

White Lies: Unraveling Whiteness in the Elementary Art Curriculum

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ABSTRACT

This article presents three case studies of elementary art education curriculum in districts across the United States. The study uses content analysis, which is grounded in Critical Whiteness Studies in order to examine the ways district art curricula address issues of race and whiteness in elementary art education. Findings suggest that district curricula reinforces racial inequities by omitting artists of color, reaffirming racial hierarchies through the master narrative of white progress, and decontextualizing the socio-cultural concerns of non-white artists. The article ends by suggesting reforms in order to create anti-oppressive multicultural art curricula.

Keywords: Art education, Critical Whiteness, Curriculum Analysis, Multicultural Education, Anti-oppressive Education

Lying is done with words, and also silence.

Adrienne Rich

Art educators are embedded in the daily work of curating knowledge, spinning stories into lessons, and drawing inspiration from art history. This process is highly subjective and the weight of our position as arbiters of truth and shapers of history is not often taken up in critical ways in our field (Gaztambide-Fernández, et al, 2018). Art education is not neutral, and we are not neutral tellers of an objective art history (Desai, 2000). As anthropologist, Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) states, “the presences and absences embodied in our sources...are neither neutral or natural. They are created” (p. 48). If our art historical sources are built upon the enduring ills of racial inequity then we are not impartial transmitters of history, we are implicated in the system as we reproduce it in our classrooms. Educators should not “assume that...by not taking a political stance we are being objective,” our experiences and the values of the institutions we participate in mold us and “work through us” often unconsciously (Apple, 2004, pp. 7-8). As educators we are shapers of thought, and as art educators we curate and present an official view of the history of humanity through images—this is a powerful act and we should acknowledge this

power and wield it responsibly (Freedman & Stuhr, 2004).

Department of Labor statistics indicate that art teachers today are over 70% white and female (Art Teacher Education, 2014). At this same time our student population is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse (Bauman, 2017). In the face of this demographic mismatch, it is vitally important that white art educators critically reflect on their roles in reproducing pernicious narratives that reify racial or gender inequities (Acuff, 2018). Critical reflection involves not only considering how we teach non-Western artists and artists of color, but also how our curriculum presents the story of whiteness.

As a white art educator taking up issues of race/racism in art education, it is important to acknowledge my bias and reflect on the ways my embodied experience and lived privilege affect my research. Throughout this analysis, I speak as a white art educator engaged in a process of “unraveling” my complicity in the systems of privilege and oppression I am attempting to disrupt (De Lissovoy, 2010, p. 419). Many of the projects and practices I critique I have also participated in as an elementary art teacher. As Sonia Nieto (2003) says, “white educators need to make the problem of racism *their* problem to solve” (p. 203). It is my hope that this research will help myself and other white art educators to consider the power of our practice and enter into our work critically engaged with the stories we teach our students. Through working to unravel the white lies underpinning our curriculum, we can make power visible and transform our practice with honesty, vulnerability, and self-reflection. This analysis argues that art education should address the overwhelming whiteness of the art historical canon in order to compare how images by/about artists of color and white artists are regulated, contextualized, negated, or legitimized in the curriculum. In order to take stock of how district mandated art curriculum intervenes in or perpetuates harmful art historical narratives, I will present three case studies analyzing elementary art curriculum guides from districts across the country. The content of these curriculum documents are then analyzed using a framework of Critical Whiteness.

Whiteness in Art Education

This study is grounded in literature on Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS), a branch of Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory is interested in centering the knowledge and experiences of people of color (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002), while CWS “focuses on problematizing the normality of hegemonic whiteness” (Matias, et al., 2014, p. 291). Charles Mills (1997) claims that “whiteness is not natural,” it is constructed and cultivated (p. 104). He says that white people are invested in whiteness and white privilege and employ

an “epistemology of ignorance” that produces “the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made” (Mills, 1997, p. 18). It is in the self-interests of those who call themselves “white” to not name it, and to remain ignorant of the way it moves in and through them (Leonardo, 2009). Naming and understanding whiteness and white privilege is often quite uncomfortable for white students because it “inevitably challenges the self-identity of white people who have internalized these racial justifications” (King, 1997, p. 128). Once white ignorance is disrupted it may cause a crisis as the perceived reality of white subjects is called into question (Kumashiro, 2000). If the crisis is productive it can lead to interpellation where learners experience “a profound unraveling of the self and its refunding on a new basis” (De Lissovoy, 2010, p. 428).

The art education field has taken up issues of multiculturalism in various iterations over the years, but often the focus is on non-white/non-Western art and culture leaving whiteness and power unexamined (Acuff, 2015; Buffington, 2014). Over time the label “multicultural” became diluted and was used to mark approaches that often reinforced rather than challenged stereotypes (Desai, 2000). Contemporary art education scholars call for a more critical approach to multicultural education that deals with cultural complexity (Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001), critiques power (Acuff, 2015; Buffington, 2014), and reflects on the identity and position of the teacher and the learner (Desai, 2000). Art education scholars in the 1990s began to categorize individual lessons, projects, and curriculum artifacts into multicultural taxonomies. Elizabeth Manley Delacruz (1996) conducted a content analysis examining multicultural merchandise marketed to teachers by developing a four tier rubric assessing the ways teachers engaged with each artifact ranging from a focus on ethnic tourism to a concern with social issues. Delacruz concluded that products used in multi-cultural curricula were “perpetuating stereotypical misconceptions, reinforcing monocultural myths, and miseducating students” (1996, p. 85). James Banks (1999) also outlined four different categories for multicultural inclusion including the Contributions Approach that focuses on heroes and holidays, the Additive Approach where culture is discussed but leaves curriculum largely unaltered, the Transformation Approach where curriculum is changed by the inclusion of diverse perspectives, and the Social Action Approach where students take steps to solve social problems. While Delacruz’s rubric assesses the ways students relate to art objects, Banks’ approaches are more concerned with the relationships between objects in the overall curriculum.

Amy Kraehe (2010) uses this literature on multiculturalism to conduct a content analysis comparing Texas’ shifting criteria for teacher certification of candidates’ understanding of race, culture, and

diversity in 1986 and 2007. Kraehe notes that while the state standards made shifts towards inclusivity, they stopped short of incorporating explicitly anti-racist or critical views of culture suggesting a “color-blind ideology” (p. 171). Fiona O’Rourke (2018) also applies a critical multicultural analysis to the English National Art Curriculum. Her curriculum analysis reveals that the history of art taught in English schools is often Euro-centric and seeks to “valorize the contributions Europeans have made to the world’s artistic heritage [and] implicitly constitute the visual arts curriculum as the property of imagined “white’ populations” (p. 206). She argues that the subtle ways the curriculum affirms white supremacy “may be tacit or unintentional, but are not accidental” (p. 207). In both of these studies we see themes of maintaining racial and gendered hierarchies, preserving and promoting white norms of aesthetics and culture, and a persistent attempt to include diverse art/artists without attending to the sociocultural issues and contexts that inform their life and work. While the literature on multicultural art education proposes there are methods to disrupt these harmful processes of social reproduction, content analysis from the field suggests these approaches are not often employed. The literature presented here shows analysis of commercial products, national curriculum, and state standards revealing a shortage of literature analyzing how race and culture are taken up in district art curriculum documents. This study addresses this gap in literature by examining K-5 curriculum documents evidencing challenges to or investments in whiteness.

Methodology

This study takes a snapshot of American curriculum at this specific cultural moment. How do district curriculum documents approach culture and race in these divisive times? By conducting a discourse analysis on elementary curriculum documents, I explore how images by/about artists of color and white artists are regulated, contextualized, negated, or legitimized in the curriculum.

Content analysis encompasses a range of approaches including “systematic, objective, quantitative analysis” (Neuendorf, 2016, p. 1) and also more qualitative approaches which go “beyond mere word counts to include latent content analysis” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1283). Content analysis uses frequency counts to look at the manifest meaning (surface/textual) and also considers rhetoric to find latent (deep/implied) meanings (Neuendorf, 2016). This study employs summative content analysis where significant terms are counted and tallied and then analyzed to find the latent meaning behind the text (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In order to apply summative content analysis to the district curricula, I will analyze the text for the presence, frequency, and organization of specific artists, styles, stated goals, and vocabulary addressing culture. I begin by examining

the identity of artists suggested in each unit to produce racial and gendered frequency counts. Next I analyze the ways artists are contextualized in each unit by considering the descriptive words labeling artists’ identities and associated artistic movements. I also investigate the unit goals, suggested projects, and accompanying vocabulary in order to compare units with higher/lower mentions of artists of color. The frequency, organization, and description of non-white/non-western artists is then compared to white/western artists to consider both the manifest meanings and the latent implications of this data as I attempt to understand “the dual creation of mentions and silences” (Trouillot, 1995, p. 50).

The purpose of this study is not to single out specific districts, but rather take up the conversation of how race is addressed in the broader field of art education through curriculum. While curriculum documents cannot tell us how teachers enact these guidelines in their classrooms, it is worthwhile to see the priorities and values districts suggest. Unlike national and state standards, the curriculum scope and sequence found in district guides is more specific to pinpoint time periods, cultures, artists, and projects in order to synchronize study across the district. These documents reveal the values and priorities of district leaders, which are codified and passed on to teachers through district curriculum.

This data comes directly from online elementary curriculum documents from three districts across the United States. These districts were chosen because their guides were publicly available and detailed enough to list specific artists, artworks, and projects. They were also chosen because they represent three distinct geographical areas of the country: the west, the northeast, and the south. Additionally, only districts with significant populations (over 25%) of both white students and students of color were considered. What follows is a concise description of each district and a curriculum overview. Demographics and regional information are included to situate curricula in a particular place serving specific populations. For the purposes of this study, I present only a snapshot of each curriculum through curricular vignettes revealing their approach to issues of culture and whiteness in the arts. After discussing individual case studies, I analyze trends across all three studies using the lens of Critical Whiteness. I then conclude with discussion, implications, and recommendations for furthering the goal of anti-oppressive art education.

Williamsport, Pennsylvania

Williamsport is a small district in central Pennsylvania within driving distance from Philadelphia. Less than 20% of residents have bachelor’s degrees with an average family income under \$40,000.

Williamsport school district is majority white (66%) with Black and multi-racial students making up 15% and 14% respectively, and Hispanic students composing 4% of the student body. The Williamsport Elementary Art Curriculum Guide¹ is only six pages long and has one page for each grade. Every grade studies artists that fit into a larger theme for the year. Each page of the guide is divided into headings that lay out objectives, vocabulary, production, art history, art criticism, aesthetics, and interdisciplinary connections. A list of artists accompany each grade level, most years this list consists of 7-10 artists with the notable exceptions of 2nd grade, which focuses on cultural diversity and only has three named artists and 5th grade which studies ancient art and has no individual artists listed. The list of suggested artists in Williamsport reveals a stark racial disparity [Table 1].

Although, 15% of the student body is African American, their curriculum guide does not recommend a single African American artist. Out of the 32 artists, they list only two artists of color.

Although Williamsport's curriculum focus is on exploring universal themes, there are designated entry points containing non-white artists. This is most striking in their year-long units on Self Discovery in Kindergarten, Exploring Imagination in 1st Grade, Inspired by Nature in 3rd Grade, and Art and Artists (from Pennsylvania) in 4th Grade. Each of these themes is explored exclusively with white artists. By solely including white artists the curriculum suggests that white imaginations and white self-discoveries are more worthy of study. This also implies that the only important artists to come out of Pennsylvania have been white. The goal of the 4th grade unit on Pennsylvanian artists is that "students will expand their appreciation for the beauty and history of their state, region and community" (Williamsport Curriculum, n.d., p. 4). However, by excluding artists of color, the document indicates that not every community has "beauty and history" worth including, sending a message of inferiority to the students of color who make up 34% of the student body. Artists of color only enter into the Williamsport curriculum during the years with explicit themes on diversity like 2nd grade's unit on Cultural and Community Diversity and 5th grade's Art Through the Ages. Even in the 5th grade historical unit, Egypt is the only non-white culture they instruct teachers to study. The stated goal here is to explore "all civilizations throughout time" (Williamsport Curriculum, n.d., p. 5), but their omission of non-white civilizations implies value judgment about whose cultures contribute to the progress of civilization. Depicting the advancement of history as led by white cultures marginalizes non-white artists and equates the story of human

1 This version of the Williamsport curriculum was accessed in 2017 and is no longer accessible online. A representative from the district confirmed that they are in the process of revising their curriculum.

progress with the story of whiteness.

Similar to the curriculum documents examined in O'Rourke's study, Williamsport relegates non-white art and artists to "neatly fenced-off areas...correlated with essentialist systems of representation...that do not convey the diverse artistic practices within these cultures" (O'Rourke, 2018, p. 214). This partitioning marks them as different and may lead students to surmise that the artists studied during these years are somehow "other," rendering them deviant from the "normative points of reference" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 28). This view of non-white artists as outside of the norm is emphasized during the 2nd grade unit on Cultural and Community Diversity which contains three artists (including the only two non-white artists) and has the stated goal that "students will discover how art is influenced by cultural differences" (Williamsport Curriculum, n.d., p. 2). The implication here is that culture is possessed exclusively by non-white communities leaving whiteness to exist outside of a marked cultural space studied every other year and thereby remaining unexamined. This location of culture outside of white bodies is reinforced by the inclusion of Betty La Duke, a white artist whose subjects are exclusively people of color. Here non-white cultures and bodies can be mimicked and possessed by white artists without substantively critiquing power or legacies of colonization. This suggests a surface-level approach to understanding the influences of cultural differences in art that does not challenge students' worldview or make whiteness visible.

The strength of this curriculum is Williamsport's desire to investigate larger themes like self-conceptions, relationships to nature, and local artists. However, in exploring these topics, they uphold racial divisions and hierarchies by utilizing an approach to multiculturalism that positions students as anthropologists and ethnic tourists (Delacruz, 1996) and engages with culture in ways that cognitively separate students from the artists of color they study. This separation is achieved by locating culture outside of white body leaving whiteness to represent the unmarked normative body against which deviations can be measured (Wynter, 2006). This is further emphasized by including artists of color only in limited categories based on essentialized understandings of race, while presenting a robust view of white art and culture. The Williamsport curriculum also does not name a single African American artist and therefore misses opportunities to acknowledge the assets found in students' heritage and culture (Acuff, 2015).

Granite, Utah

The Granite school district in Utah is a suburb near a large city where over half the students (57%) receive free or reduced lunch.

Granite reports a majority of its students are white (64%), with 25% of students identifying as Hispanic and around 3% of students identifying as Black, Pacific Islander, or Asian. The Granite Visual Art Curriculum Map (2013) is 24 pages long (four pages for each grade) and is broken down into nine sections each quarter detailing individual units of study, additional resources, and accompanying images. Sections contain key concepts, skills, standards, objectives, lesson ideas, and assessment options. The Granite curriculum emphasizes the elements of art and gives little attention to thematic connections. This is evidenced through the organization of each semester by the basic elements of shape, line, color, and texture. In fact, these four art elements are studied over and over again at the same time each year with increasing depth. Themes are not a centerpiece of this curriculum, and many of the concepts, skills, and suggested activities focus on a mastery of these repeated elements. Art historical movements and specific artists are referenced throughout and the suggested activities engage with these artists in relation to their use of the elements by prompting students to identify color schemes in artwork (3rd grade) or to practice drawing various lines (1st grade). This curriculum suggests 33 artists, of which only two are artists of color (both African American) and a single female artist [Table 1].

Table 1: Demographic breakdown of suggested artists

District	Male Artists	Female Artists	White Artists	Black Artists	Latino/Hispanic Artists	Asian Artists	Native American Artists	Total Artists
Williamsport	26 (81%)	6 (19%)*	30 (94%)	0	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	0	33
Granite	32 (97%)	1 (3%)	31 (94%)	2 (6%)	0	0	0	33
Spring Valley	85 (79%)	23 (21%)*	88 (81%)	10 (9%)	4 (4%)	1 (1%)	5 (5%)	108

*Women of color fit into multiple categories and are counted in both their gender and racial category. Williamsport has 1 Latina artist, Spring Valley has 2 Black females, 2 Native American females, and 2 Latina artists, Granite features no women of color.

In a district made up of 25% Hispanic students, Granite did not mention any Hispanic artists.

In 3rd grade they include Indigenous art in a unit on petroglyphs. The curriculum authors contextualize the art by suggesting books about ancient Indigenous art. However, over the course of six years the curricula never advises that students learn the name of Indigenous tribes or artists. Additionally, the projects during this unit suggest students “create personal petroglyphs using charcoal or chalk on flat rocks” and “make a pinch or slab pot out of clay and use Native

American designs to decorate” (3rd grade Granite Visual Art, 2013, p. 1). This approach to multiculturalism engages in what Delacruz calls “cultural consumption” which “relegates the artistic and symbolic expressions of unfamiliar or exotic peoples to the status of recreational cultural consumables” and trivializes non-white cultures turning their art into “anthropological specimens and aesthetic curiosities” (Delacruz, 1996, p. 91). In this curriculum, Granite depicts Native American culture as primitive, antiquated, and easy to mimic thereby removing it from the vital contemporary concerns of Indigenous artists today. In this way, Indigenous art is portrayed as stagnant and stuck in the past, while students continue to learn about white artists over the course of many centuries who grow, progress, invent, discover, and push boundaries into the 21st century. This sets up a comparison portraying Indigenous artists as static and irrelevant and white artists as innovative and progressive.

Despite attempts to add cultural context, Granite still devalues the spiritual meaning of sacred objects by distorting their intended purpose through imitation (Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001). This mimicry and the racial (and gendered) hierarchy they preserve through their choice of artists perpetuate a level of cultural engagement that is shallow and often characterized by reproducing cultural and racial divisions. Additionally, Granite’s Hispanic population (25% of the student body) is left out of the curriculum, sending a message of inferiority and missing opportunities to engage

with their cultural wealth and contributions to art history. Spring Valley is a school district in a coastal city with an aging middle to upper class population. The Spring Valley school district is majority white (59%), with 19% of students identifying as Hispanic or Latino, 16% Black, and 2% Asian. The *Spring Valley County Schools ART Curriculum Map* (2015) provides 61 pages of curriculum for every grade level totaling 366 pages for all six years combined. Each grade-specific curriculum begins with the yearly focus and list goals, which repeat verbatim every year. They also provide two artists that teachers should focus on annually. Every grade level includes an extensive list of the elements and principles of design paired with suggested textbook images. Months are broken down to designate specific focal artists paired with biographical information and helpful websites. Each quarter of the map includes essential questions, dates of important community art events, visual art standards, and suggested academic vocabulary. The Spring Valley Curriculum Map is markedly distinct from Williamsport and Granite. Not only is it extensively longer and more in depth, but they also pay closer attention to the

2 This district requested a pseudonym, therefore no citations referencing the curriculum are provided here.

identity of the artists they suggest. Over the course of kindergarten through 5th grade they suggest 108 different artists, 23 (21%) of which are female, and 20 (19%) are artists of color [Table 1].

In addition to explicitly highlighting more diverse artists, they also feature artists of color repeatedly; in fact their most frequently suggested artist is African American painter, Jacob Lawrence [Table 2].

Spring Valley's curriculum outlines specific artists to study weekly and details the "culture" of each artist. For white, male artists like Wassily Kandinsky, they give specific context about his culture and the art movements he is involved with saying that he was "Russian" and associated with "Expressionism/ German Expressionism/ Blue Rider" (Spring Valley Kindergarten, 2015, p. 15). We see this same depth of identity context with other white male artists like Paul Klee listed as "German born, Swiss" and associated with "Expressionism/ Surrealism/ German Expressionism/ Blaue Reiter/ Bauhaus" (Spring Valley Kindergarten, 2015, p. 15). This specificity is lacking when artists of color and/or female artists are featured. In Spring Valley non-dominant artists often are deprived of their place-specific cultural context or they are untethered from the art movements situating them in the canon of art history. For example, white artist Louis Comfort Tiffany is specifically linked to a city listing "Amer. + Orlando" while Japanese printmaker, Katshushika Hokusai, is deprived of the context of his country and regional community listing him only as "Asian" (Spring Valley 4th grade, 2015, pp. 15-16). For Jacob Lawrence (their most cited artist) they list his culture as "African American" and his associated movements as "Mixed Stories" (Spring Valley 2nd Grade, 2015, p. 11). Here again they include his race as a stand in for his cultural and community identity while omitting place-specific ties to regions and artistic movements that are important to understanding his work during the Harlem Renaissance in New York City. Whiteness is not made visible in these cultural labels, white artists are never named as white making whiteness the hegemonic norm as "unmarked humanity is white" (Trouillot, 1995, p. 81).

What does it mean for Jacob Lawrence to be the most talked about artist in Spring Valley (suggested nine times), but for the Harlem Renaissance to be omitted from his story? Does this reflect an authentic inclusion of his work and the ideas informing his practice, or a tokenized surface-level insertion? In the Spring Valley curriculum non-dominant artists are more likely to lack an anchor to a specific art movement. Of the seven non-dominant featured artists, six lack art movement classifications and/or cultural labels. This disparity is striking because it shows that even when non-dominant artists are included they may still be stripped of ties to their communities and art movements thus distorting the meaning of their work and

removing it from the larger narrative of art history.

Spring Valley's curriculum is ambitious, detailed, and contains extensive resources. Its strength is in its clear appreciation of art history and a desire to include diverse artists throughout. However, Spring Valley still provides only shallow and decontextualized engagement with the sociocultural issues affecting the artists of color they include. This suggests a level of cultural engagement that prompts students to appreciate cultural artifacts without reflecting on their own identity or privilege. Dipti Desai (2000) claims that this type of cultural representation flattens and essentializes as it "overlooks the politics of location and positionality" presenting only a partial truth (p. 114). Maintaining the separation of art from the cultural, ideological, historical, and political processes that inform it may in fact perpetuate violence as it attempts to be inclusive (Desai, 2000).

Discussion

Each district involves diverse artists only in shallow ways that do not reveal or disrupt whiteness thus contributing to the social reproduction of racism (Alden, 2001). Although Spring Valley and Granite make attempts to move towards inclusivity, their flattened and tokenized inclusions enact the very oppressions they attempt to disrupt (Desai, 2000). Critiques of power and attention to the sociocultural contexts of artists and their communities are notably absent across each of these documents illustrating a benign and a-political multiculturalism (Delacruz, 1996).

Across all three curricula, whiteness is linked with progress. This is exemplified most in the cases of Granite and Williamsport, which contain minimal artists of color compared to robust narratives of white civilization, including lessons focusing on Greek and Roman art, Medieval and Renaissance art, Early (white) American art, Modern art, and Contemporary white artists. Telling the story of human progress through the advances of white cultures establishes a hierarchy upholding the myth of white progress that situates white culture as dominant and relegates cultures unable "to fit within the dominant ideal" to the margins (Alden, 2001, pp. 36-37). As in O'Rourke's (2018) study, "these discursive practices reproduce the idea of an imagined white racial identity, through a story or 'grand narrative' that describes them as a unified social group" (p. 213). Presenting this lineage of great white artists as the norm creates a dichotomy with curricular portrayals of non-white cultures that seem stuck in time and irrelevant to the flow of artistic progress. When students in Granite learn about Indigenous art, they are fixated on ancient petroglyphs, and when Williamsport students study Egypt, they look only at ancient Egyptian art. While these ancient and traditional works are important, they should not represent

the majority of non-white/non-western art studied. This creates a stagnant view of artists of color that contrasts with the vibrant and relevant work of highlighted white artists, creating a racial hierarchy that may “hinder the development of a positive self concept” for students of color (Alden, 2001, p. 27).

The narrative of white progress is also upheld through curricular organization dictating when/how they include non-white artists. In Williamsport and Granite we see inclusions relegated to specific entry points promoting racial divisions and affirming the status of artists of color as “other” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Artists of color are most often included during lessons on global art, folk art, or ancient art implying white supremacy through suggesting that American artists, “fine” artists, and Contemporary artists are mostly white. This tendency is also seen in Spring Valley where artists of color are decontextualized and untethered from the canon of art history while hyper-contextualizing the importance of white male artists. Including artists of color without explicit links to their community context and failing to critically examine the “root causes” of oppression makes race/racism an issue that only concerns people of color and prevents white students from recognizing their own bodies as raced subjects (Urrieta, 2004).

Towards Anti-Oppressive Art Education

How might we reform curriculum to make whiteness and power visible? Kevin Kumashiro (2000) argues that in order to truly make invisible power dynamics visible educators should incorporate knowledge that disrupts student assumptions. According to Kumashiro, these moments of disruption can cause students to enter into a crisis where they become “unstuck” as they question their assumptions and reflect on their role in oppressive systems made visible (2000, p. 44). The visual arts are a rich space to take up Kumashiro’s project of anti-oppression because of arts’ power to “break through the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness” (Dewey, 1954, p. 86). Art education scholars suggest harnessing this power in a range of interlocking methods that can move our practice towards addressing whiteness, oppression, and inequities through art curriculum and pedagogy. These approaches include using counter-stories to critique the master narrative of white progress (Knight, 2006), providing space to acknowledge and critique oppressions and inequities (Acuff, 2015), and reflecting on our positionality as educators while attending to the perspectives of our students (Acuff, 2015; Desai, 2000; Kraehe, 2010). An art curriculum and accompanying pedagogy integrating these three strands has the potential to disrupt whiteness as the hegemonic norm. The first strand for disrupting white supremacy in curriculum is to use counter-stories to “rupture the storylines” of the master

narrative (Langer-Osuna & Nasir, 2016, p. 731). Counter-stories flip the perspective of the master narrative to challenge its legitimacy (Delgado, 1989). Contemporary artists like Fred Wilson, The Guerilla Girls, and Kehinde Wiley create visual counter-stories by talking back to histories based on stereotypes and oppression. These artists use tools like appropriation, layering, and juxtaposition to expose and critique the biased perspective of the canonical master narratives. Williamsport could prompt students to question the master narrative by juxtaposing white artist Betty LaDuke’s depiction of smiling Black field workers (included in 2nd Grade) with a counter-story by Latina artist Ester Hernandez whose *Sun Mad* prints criticize conflict-free representations of migrant workers’ labor conditions. Granite’s curriculum could gain a deeper understanding of Native American art and sociocultural context by including Indigenous artists like Nicholas Galanin or Wendy Red Star in addition to ancient petroglyphs to have deeper conversations about how Indigenous identity is constructed in American society. Using visual counter-stories in this way can “reveal the very bones and skeletons of domination, re-cast the workings of subordination, and re-tell the history of how things came to be” (Harris, Carney, & Fine 2001, p. 14). In this way counter-stories are both creative and destructive and move curriculum from essentializing culture to exploring larger thematic concerns across cultures and time periods (Freedman & Stuhr, 2004).

The second strand builds on counter storytelling to acknowledge and discuss issues of oppression and inequity in classrooms. Introducing the disruptive knowledge of counter-stories into curriculum can be intimidating because it signals a moment of crisis and unknowability when white students and teachers may “realize their constructions of selves were perforated with lies” (Marx, 2006, p. 149). Grappling with disruptive knowledge in the classroom is unpredictable and as educators we are often taught to “[equate] learning with control” and treat “any condition of uncertainty...as a threat” (Britzman, 1986, pp. 449-451). Therefore a move towards embracing curriculum that questions white supremacy must correspond with rethinking our teacher preparation programs to equip teachers to have conversations that may be uncomfortable.

Embracing an anti-oppressive curriculum also involves a third strand grounded in vulnerability and reflexivity as we learn alongside our students and challenge oppression and inequity using art as a “terrain of defamiliarization” (hooks, 1995, p. 5). This requires white art educators to “unravel” our own complicity in oppression as a continuous process of learning and unlearning (De Lissoy, 2010, p. 419). This reflexivity should extend to our students as we consider their needs and perspectives. How can art educators strike the appropriate balance between disrupting racist assumptions

while giving space for students of color to process and heal from the “psychic wounds inflicted by assault from the forces of imperialist, racist, and sexist domination” (hooks, 1995, p. 5)? How can we cite violence without being violent? Reforming our curriculum in this way needs to go beyond discussions of principles of design and aesthetics. It may require a new vocabulary (Freedman & Stuhr, 2004).

To envision what this might look like we can turn to resources offered by museums, critical art education scholars and community arts organizations invested in moving this conversation forward. The educator resource page for PBS’s Art 21 contains guides that investigate themes through prompts exploring diverse contemporary artists and art making across cultures. Dipti Desai and Graeme Chalmers (2007) give ideas for inquiry driven lessons featuring contemporary artists approaching sociocultural issues from different perspectives. In *Art as History, History as Art* the authors provide historical artifacts to pair with contemporary artworks to question the master narrative through critical dialogue grounded in observation and inquiry (Desai, Hammlin, & Mattson, 2010). Classroom teachers can also take steps to examine their district curricula for underpinnings of white supremacy and amend their lessons to include counter-stories, address sociocultural issues relevant to the lives of their students and the artists they study, and engage in a meaningful process of critical reflexivity.

Conclusion

This research has implications for art educators at all levels. Curricula upholding racial hierarchies and divisions must be rewritten to critically address the narratives they reproduce. Until these revisions occur, art educators need to consider ways to provide the context and counter-stories the curriculum lacks. While the scope of this study is small, it does suggest that districts often use culture to affirm white supremacy rather than challenge it. This does not implicate all district curricula, but it suggests we need to attend to the ways multiculturalism is included in these documents. Analyzing curricula sheds light on district priorities and values, but it does not tell us what art teachers do with these guidelines. While the district may control the written curriculum, it is up to teachers to make choices about how to apply these directives as curriculum-in-use (Cornbleth, 1985). Teachers have agency to navigate this space between written curriculum and curriculum-in-use in order to “fill in the gaps left by the curriculum” (Ellsworth, 2017, p. 7). More research should be done to examine how teachers enact multicultural curriculum to address whiteness in their classrooms.

It is up to each of us to decide how we can unravel the systems of white lies we are caught up in. As individual teachers, district leaders,

policy makers, and curriculum developers, we are all accountable to disrupt white supremacy where we can. As Peggy McIntosh (1988) argues, once we see whiteness and power functioning in and through us, we are “newly accountable” to act on this knowledge (p. 292). It is not enough for our curricula to include diverse artists; we need to develop a curriculum that is actively anti-racist. We cannot shield our students from a world built on inequity, but we can provide them the tools to disrupt, challenge, and unravel it in their own hearts and communities.

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