a white woman affected my understanding of art⁸, and how I could encourage students to recognize their own viewing position.

⁷Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptan is a painter and photographer from the Salish Community in Northern British Columbia. His works explore Canadian political, environmental and cultural issues and comment on the marginalized status of Aboriginal works in Canadian culture. In 2001, I worked as a guide for an exhibition of his works. The exhibition was entitled "Colour Zone" and was held at the Liane and Danny Taran Gallery at the Saidye Bronfman Centre for the Arts in Montreal.

⁸ I explore this question in my paper entitled Power and Privilege (1999) by examining how my own cultural biases influence my presentation of non-EuroAmerican cultural art forms in my teaching practice.

With the intention of gaining some understanding on these issues, I conducted an activity with graduate students at Concordia's Art Education Department. Inspired by McIntosh's (1989) writings, I asked students to list the privileges that they gained in their daily lives from being white. Most of them had difficulty responding. I asked students to consider why they had difficulty responding, but no one spoke.

Talking about white privilege is a way of discussing racism and discussing racism may be uncomfortable. I thought that if I understand the source of this discomfort, I might be better equipped to engage individuals in a process of self-examination. And so, I attempted to learn why white individuals may find it difficult to talk about racism, see their 'whiteness', and acknowledge their white privilege.

UNDERSTANDING WHITENESS

It is a sign of privilege to have the freedom not to think about racism or ponder your location in the racial order.

Peta Stephenson (1997, p.5)

In our predominately white society, being white often implies living with little or no consciousness of a white racialized identity. This sense of being unmarked racially is apparent in many whites who believe, as Dyer (1997) points out "that whiteness is nothing in particular, that white culture and identity have, as it were, no content" (p.44). In her study on white identity, Frankenberg (1993) remarks how the white women she interviewed commonly expressed "that they did not have a culture, distinctive identity, or colour..." (p.197).

In not recognizing their racial identity, some whites may feel that race is not their issue, and that racism only affects Black⁹ peoples. This may also explain how some whites do not understand that their skin colour affords them privileges. (Barry, 2000; Dyer, 1997; Stephenson, 1999)

White privilege describes the social, psychological, political, cultural and economic benefits that white people gain from racism.¹⁰ Peggy McIntosh (1988) describes white privilege as “an invisible knapsack of unearned assets” (p. 1) that confers dominance.

Given that whites may dismiss or minimize the impact of race and racism in their lives, they may also tend to overlook the presence, and/or reject the significance of racial stereotypes in visual culture.

Consider my experience in a graduate class in which my white professor presented

⁹ I use the term *Black* with a capital B to convey its meaning as a political identity for some members of African, South Asian and African-Caribbean communities. Although there are differences between and within each of the groups, the term Black refers to those who have a shared history of European colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, ethnocentrism and racism I use the lowercase white because as Alice McIntyre (1997) writes “...both have a particular history. Although ‘white’ and ‘Black’ have been defined oppositionally, they are not functional opposites. ‘White’ has incorporated Black subordination; Black is not based on domination...Black is naming that is part of counter hegemonic practice” (p.171).

¹⁰ Beverly Daniel Tatum (1999) describes racism as a system that grants rights and privileges to members of one ‘race’ and withholds them from members of another. It may be important to note that racism can present itself in various forms and in different cultures. The Japanese treatment of Koreans and the Arab exploitation and violence against Black Africans in southern Sudan are examples of how racism can be invoked by differing racial groups by positing different explanations for inferiority. (Stephenson, 1997)

his collection of 'Black Art' to white students. The collection included household objects, figurines and a large painting. One of the figurines portrayed a Black child, pants to his knees, sitting on a toilet. The painting depicted an image of a Black man with exaggerated facial features - googly eyes, swollen lips.

Despite, the artifacts¹¹ demeaning portrayal of Blacks, students appeared unclear about whether these items reflected or reinforced racism. Perhaps, the fact that the professor (representing a position of intellectual/moral authority) owned these items - and that he presented his collection as 'historical art objects' further complicated the students' perception/understanding of the artefacts. In other words, perhaps the students were struggling, in part, with the question of how can something that their teacher considers 'collectible' and presented as 'art' also be racist.

In class, I objected to the labelling of such items as 'Black art'. Clearly, whites had constructed these derogatory representations of Blacks. Perhaps, these items would be better described as 'white art'. The professor agreed.

Yet, when I suggested that the professor consider the significance of his position as a white man in relation to his collecting practice, he replied that he collected the works for investment purposes and that he "disassociated" himself from any social/political implications thereof.

Regardless of what the professor claimed his intentions or interests were in regards to his collecting practise, I felt that the issue was whether or not he was inadvertently

¹¹See Appendix C for a discussion on these artifacts called ' Black Memorabilia'.

reinforcing racism. As we continued our discussion, he asked me if I would have judged his collecting practise differently if he were Black.

Would Black ownership change the meaning or diminish the stigma of racist memorabilia? Could a Black owner put together such a collection as an 'investment' overriding the pieces' cultural and social significance? What motivates white people (that are not self-proclaimed racists) to own images that were made to show that Black people were inferior to whites, and to justify racism and segregation?

I wondered whether the professor would have considered presenting his collection or defending his argument to Black students. As a white educator, what would he need to consider when exploring such controversial issues in a multicultural and multiracial classroom?

These were some of the questions that moved me towards exploring the topic of race as it relates to art education. This experience also encouraged me to discover why some white people do not readily acknowledge their white identity.

WHITE GUILT

Thandeka (1999) suggests that some 'liberal-thinking' whites deny the social significance of having a white identity because they feel guilt at how they, individually and collectively, reinforce and benefit from racist ideologies and practices towards non-whites.

In her article, "The Cost of Whiteness", Thandeka (1999) proposes that whites resist examining the socially constructed nature of their white identity because on a deeper level, they fear confronting the fact that they were once pressured by their own communities' racial codes of conduct. To illustrate, she points to her interviews with European Americans on the subject of their early racial experiences. Here, white individuals recount how (under the threat of being punished or abandoned by family members) they are forced, as children, to ignore, reject or feel contempt for Blacks. The author remarks:

These aren't the kinds of tales I had expected... To my astonishment, instead of describing inter-racial incidents, they described intra-racial conflicts. The message they learned was to repress, deny, and split off from consciousness feelings that, if expressed, would provoke racial attacks from the adults in their own community. From these stories, I learned that becoming white is the product of a child's siege mentality. It's a defence mechanism to stop racial rebukes from one's own kith and kin. (Thandeka, 1999, p.34)

Thandeka concludes that by examining their early racial, schema-forming experiences, whites may begin to understand racism as a "system imposed on individuals - both oppressors and oppressed" (p.37). Through such examination, she argues, their sense of guilt may be lessened, allowing them to participate more freely in the dialogue on race.

WHITE TALK

In *Making meaning of whiteness: Exploring racial identity with white teachers*, McIntyre (1997) illustrates the difficulties and challenges particular to an exclusively white discussion on racism. Her study involves thirteen female pre-service teachers who, during a period of eight group sessions, discuss readings and exchange personal experiences about race-related issues. McIntyre's study reveals that although her participants choose to engage in a conversation about race, they persistently resist critiquing their own position toward racism. McIntyre refers to what she terms as 'white talk' to describe the speech tactics used by participants when they derail the conversation from its principal objective of critically analyzing whiteness. She explains:

The language of the participants' white talk, whether it was intentional or not, consciously articulated or unconsciously spoken, resisted interrogation. Interruptions, silences, switching topics, tacitly accepting racist assumptions, talking over one another, joining in collective laughter that served to ease the tension, hiding under the canopy of camaraderie- these manoeuvrings repelled critical conversations. (McIntyre, 1997, p.47)

McIntyre also states that often, her participants avoided critique by expressing a 'colour-blind' view of race, questioning the presence of racism or acting emotionally with "feelings of powerlessness, fear and defensiveness" (p.77). This point is illustrated by the following sentiments expressed during a one-day workshop¹² that I conducted with a group of white pre-service teachers in the Art Education Department at Concordia

¹²See Appendices D and E for the workshop's consent form and outline.

University:

"I don't care if they're black, red, yellow or purple - they're all the same to me.";

"It's easy to explain things away under the umbrella of race.... it's a question of personality...people make too much of it." ;

"Does being white mean you have to be nice all the time?"

McIntyre's writes about a similar situation and describes how she encouraged participants to re-examine their thinking, to identify white talk and disrupt its formation. Gradually, her participants began to interrogate whiteness and consider its implications for their teaching practice. This is significant since many of the values and privileges of whiteness are built into the academic institution and its educational practices.

WHITENESS IN OUR SCHOOLS

Advocates of anti-racist education (Dei,1995; Lippen,2004) argue that racism has been, and continues to be, ingrained in the Canadian public school system. Educational curriculum, for example, is criticized for silently endorsing white perspectives and cultures:

Canadian history is still told from the viewpoint of "two founding fathers," French and English, who "discovered" and "developed" the country. The existence of highly organized Aboriginal nations is often over-looked or minimized in this version of history. The genocide waged against Aboriginal peoples is also over-looked, as are the enslavement and genocide of African

peoples and the exclusion of people of colour who wished to immigrate to Canada. Students are not exposed to a curriculum that addresses the complexities and contestations of Canadian history thereby reproducing White privilege and power in public education. (African Canadian Legal Clinic, 2002, Part 4; Anti-Black Racism in Education, para. 43)

Canadian sociologist, George Dei, explains that the practice of exclusion in the curriculum is part of a process which may result in students' disengagement from learning (Dei, 1995). This 'disengagement' is reflected, for instance, in the high drop out rate of Black Canadian youth:

Although racial minority and White students have similar career and professional aspirations when entering the school system, the outcomes are markedly different. This is the result of a number of factors, including curricula that exclude African Canadian histories and cultures and teaching styles that discourage African Canadians. (African Canadian Legal Clinic, 2002, Part 4; Anti-Black Racism in Education, para.1)

Racism may occur in subtle and overt ways at many levels of our educational institutions "from the accepted curriculum to the accepted process of its delivery, from the demographic compositions of administrative and teaching faculty to their policies and procedures" (Lippen, 2004, p.112).

Teacher attitudes that convey low expectations for racial minorities, biased forms of evaluating student performance or the lack of diversity within the teaching

profession contribute to institutional and individual racist practices in our schools.¹³

Multicultural programs in Canada have encountered strong criticism for failing to address cultural and racial inequities in the curriculum. Molly Mullins argues that multicultural initiatives, work to “conceal rather than eliminate discriminatory practices and attitudes” (Mullins, 1994). McLaren (1994) explains that most conservative and liberal forms of multiculturalism refuse to acknowledge whiteness as a racialized category and in doing so whiteness functions as an invisible norm by which ‘others’ are judged. Diversity, he explains, is emphasized to conceal an “ideology of assimilation” (p.46).

Giroux (1994) discusses the links between multiculturalism and what he calls ‘white racism’. He argues that educators need to counter conventional ideas about nationhood, ethnicity and culture by providing members of dominant groups “with the knowledge and histories to examine, acknowledge and unlearn their own privilege” (p.327).

He also advocates a critical multiculturalism that looks at the origins of racism and the various ways it functions in society, as well as how it affects subordinate groups. In this way, racism is analyzed as a societal problem stemming from the legacy of white supremacy, rather than as “ a dilemma of black people” (p.328). He continues:

¹³In the article entitled “Improving the Educational and Life Chances of African Canadian Youth: Insights from Ontario’s Royal Commission on Learning,” Avis E. Glaze and Ouida M. Wright (1998) describe some of the obstacles faced by minority children, and Black children in particular. They describe these students as often being “casualties of negative differential treatment, stereotyping, bias in testing and evaluation, streaming, a monocultural curriculum, unfair and unusual discipline, racism, and most damaging of all, the self-fulfilling prophecy of low expectations”(p.32).

... a critical multiculturalism is about making whiteness visible, as a racial category; that is it points to the necessity of providing white students with the cultural memories that enable them to recognize the historically and socially constructed nature of their own identities. Multiculturalism as a radical, cultural politics should attempt to provide white students (and others) with the self-definitions upon which they can recognize their own complicity with or resistance to how power works within and across differences to legitimize some voices and dismantle others. (p. 339)

Based on this research and reflections, below I outline some proposals for teaching art and educating art teachers.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ART EDUCATION

In an art program based on critical multiculturalism, multiracial as well as multicultural perspectives on the arts would be presented and explored as a necessary means of understanding the world's artistic traditions. Students would be encouraged to consider issues of ethnocentrism and racism as part of a critical examination of all the art disciplines, i.e. aesthetics, art history, art production (Chalmers, 1999). In this way, the art class would not be limited to the 'celebrate diversity' model of more conservative or liberal forms of multiculturalism.

In attempting to implement a critical multicultural program, white educators must be engaged, however, in a process of self-awareness - confronting and understanding their own stance toward racism - or risk, as McIntyre argues, the tendency to "perform the multicultural tricks" without recognizing how they themselves benefit from the inequities

inherent in the educational structure (McIntyre, 1997, p. 13). The challenge for white educators then is in actively seeking to eliminate the discriminatory practices that have accorded them a position of privilege.¹⁴

One of the problems of our educational system is that not all teachers are skilled to examine issues of white privilege, social identity or to discuss racism openly in a classroom discussion. Exploring controversial issues with students, as Chalmers (2002) explains: “requires a questioning, problem-solving, and inquiry based approach to instruction in a constantly changing world and may not be all that gentle” (p.2).

What teachers need is a methodology that allows them to successfully engage students in critical dialogue that is characterized by elements of conflict and conflict resolution.¹⁵ For art educators this is of immense importance particularly as they seek “ways of dislodging students - especially the privileged students - from their ‘ safe’ spaces of viewing” (Nelson, 2000) to challenge racist narratives in visual culture.

¹⁴Christine Sleeter (1993) questions whether we can realistically expect white teachers to significantly challenge racial inequality within the school system. She explains that because teacher education and staff development are hindered by structural biases "education will not produce less racist institutions as long as white people control them" (p.47).

¹⁵Literature from antiracist education offers various strategies for fostering conflict and conflict resolution as an integral part of learning and developing critical thinking skills. Antiracism education in Canada emerges in the 1980s, largely in response to dissatisfaction with the limitations of multicultural education. Pon (2002) defines antiracism education as “ a proactive approach to education that critiques the material and social impacts of racism and aims to transform structural inequities. It posits that students’ educational experiences are mediated by and situated within social relations of unequal power“ (Pon, 2002, p.141).

The issue of whether the art curriculum should be politicized has long been debated amongst art educators. Some critics (Fehr, 2004; Giroux, 1993) argue for a pedagogical approach that addresses certain social and political concerns in the study of art:

To teach students to view art within the context of only artistic issues is to shield from their view the agendas - economic, sociological, political, educational - that drive art. To teach art critically is to give students the tools that enable them to identify the commissars of culture whose decisions govern the issues that most affect their lives. (Fehr, 2004, p.12)

Art critic Robert Hughes (1993) cautions against viewing art in political terms, claiming that "it revives the illusion that works of art carry social meaning the way trucks carry coal... and relieves the student of the burden of imaginative empathy and the difficulties of aesthetic discrimination "(p.114).

Similarly, Elliot Eisner (1972) and Ralph Smith (1992) contend that there is an over-emphasis on social issues in the study of art. Influenced by modernist views on the role of the artist and the nature of art, they contend that art education should focus students' learning on what they regard as (one) civilization's greatest works of art. I would argue that appreciating art requires an understanding of its social, historical and political context, as Denis Fehr (2004) posits:

Smith's fears that "political agendas" will stain the pristine whiteness of art education. So much for art 'sullied' by barrio and ghetto experience. So much for the burgeoning body of feminist art. So much for art 'tainted' with Third World concerns. So much for marginal art — in short, so much for post-modern work,

part and parcel, that does not conform to the exhausted doxology of White Male Modernism... Perhaps Smith will guide us as we separate and discard the politically biting work of Botticelli, Boucher, Goya, Daumier, David, Delacroix, Chardin, Millet, Hogarth, Manet, Toulouse-Lautrec, Rivera, and Picasso from their 'pure' work." (Chapter 7: Virtue, vice and vision: Art Education Today, para.26).

The problem with Eisner's and Smith's position is that, for one, it does not question the values that underpin aesthetic standards. Their position assumes that there is a universal 'quality' to 'great works of art' and dismisses the impact of social, political and economic forces that function to maintain white cultural values as the 'norm' for judging culture.

For another perspective, I interviewed art historian Charmaine Nelson¹⁶ and in 2000, asked her to comment on Eisner and Smith's views that there is an over emphasis on social and political issues in the study of art. She said the following:

the desire to maintain the study of art as a purely aesthetic realm indicates a territorial mentality which fears inter-disciplinarity as a source of disciplinarity impurity. Artists never exist in a vacuum and their art is similarly informed, transgresses and established in societies in which they work." (Nelson, 2000, p.8)

Nelson was the curator of an exhibit entitled "Through An-Other's Eyes: White Canadian Artists -Black Female Subjects" which was held at the Leonard & Bina Art

¹⁶See Appendix F for the transcript of the interview I conducted with Charmaine Nelson in 2000.

Gallery of Concordia University in February 2000. The exhibit presented its viewers with thirty-five Canadian works dating from the 18th Century to the present and raised issues concerning the stereotypical imagery of Black women as constructed by white Canadian artists.

EXPLORING WHITENESS IN CONTEMPORARY ART

When discussing race, the tendency in the art world has been to examine exclusively the works of racial minorities.¹⁷ In the last few years, however, a number of art exhibits, particularly in the United States, have reversed this trend by exploring the topic of whiteness.

In 2003, at the Laguna Beach Museum in Laguna Beach California, a group show entitled "Whiteness, A Wayward Construction" examined the cultural, racial and political meanings of whiteness. The curator, Tyler Stallings (2003), explains in the exhibit catalogue that the show addressed the objective described by cultural theorist Lucy Lippard "to encourage (whites) to see themselves as simply another 'other'." (Laguna Art Museum Archive of Exhibitions -1997 to Present, Spring 2003, para. 1)

In "White: Whiteness and Race in Contemporary Art," held in 2003 at the International Center for Photography in New York City, artists attempted to create the image of whiteness as a racial category by presenting depictions of "yuppies, privileged girls, guilty liberals, white trash..." (Dawson, 2003, para. 4). By presenting stereotypical images of the white subject, artists appeared to be taking cues from and thereby

¹⁷John Bowles(2005) discusses how " the whiteness of the artists most widely exhibited in America goes unspoken" (para.6) in *After Ever Whiteness*.

commenting on mainstream media's treatment of the Black subject. By focussing the camera lens on white people, artists countered the tendency on the part of whites to consider only racial minorities in their discourse on race.

While the study of whiteness gains attention in the visual arts - questions are being raised concerning the role of race in conventional art, art-historical and museological practice. Cultural appropriation in the works of white artists, the marginalized status of noncanonical artworks and 'artefacts', or the legacy of colonial, racist ideology in visual production are examined as contemporary issues - issues that, arguably, may be suited for inquiry in today's art class.

I think she'd look nicer if she was peachy colour...

Finally, some art educators may feel that racism or whiteness is too complex or sensitive an issue to be explored with children. I would argue that children already learn about race in their daily lives as they absorb messages from society that tell them what to think and feel about themselves and people that look 'different'.

I am reminded of this on one particular occasion when some of my students (at the primary level) transformed a black and white photocopied image of a black girl (as part of an exercise in learning collage) colouring her skin white, her hair blonde ...¹⁸

¹⁸ See Appendix G for illustrations of students' works.

Following this exercise, I interviewed students individually, asking them about their image-making process and why they chose to represent the subject of their collage as white. Not surprisingly, many of their responses emphasized stereotypical and derogatory thinking about Blacks, as the comment of one student illustrated: "I think she 'd look nicer if she was peachy colour."

Another student who portrayed the subject of her collage as white explained that "(being black) didn't fit with her standing still... there are a lot of them in school and they're always jumping around."

While a few works represented the subject as Black, the results were no less disturbing. One collage portrayed the subject holding hands with a monkey while another presented the subject amongst various images of animals because, as the student explained, "she looks exotic." When asked, the eleven-year old defined exotic as meaning to be "from another country."

This exercise clearly demonstrated that in this context children recognized difference (based on skin colour) as they expressed their particular ideas and attitudes about what it meant to look Black and what it meant to look white.

Research, primarily from the field of social psychology, suggests that children begin to develop racial awareness as early as 3 or 4 years of age. For example, McGill psychologist, Frances Aboud (1996), whose work deals with the development of racial bias in Canadian children, asserts:

It's very clear that young children do notice who is black, who is white, who has straight hair and so on. They are not colour blind. They just don't comment on it. They don't use racial slurs at five years - they don't have the verbal fluency - but that doesn't mean they don't have attitudes. (p. 36)

Dr. Kenneth Clark is renowned for his 1940s experiments using dolls to study children's attitudes about race. His research showed that Black children preferred white dolls as evidence of the negative self image that Black children acquired as a result of racism. Clark (1955) explains that as children learn about themselves and their society, they develop a process of constructing a racial identity¹⁹.

That identity is influenced by what they believe society thinks about their race. When children perceive stereotypes in visual culture, they may incorporate them as part of their understanding of society.

All of these researchers describe a serious social problem that affects children and adults. Art educators can play a significant role in helping children unlearn racial

¹⁹Alston, Bell, and Feist-Price (1996) describe racial identity in terms of four dimensions: "Racial identity development may be defined as the process through which an individual examines the psychological (sense of belongingness and commitment), cultural (awareness, knowledge, and acceptance of cultural and social traditions), physical (acceptance of physical features of the racial group) and socio-political (attitudes toward social and economic issues of the racial group) aspects of being a member of one's racial group along with the value and emotional significance associated with that membership." (p. 11)

stereotypes. They can teach students about the power of images²⁰ and work towards what Elizabeth M. Delacruz (2003) describes as: “ the dismantling of the value system that allows one group of individuals to depict another with such intellectual dishonesty and hostility” (p.19).

Art educators can lead students to understand how images contribute to the assumptions they make about who they are, how they should look and act and how they perceive others. Visual culture, however, is often coded and requires interpretation.

In his article entitled “Interpreting Visual Culture,” Terry Barrett (2003) discusses how students learn to deconstruct images and decipher the underlying messages by using what he calls “the interpretive strategy of denotations and connotations” (p.6). Denotations refer to the actual images presented in a picture while connotations are their implied meanings. Barrett emphasizes that even young learners can develop an understanding for the interpretive process allowing them to achieve the skills required for visual literacy. His research supports the prospect of anti-racism in art education.

THE POLITICS OF RACE IN THE CLASSROOM

All that being said, Pate (1989) warns that not all anti-prejudice strategies work successfully, and that some can work counter to teachers’ expectations and goals. A case in point is the incident involving the book “Nappy Hair” written by Black author and scholar Carolivia Herron. The incident involved a 27 year old white teacher, Ruth

²⁰ In her article, entitled “Racism American Style and Resistance to Change: Art Education’s Role in the Indian Mascot Issue”, Elizabeth M. Delacruz (2003) argues against the persistent practice of racist imagery in educational institutions and sports.

Sherman, who introduced the book to her predominately Black and Hispanic third grade students as part of a lesson on celebrating racial diversity and pride.

The author tells the story of a young Black girl and her appreciation for her 'nappy' hair. A parent who found black and white photocopied images of the book's illustrations in her daughter's folder was offended by what she perceived as demeaning caricatures of a Black girl. Reportedly, she was also upset in discovering that a white teacher was using the term 'nappy', a colloquialism for tightly curled African hair, in her daughter's classroom.

The parent sent photocopies of the material to neighbours with an unflattering note about the white teacher's use of negative racial stereotypes. A group of neighbourhood residents demanded Sherman be removed from her teaching position. Despite the efforts of school administrators and the expressed support of some of the students' parents, the teacher ultimately resigned.

In Black culture the word 'nappy' can be highly contentious when used by a white person. Author Maxine Leeds Craig (2002) explains:

The legacy of Eurocentric beauty standards leaves no neutral words with which to describe black hair textures. Before the mid 1960's, straight hair was known as good hair, as opposed to kinky or nappy or bad hair... Nappy is a word that can be played with and turned upside down by black beauticians and authors, but the word remains provocative, particularly when used by someone who is not black (p. 22).

Sherman was a young teacher who was only working for a few months before she eagerly introduced 'Nappy Hair' to her students. Unfortunately, she seriously misjudged the surrounding school culture. Despite her good intentions, Sherman's actions conveyed a negative message to some members of the Black community. They may have thought that she was presenting black hair textures as undesirable. Hair textures have political and social connotations in Black culture that are seldom understood by whites. Hair functions as an individual and collective symbol of status and difference. Klayman (2002) explains:

Processed or unprocessed, black hair is moulded and coiffed into statements of identity. Afros and dreadlocks, both inventions by black people in Western parts of the world, are symbols of black pride that clearly indicate a point of difference between liberated black people and white suppressers. (Chapter 2, para.8)

Some may argue that had the teacher been Black, people may have reacted differently. Perhaps they would have, but white teachers should realize that because they occupy a privileged position as whites in our society, students and the community may question their credibility in teaching about racism.

It is fear of reactions like this that may discourage white teachers from addressing controversial topics like racism. Yet, white teachers must overcome their fear of offending so they can learn and understand different viewpoints, and re-assess their own.

Cross-cultural work necessitates certain learning, i.e. 'cultural sensitivity'. Cultural sensitivity is more than open-mindedness; it requires active learning of the culture and discussion with key figures regarding what is acceptable and what is not. Part of the

remedy may be in better training of teachers in relating to students of diverse cultural and racial backgrounds. Teacher training programs could benefit teachers, for example, by bringing in members of the community in which they teach to talk about race.

Teacher training programs could also encourage teachers to re-examine their cultural assumptions and identify their racial bias and the ways these may impact on their teaching practice. Maxwell (2004) writes about the impact of the teacher's identity on the classroom and the need for white teachers to do their 'white homework' (p.160). She describes 'white homework' as an ongoing process of thinking and interrogation of issues related to anti-racism.

Similarly, Milner (2003) suggests that teachers engage in a process of self-reflection by journal writing. This may enable them to uncover their own ideas and experiences about race. He also advocates that teachers participate in critical discussions on race. I would add that these discussions be inter-racial so that teachers can learn how to interact effectively with a diversity of people around race-related issues.

Both Milner(2003) and Maxwell (2004) stress that teachers need to consider the specifics of their situation, questioning the material's intended message, the way it is delivered and the various ways students and community may interpret it. In other words, teachers need to consider social context as an essential part of curriculum development and its application. Laurie E. Hicks (1994) argues that the political component of any interpretation of cultural boundaries and group membership is not to be ignored. According to Hicks (1994), both the teacher and the knowledge which is taught must be contextualized within a socio-cultural framework:

Achieving a sense of one's own place in a concrete set of communities and traditions is an important precondition of perceiving others in their concreteness in communities and traditions which are different from one's own. (p.154)

TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD RACE

Teacher's attitudes toward race are presently a problem and the problem is growing in severity for two reasons. The first reason is that white teachers lack awareness on issues of diversity and inequity in education, as indicated by the studies of studies (McIntyre, 2002; Sleeter, 2001; Carr & Klassen, 1997). The second reason is that while the racial minority student population in Canada is increasing, the vast majority of Canadian pre-service and practicing teachers continues to be white and female (Elabor-Idemudia, 2002). Therefore the problematic lack of awareness that affects more students shows no signs of abating.

Regarding teacher attitudes, Carr & Klassen (1997) found, in their study in the Toronto Board of Education, that white teachers tend to have little understanding or appreciation of race-related issues and anti-racist education. Consequently, these teachers tend to overlook or minimize the need for a curriculum that expresses multiracial perspectives - arguably, depriving some students of a learning experience where their culture is addressed or valued.

Carr & Klassen (1997) contend that teachers' 'lived experience' plays a significant role in determining their views on race and anti-racist education. Given that white teachers, for example, are afforded the privilege of not having to experience race as an

issue in their daily lives, they do not readily perceive race as a factor influencing the educational system, their teaching practice or students' personal and academic achievements.

In his research, Charles E. Robinson (2003) points to studies (Callendar, 1997; Foster, 1997; Solomon, 1992; Wyrren, 1993) indicating that white teachers have difficulty in "relating, interacting, communicating, and... educating racialized minority students"(p.30). Robinson states that "cultural and sociolinguistic differences" (p.31) may explain, in part, why white teachers typically misinterpret the behavior of Black students. He claims that white teachers may be quick to label Black children negatively (i.e. as behavioral problems), unintentionally reinforcing racial stereotypes on the sole basis that these children do not appear or act in conformity with the teacher's culture.

The authors of a study entitled, "The Impact of White Teachers on the Academic Achievement of Black Students: An In-Depth Examination of Black Student Perceptions" (Douglas, Lewis, Henderson, Garrison-Wade, 2003) explain that prevalence of racial stereotyping of Black youth furthers the racial divide between white teachers and students. They describe how white teachers tend to set lower academic standards and expectations for Black youth. The results of which are found in inappropriate and disproportionately high rates of streaming of Black youth into lower academic or vocational programs, hindering their access to university. Moreover, the authors explain that many racial minority students suspect that racial bias will come into play when a teacher that is of another culture or race is evaluating them. This is important when considering the concept of 'stereotype threat' as discussed by social psychologist Claude

Steele (1999). He posits that students' intellectual performance can actually suffer when they are made to believe that their abilities will be judged according to a racial stereotype.

The evidence from these studies raises the question of how teacher training can help teachers to identify and challenge the assumptions and practices that maintain inequalities in education. White teachers, in particular, should be taught to recognize how their racial interactions in the classroom can affect student performance. All teachers, regardless of their racial identity, need to question how their personal frames of reference, their selection in curriculum, and pedagogical styles impact on students of cultures other than their own.

CONCLUSION

Through my experiences and research, it became apparent to me that white teachers need to investigate their own whiteness and consider its implications for teaching. This is important because of the predominance of white teachers and the negative impact of racist and complicit practices on students.

In order to accomplish this level of sophistication in teacher education, it is necessary for prospective teachers to understand their own complicity with racism which is an important step in the development of race awareness. In addition, white teachers would improve their teaching by developing competence to teach in multicultural and multiracial contexts.

In this thesis, I demonstrate that there is a need for training programs to provide teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively address race-related issues in the classroom, and I show how this relates to art education. According to this vision of anti-racist art education, art teachers would, for example, actively engage students in critical examinations of such issues as racial stereotyping in visual culture. Art teachers would also be equipped with the skills and awareness required to counter racist ideologies and practices in the study of art and within the context of multicultural education.

APPENDIX A

A Brief Literature Review on Whiteness

Contemporary critical studies on whiteness are often found in the context of a (historical) critique of racism or white supremacy. Marxist and feminist scholarship (Frankenberg, 1993; Kaplan, 1997; Eisenstein, 1996; Ignatiev, 1995) in particular have contributed to the study of whiteness as a sign/boundary marker linked to European and American interests of nationhood and imperialism. Frankenberg (1993) explains that the concept of a white identity has been used by European and American groups to deny property, power and status to non-white people for two centuries:

It was on the basis of this self-description that white settlers justified to themselves their westward colonial expansion, their destruction of indigenous community, land and life; the annexation of Mexican land 'won' in the Spanish American War; and their hopes of a domain that would one day span the globe. (Frankenberg, 1993, p.9)

Whiteness theory offers many meanings of whiteness as an identity marker. Overall, it describes white identity as fluid, moving around meanings of race in society and underlying power relations between whites and non-whites. In this respect, the fluid nature of whiteness is apparent when we consider how, for instance, the Irish, Mexicans, and Jews have all been viewed as non-white in different periods in history. Richard Dyer (1997) explains:

The Irish, Mexicans, Jews and people of mixed race provide striking instances: often excluded, sometimes being assimilated into the category of whiteness, and at others treated as a 'buffer' between the white and black or indigenous... With the Anglo-Saxons, Germans, and Scandinavians usually providing the apex of

whiteness under British Imperialism, U.S development and Nazism. (Dyer, 1997, p.19)

McIntyre (1997) asserts that white people in North America tend to lack awareness in terms of their racial identity. She explains that this occurs because "whites are carefully taught *not* to recognize their whiteness" (p.2). As whiteness defines the social and cultural 'norms', whites perceive their experience as being neutral or normative.

When white people do not recognize their racial identities, they become oblivious to the privileges that they are granted on the basis of their skin colour. McIntosh (1988) describes the concept of white privilege in the following as a:

"weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, emergency gear, and blank checks" to describe the advantage white people have in America, "solely as a result of the skin colour of which we adamantly deny the significance" (p. 1).

Thus, when white people are unaware of their racial identity or their privileged status as a group in the racial order, they may assume that race is not a determinant force in their lives. Consequently, they may deny the significance of racial difference and the impact of racism. In this way, as McIntyre (1997) explains, white people do not feel compelled to address race -related issues or take initiatives to combat racism.

In discussing the writings of scholars (Tatum, 1994; Frankenberg, 1993; Alcoff, 1995; Sleeter, 1995) Kinchloe (1999) states that whiteness theory, in the context of a

multicultural critical pedagogy, implies the examination of the social, political, and psychological dimensions of membership in a racial group:

A critical pedagogy of whiteness is possible only if we understand in great specificity the multiple meanings of whiteness and their effects on the way white consciousness is historically structured and socially inscribed. Without such appreciations and the meta-consciousness they ground, awareness of the privilege and dominance of white Northern European vantage points are buried in the cemetery of power evasion. (p.2)

Kincheloe (2002) asserts that pedagogy of whiteness may engage educators and students in a critical examination of white privilege, white identity and white cultural values. A pedagogy of whiteness, he explains, attempts to counter the tendency in multicultural education to assign cultural difference or "otherness" strictly to 'non-whites'.

In sum, whiteness theory problematizes the invisible and generic nature of whiteness. It attempts to show how whiteness functions as 'the norm' socially, culturally and politically and that its dominant position is the outcome of historical events. Arguably, the principal goal of whiteness theory is to identify whiteness and white cultural values in order to, as Rajiv Malhotra (2004) comments, "better recognize that white epistemologies and world views are relative, not universal" (para. 11).

APPENDIX B

Tubabus ('whites' in the African language of Bambara)

Excerpt from a paper submitted to Dr. Elizabeth Sacca in ARTE 680;

Fall 1998; Art Education Department, Concordia University.

In 1993, I lead a group of people to Mali, West Africa.²¹ Our group was sponsored by Canadian Crossroads International, a non-governmental organization. Our objective was to learn about community life in a rural African village.

The challenge of cultural adaptation was not easy to overcome. Group members suffered, at various times, from physical ailments (as severe as malaria) or emotional difficulties (i.e. loneliness, feelings of alienation and anxiety). All of the group's participants were white. It was their first time living as members of a visible minority.

Early on, there appeared to be competition between group members in terms of who was best at adapting to the new environment. Those who fell ill were looked down upon for not having been strong enough to adjust.

At times, an air of superiority characterized the behaviour of some. Yves, an outdoors man from Northern Quebec, would comment on the apparent 'laziness' of village men. He complained that the Africans 'just sipped tea all day'. He, on the other hand, appreciated the benefits of hard work. When there was not much to do around the village, Yves created himself a job.

He and another group member chopped down a tree. They never requested permission from any of the villagers. They wanted to build a swing or a seesaw for the

²¹Mali is known for its ancient city of Timbuktu, and as the home to the Dogon people. It also struggles with the serious problem of desertification as a sub-Saharan country.

children in the village. But as time went on, they lost interest and never completed their project.

I was angry when I discovered what the participants had done. I was afraid that the village would judge our group members as having been disrespectful. The villagers, however, never expressed any disappointment toward the group. I was aware of 'typical' Malian hospitality and tolerance. Still, I worried that the episode may have created a sentiment of distrust amongst our hosts. Moreover, our village had been criticized by neighbouring villages for having been so receptive to 'the whites'.

My relationship with Yves grew increasingly tenuous. Overall, he refused to acknowledge my position as group leader. He threatened to break his contract with the group, and leave to more 'adventurous' sites – neighbouring Ivory Coast or further north to Senegal (in search of elephants and zebras). Despite my objections, Yves continued to jog bare-chested in the village every morning. We had been warned that this act was frowned upon in Muslim culture – as was the act of greeting a village woman with a kiss on the cheek, something that Yves insisted on doing several times.

Admittedly, I questioned the 'easy-going' approach I had adopted with the group early on. I also wondered, though, if Yves and I had difficulty in relating to one another, due in part to our differences in gender and culture. I had my suspicions but they remained unconfirmed.

The phenomenon of cultural adaptation, complex as it may be, seems to reflect power dynamics between groups of individuals. The participant, for example, that

seemed to have had the least difficulty in 'adapting' was a Canadian Lebanese immigrant named Eli. I wonder whether Eli's experience as an immigrant eased his acculturation process.

I remember my friend, Yacine, commenting on his experience as a visible minority in Quebec. He once said that although he had suffered from racism, he had acquired an often overlooked advantage over the members of the dominant community. Yacine remarked that as an immigrant, he had no choice in having to learn about the dominant culture. However, it was rare when members of the dominant culture knew anything about his North African background or community.

Whereas Eli adapted to Malian culture, Yves tried to have Malian culture adapt to him. It is arguable whether Yves' self-serving attitude and behaviour in this context may be viewed as imparting from his colonial heritage. Amusingly enough, Yves managed to gain the affections of many of the Village residents.

Although Yves could be charming at times, perhaps the Malians never expected any better from their white visitors.

APPENDIX C

BLACK MEMORABILIA

An edited summary of research based on a paper submitted to Dr. David Pariser in ARTE 682, Winter 2000, Art Education Department, Concordia University.

In his article, "Memories and Black Memorabilia, Art and Identity", Michael Harris (1998) examines what has been popularized in the collectors' market as Black memorabilia. Black memorabilia consists of items produced in the United States (dating from the post-Civil War period) that express degrading images of Blacks. These images are depicted on a variety of items such as ash trays, clocks, cookie jars and toys.

Harris explains that these stereotypical caricatures of Blacks support the white myth of cultural and racial superiority. According to Harris, they have served to reconcile the contradiction of America's identification with democratic freedom while committing acts of slavery:

By projecting fantasies of savagery upon blacks, the white male tried to absolve himself of his own indefensible savagery by persuading himself that savagery is 'out there'. The lashes ordered... are not one's own savagery; repeated and dangerous breaks for freedom are 'puzzling' confirmations of black irrationality. The degraded black was invented to show what whiteness was not and to present a danger - the threat of bestial violence, or the contamination of the white social body by lesser beings - in need of containment and control, needs which justified their lack of freedom and the corporeal punishment to control them. (Harris, 1998, p.28)

The Black collectibles market has been growing rapidly since the mid 1980s. While some collectors may claim that they are driven only by profit-making interests, Harris contends that collectors are capitalizing on the legacy of racism. On the other hand, Padilla (1993) argues that celebrated Black Americans, such as civil rights leader Julian Bond, scholar Henry Louis Gates and Oprah Winfrey are among Black Americans who collect because they want to document the era of segregation in the United States. Harris (1998) contests this point:

There is a line that is crossed when one traverses from 'knowing ' to collecting, a movement from awareness to the active maintenance of the edifice that one states is being pulled down. The sentiments behind the original objects have not yet disappeared from American society so they represent active attitudes; they are not yet relics of a not-to-be forgotten past. (p.27)

Harris also takes issue with contemporary artists, such as Michael Ray Charles, who incorporate negative, stereotypical images of Black people in their works. According to Harris, these artists most likely fail in their attempts at subverting the meanings of these powerful images. He writes:

To collect memorabilia or to use such imagery in art is to risk enshrining the vocabulary of visual debasement and to ignore the ability of images to act in agency for, and independently of, ideology. Using such imagery can be like unwittingly attending a revival meeting for racism by the reification of its definitions. (1998, p.31)

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM FOR WORKSHOP AT CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I participate in a research project conducted by Daphna Leibovici as part of her Master's thesis under the supervision of Professor Elizabeth Sacca, Department of Art Education at Concordia University.

Purpose: I am aware that the purpose of this research is to investigate the teaching of race-related issues in art education.

Procedure: I will participate in a workshop. The workshop will be audiotaped and will be made available to me for review. Conditions of Participation:

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from participating at any time without any negative consequences.
- I understand that the participation in this study is confidential - the researcher will know, but not disclose my identity.
 - I understand that the data from this study may be published.
 - I understand the purpose of this study and know that there is no motive of which I have been informed.

I HAVE STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Witness: _____

Witness signature: _____

APPENDIX E

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

CONCEPT & DESIGN

My workshop is based on a model for Racism Awareness Training¹⁰ designed by Judy Katz (1978). In this model participants are provided with the conceptual framework needed to examine whiteness. They are encouraged to express their emotional responses as they learn how racism informs their thinking, shapes their perceptions and privileges them in society.

Katz (1978) suggests that participants be guided through progressive stages of anti-racist consciousness by learning, in the following order, to:

1. Name and define key concepts.
2. Examine racism in institutional and individual forms.
3. Identify and express personal feelings on racism (brought to the surface by stages 1 and 2).
4. Explore cultural racism.
5. Explore whiteness
6. Explore strategies against racism. (Katz, 1978, p. 34)

My workshop will take the form of a three hour session with no more than six participants from Concordia's undergraduate department. Due to the amount of time available for such a project, I feel it is necessary to work with a relatively small group - in this way assuring that individual participants have enough time to share and exchange their views.

I intend to use material from the visual arts and popular culture, predominately Canadian in content, in order to localize racism and underline its pervasiveness in our society.

PROCEDURE

Students will be given consent forms requiring their signature and outlining the purpose, procedure and conditions of their participation in the workshop. They will also be asked to indicate their age, gender, socio-economic background, professional and/or student background, birthplace and current place of residence on information sheets. I will also provide a brief explanation of the workshop's activities and objectives and answer any questions.

LESSON PLAN

1. Participants are directed to a large bristol board that has the word racism written at its center. They are asked to free associate and write their responses on the board:

Discussion.

2. Viewing of Shanti Thakur's video entitled "Domino", produced by the National Film Board of Canada, Montreal, 1996. Discussion.

3. Participants are asked to write their feelings (brought on by discussion in steps 1 & 2) on large bristol board taped to the wall. Discussion.

4. Participants are asked to view and critically discuss representations of Black identity in exemplars of Canadian art and popular culture.

5. Participants are asked to read and discuss excerpt from Peggy McIntosh's *Understanding Privilege* (1989). They are then asked to create visual representations of their white identity. Group discussion on works.

6. Brainstorming. Participants are asked to discuss possibilities for change.

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW WITH CHARMAINE NELSON

Interview conducted for a paper submitted to Dr. David Pariser

ARTE 682, Winter 2000, Art Education Department, Concordia University.

1. The exhibit poses questions about inter- racial looking in art - specifically, what are these questions?

I am positing, through my reading of these art works, the possibility of an alternative viewing position which is not situated in a white male experience. As the art historical texts on these works (which pre-date my catalogue) demonstrate, the main viewing and interpretive posture with these works has been one in which aesthetic and formal considerations are paramount, and the contextual issues of race and sex as specific subjects are erased.

2. What mirroring processes (going both ways) takes place in inter- racial looking?

Inter-racial looking can amount to the performance of stereotypes if the viewing body is not aware of their position and the implication for interpretation - which that position effects. Historically, the black body or body of the 'other' has been used by the dominant subject (usually the elite white male) as a screen against which they could project their racial fantasies. An equality of inter-racial looking would necessitate the viewing body's acknowledgment of their subject position as one possible position within a spectrum. As well, privileged positions would have to acknowledge their privilege and the ways it impacts on their vision of 'other' bodies.

3. What happens when white people look at (images of) non-whites?

Historically, the process of the white subject looking at the black or 'other' subject has situated the process - through which that body is located as an object of knowledge and

thereby expelled from the realm of production. However, although this has been a dominant facet of the colonial construction of looking at the 'other', the white viewing body can escape this construction.

4. What happens when Black people own the look and startle whites into knowledge of their whiteness?

The black subject's ownership of the gaze has the potential to impact on the white subject but this is not necessarily an easy equation of ownership and acknowledgement. One of the possible reactions of the white person to the black ownership of the gaze could be fear of the power it affords a supposedly marginalized subject. As such, the white subject may try to further displace the black body within a stereotypical construction in order to control or diminish what they see as the threat of vision - as power. I think what is equally important here is the impact of the ownership of the gaze on the black subject as a vehicle of empowerment and mechanism of power which can afford a view of the self - which transcends the imposition of the colonial view from the outside in.

5. Realistically, can knowledge or understanding of the 'Other' ever be attained?

What do we mean by attained? Mastered? If we understand that subjects are produced within discursive frame-works, which are invested in the performance of particular identities that support hegemonic systems, we could also ask if a subject can ever really know themselves or subjects within their same group(s). In the West, the quest for knowledge and the idea of knowledge as something which could be definitively (scientifically quantified and classified) attained is precisely what got us into this mess in

the first place. Understanding or empathy is perhaps a better paradigm since it implies a willingness to displace oneself from a comfort zone and understand the "other" subject within their own context.

6. What are the issues you hope people consider when viewing the exhibit?

-That these images speak to a persistent and historical interest in the black female subject in Canadian art, which then locates the historical presence of black peoples in Canada.

-That art participates in the production of identity since representational practices and material processes are specific to particular historical, geographical, political, cultural periods and moments.

-That art is a form of colonial discourse as is medicine, science, law etc.

-That artists are powerful in their ability to represent their worlds.

-That various forms or markers of identity (race, sex, class, etc.) are bound together in the bodies of living subjects.

- That Canadian cultural practice has been historically and still is stubbornly conservative and exclusionary.

7. Can works of art be meaningfully experienced without placing them in economic, political, or historical contexts? Why or why not?

I do not disqualify aesthetic contemplation or formalistic concerns as outside of meaningful experiences. However, I also do not feel that the issue of race and the performance of race should be avoided because it is easier to talk about line, form, and

color. Lehman's critique in the Gazette demonstrated the extent to which people cannot reconcile their enjoyment of these art works as aesthetically interesting with a sense of guilt over the fact that they represent, many of them, racial stereotypes. The result is often a rejection of one at the expense of the other. If it is beautiful it can't be racist and vice versa. Well, that is not so. The fact is that Western culture has always celebrated objects as beautiful - which have been to an alternative gaze or 'other' body examples of oppression or the visualization of stereotypes. What is different now is that the dominant white male viewing position can no longer profess to be universal and so we have a multiplicity of voices commenting upon the supposedly beautiful or aesthetically pleasing object.

8. As Elliot Eisner suggests, could there be an over- emphasis of social and cultural issues in the study of art?

No. Even if an art historian wishes to study aesthetics and connoisseurship, a true understanding of these things would recognize their specificity to a particular historical moment and social setting - i.e.: How was it that 'abstraction' occurred at that particular moment in the late nineteenth-century and not sooner or later? Well developments in science afforded inventions like the X-ray machine which afforded an internal view of the body; the artists who 'created' abstraction were avid collectors and appreciators of African art etc. I see the desire to maintain the study of art as a purely aesthetic realm as a territorial mentality which fears inter-disciplinarity as a source of disciplinary impurity. Well, artists never exist in a vacuum and their art is similarly informed, transgressed and established in societies in which they work.

9. Is discourse about gender, racial or ethnic marginalization inappropriate themes for young children? Why or why not?

I disagree with people who would say that these issues are too complex or sensitive to be discussed with children. What should change is how we discuss them. To me, it is ridiculous to imagine that there is a right age and time, later, when a person is more able to process or accept this information. In our daily lives, in a myriad of forms, we are bombarded with representations, which are telling us what to think and feel about people who do not look like us. Many of these representations support a patriarchal and colonial worldview. I believe it is essential that alternative visions be presented as early as possible! Children know about race because the adults in our society teach them daily through actions, which are often reprehensible.

10. Do you consider the presentation of racially charged imagery (from popular culture as well as fine arts) appropriate in the art class?

What is meant by racially charged? There are levels but who determines them? We must look at the age of the students we are addressing and their emotional and intellectual ability to process the information we wish to deliver. Popular cultural representations of race work within the same representational patterns as the so-called fine arts - it is just that they are often MORE visible since they are more widely produced and disseminated. This adds to their power as we are often bombarded with such images. I use both popular culture and 'high art' examples when I teach and I do not think that it does anyone any favor to try to apply an arbitrary separation of the two.

11. What teaching approach would you suggest to art educators who present their students with racially charged images, and why?

You must provide a context for the works. For example: do the students know about slavery - about imperialism - about colonialism? Do they understand that you are not talking about a representational practice which is specific to art or just happened to spring out of no where two days ago? An educator must also find ways of dislodging students - especially the privileged students from their safe spaces of viewing - and to question and acknowledge their privilege in ways which they see demonstrated in their daily lives. Another great concern is the presence of marginalized students who may feel singled out or particularly exposed within the display of images and course of discussion. Particular sensitivity must be demonstrated in concern for their well being.

12. Should the racial make-up of teacher and students be considered in the presentation of racially charged imagery? How so?

The danger here is that a white educator not proclaims him or herself as an expert on the feelings and experiences of a black subject. However, if the same sensitivity discussed above is extended to this case, there is no reason why a white educator cannot make a significant contribution in this area. The problem is that the field of education, like many fields, is not racially diverse. But on the other hand, I find it problematic to think that the 'race issues' should just be left to the black people, so to speak. Also there is a pervasive academic desire to equate race issues with Blackness or Nativeness, whereas a white educator could potentially discuss race in a way which focuses upon the white body and a position of privilege.

13. Should a line be drawn in the presentation of racially charged imagery in the art class, i.e. Should some imagery be not permitted (as 'too racially charged or racist')?

This is an independent decision that should be made with the educators, the students and the parents if the students are very young. This line is not arbitrary but based on the knowledge and maturity of the students. What we must understand is that race is happening everyday, everywhere, and if we choose not to look at it -this does not mean that the issues magically disappear!

14. Have you ever presented your students with such controversial imagery? (If so, describe your intentions, presentation, and students' reactions.)

In a course, I used Robert Mapplethorpe's controversial photos of black male nudes, which many find offensive since they reduce the black male body to an aesthetic object sometimes with the focus specifically on the penis. My discussion of these works was near the end of the course when my students had become aware of the contextual and historical issues within our discussion of race and the racialized body. The students were responsive and able to discuss the images in a way which recalled and developed their understanding of the issues at stake.

15. How does the art education system lack or resist radical change towards inclusivity and pluralism?

There is a lack of racial diversity in the actual body of educators - which not only influences what is taught and how it is taught - but impacts the students' perceptions of who can be in that privileged position of authority. Also, the delineation of a course and the larger position of that course in a degree or diploma program often reflect inherent Eurocentric and patriarchal bias (i.e. in most art history programs the focus is on male artists, 'high art' and western art).

16. Why is there resistance?

Fear! Those who are enjoying the benefits of hegemony are indeed threatened by the thought that their position of privilege was not gained through processes of equality i.e. because they are or were more qualified, more well read, had better job experience than that black man , and if the system shifts, they may be displaced or worse, the biases of their work or ideological position revealed.

17. In your view, how can art educators work to effectively promote the goals of inclusivity?

The field must, first of all, diversify racially; and educators must understand and take into account the complexity of art production and art consumption - while addressing the exclusionary history of western culture and addressing the diversity of their student body.

18. Overall, how did people within the arts (academics, educators, critics,etc.) respond to your efforts in putting up the show?

The guest book from the opening venue in Oshawa is full of people expressing their gratitude for an art exhibition which addressed critical issues - which they felt impacted their daily lives. As you can imagine, this exhibition has engaged many black people and people of color who have previously felt disconnected from Canadian culture and the art exhibitions that have claimed to serve them. Several people have also explored my thesis as a model for future exhibitions that investigate art and identity.

APPENDIX G

CONSENT FORM FOR WORKSHOP AT DOLLARD RECREART

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

This is to state that I participate in a research project conducted by Daphna Leibovici as part of her Master's thesis under the supervision of Professor Elizabeth Sacca, Department of Art Education at Concordia University.

Purpose: I am aware that the purpose of this research is to investigate the teaching of race-related issues in art education.

Procedure: I will participate in an art workshop.

Conditions of Participation:

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from participating at any time without any negative consequences.
- I understand that the participation in this study is confidential - the researcher will know, but not disclose my identity.
- I understand that the data from this study may be published.
- I understand the purpose of this study and know that there is no motive of which I have been informed.

I HAVE STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT. I FREELY CONSENT AND AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH.

Name of parent/guardian _____

Signature _____

Witness signature _____

Date _____

APPENDIX H

STUDENTS' WORKS





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