

Social Issues in the Secondary Art Classroom: Attitudes and Practices of Four Teachers.

Julie Williams

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Art Education

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts (Art Education) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

November 2009

© Julie Williams, 2009



Library and Archives
Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-67152-8
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-67152-8

NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.


Canada

ABSTRACT

Social Issues in the Secondary Art Classroom: Attitudes and Practices of Four Teachers.

Julie Williams

This thesis is a qualitative research study which investigates the current attitudes and practices of four Quebec secondary art educators while addressing social issues in the secondary art curriculum. Using narrative inquiry, three art educators were interviewed in regard to their personal and professional experiences of addressing social issues in the art classroom, along with a self-interview to capture my own attitudes and practices. Interview questions were built around four major themes that I selected because they relate to my own art teaching experience of addressing social issues in the art classroom. The data is comprised of transcripts of interviews wherein the participants relate values, preferences, concerns and practices in the art classroom, when specifically addressing social issues. The analysis consists of compiling and summarizing all of the responses according to each interview theme to identify similarities and differences among the four participants' attitudes and practices.

The findings of this analysis of the interviews, along with connections to related professional and research literature, contribute to my professional knowledge; the outcomes of the research confirm and expand my understanding of an issues-based approach to art education. As a practicing art educator, this inquiry is valuable to me

because I was able to learn from the experiences of other art educators, and to identify several practical recommendations to offer art teachers who want to address social issues in the secondary art classroom.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank my thesis advisor Paul Langdon for his encouragement, support and guidance throughout my graduate studies. Great respect and appreciation to my committee members: Professor Cathy Mullen and Professor Linda Szabad-Smyth for their time and support. I would also like to thank my family and friends who have accompanied me through this exciting journey.

I would also like to thank the participants. When I set out on this adventure, my main research goal was to explore the experiences of good and dedicated secondary art teachers who address social issues in the art classroom. I believe I was fortunate enough to meet and exchange with three experienced and generous secondary art teachers who make the effort on a daily basis to offer students a meaningful art education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Purpose	4
Related literature	6
Methodology	17
Accessibility, participants and selection process	17
Procedures and interview process	17
Data analysis	19
Summary of the interviews and discussion	20
Participants' background information	20
Reasons why participants address social issues in the secondary art classroom	22
Types of social issues currently being addressed by participants	27
Concerns or challenges encountered by participants while addressing social issues in the art classroom	35
Examples of successful lessons used to address social issues in the art classroom (artist, issue, and/or type of lessons that is particularly effective for classroom teaching) and practical recommendations	41
Conclusion	48
Recommendations	52
References	54
Appendix A: Interview guide	58
Appendix B: Transcripts of interviews	60

INTRODUCTION

The thesis topic emerges directly from a personal and professional interest in an issues-based approach to art education, an approach that enables students to study art in the context of social issues. A few years ago, an issues-based approach to art education was introduced to me by Concordia University teachers Christine Stocck and Peter Vietgen. Through their narratives, art projects and class exercises, both teachers helped me to reflect on my art teaching practice, teaching philosophy and the art content I was bringing to the art classroom. I realised that I, like many fellow art educators, tended towards a very traditional outlook of art education. I tended to concentrate a large part of my art teaching towards the teaching of art techniques, principles of design and elements of art and the discussion of master painters. I came to understand how my assumption of what was expected of me as a young art teacher influenced the content I was bringing to the art classroom.

I have furthered my exploration through readings and initiated class art projects that address social issues. Students participated eagerly and the experience was positive and beneficial for both the students and me. Today I am more aware of the content I am bringing to my art classroom but I am still very curious to know what goes on in other teachers' art classrooms in terms of addressing social content in the art curriculum. I believe that I did learn more about the topic of an issues-based approach to art education from fellow art educators' narratives of experiences of addressing social issues in the art classroom.

It is crucial to recognize the work of some Quebec secondary art educators who address social issues in the art classroom because "socially referenced art education programs are not created without struggles" (Milbrandt, 2002, p. 153). It is important to respect art educators "who take risks, sometimes under oppressive conditions, to construct a vision of art education that does not diminish existing forms of educational theory and practices in the art education field" (Giroux cited in Milbrandt, 2002, p. 153). Despite the potential risks involved in addressing social issues in the art curriculum, it is important to understand the potential risks involved in not engaging students in such a discussion.

While the content of art education has evolved, the conditions under which art is taught remain difficult. The content of art has evolved and teachers are strongly encouraged to implement different programs with more ambitious goals than ever. Could it be that art educators want to implement changes like addressing social issues in the art classroom but just don't have the resources to do so and are afraid to set themselves up for failure?

Students who recognise the positive impact of an issues-based approach to art education may be more likely to support art education as adults. According to Linda S. Bradley (1990), research in the field of art education needs to focus on the secondary level. Secondary students need meaningful and relevant experiences in the art classroom. Researchers need to realize that secondary students, later turned adults and parents, will determine the level of importance of art education in the school curriculum in the years ahead (Bradley, 1990). If the art education they receive is

irrelevant, why would they defend the place of art in the school curriculum? In my case, including social issues in the art classroom made the art curriculum significant and dynamic for students thus assuring a safe ground for art education in the years ahead.

I had the privilege to have been helped by two experienced university teachers to understand that art education can be so much more than just color theories. I hope that my investigation of the current attitudes and practices of secondary art educators in regard to addressing social issues in the art curriculum will inspire others to do the same.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this qualitative research thesis is to add to my understanding of my own attitudes and practices of teaching social issues in art education by investigating the attitudes and practices of some other art teachers in Quebec schools. Using narrative inquiry, three secondary art educators were interviewed in regard to their personal and professional experiences of addressing social issues in the art classroom. I also participated in the research process by being interviewed myself. Interview questions were built around four major themes that I have selected because they relate to my own art teaching experience of addressing social issues in the art classroom:

1. Reasons why participants address social issues in the secondary art classroom.
2. Types of social issues currently being addressed by participants.
3. Concerns or challenges encountered by participants while addressing social issues in the art classroom.
4. Examples of successful lessons used to address social issues in the art classroom (artist, issue and type of lessons that are particularly effective for classroom teaching) and practical recommendations.

The primary goal of this research study was to take the information gained from the experiences of secondary art educators and add to my frame of reference in regard to the topic of an issues-based approach to art education and its various aspects. The secondary goal of the study was to broaden my understanding on the topic and reflect on my own beliefs, ideas and art teaching practices.

These exchanges with three professional art teachers helped me to reflect, understand and share with readers my own narrative, improve my art teaching practice and also answer other questions I had on the topic of an issues-based approach to art education. The thesis also highlights, the dynamic here-and-now of teaching art while addressing social issues at the secondary level in the province of Quebec, especially in my community of the South Shore of Montréal where I live and work.

RELATED LITERATURE

In this section, I will introduce readers to literature related to the topic of an issues-based approach to art education in the secondary art classroom and its many aspects by F. Graeme Chalmers (1997), Yvonne Gaudelius and Peg Speirs (2002), Melody K. Milbrandt (2002), Danielle Benoit, Mona Trudel and Jacques-Albert Wallot (2002), Tom Anderson (2000), Ed Check (2002) and Sandra Kay Mims and E. Louis Lankford (1995).

In the article titled Social Issues in Secondary Art Education (1997), F. Graeme Chalmers clearly advocates the importance of addressing social issues in the secondary art classroom. To support his argument, Chalmers includes the work of curriculum theorists J. Miller and W. Seller in the discussion. Art projects addressing social issues have an important place in the secondary school reform movement. In his article, Chalmers clearly explains the various benefits of adopting an issues-based approach to art education. For example, issues-based art projects conducted in the secondary art classroom encourage secondary art students to participate in a dialogue process and in turn change societal roles and norms. A meaningful art education that addresses social issues in the secondary art curriculum can also help students acknowledge that they are dealing with serious issues and with hard work they can make a positive difference not only in the art classroom but also in their school, home and community.

According to Chalmers, if secondary art education is to be meaningful to secondary art students, art educators must not shy away from controversial social issues. To support his argument, Chalmers introduces readers to the words of Vincent Lanier (1969). Nearly 35 years earlier, Lanier, an outspoken champion of social issues in art education argued that almost all that secondary art educators are presently doing in secondary art classrooms was useless. Although Lanier is characterising the late 1960's, I wonder, from my different experiences, if much has changed in the current secondary art classroom? Lanier argues that secondary art students need to examine the "gut issues of their days - war, sex, race, drugs and poverty" (Lanier, 1969, p.314). He suggest that art education needs

new conceptions of modes of artistic behaviour, new ideas of what might constitute the curricula of the art class. These new curricula must be meaningful and relevant to pupils...must engage the guts and hopes of the youngsters and through these excitements provoke intellectual efforts and growth. These new ideas must give the art class a share in the process of exploring social relations and developing alternative models of human behaviour in a quickly changing and, at this point in time quickly worsening social environment (p.314).

According to Chalmers, secondary art educators have a choice to make. They can either choose to teach and reinforce traditional social patterns of power and submission or instead question them. For example, a secondary art educator can identify a social issue relevant to students. With the help of the art educator, students can gather pertinent information about the issue, analyse the gathered data, discuss their feelings and attitudes toward the issue being addressed and then challenge existing views. In turn, secondary art students can successfully learn to negotiate,

discuss and adjust their opinions or assumptions to find possible modes of action regarding the issue discussed in the art classroom.

Over the last 50 years, art education theory and practice have been influenced by the formalist, child-centered, and discipline based approaches to art education. In the book Contemporary Issues in Art Education (2002), Yvonne Gaudelius and Peg Speirs define and discuss how current art education theories (liberatory education, feminist theory, critical pedagogy and social reconstruction for examples) and contemporary practices are now used for understanding art, developing teaching materials, and guiding teaching practices. An issues-based approach to art education is derived from these theoretical foundations to offer a more socially and politically oriented framework for the teaching of art.

At first, I did not believe I would find any specific research studies investigating the current attitudes or teaching practices of art teachers in regard to addressing social issues in the art curriculum. While looking at another author's bibliography, I found Melody K. Milbrandt's (2002) study titled Addressing Contemporary Social Issues in Art Education: a Survey of Public School Art Educators in Georgia. Although the research setting was in the United States, I found the research study very pertinent to my own project because the goal of the study was similar to mine.

Milbrandt's use of a seven-item questionnaire as a survey instrument was very successful and clear. The research demonstrates how important it is for art education to address contemporary social issues within the art curriculum; why social issues are

being addressed through the art curriculum; which types of social issues are currently being discussed in the art classroom; what types of issues are believed to be the most important to teach; concerns or challenges secondary art educators have encountered when addressing social issues; how teacher preparation programs in art education can be improved to better prepare future teachers to deal with social issues and finally what artist, issues and type of lessons are particularly good for addressing societal concerns.

The narrative comments along with descriptive data provided Milbrandt with an informative image of Georgia public school art educators' values, preferences and practices in the art classroom, as well as the school atmosphere in which they teach. Milbrandt concludes that there is general support among Georgia public school art educators for the importance of addressing social issues in the art curriculum. In turn, Georgia public school art educators who participated in this survey were not in total agreement about how and why social issues should be addressed in the art curriculum. Most teachers saw teaching personal responsibility, along with social and civic responsibility as the most important reasons why to address social issues. Over half of the art teachers indicated that they taught art lessons that addressed tolerance or appreciation about culture diversity. The second most often taught issues was violence followed by concerns of mass media. The main challenges art teachers reported included a the lack of time for substantial discussion of issues in the art classroom due to other priorities, a lack of administrative support for the arts and a fear of discussing sensitive issues that might be perceived as controversial and cause parents, administrators or students to react negatively. Through their answers, art

educators also noted that they felt unprepared to discuss various social issues and advocated the need for better training during teachers' preparation programs in the development of successful teaching strategies for addressing social issues in the art curriculum. A multitude of ideas were given when teachers were asked to describe an artist, issue, and type of lessons that they thought were particularly successful to use to address social issues. For example, participants mention the work of Kathe Kollowitz as a great starting point to discuss issues of racism and poverty.

In conclusion, this research study clearly demonstrates the important value of addressing contemporary social issues in the art curriculum. It recommends art educators to take the time to seriously reflect on their values, preferences and practices in the art classroom to help develop a meaningful yet exciting school art education for students. Despite the potential risks involved in addressing social issues in the art curriculum, Milbrandt stresses how it is important for teachers to understand the potential risks involved in not engaging students in such a meaningful discussion.

My research led me to an interesting article titled Regard sur l'itinérance: le Baroque Revisité par les Adolescents by Danielle Benoît, Mona Trudel, and Jacques-Albert Wallot (2002). This article demonstrates how a social issue can successfully be addressed in the secondary art curriculum and how secondary students responded positively to an art project that addressed social issues of homelessness and poverty. In Montreal, as in many Canadian cities, homelessness touches many youngsters. The adolescents attending the College of Montreal are faced with the issue of homelessness everyday, going and coming back from school as homeless adolescents

can be seen on corner streets or near metro stations. According to Benoît, Trudel, and Wallot (2002), witnessing and hearing this reality every day does not necessarily mean students understand it.

Through various means (museum visits, workshops linking art styles to a specific social issue, class discussion initiated by a work of art that addresses a social issue, conferences with social workers, reflective processes, individual and collaborative art projects towards making various artworks dealing with the issues discussed in the art classroom), art educators have helped secondary students discuss art and simultaneously reflect on serious issues of concern with the aim to develop students' awareness.

This art project permitted students to create and reflect on a social issue frequently observed, homelessness, and helped them finally become aware of the issue. According to Benoît, Trudel and Wallot (2002), art offers amazing possibilities in the curriculum to initiate difficult yet crucial discussions. Art can promote change in students' beliefs and views of social issues and help them become critical individuals.

The art project initiated a difficult yet crucial discussion about social issues but permitted secondary students and educators to embark on an amazing yet meaningful art experience. The project contributed to students' better comprehension of the role of art and the artist in society and helped students reflect and modify their beliefs or views on social issues like homelessness. The role of the art teacher was to inform students of social issues and also to help them become critical individuals. Are other

Quebec secondary art educators addressing social issues in the art classroom? What are their actual practices, concerns and attitudes in regard to addressing social issues in the art classroom? What are their challenges?

This project, like few others, clearly demonstrates that social issues are successfully discussed in a Quebec secondary art classroom. In my research process, my participants were asked to briefly describe an artist, issue, and type of lessons they think are particularly good for addressing social issues. What social issues are being discussed in the South Shore of Montreal secondary schools? Is poverty one of them? How do secondary art teachers select the social issues they will address in the art classroom? What other social issues are being discussed in the secondary art classroom?

In Real Lives: Art Teachers and the Culture of School, Tom Anderson (2000) sets out on an amazing journey across the United States to investigate what it truly means to be an art teacher today. As a result, Anderson offers readers a detailed narrative and detailed description of one day in the life of six art educators who teach various levels in different settings and who favour different teaching practices and attitudes. From the exchanges with the participants, the author offers major teaching insights, motivations and frustrations or concerns, common instructional strategies, discipline issues, techniques, classroom routine and ideas of lesson plans.

The main goal of the author was first to explore the narratives of good and dedicated art teachers and the meaning they attach to their experiences. In offering readers a

detailed description of narratives of good art teachers, the author paints a realistic picture of what it really means to teach art. Throughout the book, the author invites both preservice students and teachers to reflect and discuss what they believe counts in the world of teaching art. "What I have attempted in this narrative is not only to convey the story of six art teachers, but also to give a sense about what it means to be an art teacher (p. 10)".

Interview questions used by Anderson were based on various themes from the personal domain, the social domain and the professional domain. The author is honest to inform readers that he was the instrument of selection in these narratives, determining what was put in and what was left out: "it's my own sensibility, intuition, my informed sense of what's right and true in the larger context of art education that was the primary interpretive instrument (p. 9)".

From his careful observations and listening to the different narratives of the six art teachers, Anderson concludes by listing various common concerns and issues:

1. Bureaucracy still has an important impact on the teacher's practice.
2. Students today are not different from the past and still share similar values, beliefs and interests.
3. Art educators still teach today because they deeply care about their students and want to see them succeed.
4. Most art educators believe that "making art is an act of intelligence and that it should center the school curriculum (p. 113)".

5. "Teachers' most common educational goal is helping students achieve self-worth through making art. But the means for achieving this end are as varied as the teachers themselves, incorporating many forms of intellectual activity, skills development, and creative expression (p. 113)."
6. One fundamental element of a good art program is a "caring, talented, and dedicated teacher. It isn't the curriculum that makes a successful art program, it's the teacher who puts it into practice (p. 113)".

It was after reading In the Trenches by Ed Check (2002), a chapter in the book Contemporary Issues in Art Education (2002), that I understood how art teachers face many challenges and concerns while discussing sensitive social issues in the art curriculum. The author narrates and reflects on life events to explain how past experiences as a child, learner and art teacher influenced and modeled his present way of teaching and also how his identity as a gay man influences the content of his art curriculum.

Art teachers today face a multitude of challenges in their teaching practice. The concerns include not only effects of the structures of schooling, lack of administrative support, lack of teacher preparation, job abuse and fatigue but can also include identity concerns. Even after studying successful ways to address social issues in the art classroom, Check still considered approaching issues of sexual identity as a challenge, dangerous and inappropriate because it hit too close to home.

Today, I understand more clearly how teachers' individual identities come into play in current teaching practices. From various exchanges with fellow teachers and from different observations, I can acknowledge how past experiences, identity, values, assumptions and social, political or religious beliefs can have a true influence on the art curriculum and also guide teaching practices and how educational decisions are made because the decisions made on a daily basis as an art teacher are often value-laden.

This chapter clearly helped me understand challenges and concerns art teachers face in teaching art in general but also while addressing social issues in the art curriculum. I believe that the identity of the secondary art educators I have questioned for this research study played an important part in their answers.

One of the readings that had an impact on the development of the research project was Time, Money and the New Art Education: Nationwide Investigation by Sandra Kay Mims and E. Louis Lankford (1995). The lack of time has never been a significant issue in my teaching practice so this article was extremely useful in understanding why my participants mainly discussed how the lack of time in various forms (lack of time for substantial discussion of social issues in the art classroom due to other priorities, lack of time to research topics prior to teaching, lack of time to research good information about artists or good lesson plans that explore significantly social issues) was a significant challenge they faced while addressing social issues in the art classroom.

The study provides readers with descriptive, empirical evidence to make an assessment of art educators' practices and inform about actual prevailing conditions of working art teachers. According to Mims and Lankford (1995), significant variables, especially time, space, money and lack of administrative support, have a direct impact on working conditions, patterns of art teaching practices, art curriculum content and instructional decision making in the art classroom. This research study helps readers understand how many variables, especially time, determine how art is planned and taught in schools. Art teachers are provided very little planning time; art teachers perceive themselves to be undervalued in the school curriculum; and are losing contact hours with students. Art educators lack time for planning, preparing and teaching because most of their time is taken by other tasks like room set-up, getting materials ready, equipment maintenance and art displays in the school. While most teachers lack lesson plans that directly address social issues, the art teacher may not have adequate time for designing lesson plans.

According to Mims and Lankford (1995), while the content of art education has expanded, the conditions under which art is taught remain difficult. Because the content of art education has changed and evolved, teachers are encouraged to implement programs with more ambitious goals than ever before. Art teachers make pedagogical choices and set priorities based upon their own particular circumstances. Time greatly affects the practices of secondary art teachers and addressing social issues in the art curriculum can be a harder task.

METHODOLOGY

Accessibility, participants and selection process

In 2005, I conducted a pilot research study where a questionnaire was used as a survey instrument to investigate the current attitudes and practices of secondary art teachers while addressing social issues through the art education curriculum. Eight secondary art educators out of 69 answered the questionnaire and a few participants expressed an interest in continuing in the research process by sharing their narratives in regard to adopting an issues-based approach to art education. Only three participants out of the eight were selected to participate in the thesis research. All participants were given pseudonyms.

Procedures and interview process

According to D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly (2000), the best way to understand the field of education is to investigate different types of experiences. "Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. Narrative inquiry is stories lived and told" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 20).

According to Irving Seidman (1999), the purpose of an in-depth interviewing is not to get the right answers to questions, but to truly understand the different experiences of

other people and the meaning they make of them. For my research, I used a semi-structured interview format to guide the participants in openly discussing their personal and professional experiences of addressing social issues in the art classroom. To insure a high level of comfort, each participant was interviewed in the location of their choice on two occasions to obtain an informative image of teachers' values, preferences, concerns, and practices in the art classroom, as well as the school atmosphere in which they work when addressing social issues in the art curriculum.

Interview questions were open-ended and were built around four major themes that I have selected because they related to my own experience with an issues-based approach to art education:

1. Reasons why participants address social issues in the secondary art classroom.
2. Types of social issues currently being addressed by participants.
3. Concerns or challenges encountered by participants while addressing social issues in the art classroom.
4. Examples of successful lessons used to address social issues in the art classroom (artist, issue, and type of lessons that are particularly effective for classroom teaching) and practical recommendations.

Recording of interviews involved tape-recording and note-taking to achieve the best accuracy and quality of data. This method of interview proved to be beneficial for both the participants and me, because there was a good record of the interviews and the narratives were treated accurately and responsibly. The interviews were originally conducted in French and I translated the data from French to English.

Data analysis

To avoid the inevitable tendency with data to over-collect and under analyse, I followed the guidelines of Irving Seidman (1998) and Jerry Wellington (2000) to analyse the data collected from interviews, that is: breaking down the data into components; carving the data into manageable units to create categories; and investigating patterns (similarities and differences) of recurring themes to make sense of the data. Only four themes have been selected to make sure that content will be detailed and rigorous. The interview guide is presented in Appendix A and the complete transcripts of the four interviews are presented in Appendix B.

Similar to Anderson (2000), I am the instrument of selection in these narratives and I am the one who selected what was the most important to put in and leave out in the writing of the summary. I trusted my intuition and my informed sense of what's right and true in the larger context of an issues-based approach to art education to guide me in the process. Readers are reminded that they can easily find a complete and detailed version of the transcripts of the participants' interviews including my own in Appendix B.

SUMMARY OF THE INTERVIEWS AND DISCUSSION

My main research goal was to explore the experiences of secondary art teachers who address social issues in the art classroom. I was fortunate enough to meet and exchange with three different yet dedicated, experienced and generous secondary art teachers who take the time and make the effort to offer students a meaningful and relevant art education. Also included in the research project is my own narrative of addressing social issues in the art classroom.

The interview responses are summarized and written in narrative form to facilitate the reading process. The participants' quotes are presented in bold and italic font while my summary narrative is presented in normal font to help differentiate the two sources. Here is a summary of the four distinct narratives of Melissa, Gail, Genevieve (all pseudonyms) and myself. Following the presentation of the data is a discussion that connects each of the four analysis themes to related literature.

Participants' background information.

All participants are women teaching art education at the secondary level in the South Shore region of Montreal, Quebec. Despite a similar interest in an issues-based approach to art education, each art teacher has a different background and a distinct narrative.

Melissa

Melissa is 26 years old and is the youngest participant. She has been teaching for the past four years and is presently teaching secondary grade levels 3, 4 and 5. She really enjoys her working environment because it is a small private school where students are not artistically gifted. Giving the arts its rightful place is challenging and stimulates her. Melissa completed a bachelor's degree in art education at UQAM (Université du Québec à Montréal) and does not have an interest in pursuing her education at a higher level for now.

Gail

Gail is 31 years old and has been teaching at the secondary level (grade levels 1 and 2) for the past six years. Gail completed her studies in France and obtained a bachelor's degree in fine arts. Upon her arrival in Canada, she completed her provincial teaching requisites to teach in Quebec. She also completed a D.E.S.S (Diplôme d'Études Supérieur Spécialisées) in art education to gain more academic qualifications.

Genevieve

Genevieve is the most experienced art teacher of the group. She has been teaching for 20 years and has been introducing secondary students to the discipline of art for the past 18 years. She completed a bachelor's degree in art education at UQAM

(Université du Québec à Montréal) and also completed a certificate in alternative learning programs because she believed it would facilitate her teaching practice. She also completed a master's degree in school planning and management. She is presently teaching secondary grade levels 1, 2 and 3.

Julie

I am 32 years old and I am presently teaching art education to secondary grade levels 4 and 5 students. I have a diploma of collegial studies in fine arts from Champlain Regional College (Saint-Lambert campus). I also completed a bachelor's degree in fine arts majoring in painting and drawing from Concordia University. I am now completing my master's degree in fine arts in the field of art education also from Concordia University. I have been teaching fine arts for the past eight years in various community and school settings.

Reasons why participants address social issues in the secondary art classroom.

Melissa

During the interview, Melissa elaborated that addressing social issues in the art classroom helps students to understand some artworks better. In her opinion, the discussion of social issues is a great motivator for students and that is one of the major reasons why she addresses social issues in her art classroom. Melissa is convinced

that the discussion of social issues is beneficial to students and opens up their minds to different views of the world that surrounds them.

Often, if a social theme is explored as a starting point for a class art project, the response is better. Different social contexts and actual events discussed in the media are often good starting points and help students develop their own ideas in regard to those social themes because they have previous knowledge.

Gail

Gail addresses social issues in her curriculum for similar reasons but her main goal is to raise her students' awareness. During the interview, Gail honestly shared that addressing social issues was not her priority at the beginning of her teaching career.

It took me a few years before addressing social issues in my art classroom because I was more concerned about how to handle my students and my classroom and also in finding good art class projects that would initially peek an interest in my students.

After gaining more experience in the field of art education, she constructed her own lesson plans that directly address social issues because she was convinced that her students gained more insight than only reading an article on a similar subject. She is convinced that students directly benefits from the discussion of social issues in the art classroom and it is the main reason why she continues to do it despite its many challenges.

For example, if students build a maquette on a subject like peace, they will work and physically get involved in the creative process. Even during a class discussion, they will have to share their opinion. I believe they benefit from that. They are active in the different learning processes and I believe it is more enjoyable for them.

Genevieve

Genevieve addresses social issues for various reasons in her classroom. She believes that it is important to include the discussion of social issues in the secondary classroom because it opens up the mind of students to new horizons, it helps students become aware of the many possibilities art can bring and it guides students in discovering new and different working methods.

I believe that art can become an important vehicle in helping students see something that they would have not noticed without their artistic eye.

Genevieve also addresses social issues because students get truly excited and involved in the process because it piques an interest. She is convinced that students directly benefit from the discussion of social issues because it opens up their minds, forges their critical abilities and helps them find answers to questions they have on the world that surrounds them. In her experience, students respond differently to images that are socially charged. She believes it can benefit students by inviting them to see the other side of the coin and another angle of an issue. During the discussion, Genevieve argues that she addresses social issues for various reasons but she is conscious that students do not benefit all the same way.

In my opinion, I believe the discussion of social issues truly impacts only one third of my students, often students who are more sensitive. Students do not risk going further even when their initial ideas are good. In some cases, students leave the classroom and I truly think they will not even remember what happened in the art classroom. I think students often have difficulties implicating themselves. Some students are surprised to see social issues in the art classroom but are still excited because it is different. Others often don't have a positive reaction because

of their preconceived notion of what an art class should be. They have a traditional view of the fine arts.

Julie

I have been addressing social issues in my art classroom for various reasons but mainly because I believe it benefits my students and me as an art teacher. I believe that an issues-based approach to art education, despite many challenges, offers students new yet meaningful learning opportunities in the art classroom. Students are given the opportunity to openly discuss and reflect critically on what is going on in the world outside the classroom. Not only are they gaining more knowledge in regard to social activism in the arts, they are also invited to examine, interpret and criticize past and present artworks from different artists. I often invite students to collectively brainstorm to develop ideas for a work of art based on the needs of the adolescent community and their research regarding various issues. In the process, I believe that students can learn to understand how knowledge and meaning can be constructed in various ways. Students also learn how art has various purposes including the potential to educate the general public and that their artistic contributions can have a direct impact on the local community by becoming a catalyst for change. Finally, students benefit from an issues-based approach to art education by learning about themselves (values, beliefs, assumptions, attitudes and personal goals) in the process of dialogue and art making.

Discussion

After analysing the participants' responses to the interview questions, it is evident that we all share a similar vision when it comes to the various reasons why we address social issues in the art classroom. Participants are aware of the various benefits of addressing social issues in the art classroom and also share similar goals. Similar to Milbrandt's (2002) research, participants see teaching personal responsibility, along with social and civic responsibility as the most important rationales for addressing social issues in the secondary art classroom. Participants also address social issues in the art classroom to help students become more aware of their surroundings and to give students the tools to make critical decisions in artworks or in life. Sheri Klein (1992) argues that a socially relevant art education can help students to become critical readers and producers of images.

Participants openly testify to the value and importance of addressing social issues. According to Chalmers (1997), social action projects conducted in the secondary art classroom encourage secondary art students to participate in a dialogue process and help them focus on a positive change. A meaningful art education that addresses social issues in the secondary art curriculum can help students acknowledge that they are dealing with serious issues and through their work they can make a positive difference not only in the art classroom but also in their immediate environment (Chalmers, 1997; Gaudelius and Speirs, 2002; Milbrandt, 2002 & 2005).

Types of social issues currently being addressed by participants.

Melissa

Melissa mainly addresses environmental issues in her classroom because she feels the most comfortable addressing this type of issues. When it comes time to select what type of social issues will be discussed during the school year, she sometimes offers students the possibility of choosing the issues they want to investigate. Students mainly choose issues like A.I.D.S., censorship and drugs. The inconvenience she has noticed of letting students choose their own issue is that students do not further their investigation and stay at the first level. She is aware that her values and beliefs play an important part in the selection process.

If the issue does not interest me at all, it will be harder for me to enjoy it and in turn share that interest with my students. I believe that environmental issues are important to address in the secondary art classroom but sometimes I feel that my students are tired of hearing about it!

When I asked Melissa what type of social issues she felt less comfortable addressing in the art curriculum, she quickly answered that she did not see herself discussing with her students issues that dealt with sexuality or sexual orientation.

I would not mind addressing issues of racism but I would not address issues of sexual orientation like homosexuality in my art classroom because I would not know how to approach it. One of my students was openly gay and despite it, I did not know where to start or how to approach the discussion of such an issue.

Melissa continued the interview by adding that if she had no choice in addressing a sensitive issue, she would first do some research on the topic or speak to a colleague. She would also slowly introduce the topic to her students and see what their initial response would be. Melissa is aware of the different issues her secondary students must face in her school environment and her community. Racism and poverty are not issues her students must deal with. Homosexuality and anorexia are the most discussed issues but she is not allowed to discuss them in her art classroom. During the interview, Melissa added that homosexuality creates a certain tension in the adolescent community.

I must add that anorexia is becoming a bigger issue in our school. We discuss various issues that adolescent students must face during school meetings or school board meetings. Anorexia is becoming a bigger issue in our school community and I am not allowed to discuss it or approach this issue in my art classroom. The reasoning is that because my students are dealing with this issue, they are afraid it will degenerate. Instead I discuss the theme of nutrition and food waste.

Gail

Similar to Melissa, Gail is aware how her values, beliefs and past experiences influence her teaching practice and art content. Also similar to Melissa, she leaves the selection of issues that will be eventually discussed in the art classroom up to her students but she was honest to admit that it is not always an easy task to do.

I like to leave the themes of the different class art projects up to the students. What I love to do, and it is not evident to do in a classroom, is to leave the theme and the choice of materials up to the students' liking. I also invite students to work on personal projects during class time. The student really decides every aspect of the work but at the same time I also guide them in the process and also make them

believe they have plenty of choices. That is how I like to work. It is not evident because it demands a lot of planning. But if I impose a specific yet large theme like the environment, I will ask my students to find sub-themes that interest them personally, giving them a certain saying in the choices otherwise I feel it becomes too moralistic.

Gail also enjoys addressing issues in regard to the respect of differences (culture, gender, race and class) because those are issues her students must face in her school establishment. Many of her students come from different cultural backgrounds. Gail never addresses sensitive issues like censorship or homosexuality in her classroom because it makes her uneasy and she is truly afraid that it will create a conflict. After a long pause and asking for some time to think about the question, she replied that she has never addressed sensitive issues in her art classroom. If she was to do so, she believes she would first ask her school administration what they think about addressing sensitive issues because she does not want to create a conflict. She would also consult the psychoeducator of her school for some advice.

Thinking about it, I would like to address sensitive issues, maybe use issues of differences to introduce the more sensitive issues. I would slowly invite them to discuss issues like homosexuality gradually, or I would probably do a concrete example that specifically made a reference to that sensitive issue, if I see nobody is interested in speaking about it. I could also combine my work and the one from my colleague in moral studies. Work in collaboration with other colleagues. Use a song that refers to the sensitive issue in question to make it not as sensitive, to desensitize it.

Genevieve

As a consultant on the school board environment committee and also a member of the recycling committee in her school, Genevieve similarly concentrates her main efforts and time discussing environmental issues in her classroom. She feels most

comfortable, secure and experienced in addressing these issues. She explained how her students also shared their opinion repeatedly in regard to different environmental issues found in the school environment so she was sure they would enjoy art projects that dealt with this type of issue. The discussion of sensitive issues seemed to be a difficult topic at first to discuss during the interview. Genevieve openly admitted that she does not address social issues that are considered sensitive for various reasons. For example, when her students express their opinions, she often has to take the role of the police officer and remind them to stay calm.

I believe that when we discuss sensitive social issues, students can have different opinions. In my experience, when we deal with sensitive issues in the classroom, it creates a discomfort in the classroom; creates a split in the classroom and even serious feuds. For an art teacher, I believe it is very difficult to handle. I try to address social issues that are lively and will touch every student to a certain level. Recently we have discussed issues of class and it was very difficult because I did not know which student was on welfare or poor and sometimes children can be cruel without wanting to be. There are things you can't expect and I don't address sensitive issues because it is too delicate to handle. I believe it is easier to address sensitive social issues when you collaborate with a teacher from another field. Once I worked with the French teacher who addressed sensitive issues from different literatures and it was helpful because she had more knowledge on the issues at hand. We collaborated together and the students had to respond visually with an image to the text that dealt with different social issues.

Genevieve is aware of the different issues her students must face in her school establishment and community, but she explained how it is not always easy to address those particular issues. She believes that it is important for students to accept themselves in their immediate environment and express themselves openly but the task is not always easy for teachers.

It's very bad. Everybody is tired and I believe the real issue here is to find ways to collaborate and reunite together in different social contexts and open up to the ideas of others. Putting all of our ideas together will prove useful and will concretely show that great things can happen. The issues that my students face today are different than those my students had to address ten years ago! When I started my career, I did not address social issues in the art classroom. Students used to discuss social issues that mattered to them while working but it was not part of my art curriculum. I believe that with the arrival of serious environmental issues like recycling, the use of harmful pesticides and concrete solutions, it was important to do so. Ten years ago, my classroom was made of only Caucasian students. Now it is different. Now, I have students from different cultural backgrounds and when we discuss various issues or different artworks, they have a different view because of their cultural references that differ from ours. Issues of war or violence for example are not discussed the same way because of each student's background, values or opinions. It changes a lot. It's different and we go along as it goes, but students are reminded that there is always something to learn out of it!

Julie

I have addressed different issues in my art classroom like poverty, issues of physical or cultural differences, the effects of mass media and cultural identity. I select the different social issues that will be discussed in the art classroom during the school year. I believe it is easier to select the issues myself because it is easier to prepare the materials adequately. For the first time this year, I will be teaching fine arts to secondary grade levels 4 and 5 students and believe I will let them choose what issue they want to investigate. I trust my students to be respectful and mature enough to respect the other students' choice of topic. I believe that all social issues are important to address with students. It is not really the specific social issue that is important but really the reflective, critical and artistic processes that surround the whole issue that is crucial. Social issues that are important to my students should be important to me also. I have never addressed issues of racism, homophobia or sexism in the art classroom. I do not feel uncomfortable but I want to address those issues in

the best manner possible and have yet to complete my research in regard to these issues. Any lesson plans or art projects would be considered. I believe that the best way to address a delicate or more sensible issue is to first acknowledge and recognize that it is a sensible and difficult issue and not to pretend as educators that we have all the answers. I believe that if a controversial issue is addressed in a respectable manner and in a calm atmosphere with the proper approach, I believe it can be a success. As art teachers, it is important to recognize that the art education field still has many challenges

Discussion

Participants address a variety of different types of social issues in their art classroom. Participants are aware of the different issues their students must face in their school establishment or community, but they individually explained how it is not always easy and simple to address these issues. Participants feel most comfortable addressing environmental issues because it is least likely to generate conflicts among students. Most of the participants are aware that they are unprepared and truly uncomfortable in addressing sensitive issues like racism, sexism or homophobia but would do it if they would be presented a good lesson plan. During the school year, most of the participants try to give some freedom to students in choosing the issues they want to investigate but they are aware that their personal values, beliefs and opinions influence the selection process.

When art teachers adopt an issues-based approach to art education, different types of issues can be openly discussed in the art classroom. From the interviews, the participants agree that students participate eagerly to the different issues-based art projects when the issues discussed in class matter to them. In his work, Anderson (1985) theorizes that "students will be much more likely to follow through meaningfully if the subject matter at hand is of central importance rather than only peripherally related to their real lives" (Anderson, 1985, p. 17). Klein (1992) also promotes a necessary change in art education to make art education truly meaningful in the lives of students.

Lanier (1969) argues that secondary art students need to examine the "gut issues of their days - war, sex, race, drugs and poverty" (Lanier cited in Chalmers, 1997, p. 314). I believe that the participants, including myself, are aware that secondary students need to discuss sensitive issues like sexism, homophobia, racism but the task seems to be more difficult than expected and good art lesson plans on these issues seem hard to find.

In recent years, exposure to contemporary art and theory has given art educators the occasion to reconsider and modify their teaching practice in the art classroom. According to Gaudelius and Speirs (2002), traditional theories are not always the most adequate when art educators want to discuss contemporary artworks and social issues. Instead, an issues-based approach to art education looks for social issues as one of many points of departure for understanding art, interpreting art, developing curricula and guiding art practices in the classroom (Gaudelius and Speirs, 2002). In

Addressing Contemporary Social Issues in Art Education: a Survey of Public School Art Educators in Georgia Social (2002), Milbrandt lists highly respected art educators who address different types of social issues as important content in art education. For example, the study of art in popular culture to help students become critical participants has been addressed by L. Chapman (1978), Tom Anderson (1990), D. E. Fehr (1993) and C. E. B. Coleman (1998). In their work, G. Collins and R. Sandell (1992), E. Garber (1996) and E. Ament (1998) have discussed the importance of addressing gender issues in art education. Issues of diversity, race and class addressed in the art classroom have been valued by art educators including D.W. Ecker (1990), L. Lampela (1995) and Graeme Chalmer (1996). Environmental issues in art education have been investigated by art educators P. Taylor (1997), Melody K. Milbrandt (1998), and D. Krug and N. Cohen-Evron (2000). Issues of censorship in art education have been addressed by Lorrie Blair (1996). Through various means like museum visits, workshops linking art styles to a specific social issue, class discussion initiated by a work of art that addresses a social issue, conferences with social workers, reflective processes, individual and collaborative art projects towards making various artworks dealing with the issues discussed in the art classroom, art educators have helped students discuss art and simultaneously reflect on serious issues of concern with the aim to develop students' awareness.

Concerns or challenges encountered by participants while addressing social issues in the art classroom.

Melissa

Melissa never faced serious challenges in addressing social issues in the art classroom. She believes it is due to the fact that she does not address controversial issues. One challenge she had to face was not the negative comments from parents, coworkers or school administrators but surprisingly a lack of interest from her students.

One problem that I have encountered or noticed many times is that students lose interest in talking about social issues. They get tired of hearing about it, not only in my classroom but also in other subject areas. A serious problem I have encountered while addressing social issues are the students themselves and their lack of involvement or motivation.

Melissa is convinced that the lack of involvement and motivation of her students is probably due to their lack of maturity. She believes that her secondary students lack maturity to discuss social issues. During the interview, Melissa elaborated on how a group dynamic can have a serious impact on what type of discussion can be successfully achieved in the art classroom. Melissa believes also that the time she has to plan, research or address social issues in the art curriculum is not adequate.

With the changes from the reform, I maybe see my students once a week. I do not have enough time to plan extraordinary class projects or elaborated lesson plans. I do not have time to do all this. I can maybe do one or two projects on a period of a few months. When I was in high school, it was not the case. I used to go to art class maybe four times a week!

Melissa claims that a lack of information about artists or good lesson plans that explore significant social issues is also problematic for a busy art teacher. Explaining how the internet is now a crucial tool for an art teacher in finding good pedagogical projects or images with a socially charged content, Melissa unexpectedly shared that if she could find one good lesson plan on how to discuss homosexuality with students, she would probably address this sensitive issue in her art classroom.

Gail

Gail faces very similar challenges including a lack of involvement from her students even though she truly believes they are mature enough to seriously discuss social issues in the art classroom and have the skills to do it successfully. A lack of information about artists or good lesson plans that explore social issues is also another challenge Gail faces. Gail believes that all those challenges are directly caused by the biggest challenge that is a lack of time to plan, research or address social issues in the art curriculum.

I do not believe we have adequate time because in a public school, teachers have a lot of different responsibilities and extra duties. Teachers are directly responsible for some students' personal files, pick up attendances and personally bring them to the school secretary. We have extra responsibilities because we don't have enough support staff. Teachers adapt and we have to do everything. I personally believe we have too much to do and in turn we can't really concentrate on our discipline. Another challenge in the past was that I taught at so many different levels and it was hard and very demanding. If I had more time I could do both: administrative work and work in regard to my field.

Genevieve

Genevieve faces challenges that are similar to the two previous participants but her main challenge is first the values of her students and their parents in regard to particular issues and what art education should and should not be.

The values of my students have always been my main challenge because they differ so much. My students do not share the same values in regard to the field of fine arts in general.... it often causes divergence. The fact that my students do not share the same values often creates a kind of tension during class discussions while addressing social issues. It is often difficult to handle. Sometimes it can be surprising and give great results but it is still a lot of work. In my case, the parents of my students do not consider art to be a priority.

Despite her extensive experience in the field of art education, Genevieve is saddened by the fact that she sometimes believes that her students are not mature enough to seriously discuss social issues in the art classroom. She believes that this lack of maturity is due to the fact that today's teenagers are simply not interested or open to what is going on elsewhere in the world. Genevieve believes that this adolescent generation is very individualist. She also believes that there is an evident lack of information about artists or good lesson plans that explore social issues. Genevieve believes this lack of good resources is due to a lack of interest from other art teachers in the region and that this approach is not popular enough in the field.

I still believe that this approach is not popular enough here. It is very hard to have complete lesson plans. Accessibility is also an issue when we want to meet people who share the same interest of addressing social issues in the art classroom.

Julie

From my experience, the lack of time has not always been a challenge in my art teaching practice. Sometimes I lack time to discuss in a thorough manner social issues in the art classroom due to other priorities. I sometimes lack time to research topics or new lesson plans because information about artists or good lesson plans that explore significant social issues are not always easy to find. From my different experiences, I believe that secondary students are mature enough to discuss seriously social issues but they need someone to facilitate the process and show them how to research critically the proper information. I believe that if they are not given the opportunity early on to build a critical mind, the process will take longer to do in the future. I would rather have a student with an opinion that is contradictory to mine, than a student that has none or follows the crowd which is often the case in the adolescent community. In my experiences, students demonstrated that they were mature enough by listening to others without judgement, by being open minded to the comments of others, by staying attentive and asking good questions even if it was done in a humorous tone. I believe that the time teachers have to plan, research and address social issues in the art classroom is never adequate. It has always been my opinion that you learn more about the many aspects of teaching by practicing it, rather than from books. I also believe that a lot of teachers have extra administrative duties and can't really concentrate on the actual art discipline. Time is a luxury. I do not lack information of artists, resources or lesson plans in regard to addressing social issues in the art classroom, because this topic has been constantly in my life for the past few years. Over the years, I found the stories of others who attempted a similar

task and were successful. I also found great resources or books that covered every aspect of the topic like Art for Life (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005) and Contemporary Issues in Art Education (Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002). I sympathise with inexperienced art teachers who wish to attempt such a task of addressing social issues in the art classroom. It can be difficult and overwhelming to find proper information when time is such a luxury in the school culture.

Discussion

Participants face some similar challenges but also share different concerns in their art practice while addressing social issues. The lack of time to plan, research and address adequately social issues is the most significant challenge the other participants face while addressing social issues in the secondary art classroom. The lack of information about artists or good lesson plans that explore significant social issues is also an issue for all the participants. Participants sometimes fear the discussion of sensitive issues that might be perceived as controversial and cause parents, students or the school administrators to react negatively.

Other concerns and challenges are due to the working environment, context and many variables particular to the participant's situation. Significant variables, including time and the maturity level of students, seem to affect how art educators do their jobs including how art is planned and taught in the art classroom.

Participants shared challenges and concerns similar to Milbrandt's (2002) participants. In her research, Milbrandt (2002) explained that challenges art teachers reported included the lack of time for substantial discussion of issues in the art classroom due to other priorities like meeting objectives of the Georgia Quality Core Curriculum for the Visual Arts. A lack of administrative support for the arts was not a real concern for these participants. A fear of discussing sensitive issues that might be perceived as controversial and cause parents or administrators to react negatively was more of a challenge for some of the participants. Art educators also noted that they felt unprepared to discuss various social issues and advocated the need for development of effective teaching strategies or lesson plans for successfully addressing social issues in the art curriculum.

Sally (1992), Mims and Lankford (1995) investigate existing conditions and patterns of art teaching practices related to various variables like time and money and their impact on curriculum content and instructional decision making. Both research studies inform about actual prevailing working conditions and teaching practices of secondary art educators.

I believe secondary art educators face a multitude of challenges and concerns such as a lack of time, administrative support or resources while teaching art in general but also while addressing social issues in the art classroom. I am convinced that many variables affect the curricular decision process of secondary art teachers including a combination of external influences (curriculum framework, parents, tradition), interactive influences (money, supplies, class size, students, students attitudes and

assumptions of what art education should be) and internal influences (art teacher's identity, personal interests, values and beliefs, past experiences as child, learner and teacher, abilities, concerns and personal assumptions of what secondary art education should be).

Examples of successful lessons used to address social issues in the art classroom (artist, issue, and/or type of lessons that are particularly effective for classroom teaching) and practical recommendations.

Melissa

Melissa briefly described a few issues-based art projects that had been successful with her secondary students. Melissa recommends the discussion of graffiti art with students to initially pique an interest in students and successfully grab their attention in the aim to pursue other similar class art projects that address social issues. At the beginning of her career, she used the work of artist Keith Haring to discuss the role of the activist artist and how his artwork was linked to the issue of A.I.D.S. During the interview, she also described another project that consists of encouraging students to collaborate together in small groups to create a life-sized costume made from recycled materials. Melissa also recommends discussing the work of art titled the Meat Dress by Canadian artist Jana Sterbak if one desires to initiate a dynamic and lively discussion in the art classroom about food waste, starvation and poverty and at the same time develop the critical abilities of students.

For this class art project, I showed the artwork titled the Meat Dress and it caused a lively yet interesting discussion in the classroom. A lot of the students saw that piece for the first time and they were appalled. Students' comments ranged from "It's so disgusting!!!" to "The dress was made from raw meat, it must smell awful!" Following the students initial reactions, I shared with them that a lot of museum visitors who saw that piece often had the same reaction to it. The students continued talking about the piece and slowly started making interesting links by adding that people around the world were dying from starvation.

Before concluding the interview, I invited Melissa to share recommendations for teachers who wish to address social issues for the first time in the art curriculum. In this instance, Melissa recommendations were in regard to the time factor and the inconsistent level of maturity of students (age appropriateness).

Time is important and it is a rare commodity even if you are not even addressing social issues in the art classroom. If you decide to address social issues, don't wait until the last minute! If you decide to do a project with recycled materials, the teacher must take into consideration an adequate time period for students to collect. In my practice, students needed more than two weeks to collect enough materials for the different projects. Don't wait until the last minute! Another recommendation is to make sure that the class art projects that address social issues are age appropriate. Some students depending on their age group are not always interested in discussing serious social issues, even if it should be a concern for everyone.

Gail

Gail described an interesting issues-based art project on the environment that she had done with her students on the environment. After a brainstorming session, students teamed up in small groups and selected one sub-theme linked to the environment to investigate in a diptych: one side of the composition had to deal with the negative aspects of the issue and the other side had to refer to the various solutions one could actively take to remedy the situation.

We live in a province where we don't have to pay for our water consumption but the negative side is that we are wasting a lot of water. There are a lot of repercussions linked to that situation. It was very interesting to see each team's artwork. Some covered one side of the issue with a piece of paper and the viewer had to lift it up to see that section of the piece. Each team had the same large size format of paper to work on but they could modify it, cut it into various shapes to do their piece. Students were allowed to paint, use collage and draw. They had more than six periods to work on that class art project. At the end, students' approaches to that issue was very different from one team to another and students really enjoyed the project. Difficulties arose during different stages of the project but I believe that students enjoyed it anyway because they were actively involved in the creative process. That same project could easily be done individually but the students really enjoyed collaborating together.

Gail recommends teachers who wish to address social issues for the first time take adequate time to prepare. According to her, preparation is crucial when adopting an issues-based approach to art education. She also recommends leaving some choices up to the students because it permits students to have ownership of the socially oriented theme and get truly involved in the different learning processes.

Genevieve

As a true activist in her school establishment when it comes to the immediate preservation of her students' environment, Genevieve decided to discuss a project that had been successful with students every year. For secondary art teachers who wish to address environmental issues for the first time in the art classroom, Genevieve strongly recommends looking at the work, career and commitment of Quebec artist and activist Armand Vaillancourt.

I personally love what Armand Vaillancourt does with recycled materials. His sculptures are simple or simply symbolic, amazing and are very beautiful. His commitment is also amazing. He collects a lot of things and he does amazing

compositions from all these disparate elements. I often use his work and his philosophy to build my own projects. I use his artworks made from recycle materials as an example to show my students what can be done and how beautiful it can be. I believe he is the best because he gets close to the students also. He is also involved in many school projects which demonstrate that he is accessible. He talks like the students. He is fun, open, and always happy. His message is clear to students: recycle things to make other beautiful things in your life.

In summary, Genevieve initiates her students to the art project by first showing the different artworks made of recycled materials by Armand Vaillancourt. During the interview, Genevieve elaborated on the art process of the artist and the act of collecting different materials like car parts for one sculpture. From that introduction and after explaining the art philosophy of Armand Vaillancourt, she invites students to collect recycled materials from home or the school cafeteria and build a small sculpture made from the different materials. The aim of the project is to demonstrate to fellow students the level of waste to create awareness around that issue and concretely show students how those materials could be used again towards another aim, other than an everyday use like a container.

We don't have to throw everything in the trash! An object can be successfully reused and have another purpose that can be purely aesthetic or create an awareness. I think that through different initiatives, students can learn about social issues like the environment, helping students to recycle more, but also learn about aesthetic issues more specific to the field. After completing the construction of the sculptures, I conclude with a class critique of the final pieces. When I first introduced such a project, my students were really excited. With time, I changed and modified a few components from my lesson plan to make it stronger and my new students still respond to such a project in a positive manner.

Julie

After gaining more experience and knowledge in regard to an issues-based approach to art education, I have many recommendations for art teachers who wish to address social issues in the art classroom for the first time.

- Always be prepared.
- Don't expect a specific outcome from a class art project that addresses social issues because the result can vary from one group to another because of the different values, beliefs and backgrounds of each student. I believe it is what makes it interesting, unpredictable and challenging yet fun.
- Trust your abilities as an art teacher to construct the appropriate lesson plans that answer the true needs of your students (issues they face inside or outside of the school).
- Stay relaxed even if the conversation becomes heated. I believe that's when the best breakthroughs happen.
- Try to stay open minded in the process because students' values and beliefs or opinions may differ from yours and you can't push your own opinions onto your students.

I also recommend art teachers to read the books titled Art for Life (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005) and Contemporary Issues in Art Education (Gaudelius & Speirs, 2002). The books offer great pedagogical strategies, resources and art lessons for

addressing different types of issues in the art classroom. I use these resources and lesson plans in my art classroom and find them very useful.

Discussion

Participants had a lot to say during the interviews when it came to the discussion of different recommendations and the description of art projects that had been successful in their art classroom. I believe this section is a true reflection of the different personalities, attitudes and various teaching contexts of the participants.

Various art projects demonstrate how different types of social issue can successfully be addressed in the secondary art classroom and how secondary students responded positively to an art project that addressed social issues. Art offers amazing possibilities. The issues-based art projects described by the participants clearly demonstrate how social issues are successfully being discussed in their secondary art classrooms.

Class art projects successfully incorporate students concerns, social content and the arts. The narratives also demonstrate how some Quebec secondary art educators are working hard to successfully address social issues in the art classroom. Through various means (workshops linking art styles to a specific social issue, class discussion initiated by a work of art that addresses a social issue, reflective processes and individual and collaborative art projects towards making various artworks dealing with the issues discussed in the art classroom), participants have helped secondary

students discuss art and simultaneously reflect on social issues in the aim to develop students' social awareness.

The various art projects described by the participants have initiated a difficult yet crucial discussion about social issues but also permitted secondary students and art teachers to try a different approach in the art classroom. These different art projects contributed to students' better comprehension of the role of art and the artist in society and helped students reflect on their views on social issues like the environment, for example.

In conclusion, participants did not share any lesson plans that were unsuccessful and I did not gather a lot of advice or recommendations based on participants learning from mistakes. Why is that? I believe I have one hypothesis. According to Genevieve, teachers do not talk about their mistakes because they are afraid of being judged negatively by fellow teachers. According to her, being an art teacher can be hard sometimes, because you are often the only one in the school and the fine arts are not always viewed as important as other school subjects in students' academic success.

CONCLUSION

Using narrative inquiry, this account of four art educators' teaching practices was very useful. The main goals of this research were to find out what some other art educators were doing (practices) and thinking (attitudes and beliefs) about social issues in the art classroom, to find similarities and differences between practices and attitudes, to confirm my own practices and attitudes when I address social issues and to expand my professional knowledge in regard to an issues-based approach to art education. I have learned a lot from this research process and here are some of my observations, conclusions and recommendations.

By telling their personal stories and discussing their teaching practices, educators can significantly influence the field of art education. Exploring narratives and teaching practices of experienced art educators who are responsible for meaningful art programs is important in the understanding of how to teach effectively in the culture of school. It is also important to see if what is known about teaching art still holds true and if not, to see what has changed and how or why it has changed (Anderson, 2000). By acknowledging the value of art educators' practices and experiences in the field, I have gained more insight into what it really means to teach art today while addressing social issues in the art classroom.

Throughout my studies and career I was privileged to be guided by experienced educators who took the time to share with me their experiences of what it really means to teach in the diverse field that is art education. I learned so much more about

an issues-based approach to art education from the exchanges I had with my participants, especially about new art projects that address social issues. I believe also that my participants enjoyed sharing their narratives with me. The research process was very beneficial to me, and I believe I learned more about the field of education from discussing with other art teachers.

This research project is very important to me because it affirmed my own belief in the value of an issues-based approach to art education. I have met too many art teachers who fail to discuss serious issues because they believe that social, political and cultural issues don't have a place in the art classroom. I do not believe that is the case if it is done properly and with respect. From my experience, an issues-based approach to art education not only changes the content I bring to the classroom, it also changes the approach I bring to teaching. I agree with Gaudelius and Speirs (2002) that through an issues-based approach to art education, art teachers "present a theoretical framework for art education that challenges, expands and rewrites the limits of what already exists" (2002, p.14). I believe that including social issues in the art classroom can make the art curriculum more meaningful for secondary art students and more dynamic for art teachers.

The goal of this research study has been to discover the different narratives and meanings those participants attach to their experiences and to deepen my own inquiry on this topic. I hope that by investigating the current attitudes and practices of some secondary art educators who address social issues in the art curriculum, this thesis encourages other educators to reflect on their own current art teaching practice, to see

the value of addressing social issues in the art classroom , and perhaps to initiate issues-based art projects to their students.

According to Anderson (2000), much of what is concretely happening in art secondary classrooms is often lost to the research community, and never becomes available to other teachers. For this research, I have met with secondary art educators who work on a daily basis to design learning opportunities to discuss social issues, respond critically to art and to create artworks. By sharing the narratives of four secondary art teachers; this research makes these resources and innovative teaching strategies available to a wider professional community. The narratives clearly demonstrate that, despite challenges and concerns, different types of social issues can successfully be addressed in the secondary art classroom and can benefit both students and art teachers. Art in the context of social issues offers teachers the potential choice for a broad range of subject matter and a wide range of possibilities upon which to build curricula (Milbrandt, 2002; Gaudelius and Speirs, 2002; Anderson and Milbrandt, 2005). I hope this research informs and encourages secondary art educators who consider the content of an issues-based approach desirable and necessary, yet find it difficult to use because they lack experience with it in the art classroom.

Different types of social issues are successfully being addressed in some secondary art classrooms for different reasons. Secondary art educators who are linking art learning to important societal issues provide students with the benefits of an issues-based approach to art education (Gaudelius and Speirs (2002)). According to the work of

Klein (1992-93); Chalmer (1997); Anderson (2000); Baraket, Saccá in collaboration with Freedman (2001); Milbrandt (2002); Benoit, Trudel, and Wallot (2002); Gaudelius and Speirs (2002) and Anderson and Milbrandt (2005); an issues-based approach to art education offers many benefits for students. In summary, an issues-based approach to art education,

- Promotes students' sense of efficacy, autonomy, personal growth and social development.
- Encourages self-esteem when students know that they are dealing with important social issues and that through their work they can make a difference in their school, community and society.
- Helps teenagers learn to act, interact and react when they encounter people who are different.
- Develops students' sense of self and democracy.
- Helps students identify, understand, question, and transform or reposition their beliefs about gender, race, culture, sexual orientation and class in society.
- Contributes to a better comprehension of the role of art and the artist in society.
- Challenges students to think more deeply about social issues and interrogate them thus raising consciousness about social issues.
- Engages students in lively, controversial conversations about their active role in society thus developing emotional and intellectual skills.

Recommendations

The field of art education would be best served if art educators would have easy access to curricular and resource materials for teaching social issues in the secondary art classroom. The participants in this study all mentioned the need for curricular and resource materials for addressing social issues, especially more controversial issues. These materials would help to remedy their concerns of being unprepared, inexperienced or simply uncomfortable in addressing social issues in the art classroom. Appropriate teaching materials and adequate lesson plans that can easily be incorporated in the art curriculum could facilitate the discussion of sensitive issues. According to Milbrandt (2002), art teachers are often uncomfortable or hesitant in addressing social issues because they are afraid of discussing sensitive issues that might be perceived as controversial and cause parents, students, and school administrators to respond negatively.

Social issues affect everybody in the world either directly or indirectly. How individuals including art educators and students choose to deal with social issues has an impact on how they are dealt with on a larger scale. Social issues affect every member of society including adults, teenagers and young children. How each member of society chooses to deal with social issues will impact the future because social issues are causes of legislation that regulates individuals' everyday lives in either positive or negative ways (Gaudelius and Speirs, 2002). For society to be just, students who will become critical members of society need to learn how they act,

interact, and react to social issues will determine the kind of society we live in.

Gaudelius and Speirs (2002) state:

As art educators, we know that all of our students will not grow up to be artists, but we would like them all to grow up to be creative and critical thinkers actively participating as members of a just and democratic society, no matter what their vocation. When they become adult, we want our students to freely engage in dialogues about issues that surround their lives, make good decisions for themselves and others, and contribute to the well-being of society. We want students to walk away with the varied knowledges and understandings that they need to help create, maintain and function within a society (p. 3).

Children and teenagers need a critical consciousness in order to function as members of society. Critical decision-making skills, comprehension, problem solving and critical and creative thinking skills can be developed in the secondary art classroom because art provides many learning opportunities and experiences.

REFERENCES

- Ament, E. (1998). Using feminist perspectives in art education. *Art Education*, 51 (5), 56-61.
- Anderson, Tom. (1985). Thoughts on social contextualism in art and art education. *Bulletin of the Caucus on Social Theory and Art Education*, 5.
- Anderson, Tom. (1985). Toward a socially defined studio curriculum. *Art Education*, Sept 1985, 16-18.
- Anderson, Tom. (1990). Examining environmental advertising imagery through art Education. *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education*, 10, 143-157.
- Anderson, Tom. (2000). *Real Lives: Art teachers and the culture of school*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Anderson, T. & Milbrandt, M. (2005). *Art for life: Authentic instruction in art*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Atkinson, Dennis, & Dash, Paul. (Eds.). (2005). *Social and critical practices in art education*. Sterling, Virginia: Trentham Books.
- Barakett, J., Saccá, E. J., & Freedman, J. (2001). Social reconstruction through video art: A case study. *Transformations*, Volume XII (1), 93-105.
- Barrow, Robin, & Geoffrey Milburn. (1990). *A critical dictionary of educational concepts: an appraisal of selected ideas and issues in educational theory and practice*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Beattie, Mary (Ed). (2007). *The art of learning to teach: creating professional narratives* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Benoît, Danielle, & Trudel, Mona and Jacques-Albert Wallot. (2002) Regards sur l'itinérance: Le baroque revisité par les adolescents. *Canadian Review of Art Education*, 29 (1), 36-46.
- Blair, Lorie. (1996). Strategies for dealing with censorship. *Art Education*, 49 (5), 57-61.
- Bradley, Linda S. (1990). The role of the researcher in secondary art education. In Bruce E. Little (Ed), *Secondary art education: An anthology of issues* (pp. 201-210). Reston, Virginia: National Art Education Association.
- Chalmers, G. (1996). *Celebrating pluralism: Art, education, and cultural diversity*. Los Angeles: J. P. Getty Trust.

- Chalmers, G. (1997). Social issues in secondary art education. In Irwin, Rita L. and Kit Grauer (Eds.), *Readings in Canadian Art Teacher Education* (pp.83-89). Canada: Canadian Society for Education Trough Art.
- Chapman, L. (1978). *Approaches to art education*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Check, Ed. (2002). In the trenches. In Y. Gaudelius and P. Speirs (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in art education* (pp. 51-60). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Clandinin, D. Jean. & Connelly, F. Michael. (2000). *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Coleman, C. E. B. (1998). Advertising : Art as society's mirror. *Art Education*, 51 (3), 25-28, 37-40.
- Collins, G. and Sandell, R. (1992). The politics of multicultural education. *Art education*, 45 (6), 10-16.
- Counts, H. (1932). *Dare the shools build a new social order?* New York: Day.
- Ecker, D.W. (1990). Cultural identity, artistic empowerment, and the future of art in the schools. *Design for Arts in Education*, 91 (3), 14-20.
- Fehr, D. E. (1993). Dogs playing cards: Powerbrokers of prejudice in education, art and culture. Counterpoints: *Studies in Postmodern Theory of Education*, vol. 5.
- Freedman, Kerry. (1994). About this issue: The social reconstruction of art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 35 (3), 131-134.
- Garber, E. (1996). Art criticism from a feminist point of view: An approach for teachers. In G. Collins & R. Sandell (Eds.), *Gender issues in art education: Content, contexts, and strategies* (pp.21-38). Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Gaudelius, Yvonne, & Speirs, Peg. (Eds.). (2002). *Contemporary issues in art education*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Giroux, H.A. (1988). *Teachers as intellectuals: Towards a critical pedagogy of learning*. Granby, MA: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc.
- Guay, Doris M. (2002). The dynamic project, contemporary issues and integrative learning. In Y. Gaudelius and P. Speirs (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in art education* (pp. 302-316). Upper Saddle River, NJ: prentice Hall.

- Hicks, Laurie. (1994). Social reconstruction and community. *Studies in Art Education*, 35 (3), 149-156.
- Klein, Sheri. (1992-93). Social action and art education: A curriculum for change. *Journal of Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Research in Art Education*, 10, 111-125.
- Krug, D. & Cohen-Evron, N. (2000). Curriculum integration positions and practices in art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 41 (3), 258-275.
- Lampela, L. (1995). A challenge for art education: Including lesbians and gays. *Studies in Art Education*, 36 (4), 242-248.
- Lanier, Vincent. (1969). The teaching of art as social revolution. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 50 (6), 314-319.
- Lemerise, Suzanne, & Richard, Monique. (Eds.). (1998). *Les arts plastiques à l'école: Explorations de nouveaux territoires*. Montréal, Québec: Éditions Logiques.
- Little, Bruce E. (Ed.). (1990). *Secondary art education : An anthology of issues*. Reston, Virginia: National Art Education Association.
- Lockstedt, Ann. (1978). The relevance of high school art programs to high school students. *Art Education*, 31 (1), 26-28
- Marshal, Julia. (2002). Exploring culture and identity through artifacts: Three art lessons derived from contemporary art practice. In Y. Gaudelius and P. Speirs (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in art education* (pp. 279-290). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Milbrandt, M. K. (1998). Postmodernism in art education: Content for life. *Art Education*, 34 (2), 47-53.
- Milbrandt, M. K. (2002). Addressing contemporary social issues in art education: a survey of public school art educators in Georgia. *Studies in Art Education*, 43 (2), 141-157.
- Milbrandt, M. K. (2002). Elementary instruction through postmodern art. In Y. Gaudelius and P. Speirs (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in art education* (pp. 317-325). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Miller, J and Seller, W. (1990). *Curriculum perspectives and practice*. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman.
- Mims, Sandra Kay, & Lankford, E. Louis. (1995). Time, money, and the new art education: a nationwide investigation. *Studies in Art Education*, 36 (2), 84-95.

- Oliviera, Andriana Antunes de. (2003). *The reflected image of "at risk" students: A collaborative art program*. Unpublished Master's thesis, Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.
- Rubin, H. J. & Rubin I. S. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (2nd ed). Thousands Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Saccá, Elizabeth J., & Zimmerman, E. (Eds.). (1998). *Women art educators IV: Her stories, our stories, future stories*. Boucherville, Québec: Canadian Society for Education Trough Art.
- Salley, Jo Dean. (1992). The variables affecting the curricular decisions of secondary art teachers. *Dissertation Abstracts International*. (UMI No. 9231944).
- Seidman, Irving. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Stuhr, Patricia L. (1994). Multicultural art education and social reconstruction. *Studies in Art Education*, 35 (3), 171-178.
- Taylor, P. (1997). It all started with the trash: Taking steps toward sustainable art education. *Art Education*, 50 (6), 33-39.
- Wellington, Jerry. (2000). *Educational research: Contemporary issues and practical approaches*. New York: Continuum.

APPENDIX A INTERVIEW GUIDE

Participants' background information

How old are you?

What grade level(s) are you presently teaching?

Could you briefly describe your education?

How many years of teaching experience do you have?

Reasons why participants address social issues in the secondary art classroom.

Why do you address social issues through the secondary art curriculum?

When did you start addressing social issues in the secondary art curriculum? What was the determining factor?

How do your students directly benefit from the discussion of social issues in the secondary art classroom?

Types of social issues currently being addressed by the participants.

Which types of social issues have you addressed through the art curriculum?

How do you select the different social issues you will address in the secondary art classroom?

Do you believe your values and beliefs influence the selection of social issues you will address in the art curriculum?

What issues do you believe are the most important to teach in the secondary art curriculum?

What social issues do you feel the most comfortable addressing in the art curriculum?

What social issues do you feel the least comfortable addressing in the art curriculum?

How do you address or would you address the discussion of social issues that are considered more sensitive, like censorship or homosexuality for example?

What social issues must your students face in your school environment or in their own community? Do you particularly address those social issues in the art classroom?

Concerns or challenges encountered by participants while addressing social issues in the art classroom.

What concerns or problems have you encountered when addressing social issues in the art curriculum?

Did you ever receive comments or negative reactions from parents, students or school administration when you have addressed social issues in the art classroom?

Do you believe secondary students are mature enough to seriously discuss social issues in the art classroom?

Do you believe the time you have to plan, research or address social issues in the art curriculum is adequate?

Do you lack information about artists or good lesson plans that explore significant social issues?

Examples of successful lessons used to address social issues in the art classroom (artist, issue, and type of lessons that are particularly effective for classroom teaching) and practical recommendations.

Briefly describe an artist, issues, and type of lessons you think are particularly good for addressing social issues in the art curriculum.

Do you have tips or recommendations for teachers who wish to address social issues in the art curriculum for the first time?

**APPENDIX B
TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH MELISSA**

Participant's background information

How old are you?

I am 26 years old.

What grade level(s) are you presently teaching?

I am presently teaching secondary grade levels 3, 4 and 5. The school where I have been teaching for the past two years is great. It is a very small private school. My students are not artistically gifted but we are slowly trying to give the fine arts its rightful place in our school establishment.

Could you briefly describe your education?

A few years ago I completed my bachelor's degree in art education from UQAM (Université du Québec à Montréal). I also completed a diploma of collegial studies (D.E.C) in fine arts from le Cégep du Vieux Montréal. I do not wish to pursue my studies at a higher level right now.

How many years of art teaching experience do you have?

I just started my fourth year in the art teaching field.

Reasons why participant addresses social issues in the secondary art classroom.

Why do you address social issues through the secondary art curriculum?

I believe that addressing social issues in the secondary art classroom helps students understand some artworks better. In my opinion, if a social theme is explored as a starting point for a class art project, the response is better. Different social contexts and actual events discussed in the medias are often good starting points and help students develop their own ideas in regard to those social themes because they are a bit inform and have some previous knowledge. Interdisciplinary projects are also a great way to introduce students to various issues.

**When did you start addressing social issues in the secondary art curriculum?
What was the determining factor?**

During my university studies, the topic of social issues in art education was often raised in our class discussions. We were invited by teachers to construct a few lesson plans in link to some social issues.

How do your students directly benefit from the discussion of social issues in the secondary art classroom?

I believe that the discussion of social issues opens up the mind of the students; it opens up their horizons and views about the world and helps them think differently.

Types of social issues currently being addressed by the participant.

Which types of social issues have you addressed through the art curriculum?

I have mainly addressed environmental issues in my art classroom. One time, the students selected the type of social issues they wanted to explore because it was important to them. They selected issues related to A.I.D.S, censorship, and drugs just to name a few examples. Some students made researched their topics and others used their own knowledge on the issue. I must say that despite a research, it often stayed at the first level. For example, a small group of students decided to explore a theme of their choice using a graffiti approach.

How do you select the different social issues you will address in the secondary art classroom? Do you believe your values and beliefs influence the selection of social issues you will address in the art curriculum?

I sometimes select the social issue and sometimes it is the students who decide what type of social issues they want to explore. I believe my values and beliefs play a part in the selection of social issues that will be discussed because if it does not interest me at all, it will be harder for me to enjoy it and in turn share that interest with my students.

What issues do you believe are the most important to teach in the secondary art curriculum?

I believe that environmental issues are very important to address in the secondary art classroom but sometimes I feel that my students are tired of hearing about it.

What social issues do you feel the most comfortable addressing in the art curriculum?

I feel the most comfortable when I address environmental issues in the art classroom.

What social issues do you feel the least comfortable addressing in the art curriculum?

I really don't see myself discussing with my students any issues that deal with sexuality or sexual orientation. The rest I could handle. I would not mind addressing issues of racism but I would not address issues of sexual orientation like homosexuality in my art classroom. I would not know how to approach it. One of

my students was openly gay and despite it, I would not know where to start or how to approach the discussion of such an issue.

How do you address or would you address the discussion of social issues that are considered more sensitive, like censorship or homosexuality for example?

I would probably do some research first or speak to a colleague. I would also start scratching the surface with a class discussion with my students and see what they initially think in regard to that issue. We are two art teachers and we often work together. My colleague will retire soon so we will see with the next one what happens.

What social issues must your students face in your school environment or in their own community? Do you particularly address those social issues in the art classroom?

I would not say that racism is an issue in our school community because most of our students are Caucasians. Homosexuality is slowly becoming an issue in our school because some students are coming out and it creates some tensions. Poverty is really not an issue in our school environment and our students are really well-rounded compared to other schools. Violence is a small issue in our school, probably like in any other secondary school. I must add that anorexia is becoming a bigger issue in our school.

We discuss various issues that adolescent students must face during school meetings or school board meetings. Anorexia is becoming a bigger issue in our school community and I am not allowed to discuss it or approach this issue in my art classroom. The reasoning is that because my students are dealing with this issue, they are afraid it will degenerate. Instead I discuss the theme of nutrition and food waste.

Concerns or challenges encountered by the participant while addressing social issues in the art classroom.

What concerns or problems have you encountered when addressing social issues in the art curriculum?

One problem that I have encountered or noticed many times is that students lose interest in talking about social issues. They get tired of hearing about it, not only in my classroom but also in other subject areas. One other problem I have encountered is that when I ask students to bring recycle materials from home, they often forget and it takes a long period of time before collecting all the necessary materials. I have to warn them two months in advance! It can take a long time. Another problem I have encountered while addressing social issues are the students themselves and their lack of involvement. Some students are really weird and you worry about what type of adults they will become. Others are really not motivated and don't mind getting 20% for an assignment.

Did you ever receive comments or negative reactions from parents, students or school administration when you have addressed social issues in the art classroom?

I have never received any negative comments from parents or the administration. I believe it is because I do not address controversial issues in the art classroom.

Do you believe secondary students are mature enough to seriously discuss social issues in the art classroom?

I believe that secondary students are more or less mature enough to discuss social issues. There are some students who are mature enough. I have two types of students in my school: regular or advanced. My advanced students are mature enough and can successfully discuss social issues. They are more open and we can nearly discuss anything. My other students have more difficulties discussing serious issues and will often nervously start laughing to break the tension. Every year, students are different and it has an impact on the type of discussion we can have with them.

Do you believe the time you have to plan, research or address social issues in the art curriculum is adequate?

No, I do not believe the time I have is adequate. With the changes from the reform, I maybe see my students once a week. I do not have enough time to plan extraordinary class project or elaborated lesson plans. I do not have time to do all this. I can maybe do one or two projects on a period of a few months. When I was in high school, it was not the case. I used to go to art class maybe four times a week.

Do you lack information about artists or good lesson plans that explore significant social issues?

It is certain that we often lack information regarding good artists or lesson plans. I believe that is why the internet exists! Often when I plan or construct a class art project, I often consult the internet to get more information and answer a few questions I have on different topics. Maybe I am looking for more information in regard to a particular artist and aspects of his or her artworks. I know a few artists but it is always good to do more research and discover new ones. I think that if I would find a good lesson plan in regard to homosexuality, I would try to address that issue in my art classroom.

Examples of successful lessons used to address social issues in the art classroom (artist, issue, and type of lessons that are particularly effective for classroom teaching) and practical recommendations.

Briefly describe an artist, issues, and type of lessons you think are particularly good for addressing social issues in the art curriculum.

When I discuss the many aspects of graffiti art including its purpose in my art classroom, it is always a success. For another project, I presented the artworks of Keith Haring to discuss his role as an activist artist. I did not show his most controversial works because I did not want to cause conflicts in the classroom and it was my first year teaching at that school. In turn, the students had to select a personal issue of their choice, use acrylic paint and express their opinion in regard to that issue through a graffiti image or a mural. The size of the surface was not too small and not too big. Some added collage elements to their compositions and even some drawing materials. There are always some students who want to do more and that I enjoy.

Another art project I have done in my classroom consisted of putting students together in small groups and asking them to construct a real size costume using only recycled materials. Students really enjoyed that project and the result was great. If I repeat this project next year, it will be even better. For this project I used pictures taken from an exhibition at the biosphere of Montreal to make a link with different environmental issues. It took a long time for some students to collect recycled materials. Rather than making copies of the pictures and putting them on the blackboard, I put the pictures on a DVD and let it play on the class television while I gave further directives about the class art project. You know how much teenagers love television. For this class art project, I also showed the artwork titled the Meat Dress and it caused a lively yet interesting discussion in the classroom. A lot of the students saw that piece for the first time and they were appalled. Students' comments ranged from "It's so disgusting!!!" to "The dress was made from raw meat, it must smell awful!" Following the students initial reactions, I shared with them that a lot of museum visitors who saw that piece often had the same reaction to it. The students continued talking about the piece and slowly started making interesting links by adding that people around the world were dying from starvation.

Do you have tips or recommendations for teachers who wish to address social issues in the art curriculum for the first time?

Time is important and is a rare commodity even if you are not even addressing social issues in the art classroom. If you decide to address social issues in your art classroom, don't wait until the last minute! For example, do not wait until the end of the year to do an issues-based class art project. If you decide to do a project with recycled materials, the teacher must take into consideration an adequate time period for students to collect. In my practice, students needed more than two weeks to collect enough materials for the different projects. Don't wait! Another recommendation is to make sure that the different class art projects that address social issues are age appropriate. Some students depending on their age groups are not

always interested in discussing serious social issues, even if it should be a concern for everyone.

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH GAIL

Participant's background information

How old are you?

I am 31 years old.

What grade level(s) are you presently teaching?

I am presently teaching secondary grade levels 1 and 2.

Could you briefly describe your education?

I did three years in France to obtain my bachelors degree in fine arts. After arriving to Quebec, I had to complete my teaching requisites if I wanted to work here. I took some classes at UQAM (Université du Québec à Montréal). I started working and a few years later I completed my D.E.S.S (Diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées) in art education also at UQAM.

How many years of teaching experience do you have?

I have more than 6 years of teaching experience in the field of art education at the secondary level.

Reasons why the participant addresses social issues in the secondary art classroom.

Why do you address social issues through the secondary art curriculum?

I address social issues in my curriculum to raise my students' consciousness. I believe that if we find and address social issues of interest to the students, they will get even more involved in their projects.

**When did you start addressing social issues in the secondary art curriculum?
What was the determining factor?**

It took me a few years before I addressed social issues in my art classroom because I was more concerned about how to handle my students and my classroom and also find good class projects that would initially peek an interest in my students. At the beginning I did not think of addressing social issues and I did not spend time refining my class art projects. Now that everything is in place and that I have gained more experience in the field and I have less worries, I can really concentrate my efforts towards constructing good class art projects even some that address social issues and I can also enjoy them in turn.

How do your students directly benefit from the discussion of social issues in the secondary art classroom?

If we discuss a subject matter rather than only reading an article on the same subject, I believe that the students get more involved. For example, if they build a maquette on a subject like peace, they will work and physically get involved in the creative process. Even through class discussion, they will have to share their opinion. I believe they benefit from that. They are active in the different learning processes and it is more enjoyable for them I believe.

Types of social issues currently being addressed by the participant.

Which types of social issues have you addressed through the art curriculum?

N/A

How do you select the different social issues you will address in the secondary art classroom?

It depends. If I plan my class art projects in advance, they are certainly social issues I personally prefer to address. I believe our personality has an influence on our teaching practice. I also like to leave the themes of the different class art projects up to the students. What I love to do, and it is not evident to do in a classroom, is to leave the theme and the choice of materials up to the students' liking. I also invite students to work on personal projects during class time. The student really decides every aspect of the work but at the same time I also guide them in the process and also make them believe they have plenty of choices. That is how I like to work. It is not easy because it demands a lot of planning. If I impose a specific yet large theme like the environment, I will ask my students to find sub-themes that interest them personally, give them a certain saying in the choices otherwise I feel it becomes too moralistic.

Do you believe your values and beliefs influence the selection of social issues you will address in the art curriculum?

N/A

What issues do you believe are the most important to teach in the secondary art curriculum?

I think the respect of others is important to address. It includes respecting also differences. Students at that age really have at heart the theme of respect.

What social issues do you feel the most comfortable addressing in the art curriculum?

I really enjoy everything linked to the environment. I also enjoy addressing issues linked to the theme of respect.

What social issues do you feel the least comfortable addressing in the art curriculum?

Anything that touches close or far to the world of politics, I feel less comfortable.

How do you address or would you address the discussion of social issues that are considered more sensitive, like censorship or homosexuality for example?

I have never addressed sensitive issues in my art classroom. If I was to do so, I believe I would first ask my school administration what they think about addressing sensitive issues because I do not want to create a conflict. I would also consult the psychoeducator of our school for some advice. Thinking about it, I would like to address sensitive issues, maybe use issues of differences to introduce the more sensitive issues. I would slowly invite them to discuss issues like homosexuality gradually, or I would probably do a concrete example that specifically made a reference to that sensitive issue, if I see nobody is interested in speaking about it. I could also combine my work and the one from my colleague in moral studies. Work in collaboration with other colleagues. Use a song that refers to the sensitive issue in question to make it not as sensitive, to desensitize it.

What social issues must your students face in your school environment or in their own community? Do you particularly address those social issues in the art classroom?

My students must face issues of differences in our school establishment, because there are a lot of students with different cultural backgrounds or from different nationalities. Class issues are also present because we are an international school and we do not pre-select our students. We have students from our local community and at the same time we have students who reside in wealthy neighbourhoods like Saint-Lambert. I never really stop to think about that question, it is interesting.

Concerns or challenges encountered by the participant while addressing social issues in the art classroom.

What concerns or problems have you encountered when addressing social issues in the art curriculum?

Sometimes my students argue that the themes discussed in the art classroom resemble those discussed in other classes. What they want to do is mainly crafts. I believe that when we include socially oriented art class projects, there can be more discussion

involve and more talking rather than art making. It also asks students to do more research and work in their sketchbook to record the process.

Did you ever receive comments or negative reactions from parents, students or school administration when you have addressed social issues in the art classroom?

I never received any negative comments from anybody. I am always very careful. I have an example. Two years ago, I asked my students to draw a picture that included three dreams they had. One of my students was gay, I never noticed it, he discovered he was gay during the summer, and on his drawing was a bed with him in it and also another male figure. I was a little puzzled so I spoke to the psychoeducator of our school. He told me not worry and to approach it the same way as if it was a boy and a girl in the drawing. Other students saw the drawing without having any negative comments or reactions. The student was aware that the other students were seeing his drawing and it was important to him. I tried to handle everything, but I was still very uncomfortable. I was scared of the negative reactions of the other students' parents. To a certain extent, I could always take care of the school administration if anything had happened but sometimes parents complain not to the school but directly to the school board.

Do you believe secondary students are mature enough to seriously discuss social issues in the art classroom?

Yes, but it is important to be careful and structure the process adequately. That is why I don't only do projects that address social issues. It demands a lot of preparation and structure if we want students to actively participate and learn something in the process.

Do you believe the time you have to plan, research or address social issues in the art curriculum is adequate?

No, because in a public school, teachers have a lot of different responsibilities and extra duties. Because it is a small school with 750 students, we have a lot of responsibilities. We are directly responsible for some students' personal files, pick up attendances and personally bring them to the school secretary. We have extra responsibilities because we don't have enough supporting staff. Teachers adapt and we have to do everything. I personally believe we have too much to do and in turn we can't really concentrate on our discipline. Another challenge in the past was that I taught at so many different levels and it was hard and very demanding. This year,, it is different because I teach only at two different levels. If I had more time I could do both: administrative work and work in regard to my field.

Do you lack information about artists or good lesson plans that explore significant social issues?

Yes, completely! I believe this is due to the fact that past class art projects did not used to address social issues. In my opinion, past class projects consisted of the

teacher showing an example to students and asking the students to replicate it! Now it has changed and it is new. Even when we meet with our pedagogical director, he brings us typical and old fashioned art class projects. Students know those lessons already, they want something new.

Examples of successful lessons used to address social issues in the art classroom (artist, issue, and type of lessons that are particularly effective for classroom teaching) and practical recommendations.

Briefly describe an artist, issues, and type of lessons you think are particularly good for addressing social issues in the art curriculum.

The project I will discuss addresses environmental issues and involved my secondary grade level 2 students. I had made a list of sub-themes in regard to environmental issues for myself. During a class discussion, I ask my students to come up with a few sub-themes. Afterwards, they had to get into teams and select one sub-theme in regard to the environment to make up their art composition. One side of the composition had to deal with the negative side of the issue and the other side had to refer to various solutions one could take to remedy the situation. For example, we live in a province where we don't have to pay for our water consumption but the negative side is that we are wasting a lot of water. There are a lot of repercussions linked to that situation. It was very interesting to see each team's artwork. Some covered one side of the issue with a piece of paper and the viewer had to lift it up to see that section of the piece. Each team had the same large size format of paper to work on but they could modify it, cut it into various shapes to do their final piece. Students were allowed to paint, use collage and draw. They had more than six periods to work on that class art project. Students really enjoyed the project. Difficulties arose during different stages of the project but I believe that students enjoyed it anyway because they were actively involved in the creative process. That same project could easily be done individually but the students really enjoyed collaborating together.

Do you have tips or recommendations for teachers who wish to address social issues in the art curriculum for the first time?

Preparation is crucial in this approach. I also suggest leaving some choices up to the students, some liberty. I also suggest working with large themes so that students can find and work with the sub-themes they want to explore. It is so much better!

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH GENEVIEVE

Participant's background information

What grade level(s) are you presently teaching?

I am presently teaching secondary grade levels 1, 2 and 3. Here, we are on a nine day cycle and I only see my students twice during that nine day cycle. I would truly like to see my students more often, especially my secondary grade level 3 students. I believe it would be more interesting and I could develop or elaborate more in regard to some projects. With this type of scheduling, I believe we are only scratching the surface.

Could you briefly describe your education?

I completed my bachelor's degree in fine arts from UQAM (Université du Québec à Montréal) because I wanted to work primarily in the communication field. During my last semester, I changed my mind and directed my studies towards to field of art education. I pursued my studies by completing a certificate in animation and cultural research. I also completed a certificate in alternative learning programs because I believe it would be helpful in my field and facilitate my teaching practice. I also completed a master's degree in school planning and management. I did not wish to pursue my studies at a higher level. I had enough and it was becoming too heavy to handle.

How many years of art teaching experience do you have?

I have been teaching for the past 20 years and have introduced secondary students to the discipline of art for the last 18 years. Despite many years of experience, the field of art education still interests me and excites me. Sometimes during the year, it can become routine but it always depends on the students and the participation rate.

Reasons why the participant addresses social issues in the secondary art classroom.

Why do you address social issues through the secondary art curriculum?

It is important to include the discussion of social issues in the secondary art classroom because it invites students to view other things that are out there. It can help students become aware of the many possibilities art can bring and discover different working methods. I also believe that the discussion of social issues can also help students recognise and acknowledge maybe things that are out there and that they did not notice before. I believe that art can become an important vehicle and help students see something that they would have not notice without their artistic eye.

**When did you start addressing social issues in the secondary art curriculum?
What was the determining factor?**

My interest peaked when I started doing projects that deal with environmental issues. Using recycled materials to create small sized ornamental sculptures. When I first introduced such projects, my students were really excited. With time, I changed and modified a few components from my lesson plans and projects to make them stronger and my students still respond to such projects in a positive manner.

How do your students directly benefit from the discussion of social issues in the secondary art classroom?

I believe the discussion of social issues directly benefits students by helping them recognize things. It forges their critical abilities and helps them answer different questions. How do you see this issue? Do you believe it could have been done in a different manner?

I also believe it can benefit students by seeing another side of the coin or another angle of a same issue. For example, students see an image, a movie poster for example, and they try to respond to that image. If it is a war movie, what are the different issues present in the film? Is it violence, a societal phenomena present in our culture or street gangs? It is a starting point for the discussion of social issues in a more familiar way and in a less threatening manner. It helps us see their perceptions or views of those issues. Even if I do the same art activity the next year, I will not get the same result because the views of students' change.

In my opinion, I believe the discussion of social issues truly impacts only one third of my students, often students who are more sensitive. I believe that students do not risk going further even when their initial ideas are good. Students leave the classroom and I truly think they will not even remember what happened in the art classroom. I think students often have difficulties implicating themselves. Some students are surprised to see social issues in the art classroom, but are still excited because it is different. Others often don't have a positive reaction because of their preconceived notion of what an art class should be. They have a traditional view of the fine arts.

Types of social issues currently being addresses by the participant.

Which types of social issues have you addressed through the art curriculum?

I have addressed environment issues and aesthetic issues in regard to the school environment. For example, how could we improve the cafeteria? Students were invited to find and reuse materials from our school cafeteria to construct a sculpture in the aim to demonstrate to fellow students the level of waste, create awareness around that issue and concretely show students how those materials could be used again towards another aim. We don't have to throw everything in the trash! An object can be successfully reused and have another purpose that can be purely aesthetic or create an awareness. I think that through different initiatives, students can be invited to learn

about social issues like the environment, helping students to recycle more, but also learn about aesthetic issues more specific to the field.

How do you select the different social issues you will address in the secondary art classroom? Do you believe your values and beliefs influence the selection of social issues you will address in the art curriculum?

My students repeatedly shared their opinions in regard to environmental issues. As a consultant on the environment committee of the school board and also a member of the recycling committee in my school, and I am personally very sensitive to different environmental issues. I believe that people waste a lot. I personally love what the artist Armand Vaillancourt does with recycle materials. His sculptures are simple or simply symbolic, amazing and are very beautiful. His commitment is also amazing. He collects a lot of things and he does amazing compositions from all these disparate elements. I often use his work and his philosophy to build my own projects. I use his artworks made from recycle materials as an example to show my students what can be done and how beautiful it can be. I believe he is the best because he is close to the students also. He is also involved in many school projects which demonstrate that he is accessible; he talks like the students and it demonstrate adaptability. He is fun, open, and always happy. His message is clear to students: recycle things to make other beautiful things in our life.

What issues do you believe are the most important to teach in the secondary art curriculum?

I don't have an exact answer but I think about that question a lot. I think that improving the immediate environment of the students is important. I also believe it is important to address issues that open up their views to a larger spectrum and make them also sensitive to those issues. For example, I went to New York with some students and they were not aware of the architecture, the pop art movement, and how at every street corner, there is something exciting and exceptional. I believe that by travelling, we remedy the situation and open up the mind of students. Some students in my community never walked the streets of Montreal. Various learning opportunities are wasted. Now, we make a field trip to Montreal to help students get familiarized with the environment, its issues, see the people and their particular issues and the architecture.

What social issues do you feel the most comfortable addressing in the art curriculum?

I believe that when we discuss sensitive social issues, students can have different opinions. In my experience, when we deal with sensitive issues in the classroom, it can create a discomfort in the classroom, create a split in the crowd and even serious feuds. For a teacher, I believe it is difficult to handle. I try to address social issues that are lively but that will touch every student to a certain level. Recently we have discussed issues of class and it was very delicate because I did not know which student was on welfare or poor and sometimes children can be cruel without wanted to be. There are things you can't expect and I don't address sensitive issues because it

is too delicate to handle. I believe it is easier to address sensitive social issues when you collaborate with a teacher from another field. Once I worked with the French teacher who addressed sensitive issues from different literatures and it was helpful because she had more knowledge on the issues at hand. We collaborated together and the students had to respond visually with an image to the text that dealt with different social issues.

What social issues do you feel the least comfortable addressing in the art curriculum?

Sexism and racism are difficult issues to address in a secondary art classroom. Just the other day, a student of mine was crying in class because her boyfriend had just broken up with her. A classroom discussion suddenly and unexpectedly followed on how men are always the same. I had to be the police officer and remind them that all men are not the same and I felt the load was too hard to carry. They want to learn and are open to listen to other opinions but they are young and when you are sad, crying, you are not open to listen to others.

How do you address or would you address the discussion of social issues that are considered more sensitive, like censorship or homosexuality for example?

I do not wish to answer the question.

What social issues must your students face in your school environment or in their own community? Do you particularly address those social issues in the art classroom?

In my case, I believe the physical environment of the students is important. To be accepted by others is not an easy task; there are a lot of differences between students. A few years ago we had to adopt a dress code, the polo shirt, because the school establishment, the administration, the parents and its students had problems with girls wearing short camisoles and see through shirts. I believe it is important for students to accept themselves in their own environment. It's okay for students to express themselves and acknowledge their differences. How will you transform your life the minute you will graduate and leave this school establishment? A lot of my students are very individualistic and I believe that teachers are also becoming more individualists. It's very bad. Everybody is tired and I believe the real issue here is to find ways to collaborate and reunite together in different social contexts and open up to the ideas of others. Putting all of our ideas together will prove useful and will concretely show that great things can happen.

The issues that my students must face today are different from those my students had to address ten years ago! When I started my career, I did not address social issues in the art classroom. Students used to discuss social issues that mattered to them while working but it was not part of my art curriculum. I believe that with the arrival of serious environmental issues like recycling, the use of harmful pesticides and concrete solutions, it was important to do so. Ten years ago, my classroom was made of only Caucasian students. Now it is different. Now, I have students from different cultural

backgrounds and when we discuss various issues or different artworks, they have a different view or spin on it because of their cultural references that differ from ours. Issues of war or violence for example are not discussed the same way because of each student's background, values or opinions. It changes a lot. It's different, but students are reminded that there is always something to learn out of it!

Concerns or challenges encountered by the participant while addressing social issues in the art classroom.

What concerns or problems have you encountered when addressing social issues in the art curriculum?

The values of my students have always been my main challenge because they differ so much. My students do not share the same values in regard to the field of fine arts in general. They also do not share the same views in regard to a particular social issue and it often causes divergence. The fact that my students do not share the same values often creates a kind tension during class discussions while addressing social issues that is often difficult to handle for me as the art teacher. Sometimes it can be surprising and give great results but it is still a lot of work.

Did you ever receive comments or negative reactions from parents, students or school administration when you have addressed social issues in the art classroom?

I never received any negative comments or reactions from any of the mentioned parties. It never happened in my career as an art teacher. In my case, the parents of my students do not consider art to be a priority. The only comment I once received was from a few parents that did not understand why their child had to go through the recycle bin and bring those materials to school. Some parents found it bizarre, but when they saw the final product, the sculptures made of recycled materials, they understood because they enjoyed it!

Do you believe secondary students are mature enough to seriously discuss social issues in the art classroom?

I do not believe that all students are mature enough to seriously discuss social issues in the art classroom. There are maybe a few that truly can. They are not open enough; they don't inform themselves by watching the media in regard to what is happening elsewhere in the world. They are very centralized on themselves. One year, I had students who watched the television show on Radio-Canada called *LaFlaque* because it was very artistic in regard to its production and at the same time was very politically and socially charged. I used that television show as a starting point for a class project and students that were artistically challenged enjoyed the television show so much and it peaked an interest in regard to how it was made. This new interest in the television show made students watch the show and every time they walked in the classroom, they ask me if I had watched the show and in turn we discussed its socially oriented content.

Do you believe the time you have to plan, research or address social issues in the art curriculum is adequate?

The time I have is not adequate at all! We don't have enough time to do it. In my case I only see my students a few times in a nine day cycle. The students do a lot of intellectual work and when they arrive in the art classroom, it's as if they want to unwind and relax. They want to do something else than talk, read, discuss and do more intellectual work.

Do you lack information about artists or good lesson plans that explore significant social issues?

I lack a lot of information in regard to that topic. I believe the one who demonstrated how successfully social issues and the fine arts could be partnered is the artist Armand Vaillancourt. He works closely with teachers and students. He has many websites with a lot of information. I still believe that this approach is not popular enough here. It is very hard to have complete lesson plans. Accessibility is also an issue when we want to meet people who share the same interest of addressing social issues in the art classroom.

Examples of successful lessons used to address social issues in the art classroom (artist, issue, and type of lessons that are particularly effective for classroom teaching) and practical recommendations.

Briefly describe an artist, issues, and type of lessons you think are particularly good for addressing social issues in the art curriculum.

For a project on the environment, I first introduced my students to the topic by showing the different artworks made of recycle materials from the artist Armand Vaillancourt. I elaborated on the art process of the artists and the act of collecting different materials like car parts for one sculpture. From that introduction and after explaining the philosophy of the artist, I invited students to collect recycled materials and build a small sculpture made from the different materials. After completing the construction of the sculpture, we had a class critique in regard to the final pieces.

Do you have tips or recommendations for teachers who wish to address social issues in the art curriculum for the first time?

I recommend teachers to plan ahead to get the necessary materials because it will facilitate the process in class. I also recommend art teachers to work regularly and progressively on smaller class art projects to peek the interest of students and open up their minds to different issues.

TRANSCRIPT OF MY NARRATIVE (JULIE)

Participant's background information

How old are you?

I am 32 years old.

What grade level(s) are you presently teaching?

During the school year, I teach secondary grade levels 4 and 5. During the summer, I teach children from 8 years old to 13 years old.

Could you briefly describe your education?

I have a diploma of collegial studies of fine arts from Champlain Regional College (Saint-Lambert campus). I also completed a bachelor degree of fine arts majoring in painting and drawing from Concordia University. I am now completing my master of fine arts in the field of art education also from Concordia University.

How many years of teaching experience do you have?

I have been teaching fine arts for the past eight years in various community and school settings. I have volunteered in other primary schools where I was invited to accompany primary level teachers to build exciting and different art projects. For the past four years, I have been a substitute teacher in a private school. For the past year, I have been teaching fine arts to secondary grade levels 4 and 5 in the same school.

Reasons why the participant addresses social issues in the secondary art classroom.

Why do you address social issues through the secondary art curriculum?

I have been addressing social issues in my art classroom for various reasons but mainly because it is beneficial for my students and also me as an art teacher. It is different and offer students new learning opportunities in the art classroom.

When did you start addressing social issues in the secondary art curriculum? What was the determining factor?

A few years ago, an issues-based approach to art education was introduced to me by Concordia University teachers Christine Stoczek and Peter Vietgen. Through their narratives, art projects and class exercises, both teachers helped me to reflect on my art teaching practice, teaching philosophy and the art content I was bringing to the art classroom. I realised that I, like many fellow art educators, tended towards a very traditional outlook of art education. I tended to concentrate a large part of my art

teaching towards the teaching of art techniques, principles of design and elements of art and the discussion of master painters. I came to understand how my assumption of what was expected of me as a young art teacher influenced the content I was bringing to the art classroom. I have furthered my exploration through readings and initiated class art projects that address social issues. Students participated eagerly and the experience was positive and beneficial for both the students and me. Today I am more aware of the content I am bringing to my art classroom and I believe it has an impact on my art practice.

How do your students directly benefit from the discussion of social issues in the secondary art classroom?

My students benefit in various ways from the discussion of social issues in the art classroom or issues-based class art projects. Students are given the opportunity to openly discuss and reflect critically on what is going on in the world. Not only are they gaining more knowledge in regard to social activism in the arts, they are also invited to examine, interpret and criticize past and present artworks from different artists. In the process, I believe that students can learn to understand how knowledge and meaning can be constructed in various ways. Students also learn how art has various purposes including the potential to educate the general public and that their artistic contributions can have a direct impact on the local community by becoming a catalyst for change. Finally, students benefit from an issues-based approach to secondary art education by learning about themselves (values, beliefs, assumptions, attitudes and personal goals) in the process of dialogue and art making.

Types of social issues currently being addressed by the participant.

Which types of social issues have you addressed through the art curriculum?

I have address different issues in my art classroom like poverty, physical or cultural differences, the effects of mass media and cultural identity.

How do you select the different social issues you will address in the secondary art classroom?

I select the different social issues that will be discussed in the art classroom. It saves time and I can prepare the materials adequately. For the first time this year, I will be teaching fine arts to secondary grade levels 4 and 5 students and believe I will let them choose what issues they want to talk about. I trust them to be respectful and mature enough to respect the other students' choice of topic.

Do you believe your values and beliefs influence the selection of social issues you will address in the art curriculum?

I believe that it would be foolish to think that the values and beliefs of teachers never influence their teaching practice but it does not really influence how I select social issues. For the past seven years, I have done a project on cancer and its many aspects

but this year I will not do it because I lost so many friends and close family members in the last year and a half and I believe I need some time to distance myself from the issue and investigate other options. I love to address social issues in the art classroom, because I do not know everything and it answers my need to learn more.

What issues do you believe are the most important to teach in the secondary art curriculum?

I believe that all social issues are important to address with students. The reflective, critical and artistic processes that surround an issue are crucial. I also believe that discussing one social issue is better than none. Social issues that are important to my students should be important to me also.

What social issues do you feel the most comfortable addressing in the art curriculum?

I believe that in my career, I have felt comfortable addressing different issues like cultural diversity, environmental issues, poverty, issues related to physical and mental illnesses, respect, war and issues in link to the different rights and needs of children.

What social issues do you feel the least comfortable addressing in the art curriculum?

I have never addressed issues of racism, homophobia or sexism in the art classroom. I do not feel uncomfortable but I want to address those issues in the best manner possible. I have yet to complete my research in regard to these issues. Any lesson plan or projects would be truly considered.

How do you address or would you address the discussion of social issues that are considered more sensitive, like censorship or homosexuality for example?

I believe that the best way to address a delicate or more sensitive issue is to first acknowledge and recognize that it is a sensitive issue and not to pretend as educators that we have all the answers. I believe that if a sensitive issue is addressed in a respectful manner and in a calm atmosphere with the proper approach, I believe it can only be a success. As art teachers, it is important to recognize that the art education field still has many challenges.

What social issues must your students face in your school environment or in their own community? Do you particularly address those social issues in the art classroom?

I have been teaching in a private school for the past four years and I must say that my students are privileged and do not face the same challenges of students from other sectors. I believe that my students face some similar challenges as any average adolescent like acceptance from others, body image and many more. Poverty is not an issue they face in our school establishment because of the many learning opportunities presented to them. But too many times I hear about how my students

are left alone and with the responsibility of an adult because their parents work too much. They lack adult supervision, guidance and the knowledge transmitted from their parents. Even if poverty is not an issue they face in their everyday life, I still discuss that issue because a large part of students seem very oblivious on what goes on in other parts of our community.

Concerns or challenges encountered by the participant while addressing social issues in the art classroom.

What concerns or problems have you encountered when addressing social issues in the art curriculum?

I believe that the lack of time has sometimes been my main challenge in my art teaching practice. I lack time for a substantial discussion of issues in the art classroom due to other priorities. I also lack time to research topics or new lesson plans because information about artists or good lesson plans that explore significant social issues are not always easy to find.

Did you ever receive comments or negative reactions from parents, students or school administration when you have addressed social issues in the art classroom?

I never received any bad reactions from parents, students or the school administration. Students and parents are curious at first on how social issues fit in the art classroom. I would make a good lawyer because I am always prepared to defend my art teaching philosophy. It gives me credibility.

Do you believe secondary students are mature enough to seriously discuss social issues in the art classroom?

I believe that secondary students are mature enough to discuss seriously social issues. If they are not given the opportunity early on to build a critical mind, the process takes longer to do in the future. I would rather have a student with an opinion that is contradictory to mine, than a student that has none or follows the crowd which is recurrent at this stage in their adolescent life. In my experience, students demonstrated that they were mature enough by listening to others without judgement, by being open minded to the comments of others towards themselves, by staying calm or attentive and asking good and constructive questions even if it was done in a humorist tone.

Do you believe the time you have to plan, research or address social issues in the art curriculum is adequate?

I believe that the time teachers have to plan, research and address social issues in the art classroom is never adequate or sufficient. I also believe that a lot of teachers have extra administrative duties and can't really concentrate on the actual art discipline.

Do you lack information about artists or good lesson plans that explore significant social issues?

I do not lack information of artists, resources or lesson plans for addressing social issues in the art classroom, because this topic has been constantly in my life for the past few years. With time and a lot of research, I was able to find the stories of others who attempted a similar task and were successful. I also found great resources or books that covered every aspect of the topic like Art for Life (2005) and Contemporary Issues in Art Education (2002). I can understand that for inexperienced art teachers who wish to attempt such a task of addressing social issues in the art classroom, it can be difficult and overwhelming to find proper information when time is such a luxury in the school culture.

Examples of successful lessons used to address social issues in the art classroom (artist, issue, and type of lessons that are particularly effective for classroom teaching) and practical recommendations.

Briefly describe an artist, issues, and type of lessons you think are particularly good for addressing social issues in the art curriculum.

N/A

Do you have tips or recommendations for teachers who wish to address social issues in the art curriculum for the first time?

- Always be prepared.
- Don't expect a specific outcome from a class art project that addresses social issues because the result can vary from one class to another because of the different values, beliefs and backgrounds of each student. I believe it is what makes it interesting, unpredictable and challenging yet fun.
- Trust your abilities as an art teacher to build yourself a lesson plan that answer your students needs (issues they face in the school establishment) because your students needs may differ from my students.
- Stay relaxed even if the conversation becomes heated, that's when the best breakthroughs happen.
- Being open minded in the process because students' values and beliefs or opinions may drastically differ from yours and you can't push your own opinions onto them.