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ART EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF PROMOTING DEMOCRACY:

PREPARING PRE-SERVICE ART TEACHERS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION

By

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"When righteous people keep silent about injustice, corrupt people believe their actions are right."

Ali bin Abi Talib

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the use of art as a pedagogical tool with pre-service art teachers in a graduate-level art education class. A curriculum was developed focusing on educational social justice theories and their application in regard to gender inequity and diversity issues. The goal was to lead students to engage in more self-directed learning and to become more pro-active in their society. The results indicate the value of using art making to help students explore, investigate, and examine self and self in relation to society. In addition, they shed light on transformational moments in the art making process when students' awareness of self and social justice issues was heightened and democratic ideas were reinforced. The results have implications for classroom practice as well as enhancing the quality of art education by incorporating social justice concerns in art education for individual and community developments.

Keywords: *Social justice education, Educational Democracy, Social justice art, Gender equity, Diversity, Practitioner research, Pre-service art teachers.*

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Art Education as a Means of Promoting Democracy: Preparing Pre-Service Art Teachers for Social Justice Education

I was raised in Kuwait, where I grew up with an abiding desire to be an artist. In 1997 I began my undergraduate studies in Kuwait City at the Art Education Department at the College of Basic Education. My training program was based on an old version of discipline-based art education (DBAE), an approach to art instruction that includes learning about art criticism, art history, art production, and aesthetics (Chalmers, 1987). In time, I noticed that the art represented the perspectives of elites who glorified the modern art era and white European masters, and I found it frustrating to see that my culture and I were not at all represented in the art education curriculum. I later found this same problem was being discussed in the United States, where many researchers rejected the narrowness of this uni-dimensional traditional Western-based perspective on art (Acuff, Hirak, & Nangah, 2012; Cahan & Kocure, 1994; Jelcich, 1998). Acuff (2013) discussed the limitations of current art education textbooks, for example, and argued that they represent mostly mainstream influences. She contended that failing to recognize these influences results in the exclusion of minorities and other cultures and that educators need to empower students by including them in the curriculum, an objective that can be accomplished by tapping into their interests and backgrounds, or bringing in current issues related to their daily lives (Acuff, 2013; Gude, 2007).

According to Chalmers (1987), to understand art as a democratic practice is to understand it from multiple perspectives and through sociocultural contexts. While art can be used for

decoration or for education, to fulfill art's full potential, it should be meaningful and communicate to viewers. This form of communicative art has the power to perpetuate cultural norms, as well as to inspire change. Thus, when viewing art through this lens it becomes easy to view art education's aim as connecting and relating art to our social and cultural lives (Chalmers, 1987).

As an artist and art teacher, I am aware of the power of art to promote democratic values, especially in a context in which communication and acceptance is highlighted. Art can be a means by which to mediate and accept our differences; it can act as a rostrum of liberty that enables individuals to share their opinions (Fischer & Kaneda, 2010; Freedman, 2000). Historically, art has focused on social qualities and values rather than just the individual's interests (Anderson, 1990). In fact, art has frequently represented common values and shared truths. Many societies have used art as a medium for recording wisdom or insights, in this way providing a version of truth based on shared human experiences. Art represents a society's values through visual manifestations. Accordingly, educators can take advantage of art as a means of enriching students' values and educating them about ways they might lead civil, democratic lives. Thus, art education is well equipped to provide students with opportunities to speak and articulate different perspectives about the world they live in.

Building out of this understanding of the function of art, the purpose of my dissertation highlights art's capacity to inspire change for social reform. My research focuses on preparing K-12 pre-service art teachers to understand the function of art as an educative tool to raise awareness and motivate change. My dissertation is based on the theoretical understanding that by providing students with tools for social change, they can create a classroom full of energy and hope, and can move education from the passive pursuit of knowledge to the active realization of

hope and possibilities (Bell, 2016; Hackman, 2005). Giving pre-service art teachers opportunities to experience the power of action on a small level can prepare them to engage in society in broader ways. My research aims to illuminate their responsibilities as educators, artists, and citizens who have a voice and rights to participate in society. Art educators need to know that education can have large-scale social impact if they are willing to expand their goals to include social change toward a more democratic society. In this chapter I will briefly explore the purpose of my study, review relevant empirical and theoretical literature, and outline the methodological approach of my proposed dissertation research project.

Statement of the Problem

Diversity is everywhere; cultures are built on complex structures of gender, class, power, disability, or race (Banks, 2013). As such, it is important to promote democracy toward societal issues and one might argue that schools are the best place to do this. In a democratic society, education serves as an introduction to the culturally responsive system of morals and values. Within this focus on social reform and democracy, art wields a particular power. Art is meaning making; it represents our perspectives, stories, and opinions (Gude, 2008). Artistic language is one way of communicating over time and maintaining heritage and identity. Most fundamentally, art functions as a medium of communication, which is the foundation of a democratic society (Dewey, 1934). In my dissertation I aimed to highlight this purpose of art, starting with the examnation of social needs. This approach is consistent with the work of Anderson and Mibrandt (2005), who argued that art education can and should be a social instrument for improving our lives. Further, because art provides unique ways of understanding our experiences, I used art to promote democratic communication through artistic language (Barone & Eisner, 2012). When

armed with an understanding of art's power for social change then, art education is a suitable means of cultivating democratic values (Anderson, 2004).

Accountability pressures and the focus on academic core subjects are but a few of the reasons that art education is frequently misunderstood and underrepresented (Eisner, 2004; Winner & Hetland, 2008). When art disappears, we should ask: What else did we lose with it? We can arguably respond that we lose the medium by which we can influence students in different ways resulting in deeper understanding. Or that we are weakening art's essential power when it is represented only from the elite perspectives occurring when the cannon is informed by Western-European bias (Acuff, 2013; Jelcich, 1998). Many of the current art education textbooks in the United States are geared for elitist groups. They tend to representi mainstream influences (see Efland, 1990; Logan, 1955; Smith, 1996; Wygant, 1983, 1993) and ignore minority perspectives by excluding their heritages (Acuff, Hirak, & Nangah, 2012). This tendency equates to a lack of advocacy about social justice principles and narrows the relevance of many art curricula to majority groups only. Art needs to be meaningful to students' lives by representing their backgrounds and experiences (Acuff, 2013; Jelcich, 1998). Therefore, the main goal of my dissertation is to develop art education curriculum and practices that highlight the importance of including students in the curriculum. I see this curricular approach as an attempt to raise students' awareness and provide them with tools and strategies to engage and speak for themselves in society.

Purpose of the Study

My research method was practitioner inquiry, situated within a pre-service arts classroom. The purpose was to enrich pre-service teachers' understandings of social justice education and democracy by using art as a tool to both educate and resist the status quo. As part

of the study I attempted to develop and implement a critical pedagogical approach that would be implemented in an art education classroom composed of pre-service art teachers. One aim was to help the pre-service teachers develop critical thinking and an understanding of social justice through artistic creation and discussion. In the curriculum I developed, I addressed the problems of inequity and marginalization, and how pre-service teachers shape their teacher identities through consideration of these issues. A fundamental goal was to contribute to the existing empirical research by providing guidance that helps to prepare a new generation of culturally sensitive art educators.

In this practitioner inquiry, pre-service teachers conceptualize the problem minorities face through an investigation of social justice issues through art making engagement and discussion of relevant literature. Students examined the complexities of visual culture in order to explore political and economic relationships in an effort to understand how visuals inform and develop identity. To encounter these influences, students reflected on their own beliefs, values, and interests through art making as a form of creative resistance. My understanding of art making and art education is informed by a theoretical framing of making as a way of knowing (Barone & Eisner, 2012). This includes an understanding that visual ideas have the unique ability to record new understandings for the learner. My study took place in *Contemporary and Historical Issues in Art Education*, a course offered in the Art Education Department at Florida State University. Currently, the course is taught by Dr. Sara Scott Shields and utilizes arts-based teaching methods, the same strategy I used in my research.

My research study took place during the first four weeks of the course. The class met for three hours once a week. My lessons entailed readings, discussions, and art reflections. I used activities, videos, and art making to engage students in conversations on the role of the art

teacher in providing democratic education, with a specific focus on engaging students with social justice issues. I provided students with up-to-date literature (academic articles) intended to enrich their awareness of the current and local political, economic, and social realities. My role was to prompt students' thinking to analyze and discuss issues critically. Students completed one art project; in this project, they explored a social justice issue in which they were interested or which they had personally experienced. As a class, we discussed each student's work through a group critique designed to share and engage both individual and collective opinions. Engaging with students' opinions during the art process allowed me to observe the transformation in their values, beliefs, and attitudes. At the end of the classes, I arranged for an exhibition of the students' work.

Students' experiences with these visual artifacts, critical discussions, and artistic reflections yielded rich data. My goals for this project were two-fold. On the micro level, I sought to provide tools and methodologies the pre-service teachers could use with their future students; on the macro level, I sought to give them insight into the roles they will play in enhancing student engagement with social issues. When we raise the pre-service teachers awareness, it can motivate them to develop their own tools for their own classroom that are suitable for their particular contexts and conditions. The second goal was to continue the scholarly conversation surrounding the role of art in the development of a democratic society.

Significance of the Study

Art education has many distinctive characteristics that can be significant for educational and social development. According to Anderson (1990), the common feature of art across cultures is to convey meaning. Art has the capacity to achieve a goal by bringing attention to ends that go beyond art itself. Therefore, this study was an attempt to direct pre-service art

teachers to use the capacity of art to promote social transformation, as art education is a social subject and an abundant field for investigation, analysis, and discussion (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). My project attempted to cultivate democratic values by integrating art curriculum with critical pedagogy aimed at improving art education practice through the facilitation of a curriculum informed by social justice.

Research focused on practice-based methods for cultivating democracy and social justice principles is needed in the field of pre-service education (Acuff, 2013; Acuff, Hirak, & Nangah, 2012; Darts, 2004). This research could promote the development of a curriculum of respect empowering pre-service teachers to be leaders in social reform. By arming our future teachers with the skills needed to confront and engage cultural differences, we are contributing to the development of a more democratic society.

Research Questions

In this study I intended to enrich the critical thinking skills of pre-service art teachers. In the classroom, we discussed the importance of culture and cultural diversity in understanding students' backgrounds. I also highlighted the importance of relating the art education curriculum to students' lives, as students can use art as an analytic tool when examining and exploring themselves and their community. I investigated how art making can enlarge students' perspectives and enrich their awareness as well as how art making can transform students' understandings and foster democratic values, believes, and attitudes. The research questions guiding the study were:

1. How can critical pedagogy be used to prepare pre-service art teachers to teach about social justice issues in their own classroom?

2. How can pre-service art teachers use art making to develop an identity sensitive to social justice issues?

Objectives of the Project

My lessons were designed to use art as a form of pedagogical resistance, moving students from empty aesthetic art to experiences that are more thoughtful, by encouraging artistic self-reflection. Students investigated visual culture and contemporary art as a way to explore the complex layers of politics, economics, and culture relations. My research was a form of practitioner inquiry, with objectives focusing on improving art education curriculum and practice. The program I designed provided pre-service art teachers various ways to use art as a tool that helps students encourage creative resistance, engage with community, and explore identities as contextually bound. More specifically, the goals of my curriculum were:

- Students —pre-service art teachers—will develop critical skills in social justice education and will understand the influence of politics and economics on educational policies by analyzing up-to-date news and visuals.
- Students will explore the potential of art education in a democratic culture by applying their understandings, opinions, and thoughts on artwork.
- Students will understand the function of art in social life, through relating art meaningfully to their life and through discussing the art process in a group critique.
- Students will explore recent contemporary art trends and will learn how to confront these given new challenges in their field to explain this art within a social justice understanding.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this research, I offer these definitions of the terms Social Justice Education and democracy:

Social Justice Education. Social Justice Education (SJE) is both a goal and a process (Bell, 2016). The primary goal of those who practice SJE is equal and full participation for all members in society, shaping and achieving their needs collaboratively. SJE requires democratic processes to accomplish this goal. These include affirming diversity and encouraging collaboration between different groups to make change. Bell (2016) asserted that the ambition of SJE is to distribute resources equally and secure physical and psychological safety for all members. In this sense, SJE is an emancipatory theory that could lead to a more democratic society.

Democracy. Democracy has multiple definitions that vary from field to field. In an educational context, Apple and Beane (1995) asserted that democracy is not a static aim to be fulfilled; rather democracy is an ambitious and continuing mission. Democracy provides equal opportunities for all students, their values in diversity. It also emphasizes cooperation rather than competition and embraces the notion of the common good.

My view of democracy in art education links expression, social engagement, and respect for all voices. This view is consistent with the ultimate goal of art education, which is to use art to construct new understandings. Greene (1993) indicated that art education encourages students to share their opinions when it honors heritage as a source of identity. Greene (1993) contended that a democratic society unites, listens, and gives citizens the freedom to tell their own stories. These stories have the potential to change how we view the role of art education in the democratic classroom. In using art for reflection and dialogue, I drew on the work of Paolo

Freire (2002/1970). Freire believed dialogue could not be meaningful if it did not come from contextualized self-expression.

In the chapter that follows, I review empirical and theoretical research relevant to my dissertation. I begin with my theoretical framework, juxtaposing different thinkers' perspectives on social justice education and democracy. I articulate the basic components of my theoretical framework and focus on how to apply these ideas to educational contexts and curriculum design. Next, I review empirical research in art education. The literature I review all advocates for the principles of democracy and social justice in the field of art education. Accordingly, the chapter is organized around three overarching main ideas: art education and democracy, art education and social justice principles, and art education and gender equity

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review selective studies relevant to my research. I begin with an exploration of the theoretical framework for the study from which my research strategies derived, including the perspectives of early thinkers in the education field to the contemporary researchers. In addition, I articulate in detail the components of social justice education theory and its application in an educational context, particularly in regard to curriculum design. I review empirical studies in art education with a similar direction as my research or which advocate for democracy and social justice principles through art education. Finally, this literature review will cover research with three overarching themes: art education and democracy, art education and social justice principles, and art education and gender equity.

Educational Democracy:
Apple & Beane (1995)

Critical Pedagogy:
Freire (2002/1970)
Giroux (1983) (2001)
McLaren (1994).

Social Justice Education:
Bell & Adams (2016)

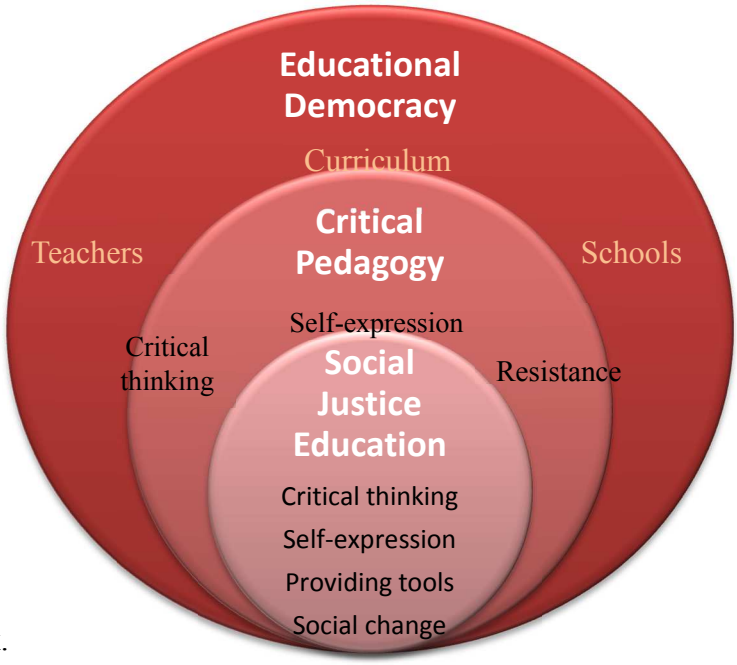

Figure 1. Theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework

I organized my theoretical framework around the work of particular thinkers under the big umbrella of critical pedagogy: Freire, Giroux, and McLaren. I refer to the structures of democratic schools Giroux (1983), as well as the role of three elements that influence democratic education: schools, curriculum, and teachers (Apple & Beane, 1995). In the last section, I take a look at my framework through a social justice education lens, discussing strategies and goals put forth by Bell (2016).

Critical Pedagogy for Social Change

This study's focus on raising students' consciousness and encouraging social reform lead me to theoretical literature on critical pedagogy, which emphasizes self-reflection, self-governance, and independent construction of knowledge by students (Giroux, 2010). Paolo Freire (2002/1997) created the notion of critical pedagogy, and Giroux and McLaren (1994) advocated for Freire's methods. They analyzed and developed Freire's ideas and expanded them to address issues of feminism, race, media, and contemporary politics. In this section I will take my readers through an exploration of Freire, Giroux, and McLaren's concepts, and discuss how their ideas are relevant, supported, and built my own study's perspective.

Paulo Freire

Paulo Freire (2002/1970) created a new approach to educating students. He asserted that teachers can play a significant role in raising students' consciousness and awaking critical awareness as a means for self-liberation (Giroux, 2010). Freire realized that the educational system can serve as a powerful oppressor to maintain a culture of silence. He rejected the banking metaphor of education in which teachers deposit information that students passively

accept, and instead argued that the teacher's role is to create authentic and meaningful dialogue grounded in the immediate life contexts of participants. Freire (2002/1970) worked to find creative ways to liberate education, for example, by encouraging students to engage in critical thinking about their lives and current circumstances in society. He posited that students who learn the skills of self-advocacy might be able to transform their worlds as well. Freire's intention to liberate the educational system and empower learners led him to a more complete theoretical conception of critical pedagogy.

In Freire's philosophy of critical pedagogy, the school is a place where students learn to liberate themselves from authority (Giroux, 2010). His educational methods emphasized helping students to develop critical awareness, self-reflection, and a self-managed life focused on social transformation. Critical pedagogy focus on political and economic power, as these authorities have the power to maintain and control the existing system, including education. Freire (2002/1970) argued that critical consciousness would not lead to disorder but instead facilitate responsibility, self-awaking, and self-affirmation against ignorance. Hence, students who develop a critical consciousness will become aware that they too are the creators of their culture and so have the ability to transform their lives. From Freire's standpoint, the future is not something that students simply receive, but that is created by human endeavor, which can change it. In other words, students need to recognize that life is a process of change rather than something static. The critical thinker strives for action and transforms the world, rather than accommodating the current reality.

Therefore, authentic dialogue is essential to Freire's (2002/1970) conception of critical consciousness, as it represents the only path to transformation. Engaging in critical thinking means engaging in authentic dialogue with others in the world. When a critical dialogue

generates productive communication, that is, communication about students' thoughts, preoccupations, or hopes rather than just discourse about the present situation, true education has occurred (Freire, 2002/1970). Freire argued that it is not the educator's role to discuss only his or her personal view of life, but to share and discuss their views with students as well. Educators can foster effective communication, by involving students in dialectical thought and language.

Freire (2002/1970) suggested that educators use methods of problem posing and thematic investigation. By shifting ideas from abstract to concrete and part to whole, teachers can help students gain a broader sense of the world and learn to decode coded situations—such as images—through description and analysis. One of the strategies I use in my lessons with students is decoding. Influenced by Freire, in my lessons students will decode images and news segments. They will go through the process of investigation to understand the real meaning of these coded materials. Providing these activities inside the classroom will give students an opportunity to think critically and participate in true dialogues, thinking of their everyday life and how outsider ideas could impose on them. This process, which Freire called the methodology of consciousness, can to help students explore their thinking about the world and actions toward it.

Freire's pedagogy aims to liberate students' minds from oppression exerted in existing power structures (Kellner, 2003). He asserted that educators can follow a process he called *investigation* that challenges the learner to thematize—seek to understand the themes in their internal and external experiences—and analyze different subjects of study. This type of dialogue is consciousness-raising and gives students opportunity to share their views and opinions rather than simply memorize imposed ideas (Kellner, 2003).

Freire and social justice education. Social justice education (SJE) was influenced by Freire's pedagogy, and connects theory with practice (Adams, 2016). Freire's ideas emphasized practice; they integrate pedagogical goals with learning processes that encourage critical reflection and active participation. In effect, Freire's pedagogy was an awakening instrument to raise people's awareness about the conditions of their own oppression and subjugation. He used a coding and decoding strategy, as well as prompt questions, that would encourage authentic dialogue. The goal is to facilitate meaningful discourse related to students' daily lives.

Educators who subscribe to Freirean doctrine are essentially facilitators who provide students with activities and discussion opportunities that make the classroom student-centered (Adams, 2016). Freire was against traditional education methods that put students in a passive role in which teachers imposed knowledge on them without giving them the opportunity to interact or question. Freire argued that this "banking education" approach aimed at subjugating people and perpetuating the control of the dominant members in a society (Adams, 2016). SJE principles challenge the traditional system of schooling which supports privileged knowledge and excludes marginalized groups (Adams, 2016) by exposing unequal treatments in both explicit and hidden curricula.

My teaching strategy was influenced by Freirean doctrine. I tend to focus on the learning process and encourage reflection and critical thinking, in this way integrating critical pedagogy in an art education context. Art making processes can result in powerful reflections and actions that engage students in a true discourse with self and others. In this study, I used current visual culture from students' context, for example, to decode the implicit meanings in these visuals. Further, I believe students need to have a deeper encounter with the visual culture strategies imposed on them by first, investigating their thoughts and ideas, using Freire's method of

investigation, and then I believe that students need to construct their own beliefs and values. Art can be a powerful visual reflection of voices and stories, so students can use it to take action through which to engage with their society.

Giroux and Contemporary Critical Pedagogy

Henry Giroux is a prominent contemporary scholar and cultural critic who has advocated for Paolo Freire's pedagogical approach. In fact, much of Giroux's (2001) works originate from Freire's ideas about teaching critical thinking. Giroux has emphasized that schools, teachers, and curricula should address cultural and political issues and support social change through critical pedagogy. In this sense, Giroux (2001) has agreed with Freire's position that education is an empowering force for people. According to Giroux, Freire gave us insight into cultural politics and linked social theory and practice as deeply meaningful forms of self-emancipation. Giroux has emphasized that students need to be involved in critical discourse, allowing them to think critically in order to bring about social change and uniting theory and practice.

Giroux (2001) critiqued traditional educational theory and its view of school as merely an instructional site. He asserted that failing to recognize education's power will result in reproducing the current system and maintaining a culture of silence. Accordingly, Giroux believes that Freire's educational theory provides a starting point for liberation as it combines hope and critique in order to react and resist. Giroux (2001) pointed out an important element of Freire's pedagogical theory: affirming the uniqueness of each culture. He argued that no culture is better than another, and that each culture is simply a different lived experience. Thus, educators must empower students to construct their own stories surrounding these lived experiences in their own voices. Giroux advocated Freire's idea that everyone is an intellectual

and can give meaning to the world. Therefore, educators should facilitate their students' ability to foster modes of self-education and develop their own concepts about the world.

I believe that critical pedagogy is an important topic in the field of education in the 21st century. Thus, my research project aims to find realistic ways to connect Giroux's and Freire's ideas about critical pedagogy to the actual experiences of teachers in art classrooms. While critical pedagogy emphasizes reflection and critical discourse, my study emphasizes visual reflection through art making. Art making gives students opportunity to express their uniqueness and explore their background, leading to the potentiality of identity reconstruction (Gude, 2008). The power of art making reflection is situated in the process of making, where the artist goes through analyzing and investigating critical self-discourse (Dewhurst, 2013; Gude, 2008). My attention goes beyond merely critical reflection, I attempt in my study to empower this reflection by highlighting these processes and sharing the self-discourse with others. Doing so, may create a student-centered classroom and emphasize the importance of students' opinions.

Furthermore, the product of the art making is as important as the process because it will be the tool of hope that engages students in social action. My approach required that students not only take action in the classroom, but also to participate in public exhibition. Social justice art aims *not* at finding immediate solutions, but developing responsible citizens who care and are proactive in their society (Dewhurst, 2013).

McLaren and the Postmodern Critique

Like Giroux and Freire, McLaren (1994) discussed issues related to multiculturalism in present-day, postmodern school contexts—specifically, how educators and other cultural workers can become engaged in social change. McLaren's concentration in educational theory and current trends focused on developing postmodern theories and their applications in the

curriculum. Postmodern theories investigate the twentieth century materials that yield knowledge and implicit meanings of inequality, such as media and visual culture. In a postmodern critique, McLaren argued that teachers should use pedagogy as a method of resistance and transformation. He highlighted the role of education in reinforcing the voices of individuals and helping teachers and students understand differences and respect diversity.

According to McLaren (1994), postmodern criticism can empower educators and cultural workers by bringing a critical or resistant postmodernist perspective to multiculturalism. He has argued that it is the goal of educators to develop a multicultural curriculum and pedagogy that deals with race, class, gender, and sexuality—one that illuminates diversity issues and reinforce the importance of accepting differences. In the same ways as Freire and Giroux, McLaren has asserted that critical pedagogy stimulates resistance and raises consciousness of the real world outside of school. Students need to be aware of their rights and real issues in their lives, such as the economy, politics, and institutionalized authorities like schools, and they should be free to express themselves through critical dialogue and decision-making (McLaren, 1994). Critical pedagogy can serve to change basic assumptions and give students an opportunity to investigate concepts, issues, and problems from different ethnic and cultural points of view, rather than simply via so-called expert perspectives or other authoritarian modes of teaching.

McLaren (1994) rejected the assault of mass media on human intelligence, since its output contains inferences of meaning that relate to moral issues. In McLaren's view, the U.S. media creates unequal representations of non-dominant groups in society, particularly since the media always has been under the control of white males. For instance, the media has attempted to highlight African American violence and portray whites as the victims, disregarding the

crimes of white people and giving much less attention to the unequal economic and social conditions faced by African Americans.

McLaren (1994) noted that democracy does not exist simply because of laws, but teachers and students must recognize that democracy needs to be continually recreated by human endeavors. He suggested that the language of postmodern criticism could be the means to transforming the existing status quo. In McLaren's view, teachers should deal with racial and cultural differences in ways that avoid reinforcing a mono-cultural structure and instead encourage solidarity and collaboration that breaks with the traditional ideology of market imperatives. Thus, it is the task of educators to help actualize real citizenship and democracy. Solidarity does not mean that we must constantly agree with each other, but that we provide safe spaces for disagreement and discussion that can lead us closer to common agreement, or at least mutual understanding. Even when common agreement is achieved it must not be seen as static, but rather continuously offering opportunities to move toward the development of new conditions (McLaren, 1994).

Exploring McLaren's (1994) concept of the postmodern critique, I found that McLaren's effort was shedding light on the current realities that influence inequalities. He highlighted the media's role in creating disparities through stereotyping minority groups. McLaren's view is relevant to my idea that the media is an important issue educators need to discuss in their classroom. In my study, I attempt to investigate media news segments because it is a part of students' everyday life. Further, media is not only consisting of news, but also visuals, commercials, and products that could have more implicit meaning about inequity (Darts, 2004). I am bringing these visuals in my classroom with pre-service art educators to discuss their responsibilities, as well as to raise students' awareness of invisible forces. Visuals are a

significant element in our field. Art education has a powerful role illuminating how students can explore their world through analyzing and teaching them how to see (Darts, 2004).

The law is also created from people—who are mostly privileged—and it is subject to change (McLaren, 1994). Teachers and students need to recognize that democracy needs their persistent effort to make change because democracy does not naturally exist. Building on McLaren's idea, I found it is more reliable to bring challenging realities existing in students' communities, rather than relying only on idealistic readings. I want to create an active classroom that encourages students to participate inside and outside the educational setting.

Linking Art Making with Critical Pedagogy

Applying critical pedagogy to my teaching framework gives my students the opportunity to explore themselves and develop concepts that are personally meaningful. First, students must enrich their background knowledge of the life forces that influence their lives and identities. Through discussions and readings and open-ended questions, I stimulated students to think creatively and engage in artful exploration with the purpose of societal change. One of the most powerful features of social justice art reflection is that it makes students in charge of their own learning. The student begins by discussing the inquiry and bringing attention to the problem. Then, the student must think about how to transform one or more aspects of the problem in visual form. As they strive to transform their ideas into aesthetic terms, it becomes a critical moment for rethinking the problem and attempting to find a solution through art making (Dewhurst, 2011; Gude, 2008). Then the solution is in sharing the problem with others and opening critical discourse about the topic. Thus, the power of art making reflection begins with self-discourse through questioning, investigating, and examining a topic, all guided by an inner drive. Finally, the student engages others in his or her inquiry by sharing the findings with

others. This powerful process of engagement and reciprocal action between the artist and the audience makes the art making a powerful reflection that stimulates action, engagement, and critical thinking for self and others.

Educational Democracy

In the previous section, I presented critical pedagogy as the fundamental of my framework; the thinkers discussed important strategies in education that can promote self-liberation. In this section, I will present the big umbrella of my framework that includes three elements within a democratic education structure: schools, curriculum, and teachers. I will present a comparison between Apple and Beane (1995) and Giroux (1983) discussing these elements from their different views. Exploring the structure of democratic schools will support my research idea that aims to expand the meaning of democracy in art education. Bringing attention to the role of each element enhances democracy in our practice.

Schools

Apple and Beane (1995) explained how democracy could be practiced in schools. They contended that democracy is not a spontaneous occurrence but rather requires an effort on the part of an educator to make it happen. Educators need to recognize that democracy structures exist throughout both the school and curriculum, and requires the widespread participation of educators, as well as professionals, within the community. Because educators are not the only ones making democratic decisions, but also student and parents have roles of as important as well. Educators need to engage students in the planning processes by eliciting their interests and concerns. At the same time, educators need to be careful that the democracy of the classroom, and of the school, is not predetermined.

Democratic educators encourage students to collaborate and work in groups, rather than compete (Apple & Beane, 1995). As true democracy centers on the common good, it is not a means for serving self-interest, a motivation that privatizers might try to promote. Instead, democratic schools cultivate in students a feeling of responsibility for others and for the community as a whole. All racial, socio-economic, and gender groups should have equal access to school as well as all school programs as well. Though school is a smaller scale society, educators must connect students with society outside of school to understand themselves and their place in the social system on a larger scale. Though democratic educators seek to recreate democracy, their efforts might fail easily if students do not understand the reality outside school.

Democratic schools care about humanism and progress; nevertheless, their main focus is often limited to improving the school system and students' performances (Apple & Beane, 1995). Yet, since a school's structure is integral part to larger societal conditions like the economy and politics, democratic educators seek to improve schools by illuminating inequities. Giroux (1983) emphasized this same notion: to develop classroom practice we must link it with a larger society. Further, educators and researchers need base theories to start from on interactions between the economy, politics, and culture. Giroux stressed that schools are social sites, not merely places that students learn to read and write.

Apple and Beane (1995) argued that democratic values should be learned through practical experiences, and that schools are suitable sites for students to learn and gain practice in democracy, through both school life and the curriculum. Schools need to emphasize cooperation rather than competition, caring for the common good instead of one's own interests, valuing diversity instead of focusing on elite groups, and providing equal opportunity for all students. At the same time, educators have to keep in mind that it is not easy to change school traditions or

resist hegemony, so that they will encounter conflict and controversy. They need to remember that democracy is an ambitious and continuing mission, and that frustrations are a part of this task. Democracy is not a static aim for people to attain one day; but rather it is an ideal that requires persistent effort.

Curriculum

Giroux (1983) stressed schools are socialization agencies that instill students with values and beliefs through implicit rules and routines. From this viewpoint, we can understand that there is a dual curriculum: the formal subjects that students learn and the informal learning known as the hidden curriculum. We must also consider how schools are political institutions controlled by outside forces such as politics and the economy. Apple and Beane (1995) offered two solutions for serving democratic curricula in both curricula. First, the hidden curriculum represents the structure and process of school life. Students can indirectly learn powerful lessons about power, equity, and self-worth in school. The hidden curriculum, that is, the informal learning, centered on representing practical examples for the students and their experiences Second, the official curriculum represents the direct knowledge provided to the student, which can consist of planned lesson outlines and can clarify democracy in creative ways. Besides the dual curriculum, Eisner (1985) also highlighted the null curriculum, that is, what has been neglected in the curriculum or classroom teaching. The null curriculum is characterized by a one-dimensional view, such as when information is presented exclusively from the dominant perspective.

Giroux's (1983) solution to offer better democratic practice in school centered on using critique to reinforce the practical means for countering hegemonic practices. Educators and students need to have insight into the hidden curriculum of the school, such as the school's practices, as well as the formal curriculum that includes text and images in curriculum

materials—and question them. Apple and Beane (1995) contended that a democratic curriculum should not be limited to select content but should instead contain various perspectives and opinions, allowing students to encounter a broad range of information. Similarly, Eisner (1985) emphasized an approach to curriculum development grounded in different perspectives on a topic in order to give students a more complete picture of multiple realities or perspectives. Educators are obligated to encourage students to formulate their own voices, since doing so improves the chance that acknowledging the equal rights of varied perspectives. Which in return can increase achievement of students at both the academic and the social level. Students need to consider the notion that there is no ultimate truth, that is, that knowledge is socially constructed. Instead, knowledge is essentially cultural values, viewpoints, and preferences; and there is no centricity of the truth for specific cultures. People creating science, history, and art reflect particular biases and beliefs that are influenced from their cultures. Within a democratic curriculum, then, students must confront the idea that no definite knowledge exists, and be encouraged to be critical readers and creators.

Though those in dominant societal positions no one can attempt to claim the ownership of official knowledge, meaning and knowledge cannot be possessed by anyone (Apple & Beane, 1995). In the same way, a democratic curriculum is determined not only by adults, but also by students, who have the right to share the salient concerns, questions, and issues in their lives. Students working within a democratic curriculum do not passively receive knowledge from external resources; they make meaning of their experiences by engaging and interacting. Although the students participate in building the curriculum, however, the educator's role is to direct the curriculum toward intelligent and purposeful educational goals.

Teachers

Giroux (1983) asserted that educators could play a significant role in this democratizing educational movement. Instead of simply being agents for the dominant class, educators can choose not to strictly follow the rules or rely on the textbook as the only source of knowledge. Giroux's focused on developing a comprehensive resistance, in this way linking theory—critical theory—and practice. Critical theory has little power without social action. In fact, Giroux argued that schools did not need hegemony to retain a particular structured system but rather use a radical pedagogy to reverse and counter hegemony.

Giroux (1983) emphasized educators need to model critical thinking skills and raise students' awareness of the implicit biases in school materials. Yet, raising students' consciousness is not enough; teachers must practice critiquing implicit ideologies by evaluating the strengths and weaknesses in educational materials and identifying alternative values and ideas where relevant. Students can practice using a form of critical reflection that underlies the legitimated ideas constituted by the dominant forces. This interaction of critique and reflection on different subjects becomes an act of refusal. As students learn to speak for themselves, judge, and reflect, they will begin to engage in self-critique. Knowing how thoughts are constructed and influenced, and the consequences of these influences, provides the groundwork for this self-critique. Thus, teachers can raise students' self-awareness by teaching them to decode the artifacts and visuals of their culture and deconstruct hidden meanings in the surrounding world, consequently helping students develop their critiquing ability and self-determination. Apple and Beane (1995) similarly contended that the curriculum does not have to derive entirely from outside the school. Instead, educators need a space of freedom to create their own educational materials and liberate themselves from the restrictions of the official curriculum. Teaching

conditions vary from class to class, both in their environment and in needs. Because the best educators have insight into local needs and issues, they can develop educational materials suited to their students' growth. Since knowledge resources do not only come from elite researchers outside the school setting, we must realize that educators are local practitioners who have perceptions about the problems in their surroundings. These experiences can be very useful when seeking to produce knowledge through action research. In short, though academic research can be a good resource, it is not the only means by which to gain knowledge.

According to Apple and Beane (1995), democracy has a history of struggle, and a big gap exists between democratic values and current school practices. Nevertheless, many educators have worked to expand democracy in schools. Yet, democracy is not a system that remains steady once established. Rather, it continuously changes and requires constant examination over time. In addition, since democracy has multiple definitions in U.S. society, it is difficult to define how democracy should look in a school context.

The study reveals the significant roles of teachers, curriculum, and the school to promote democratic society. the comparison study between Apple and Beane, (1995) and Giroux (1983) supports my ideas of teachers' role to create an equitable curriculum that is appropriate to their classroom and communities' conditions. A potential goal of my research is to expand the meaning of democracy through the practice and critique of art in the art classroom. The aim of the study is to integrate an art education curriculum with democratic principles by including students' experiences as vital part of classroom instruction. The discussion of student opinions was important in my classroom, so in my role as facilitator I offered question prompts about current national and local events. The educational material in my classroom combined reading with real life societal challenges related to news and visual culture. The goal of the activities

included in the curriculum was to foster the practice of decoding visuals and constructing understandings through visuals (Ballengee-Morris, Daniel, & Stuhr, 2010). Practicing visual analysis can raise students' consciousness of the world around them, an important ingredient for the maintenance of a democracy. In addition, I used art making as a means of reflection in that students encouraged construct art that reflects their own interests, concerns, and stories. In sharing and discussing their art, students also can gain practice to improve their critiquing skills and develop greater self-determination (Ballengee-Morris, Daniel, & Stuhr, 2010). My expectation was that the pre-service art teachers in the study would eventually transmit these experiences to their students and expand their choices of educational materials and teaching approaches.

Social Justice Art Education

Kraehe and Acuff (2013) discussed the need for effective theoretical frameworks in art education that address social equity. One potential use of such a theoretical frame is to enable art teachers to conceptualize the problems of underserved populations and provide them with equal treatment. The term "underserved populations" includes a diverse range of groups—typically based on social class, race, gender, or sexual orientation—that lack equal opportunities to benefit from the full rights and resources associated with a quality education. Though many researchers and educators have used the flexibility inherent in art education to address social justice issues (Dewhurst, 2011; Garber, 2004), it remains important to examine current art education policies, textbooks, and practices in order to identify those that demonstrate inequities related to race, gender, and class status (Acuff, 2013). Even educators who already advocate for social equity would do well to support their practice with an appropriate theoretical framework.

Kraehe and Acuff (2013) described four theories that can be useful for educators interested in social equity and its relevance to the field of art education: critical multiculturalism, intersectionality, race theory, and social justice education (SJE). Critical multiculturalism overlaps with the others; it facilitates a fluid and multilayered discussion about oppression and power in terms of awareness and tolerance. Intersectionality and critical race theory, on the other hand, are specifically oriented toward analyzing issues related to gender and race, and so facilitate analyses with this more narrowed focus. SJE embraces the shared goal of all four of these theories: to develop broader approaches to addressing injustice issues (Kraehe & Acuff, 2013).

The SJE theoretical framework is concerned primarily with the analysis of structural issues that create disparities in society as a means of solving the conditions that create problems in first place (Kraehe & Acuff, 2013). Additionally, because SJE emphasizes active responses to injustice it points to strategies for transformation and resistance that encourage participation in activities involving social justice issues. Kraehe and Acuff argued that the expansiveness of social justice education makes it too broad and vague a method by which to investigate the role of power with deeply penetrating questions. Though some scholars and educators have created art projects under topic headings like environmental sustainability or homelessness, for example, most avoid core interrogative questions such as, "Who is benefiting in this situation?" and, "Which groups are left out?" Yet, it is in the answers to such questions that students may begin to understand the relationship between inequitable relations and the topic at hand. In my view, however, of the four theoretical frameworks mentioned earlier, SJE is the one most suited to my research aims. The expansiveness of SJE can be an asset, because diversity is central to the SJE theoretical framework (Bell, 2016). Adding questions about the particular challenges facing

specific groups would limit discussions in the classroom. Rather, it is my intention to openly discuss injustice in order to give students the chance to choose cases in which they have become interested or actually experienced. Then students can additionally examine the role of power within economic and political systems to understand how it may contribute to such social problems (Apple & Beane, 1995). Giroux (1983) noted that school must be linked to the larger society and consider the interactions between the economy, politics, and culture. What I consider important in my research is that students understand social disorder within its larger context, gaining a full picture by recognizing some of the fundamental problems leading to injustice. I have chosen to use SJE as the foundation of my study, because it is the convergence of critical pedagogy and democracy that emphasizes solving the conditions that created the problem. These theories encourage critique and raise awareness to develop active citizens participating in social resistance.

Studies indicated that many teachers often fail to recognize problems of social inequity at a deep, structural level (May & Sleeter, 2010; McLaren, 1995). In fact, most instruction in the United States currently is grounded in liberal theory, an old version of critical multiculturalism (Kraehe & Acuff, 2013) that emphasizes tolerance and fails to identify the power relations that lie below the surface of social problems (May & Sleeter, 2010; McLaren, 1995). Pre-service educators need to recognize structural differences related to social class, gender, and race and other categorical prejudices if they are to understand why students may experience inequality even if they are provided equal and tolerant treatment at school. Additionally, I am attracted to the active approach of SJE theory, as my aim is to encourage pre-service art teachers to engage in social reform and resistance to injustice. I intend not to focus on a specific issue, however, but rather on the multilayered face of injustice in their own communities, such as class struggle,

gender equity, and the freedom of beliefs, since oppression effects all people's lives at many different levels.

Framework

Bell (2016) defined SJE as "both a process and a goal" (p. 1). In addition, SJE can be applied to educational institutions themselves, particularly in the extent to which curriculums, materials, and attitudes within schools support social justice and equity of access regardless of class, race, or gender. SJE theory influenced the multidimensional aspect from the goals of other justice-driven theories such as feminism, critical theory, critical race, queer theory, and critical multicultural education (Kraehe & Acuff, 2013). Diversity, equity, and fairness of resource distribution are central to the theoretical frame of SJE. Because respecting differences and equal treatment and access for everyone are its key concepts, SJE has the potential to reinforce democratic values—which is one of the goals of my research. Among other democratic practices that I wish to encourage through this research, I hope to encourage students to express their own voices and uphold the rights of others with varied perspectives to do the same.

SJE promotes students' empowerment and self-determination by helping them to develop their critical thinking abilities and increase their awareness of the world around them (Bell, 2016). In fact, listening to marginal voices has the effect of shedding light on one's own experiences. Thus, SJE is an emancipatory theory that art teachers and researchers can employ to integrate art with social justice goals (Dewhurst, 2011). Visual materials have power, and teachers can use it as a means of illuminating inequalities (e.g., Ballengee-Morris, Daniel & Stuhr, 2010; Desai, 2010a; Dewhurst, 2010). Art provides a special vehicle for allowing students to make sense of their society's conditions and construct clearer understandings for their lives.

SJE is a theoretical framework, then, that is designed to help students analyze all forms of oppression through experimental practices and methodologies that encourage them to be active and responsible participants in their learning (Bell, 2016). The conceptual approach of SJE centers on providing practical tools that enable students to become self-learners and unmask oppressive forms in both social institutions and in their personal lives. The development of critical thinking skills is integral to this approach, as is the task of identifying how oppression influences individual personal lives, institutions, communities, and ultimately, society. SJE also endeavors to connect learning with practice, so that students learn how to become responsible active citizens who work collaboratively to disturb oppressive patterns in institutions and communities.

The pedagogy of SJE is premised on awaking consciousness to oppression through a specific set of teaching principles and tools (Adams, 2016). SJE pedagogy is not focused only on the result, but also on active learning processes that are a significant part of the ultimate goal. In SJE, teachers employ activities and social engagements that require the use of critical analysis to code and decode everyday life experiences, potentially teaching students skills that they will use throughout their lives. In SJE, teachers should cultivate a micro model of the social justice environment within the classroom so students can engage with a model of democratic relationships and equitable learning that they might ultimately achieve in a broader societal context (Adams, 2016).

I applied such an SJE framework in my research in order to combine art education with SJE goals. My method provided students with classroom strategies they could use to analyze visual culture and raise awareness through artmaking. Further, I used art as a vehicle for self-reflection and the engagement of students with their community. Many critical pedagogy

advocates have recommended the use of visuals to decode everyday life (Freire, 2002/1970; Giroux, 1983). In employing aspects of Freire's methodology, my research used the artmaking process to awaken, transform, and further, counter hegemony by encouraging students to express through their art their own beliefs, values, and heritages. Students supported this process through micro-collaborative engagement, in the classroom, and then displayed the final product at a macro level, outside the classroom. My research goal, then, was to provide students with a practical tool, as means to use art as a methodology for investigation that produces knowledge that prepares students to be active agents in their community.

The significance of SJE theory is rooted in the assistance it provides to educators in their teaching practice; it directs their teaching toward clear purposes and means, actualized in an educational plan (Bell, 2016). Therefore, articulating an SJE approach for the art education classroom will give educators committed to social equity a clear framework by which to make successful choices, including procedures by which to achieve the theory's intentions. Educational theories function as guides by outlining teaching objectives and enabling practitioners to challenge and interrogate their practice. SJE theory, in particular, can be distinguished from other approaches like feminist theory, critical race theory, and intersectionality, which move in the same direction of a more equitable society but focus more on specific groups and subjects (Kraehe & Acuff, 2013). At the same time, critical multicultural education and SJE share similar multidimensional goals, because both theories were the progress from previous theories, though with different orientations. Multicultural education focuses on tolerance, and points to power relations to answer explicit questions about which groups benefit and which are left out (Banks, 2013; Kraehe & Acuff, 2013; Rios & Stanton, 2011). SJE, on the other hand, focuses on power relations more generally (Bell, 2016) and looks at power in society

in terms of who benefits (power with) and who is underserved (power over). SJE seeks to expose hegemonic practices and inequities in the foundational structure of society. Further, because SJE aims to encourage resistance and social action, it provides students with tools and methodologies for social change.

Kraehe and Acuff (2013) have asserted that because SJE focuses on structures that support injustice, educators and administrators can apply it to art education policies to facilitate teaching that is more democratic. The use of SJE can lead art education researchers to more interrogate current art education policies—and potentially inspire democratic practice among students and teachers. Requiring researchers to continually examine, investigate, and explore inequities in educational practices helps to ensure equal learning for all (Kraehe & Acuff, 2013). The history of students' cultural experiences can be a focal point for SJE, one that helps to provide a more comprehensive picture of current disparities and leads to a re-thinking of inequitable societal structures that may have been taken for granted by teachers and students.

Acuff (2013) further asserted that an equitable curriculum should be supported by theoretical frameworks that lead toward social justice goals. Many such frameworks exist in art education, including critical race theory, intersectionality, critical multicultural education, and social justice education (Kraehe & Acuff, 2013). These theoretical frameworks emphasize critical thinking and facilitate the analysis of assumed, normalized universal values. They deconstruct the assumption of neutral of universal cultural values in order to expose who benefits from the status quo and how the cultural values of minority groups are demeaned within this status quo (Acuff, 2013). As a theoretical framework, social justice education provides students with practical methods by which to investigate artworks or explore social realities through artmaking (Bell, 2016; Kraehe & Acuff, 2013). SJE, then, supports students with the analytic

tools needed to investigate the dynamic relationships between cultures and encourages all students to engage with the complexity and fluidity of their own cultural backgrounds (Acuff, 2013). Integrating art education curricula with a social justice theoretical frameworks will guide and help students develop reflexive thinking, foster and facilitate social reform and transformation, and avoid the making of superficial art.

Challenges

Many educators who wish to incorporate social equity concerns in their work face the challenge of applying a suitable SJE framework in their teaching. Hackman (2005) articulated five key components that are important for effective implementation of SJE in teaching practice. These components facilitate critical thinking among students and empower both students and educators. The five tools are: (1) content mastery, (2) critical analysis, (3) social change, (4) personal reflection, and (5) multicultural dynamics awareness.

Content mastery. Fundamentally, SJE begins by introducing inclusive content mastery that ensures students have sufficient knowledge of three basic aspects of a social issue: historical underpinnings, information, and macro- and micro-level analyses (Hackman, 2005). Content mastery has a priority in social justice teaching because such learning is essential to a deep understanding of an issue. When students recognize more fully the varied dimensions of a social dilemma, they can form insights about the relationships between power, culture, and knowledge and recognize the effect of a problem on societal stability.

Without such historical knowledge, students cannot truly raise their awareness about social issues, nor may they be motivated or compelled to take an active role in making changes in their society (Hackman, 2005). Educators must not present history passively, however, nor

filtered only through a dominant ideology. Students can better understand the dynamic and complex roots of a social problem when they explore historical patterns through a critical lens. Contextualizing modern inequalities can stimulate students to engage in critical dialogue at a deeper level. Because history is often written from one group's perspective—typically by the dominant members of a society—students can broaden their understandings by examining the legitimated history provided in schools.

From this initial perspective, students should be able to cultivate a more profound micro- and macro-awareness of a problem. This additional element in content mastery helps students meaningfully connect classroom knowledge with their realities (Hackman, 2005). Students might better relate classroom content to their lives at a micro level, for example, by engaging in social action inside the classroom or school through activities, projects, or assignments. Activities that practically link classroom content to students' lives and communities give them insight into their roles in the larger context of society on a macro level. Many social justice researchers have emphasized the importance of relating learning to students' lives in this way (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2000). In doing so, teachers create a more student-centered classroom and facilitate learning processes in which students construct knowledge for themselves (Hackman, 2005).

Critical analysis. Without critical analysis tools, the content knowledge shared in SJE is insufficient to actualize democratic teaching (Hackman, 2005). The critical lens is vital to empowering students to engage in meaningful dialogue and become proactive, self-determining agents. Static knowledge often does not have the transformative power to motivate deeper knowledge or action. Simply providing information about hegemonic practices, for example, may frustrate students unless teachers provide for them the means to apply an analytical lens that enables them to gain insights leading to hope and possible avenues for change. Though critical

dialogue needs to be part of all educational materials and classroom content, however, teachers need to be careful not to impose their ideas on students as truth. To truly empower students, teachers must approach knowledge as a reciprocal discussion between teacher and students. From the SJE standpoint, the educator's role is not to indoctrinate students into a particular knowledge set, but to help them carefully analyze and consider power issues (Hackman, 2005) to move them toward deeper knowledge through dialogue and insightful connections with their lives. Helping students recognize who is benefiting from social inequities, for example, stimulates them to consider what is needed to create a more inclusive and sustainable social system.

Teachers sometimes distort the application of critical thinking in the classroom, causing the process to lose meaning. In the interest of preventing this problem, Hackman (2005) identified four requirements for effective critical thinking. First, provide knowledge from multiple viewpoints and non-dominant perspectives, and frame divergent views as independent and not as part of dominant ideologies. Second, de-center knowledge, that is, avoid centralizing knowledge from one cultural perspective in order to enable students to open to variety of experiences. Third, investigate hegemonic practices and their effects. Fourth, examine different views of reality other than the current dominant view. By employing critical analysis appropriately, teachers can cultivate the conditions in which students gain deeper insights about societal conditions and become motivated to act.

Social change. The emphasis on social change is the third component distinguishing SJE theory from other frameworks (Hackman, 2005). One impact of social action—for any of us—is helping us move from a sense of hopelessness to possibility. Teaching students about injustice issues and their sustained historical roots may recreate frustrating experiences for oppressed

groups and make dominant members in the classroom feel privileged or guilty. Working to promote social change gives students hope by providing them with tools and encouragement for social action. When students experience the power of social action, they create vibrant classrooms full of energy and courage. Yet teachers must provide students with the tools to accomplish change at even a small level; from a social justice perspective it is imperative to create an effective teaching atmosphere that makes students believe in their ability to create change. Doing so can empower them and help them avoid passive or negative thoughts. Thus, in the classroom setting, social action becomes a political act that disrupts silence and teaches students about their rights and responsibilities as members of a society built on participating, engaging, and including every voice (Hackman, 2005).

The concept of social change varies between researchers. Some view it as political action, such as participation in street protests and elections, while others approach it through intergroup dialogue or writing (Hackman, 2005). In my research design, the approach to social change lies close to that of Freire's (2002/1970) methodology of problem posing, where through consciousness-raising education is a place where students learn to liberate themselves from authority. Freire (2002/1970) used images to teach his students the analytical process of moving from the abstract to the concrete for decoding coded situations. Similarly, part of my method was to teach students how to analyze everyday images and news from current visual culture. I built on the analysis by encouraging students to create their own voices, opinions, and interests through the art making process. My goal was to encourage students to encounter hegemony through creating and expressing their own perspectives.

Personal reflection. The previous three components compose the basic framework of social justice education. In order to create effective teaching practices, however, the teacher also

needs to engage in personal reflection (Hackman, 2005). Personal reflection is the fourth key component because it points to the need for teachers to recognize themselves as a part of the teaching framework. Educators need to critically reflect on their personal qualities and the influence of these qualities on their teaching practice. Hackman (2005) discussed teachers from privileged backgrounds, and how such a background may affect classroom and teaching.

Regular self-reflection allows educators to be open to new possibilities because it involves interrogating self and classroom content for its validity. Teachers who engage in self-reflection ask themselves why they think something is right, where their information comes from, and whether the information involves fact, common sense, or something else (Hackman, 2005). Further, self-interrogating teachers can share their self-refection process with students in order to open up a more democratic dialogue in the classroom. Moreover, self- reflection is useful because it provides the ground from which students and educators begin to act. As Hackman (2005) stated, "Having the self as a site for change is a useful way to prevent the feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness that students sometimes encounter when discussing macro-level social issues" (p. 107). Thus, the teacher's commitment to self-interrogation and self-reflection can move students from complacency to proactive growth.

Multicultural dynamics. The fifth and final tool identified by Hackman (2005) sheds light on multicultural dynamics and highlights an important and often overlooked aspect of effective teaching. Educators need to be aware of the cultural identities of students within each classroom and determine how to employ the previous four components effectively. Every classroom environment needs its own presentation of racism and ideologies suited to the identities of its students, since these identities will influence the classroom dialogue. In other words, teachers should not present the content identically in every class because the

demographics of the classroom and local community vary. Students need to participate in dialogue that engages their attention and relates directly with their lived conditions. Overlooking such differences and needs in students contradicts social justice principles, which call on us to consider students' identities and different cultural backgrounds. Such a student-centered focus is an exciting element of teaching social justice since it motivates students towards greater engagement and ultimately, social action.

Nevertheless, critical discussion of justice issues does not occur in many classrooms. In some cases, teachers do not see the need to discuss race or culture when classrooms lack diversity; in other cases, teachers may feel concerned about discussing race when students of color are present. Yet, it is it is essential to discuss justice issues in every makeup of classroom as racism and injustice in society effect everyone (Hackman, 2005). Further, when educators maximize their understanding of students' identities they can influence dialogue and open up effective communication between individuals of diverse backgrounds rather than shyly avoid these discussions. When such engagement is fruitful it may lead to more democratic classrooms. Student-centered means teachers seek to educate neither privileged nor marginal groups, but share with students the responsibility for growth in the classroom setting.

In addition to the SJE framework and the five challenges Hackman (2005), visual culture is an important component of my curriculum because it helps students better understand the era in which they live. Visual culture is both a significant source of knowledge relating to our everyday life (Gude, 2008) as well as a site of ideologies that influence our understandings of our lives and ourselves (Duncum, 2010).

Visual Culture

Some art educators are anxious to expand their art curriculum to include visual culture and contemporary art (Wilson, 2003). Such additions to an art education curriculum can provide students with deeper understandings of the times in which they live than the exclusive study of artifacts from previous eras. When considered analytically, visual culture can teach students about current ideologies and raise their awareness about contemporary issues in our society, particularly in regard to values. Additionally, visual culture education provides meaningful learning because it relates more directly to the lives of students (Wilson, 2003). Duncum (2010) offered seven principles that art educators can use for examining visuals in a way that creates a more balanced curriculum appropriate for the 21th century.

The Principles of Visual Education

Duncum (2010) asserted that because our era is thoroughly mediated through the numerous visuals that surround our lives, art educators must build curricula appropriate to this reality in order to engage students. His seven principles for investigating visuals, whether in popular culture or fine art, derived from visual culture studies that sought to explain the complexity of everyday contemporary imagery (e.g., Dikovitskaya, 2006; Howells, 2003; Mirzeoff, 2002, 2009; Rampley, 2005; Rose, 2006). These seven principles—power, ideology, representation, seduction, gaze, intertextuality, and multimodality—are not rigorous guidelines but concepts that educators can use as sources to support their teaching. Each principle's focus represents a method for investigating image history, knowledge, and experiences, helping students to understand the century in which they live. I articulate the seven principles and identify their characteristics below.

Power. Duncum (2010) considered power to be the most crucial of the principles because images embody beliefs, values, and ideas. These concepts usually possess interest for audiences and, at the same time, benefit the creators by emphasizing certain social, political, or economic views. Societies generally have a social order in which some groups have more power than others, and visual images may serve to perpetuate the authority of the groups with power. Visual images have the power, for example, to indicate to the audience how life should and shouldn't be and what life is or is not. Thus, as cultural productions, visual images both satisfy social desires and at the time convey mainstream ideologies. In this way, people of power maintain the social hierarchy through common sense. An image does not contain power by itself or automatically influence values, but gains such through the viewer's equal power of interpretation. Duncum (2010) stated, "viewers are not passive receptacles, but active discriminators" (p. 7), that is, the image offers a meaning and the viewers have a choice to accept or reject the ideas the image may hold. In other words, the image creates a dialogue with the viewers in a form of constant negotiation, back and forth between accepting, rejecting, or thinking about the undecided idea. And image's power, then, becomes activated through the viewer's interpretation, which in some cases creates conflict between control and resistance.

Ideology. Images are a location for ideologies, usually in the form of messages about values, beliefs, and ideas that aim to influence ways of thinking or lifestyles (Duncum, 2010). While our ideologies serve as interpretation systems that make life more intelligible for us (Decker, 2004), images are mediators that engage people through shared thoughts about human joys and concerns. Visual culture is filled with images that reflect and reinforce our expectations, worries, hopes, certainties, and uncertainties—all elements of ideologies that help one understand the world by suggesting answers for ambiguities and uncertainties about oneself and

others (Duncum, 2010). Images are a double-edged sword. They can be seen as representing ideologies that encourage positive ideals supporting family, society, and environment or that promote sexism, racism, prejudice, and the marginalization of certain groups. A source of concern is that the repetition and pervasiveness of images can cause people to take their associated ideologies as common sense. As Duncum (2010) noted, however, ideologies are often inconsistent, suggesting that they represent viewpoints, not ultimate truth.

Representation. Ideology and representation closely work together (Duncum, 2010). Representation is more than simply appearance, but how the subject was framed. Such as how privileged and marginalized were presented. The way images are cropped and angled, for example, can convey different ideologies and levels of power to impact the viewer. Cropping and angling effects also create meaning because they change the relationship between the viewer and the subject. Representation reinforces the power of ideology in many ways other ways as well, such as how and what the images represent; what was not represented; how the subject is framed; and how the scene was represented to situate the viewer at certain angle. In representations of people, for example, body language, expression, and gesture can play crucial roles in regard to ideology by influencing the audience about a belief or stereotype, especially those related to ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation.

Seduction. Seduction is the way ideologies are arranged to influence ideas in a seductive way (Duncum, 2010). Seduction comes in various forms, often in the subject matter of the image. Sometimes images reflect our discriminatory views by offering confirmation and justifying our beliefs. At the same time, images may seduce because they satisfy our unconscious desires and social taboos (Zizek, 1989). Movies, for example, often justify violence through the

terrible endings of criminals, which may correspond with our desire for revenge. The sensory nature of images helps make them seductive as well to add pleasurable layer. (Duncum, 2010). Some images project a traditional aesthetic of beauty, or any of the various contemporary aesthetic views of the romantic, the cool, the quaint, as well as the ugly as beautiful, or violent.

Gaze. Gaze is different from the previous principles in that it does not concern the image itself, but rather "how we look at images and the circumstances under which we look" (Duncum, 2010, p. 8). Viewers have different tendencies in regard to how they see things depending on their gender, age, class, ethnicity, and other factors, and they build on these tendencies by bringing the image to life through the filter of their personal perspective. For instance, the male gaze in advertisements or Western paintings represents the male observing women, while the female sees herself as the one who is being observed (Berger, 1972).

Gazes come in many forms. Gaze may give the viewer a sense of power over the observed subject through the *voyeuristic* pleasure of observing a subject that is unaware of being observed (Duncum, 2010). Seeing violence for some results in a *sadistic* pleasure. Specifically, these types of gazes present the viewer with the pleasure of power over that which is viewed. The gaze of the viewer, then, refers to the viewer's relationship to the image, formed in the space between the creator's invitation to see an image in a certain way and the viewer's own perceptions. Thus, the gaze is not only the means by which one understands a visual image but understands oneself and society (Duncum, 2010). When we as viewers reflect on our responses to images we can better identify our positions and question whether our gazes are racist or sexist, or simply why we respond to an image in a particular way. Often we evaluate, interpret, and describe an artwork by focusing exclusively on the artist's purposes without recognizing our positions as viewers. We need to reflect on our gaze; this awareness can illuminate who we are,

including our biases and predispositions, and the broader personal context for our encounters with visual images and the world.

Intertextuality. Images do not arise from a vacuum; they connect to cultural texts like books, music, poetry, and other images (Wilson, 2003). Images are connected to other ideas and events in a complex way regardless of historical, hierarchical, or any other specific order in which they may fit. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) portrayed the relation between images and ideas or events in a grass rhizome rather than tree-like structures—as suggested in Discipline Based Art Education. Grass features a tangled network of horizontally expanding roots and nodes; it signifies a rhizomatic paradigm that is more complicated than an orderly tree-like structure, but gives a more accurate map than a simple linear order. (Wilson, 2003)

The Internet provides a clear example of intertextuality, where one can search through text or click on images to arrive at related links (Duncum, 2010). Students are familiar with this phenomenon, specifically of how images relate to a network of various connections within the Internet's massive world. The human brain, also, makes connections and associates the image with different perceptions. Art teachers can require students to explore image associations as a way of learning. With the intertextuality made possible by modern technology, art students can further explore any of the principles—ideologies, power, the gaze, and representation—as well as the principle of multimodality.

Multimodality. Image multimodality involves the context for the image (Duncum, 2010). Sounds, music, and words often complement images, confirming and emphasizing the image's meaning. For instance, the music that complements a visual—whether imagery or scene—can dramatically affect its meaning. Sounds emphasize certain feelings and effects,

shaping whether one perceives an image as cheerful, sad, threatening, or something else. Exhibitions and art galleries rarely display images with no labels; many providing guidance with summaries, text, or connected to sound. We also can see multimodality imagery in print or on television, computer, and movie screens. Watching the images on television without sound or viewing images in magazines without text makes recognizing the meanings associated with images difficult.

The ubiquitous visual culture of our times invades our daily lives and calls upon art educators to employ with students both contemporary principles and modern principles when considering art. Duncum contended that because modern principles only focus on the classical qualities of images they are inadequate for the purpose of creating an equitable curriculum. His contemporary principles of power, ideology, representation, seduction, gaze, intertextuality, and multimodality provide art teachers with analytic lenses commensurate with our current era. On the other hand, Ballengee-Morris, Daniel, and Stuhr (2010) discussed the importance of deconstructing visual culture, whether media or images, as practical activities. Students need to exercise their critical skills inside and outside the classroom.

Deconstructing Visual Culture

Ballengee-Morris, Daniel, and Stuhr (2010) argued that multicultural art education is not a product but a continual process that educators and researchers should embrace along with democratic values, and social aims must face down racism and other anti-democratic impulses. The art education process must guide students to elucidate and confront the dominant group with power over other groups in areas such as culture, language, education, and economy. It is not enough for students to learn critical skills; they must conceptually and practically explore these skills outside of the classroom (Ballengee-Morris, Daniel, and Stuhr, 2010). Students need to

investigate current social issues through visual culture and relevant histories. Art education offers students the opportunity to experience these concepts through activities that create visual culture leading to the deconstruction of social, economic, and political complexities related to education and their lives. Deconstructing visual images reveals contradictions, multiple perspectives, and ambiguities, and helps students understand the complexities of life. At the same time, the classroom can be a microcosm of a healthy democratic society when teachers cultivate a safe and secure atmosphere of caring, sharing, and discussion. Teachers can even ask students to examine the role of mass media and national news in constructing and reinforcing racism through its representations of inequity and stereotypes and direct students' attention to related questions about the national agenda (Ballengee-Morris, Daniel, and Stuhr, 2010).

Ballengee-Morris, Daniel, and Stuhr (2010) asserted that students should practice critical skills both inside and outside the classroom walls, perhaps by investigating current issues in society. I found that these authors offered a variety of inspiring ideas that inflounced my program, particularly since mass media and visual culture are appropriate areas of inquiry for the art education classroom. Integrating critical visual literacy within the art education curriculum will bring real life problems into the classroom, prepare students to face realities, and encourage them to find solutions.

Critical Visual Literacy

Likewise, Chung (2013) clarified the importance of critical visual literacy for art educators who care to empower youth. Chung explained that the combination of art education and current social theories can shape contemporary concepts about art and help to further develop emergent critical pedagogy in the interests of social justice. Integrating a critical approach within an art education curriculum and nurturing such critical visual literacy can

empower students and prepare them to be fully aware citizens. Visual literacy emphasizes the deconstruction of meaning behind the visuals of media and popular culture for the sake of emancipation and democratization. Critical visual literacy, then, is a tool of liberation, and art educators can include it in the students' learning journeys in order to expose hegemonic ideologies. In addition, critical visual literacy enables students to recognize manifested injustices and conditions of privilege, and then construct subjects of human rights. Critical visual literacy offers real-world insights for students as they investigate constructed popular visual culture to reflect on their everyday lives. Chung (2013) asserted that this sort of analysis also helps students acquire the keys to self- learning, thus generating future leaders who will support social change and participate in substantive political conversations.

Chung (2013) noted that art education has expanded to include developing social theories, an indication that art education practitioners need to renew the field by more frequently incorporating contemporary issues into classroom practice. From this point of view, the development of art education practice is a continual need. Because knowledge is not static, students need the keys of knowledge to prepare them to be self-learners. Critical visual literacy is a tool can help them in this process throughout their lives, as they investigate, learn, and engage with their community.

Application

In applying SJE in my classroom, I gave my students the freedom to choose cases of injustice in which they were interested, perhaps even because they had experienced them personally. In order to integrate SJE goals with my research methodology, I required students to react, reflect, and respond through artwork. During their process of artmaking I facilitated discussion of their values, beliefs, and attitudes in critical discussions, with the assumption that

the particular content of their responses indicated if some sort of transformation has occurred within them. Their final products included both their artwork and engagement with a social justice activity. I arranged to have students exhibit their work in the Art Department's gallery in order to enable students to witness public reactions to their artwork.

I believe that my choice to use SJE as a theoretical framework for my research provided strong support for a program designed to raise pre-service art teachers' awareness of social justice issues and prepare them to potentially use this knowledge in their own art classroom practice. My intention for this program to is to raise pre-service art teachers' awareness of local social conditions as well as motivate them to provide their students with the skills they will need to respond to their heightened awareness of inequities, including active participation in social resistance. In envisioning art as a vehicle for social criticism that may not be ignored, I hope to employ a type of SJE that fosters greater identity sensitivity among pre-service art teachers and a more complex understanding of underserved populations—all of which will enable them to theorize about the causes of underservedness in democratic practices.

The manner in which to use an SJE framework may be somewhat ambiguous for many educators because researchers often do not articulate practical aspects of the theory. Hackman's (2005) elucidation of five components in the application of SJE can help teachers with this task, and illustrates the importance of each in teaching social justice effectively. Though each component may improve classroom practice, however, they do not encompass the totality of a social justice perspective. Nevertheless, in outlining the social justice framework with these five components, Hackman has sought not to limit the conversation about social justice education's essential component, but to encourage researchers to continue investigating theory for effective practice in SJE application (Hackman, 2005).

As a practitioner in the United States, I recognize that my gender, race, and religion historically have set me apart from the dominant, privileged group in this country. I am Arabian, female, I adhere to the Islamic faith, and I must reflect on how I can utilize these personal qualities to positively influence my classroom. As a female, I can freely discuss feminist issues, while minding the differences between Western and Middle East cultures. In fact, I can use my position as a feminist from a different culture to increase my students' understandings of the different variables that may empower women. I think it is more appropriate when a female teacher discusses women's rights and challenges issues of gender equity, providing comfortable discussions for female students. Likewise, it will be reasonable to discuss women's issues with male students. My Islamic faith also allows me to discuss sensitive subjects related to Islamic beliefs that many educators avoid due to concern about misunderstandings when discussing a religion other than their own. Concerning the content of democratic and social justice principles, I have defined them from a Western perspective even though I find that some of them contradict my beliefs. I embrace such differences because I believe democratic teaching should consider that each environment has its own conditions, beliefs, and values. Hackman (2005) has asserted that failing to recognize the influence of our identity in our lives can support systems of injustice in teaching and society. By engaging in regular self-reflection, teachers can help to diminish the invisibility of their identity, allowing them to improve their teaching for more equitable and democratic educational and social communities.

Empirical Literature

Following is a review of selected recent academic research that inspired my direction and helped me to identify the current needs in art education fields. These empirical studies build on the recent research. I situate my study within the existing research and continue developing

these areas with new understanding and investigate different perspectives. My research does not adopt a new idea; rather it contributes new perspectives to extend new dimensions in our vision. By addressing previous studies with different thoughts, concepts, and conditions, I examine new results. I arrange my literature in three big themes. The first focus is *Art Education and Democracy* where I review literature aimed to integrate art education with democratic values and practices. The second topic, *Art Education and Social Justice Principles,* I narrow my focus on principles that to lead to democratic society. Finally, the last topic, *Art Education and Gender Equity,* I focus on gender equity.

These selected empirical studies are practical applications for different theories aiming to cultivate democratic values and social justice principles. Reviewing different interpretations transmits theory into practice and expands understanding of the theory's significance and limitations. This literature allows me to extend and develop my research goals.

Art Education and Democracy

Several researchers have addressed the link between art education and democracy. Gude (2009) discussed the role of art education in the development of conscientious citizens in a democratic society. She argued that schools cannot reinforce democratic principles simply by filling the minds of students with ideas about democracy. Rather, art teachers provide the conditions for students to experience their relationship to democracy by enabling them to creatively express their ideas—the anxieties, pleasures, and responsibilities of democratic life—through art. Artistic engagement involves the artist in a high level of awareness accompanied by a sensation of agency, an imaginative sense of possibility that creates a vision of how to shape the world. A belief in this possibility is vital in a democratic society (Dewhurst, 2013; Greene, 1995; Gude, 2009). Art education can prepare students to become citizens who believe their

actions have effects, that they can make a difference by engaging and participating with their views. This outcome emerges from the art making process itself, which essentially engages students in creative thinking that requires them to formulate, problematize, and find solutions. The power of this creative process stimulates questions about the world, and leads students to obligate themselves to find answers (Gude, 2009).

Gude (2009) asserted that democratic cultures should be comprised of many voices, and quality art education allows students to formulate their own stories and experiences and express them in a manner that differs. The complexity of aesthetics, media experimentation, and methodologies takes students on a journey of exploration involving feelings, form, and knowing. Through images, words, and symbols students represent them themselves and highlight their uniqueness (Gude, 2009). Thus, students are not simply representing their stories, but re-representing and re-making their experiences in a way that helps them investigate their identity in relation to the world around them. As democratic citizens, we must hear the stories of others and believe that everyone has a place in society if we are to gain the ability to influence the world. Teachers can foster a sense of individual identity and connection with others by helping students work through problems via engagement in creative thinking (Gude, 2009).

Thus, art education enables students to express their own voices in a sort of democratic dialogue by representing and sharing their ideas, thoughts, and life experiences in their artworks (Gude, 2009). In promoting self-awareness as well as awareness of others, art educators help students develop skills for understanding not just the meanings of their own works but also the meanings of others' works. Students will learn to recognize the unique qualities in the perceptions of others—that everyone sees life in different ways—encouraging conversation and

sharing of visions between individuals who otherwise may not have communicated with each other (Gude, 2009).

Gude (2009) creatively employed art education qualities to promote democratic values, articulating how art making provides the conditions and the experiences that prepare responsible citizens. In my research, I applied Gude's ideas by extending the discussion to the art making process. This provided practical experiences for the pre-service teachers to understand the complexity of these processes. In my study the participants were required to discuss three phases of the art making process and explore the power of the aesthetic in creating new understanding. Gude (2009) underlined how art education classroom can provide democratic environment by sharing different opinions, agreements, and disagreements. Her declaration supports my use of the art education classroom as an appropriate environment for cultivating democratic habits, attitudes, and values—through listing to each other and respecting each other's' beliefs. By supporting art making with critical pedagogy I was able to emphasize taking action and engaging with the community.

Gude (2007) asserted that art education definition has never been stable, but is continually expanding to incorporate contemporary issues, particularly those related to cultural studies, cultural visuals, and cultural materials, as well as critical theory. Therefore, the contemporary art educator who cares about empowering youth does not form the curriculum based simply on modernist principles such as line, color, and shape, and so on (Chalmers, 1987). Rather, the focus of art educators is on the role and practice of art and its reflection within culture, including the analysis of art's relationship to formal properties. Gude (2007) asserted that the art curriculum is fundamentally a cultural structure and aesthetic. Quality curriculums should contain practices involving both cultural themes and contemporary artmaking. Art education,

then, essentially involves skills and concepts that provide opportunities for students to explore and share their personal experiences.

Gude (2007) discussed new principles that might help students and teachers in the art education classroom understand and connect with everyday life contemporary issues. Most of her focus was on self, society, and multicultural education. She discussed the formation of self and the teacher's role in helping students expand self-awareness by encouraging them to explore themselves and their future interests. Students can investigate their experiences and the complexities of family, community, and media in their everyday lives. Investigating community themes is a significant element in art, where students have opportunity to engage with community experiences, as real learning involves exploring real concerns in our society (Freire, 2002/1970). Because quality multicultural education presents different cultures and backgrounds it offers the chance for significant learning by letting students see the world from different perspectives (Gude, 2007).

Gude (2007) contended that a quality art education should stimulate students' abilities to use critical skills in order to analyze, investigate, reflect, and represent visual images, all in the context of preparing citizens for a participatory democracy. In illuminating how the art education classroom can be a place where students discover themselves and their society, she offered a vision with concrete art education principles that has influenced many art educators. By giving students the opportunity to express their personal interests, art educators help them build new understandings of themselves. Encouraging students to practice contemporary art rather than glorifying modern art that represents elite perspectives can enhance these goals. Gude (2008) also described how the complex nature of art requires that art educators operate at a higher level of intelligence and critical thinking. Interpretation and the artistic processes require the artist's

presence in his or her work. Gude's principles of possibility supports my research goals, as her focal point was to integrate art education with 21st century topics such as contemporary art, visual culture, critical theory, and students' social lives. Doing so makes art education meaningful, students explore themselves and their society, rather than stay stuck in modern art principles.

Cahan and Kocure (1994) discussed the growing demand in art education research to embrace a range of perspectives in art education. They contended that most art education curriculums still hang on to old historical art that is far in time and place from the present day. The authors explained some reasons why art teachers may avoid contemporary art: it may be unfamiliar to them and they may be insecure about presenting artwork that mystifies them. At the same time, Cahan and Kocure (1994) articulated how contemporary art may engage with politics in a multicultural context. Contemporary artists challenge universal perspectives and point to the ability of all humans to present their ideas, including diverse views about politics, traditions, popular culture, and everyday life. They showed examples of contemporary artists of different ethnicities and ages to help illustrate different perspectives on social criticism, individual expression, political struggle, and the incorporation of beauty as pleasure. The authors asserted that contemporary art that combines social concerns with multicultural education aims an indispensable resource in the art education classroom.

Desai (2000) discussed the power of image to help us understand meanings the role of the art educator in selecting accurate images to represent other cultures. She asserted that one of the essential goals in art education is to provide authentic and accurate representations of other cultures rather representations derived from a dominant worldview that distorts and stereotypes race, ethnicity, and less-dominant cultures. Representation reveals the link to history, culture,

and power within the global context, interceded through political and economic ideologies. Visual representation is a selective process that reveals a set of cultural terms and assumptions and shapes our understandings. Images have a crucial influence on how we understand others and how we perceive ourselves (Hooks, 1992). Thus, multicultural art is an important method for understanding the authentic meaning of cultural events and experiences and changing stereotypic ideas. Images, then, play significant roles in controlling and maintaining dominance over race, social class, and gender. Desai (2000) noted that the authenticity multicultural art can be enhanced by experiencing it through the lens of location and position. When art teachers represent cultures other than their own, students typically will understand the representation only in relation to their social location and historical conjunctures. Desai suggested that art educators need to ask, "What can we know about another culture?" instead of, "How can we accurately or authentically represent another culture?" (p.115).

Gude (2008) explained that making meaning is essential to curriculum goals in art education, first, because we need to engage and understand artworks through active interpretation and second, because the artist needs purpose, meaning, and pleasure in order to create art. Gude (2008) asserted that art acts as a key generator of cultural meaning, the interpretation of which reflect students' cultural values and beliefs. Investigations into cultural aesthetics encourage students to understand the perspectives of others, since art productions based on the artist's subjective experience. Gude (2008) suggested to investigate contemporary art and visual culture provides knowledge and meaning that relates to students' current century. This process of investigation is a type of cultural communication. On the other hand, expressing cultural values through art and aesthetic practices helps make life more meaningful. Because aesthetics provides opportunity for students to represent themselves and become central in their

topic, they can investigate their identities, backgrounds, and their rights to engage in the community. Aesthetics fosters self-understanding and community pride that contribute to social justice movements.

In another empirical study, Cruz, Ellerbrock, and Smith (2015) showed how qualities inherent in art education can facilitate democratic learning when integrated with social studies. Cruz, Ellerbrock, and Smith (2015) argued that art education can foster social engagement and serve as a democratic means for exercising citizenship through practice. The authors suggested that teachers use art for democratic means across academic disciplines. They encouraged social studies teachers, for example, to integrate art into their curriculums as a means of raising students' consciousness and emphasizing democratic engagement—since art can provide the motivation to investigate community concerns and social issues. The power of art is such that it can bring forward cultural, political, and social problems and inform us about problems that we need fix it. Visual images combined with critical analysis can reveal multiple layers of meaning and messages—from topics as wide-ranging as politics, economics, and ethnicity concerns. Thus, this approach to art makes it a democratic vehicle that can point to societal and governmental problems, building a natural environment for integration with social studies.

Cruz, Ellerbrock, and Smith (2015) described an application of this approach with a high school art lesson centered on political artist Ramón Esono Ebalé. The artist, who visited the class that the authors described, lives in exile in Paraguay because of the critique of the government of his native Equatorial Guinea that is contained in his political art. The lesson began by engaging students with the artist by hearing him speak about the inequity in his country. Students had the opportunity to sympathize with the artist's pain, which appears so obviously in his artwork. They learned about his country's history, economy, and sociopolitical system and were surprised about

the poverty, injustice, and government corruption there. Also evident was the potential of this art-social studies integration to foster strong involvement with the local community through dialogue and engagement. Students were asked to react and reflect through artmaking to highlight human rights or social issue in their own community, a process that enabled them to critically reflect on their beliefs, values, and experiences as they created their art projects. Artmaking was not merely artistic reaction, then, but required exploring and constructing one's identity.

Students benefit from a process of thinking about their beliefs, questioning their values, rethinking their attitudes, and examining their role in the community (Cruz, Ellerbrock, & Smith, 2015). Contemporary art can give students the opportunity to analyze their values and the lives that surround them. Cruz, Ellerbrock, and Smith concluded that integrating art experiences with social studies is a powerful exercise by which students can enlarge their citizenship skills and develop a heightened consciousness about social issues. Student can explore and relate past and current events or compare different cultures through visuals. Art can be a powerful, democratic means of exploring other societies' sociopolitical systems in order to improve one's own community. As an educative method, art provides a unique experience that can reach beyond traditional learning to touch students at sensory levels.

Though not an art educator, Noel (2003) used the quality of art to engage students in a reflective process as a mean for transformation. Her work influenced the method and purpose of this study, as her aim was to prepare pre-service teachers for multicultural education. She used critical pedagogy to engage students in a process of critiquing hegemonic practices within school and society. In Noel's classroom, the primary purpose of making art was to empower students to have better understandings of themselves within the complexities of their society. To this end,

Noel sought to guide students to become more aware of how their social location, class, gender, race, and power all served to influence the construction of their identities. She acknowledged the challenges of addressing these topics through art making, some students have little experience with such self-examination and many individuals do not have the experience to share personal issues and others may prefer to remain silent. Nevertheless, Noel asserted that the pleasure and aesthetic of art making enables students to experience such meaning making, as personal action. Aesthetics represents a deeper understanding of concepts and beliefs that students share with others. She argued that this process would give pre-service teachers a vision that would clarify for them the social transformation they achieved through their artistic creations. This vision can lead them to social action through transmit these experiences to their students ultimately to the society.

Noel's (2003) approach aims to shed light on diversity and diverse cultural contributions of both the dominant cultures and smaller cultural groups within it, in this way helping students develop a greater awareness of their own and others' identity. By encouraging her students to first read articles that engaged them in a critical pluralistic pedagogy, she helped them develop broader cultural perspectives. Then, through activities involving mixed media and collage work, she directed the students to address their new understandings of multicultural issues. At the end of the semester, Noel combined reflections from the students' research papers with a public exhibition. Noel asserted the reflections of these students, as they described their artwork, provided evidence of their move toward socially transformative perspectives on teaching.

Jana Noel (2003) is an associate professor with a focus on multicultural education. Although she was not an art educator, she realized the power of the aesthetic on personal transformation. The difference between Noel's work and the work for this study is that I

highlighted the role of art and analyzed the process of art making more deeply, and from an art educator's point of view.

Art Education and Social Justice Principles

In this section, I highlight social justice principles as they relate to the field of art education, emphasizing the importance of art education's role and the responsibility of art educators. I present studies discussing and analyzing social justice art to facilitate a better understanding of art's functionality within social justice education.

Social Justice Art

Dewhurst (2013) articulated the nature of social justice art education and its potential to offer better understandings for researchers and educators. She explained that SJE involves three main actors: the artist, the artwork, and the spectators. Dewhurst (2013) maintained that it is useful to define each actor separately as well as in relation to each other. Dewhurst's article gave me better insight into the functions and the roles of the three actors. Acknowledging the functions and roles of the three actors directs my teaching toward more powerful goals that focus on the significant aspects of each element. I will present each element in the following way: First the artist, what are the artist goals and why are they beginning the process; second, the artwork, what are the social justice art qualities; third, the audience, how to attract the audience to engage them with the visual message.

The artist. The artist is the first player who begins the process of inquiry within the artistic form (Dewhurst, 2013). The artist is driven by an instinctive sense of inquiry that engages her or him with the surroundings. The artist can take on the powerful role of critiquing and shaping society when she or he acts like an investigator trying to make sense of the world

through a process of inquiry and discovery. The artist usually has a moral stance that seeks to perpetuate cultural heritage or cultural values, or seek change. The artist's voice usually holds a political influence because artwork, like the media, powerfully reveals and shares ideas and opinions with the public (Dewhurst, 2013). In addition, artistic inquiry offers novel ways to come to solutions and cultivates a more democratic community because it uses an artistic rhythm to invite audiences to live the dream of the artist (Dewhurst, 2013).

The idealistic vision of a democratic society is an act of resistance and the first step in motivating change. In the process of creating and critiquing art produced in a democratic classroom, students might recognize their abilities to make social changes, reflecting positively on their self-image and giving them a better understanding of themselves and their potential to have an active role in society. Thus, art can help a student construct an identity and diminish a socially imposed one (Dewhurst, 2013). The uniqueness of artistic inquiry in combination with creative imagination—which are necessary in the art making process—move students' insights beyond the boundaries of commonplace scenes to places of possibilities (Greene, 1995). Because SJE combines art with critical pedagogy it allows students to explore their potential internal capabilities and potential involvement in the community. Social justice artists move beyond resistance to imposed knowledge by exposing the history, knowledge, and experiences of minorities that previously have been ignored (Dewhurst, 2013). Thus, it is artwork that is the tool artists use to encounter and resist hegemony, at the same time shaping and engaging society.

The artwork. The second component in Dewhurst's (2013) formulation is the artwork itself, which is considered an instrument the artist uses for communication. A common feature of art throughout history is its powerful ability to communicate ideas, experiences, and emotions through expressive visual or audio forms (Chalmers, 1996; Dewey, 1934). Social justice art

further differentiates itself from other art in that it is oriented to create change by using its qualities to attract audience attention and invite them to live unique experiences that challenge many social assumptions (Dewhurst, 2013).

Art, even when simple, can express complex ideas that even words sometimes fail to bring attention to (Dewhurst, 2013). Critical expression is the core of social justice art, particularly when it deals with complex issues such as oppression, identity, or freedom of expression. When artistic practice occurs in a social justice education framework it has the clear ambition to change unwanted beliefs and attitudes by raising awareness of specific conditions in society. Therefore, the radical nature of social justice art aims to motivate, change, and seek better conditions and fair opportunities. Often social justice art is used as a voice for minority groups who have been silenced or ignored (Dewhurst, 2013); in such cases, the artwork is aimed at much more than decoration, and extends to fulfill the arts' communicative nature (Chalmers, 1987).

The capacities of social justice art make it possible for students to investigate the complexities of life and engage with them to find solutions (Dewhurst, 2013). The purpose is not to find immediate solutions, but to engage students in the active process of imagining and discovering their responsibility toward society. Art educators can facilitate this process by asking students to search their backgrounds, memories, and reflections and find a voice to speak about their personal interests and stories. When educators encourage such sharing of stories, they build the habit of listening to each other and expand students' vision of the world. Likewise, social justice art can attract a larger audience when it focuses on specific issues society needs addressed, because the audience plays a significant part in interacting with the artwork and adding a new understanding of the world around them (Dewhurst, 2013).

The audience. The audience is the third component Dewhurst (2013) identified, and it plays an important part in social justice art, which becomes a message to the public. In its purposefulness, social justice art belongs to the public space to share and extend experiences (Dewey, 1934). Further, to create an even more powerful relationship between the audience and work of art, Dewhurst (2013) suggested creating a dynamic engagement of the public with the art, unlike that which occurs with static formal art. This dynamic approach to art can actively engage audiences in reciprocal communication; the art media becomes a kind of imagined dialogue between the artist and the audience. Communicative art drags the public into conversation, shifts them from passive to active participants, and shares the artist ideas, perspectives, and experiences. The work of art becomes a space of dialogue where the artist exposes significant issues that may move the public to act and participate in social change; or at least, may drag the audience to discuss and investigate (Dewhurst, 2013).

The exploration of social justice art elements highlights the power of communicative art and its active role in society. Art educators need to recognize the importance of their mission in this visual era by helping students to explore their identity and recognize the everyday forces behind these visuals. Next, Darts (2004) discusses art educators' responsibilities for those who are committed to social justice issues.

The Role of Art Educators in the Visual Era

Darts (2004) positioned an argument about power and the arts around current and historical political events. He contended that using art, especially visual art, for hegemonic purposes is not new, as evidenced by the historically profound relationships between art, culture, and ideology. The Roman Empire, for instance, used its coins and statues to affirm its colonial

influence. I have found similarities in the symbolic images of current currencies, leading to questions about what they represent, what they attempt to influence, and what kind of power their country of origin seeks to establish. Darts (2004) brought our attention to the symbolic visuals that may appear or are hidden in televised news segments and newspapers. He contended, during their deliberations on the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the news presented photos of the United Nations Security Council and the background of the council hall was completely covered with a blue curtain, hiding a reproduction of Picasso's famed anti-war painting Guernica that had hung there since 1987. Given the highly charged atmosphere surrounding the Iraq invasion, one may reasonably question if the concealment of the painting was not intentional.

Because the visuals in our everyday lives are created through a variety of seemingly invisible forces, art educators have the opportunity—and even the responsibility—to raise students' awareness about their origins (Darts, 2004). In our era, more influential visuals surround us than ever, making it particularly important that art educators understand they are in a position to promote social justice principles. Teachers who are committed to teaching democratic values can engage students in thoughtful investigations of visual culture and politics. Students benefit from deeper understandings of the complex relationships between art, politics, and power. Because visual culture is such a large part of students' lives, they may be automatically accepted as normal, and the ideas they represent as common sense (Duncum, 2002). Hegemony is supported when ideologies infused into familiar cultural artifacts become such a habitual part of our lives that they are taken for granted and hard to distinguish or resist (Duncum, 2002).

Aesthetic experiences, such as those contained in celebrations and rhythmic songs, always have been a good place to conceal ideologies because they give experiences of pleasure and easily become normalized. Everyday visual experiences produce knowledge and shape

personalities, typically without our knowing (Duncum, 1999, 2002). For this reason, Darts (2004) emphasized that education related to visual culture has the ability to uncover the hegemonic practices within the ordinary realm of our lives. Art educators have a powerful role to flip the art weapon to challenge and expose hegemony practice. While art has been used to achieve dominant ideologies, teachers can use arts power to democratize the society. Art education can be uses to awaken experiences that recognize the invisible forces behind aesthetics and question the ideology of commonsense.

Maxine Greene (1995) advocated the use of art as pedagogical resistance—to move students to a critical level of thinking that challenges empty aestheticism and elitism. The work of socially engaged artists can serve as educational material through which to explore layers of political, historical, and cultural relations. Helping students deconstruct the aesthetic tactics used in visual culture can raise their understandings of the strategies used to shape their identities and enforce acceptance. Creative resistance through aesthetics moves students from superficial artmaking to more thoughtful and meaningful approaches that enable them to be selective choosers of the influences they want to accept rather than passive consumers (Freedman & Schuler, 2002). Further, educative art not only encourages students to deconstruct visuals in order to expand sociopolitical awareness, but also helps students form their individual identities through meaningful artmaking.

Art productions contain cultural values that reflect experiences, worldviews, and heritages. Students' participation in cultural production, then, can move them from passive viewing to more active engagement. According to Freedman (2003), thoughtful artmaking represents a higher level of teaching and learning that distinguishes art education from other disciplines because it enables students to develop critical thinking skills through the process of

making. This critical thinking occurs as students begin to understand the relationship between form, feeling, and knowing. Additionally, the freedom of expression empowers students to construct their unique identities. Duncombe (2002) emphasized the importance of encouraging students to scrutinize the cultural production of shared beliefs and meanings. Re-examining cultural symbols and signs is a means of rewriting the cultural discourse, a political act that can be considered resistance. Creative exploration and artmaking can elevate art teaching when it engages students in current sociopolitical discourse. By critiquing the visuals daily surrounding them, students learn to communicate and actively engage in their society. Darts (2004) concluded that art education has a powerful role to play in moving students toward such active learning and participation. In fact, this awareness obliges art educators to help students explore the world around them by learning how to see and analyze it. Then students can respond thoughtfully and creatively to these visuals in their daily lives by generating reflective art projects. In essence, art educators can arm students with the tools to help them investigate, explore, and counter hegemony if they so desire, enabling personal and societal reformation.

Like others, Darts (2004) highlighted the importance of the art educator's role in addressing hegemony in this increasingly visual era. Dart's work encouraged me, as practitioner researcher, to apply to my research concepts from my own perspectives and experiences. Darts (2004) brought to my attention qualities of art that can elicit higher thinking processes in students as they engage in the process of creation. Students engaged in artmaking gain help in two ways: engaging them actively and thoughtfully with their surroundings rather than allowing them to remain passive consumers, and giving them the opportunity to explore their self-identities. This is an important focus in my research, because in my view the process of creation is an important stage. In the process of artmaking, students must move through deeper analysis to

investigate their feelings and record new understandings in a coherent artistic form. For this reason, I extended the time for the art making in my curriculum and assigned students to conduct a group critique in an effort to shed light on the process and outcomes of reflection and self-interrogation. What is most significance in this stage is the action that typically indicates students' transformation (Dewhurst, 2011). Dewhurst (2011) has discussed these stages in social justice artmaking in more detail.

Three Lenses for Viewing Social Justice Art

Dewhurst (2011) analyzed the nature of "social justice art" through an investigation involving three lenses: intention, process, and social location. Intention centers on the artist's intention; as Dewhurst noted, the very nature of art is to bring attention to a subject. Artists intend to present their ideas or to affect their community by notifying, questioning, motivating, or provoking it to change (Becker, 1994; Reed, 2005). Therefore, students should start with their own experiences within their daily lives in order to have a solid foundation (Freire, 2002/1970). Dewhurst (2011) contended that the intention lens provides educators with an evaluation tool so they can articulate the different views of social reform, as well as see how the artworks are related to their experiences.

Process. The second lens and the heart of examining the critical nature of the artwork is process. According to Dewey (1934), artworks are not objects, but rather experiences and processes attached to objects. Thus, activist art should be thought of as both form and method (Felshin, 1995). When considering it through this process lens, we consider how the artist synthesizes the complexities of aesthetics within the subject of injustice in an effort to create effective, communicative artwork. The significance of the artistic process is the practice of

action and reflection and not necessarily whether a problem is solved; it is the students' transformations that are more important.

Social location. The third lens is the artist's social location. Dewhurst (2011) argued that the artist's social location influences the artist's perspective and motivations. The artist's work is a product of experiences and intentions that are shaped by the artist's social location and identify the artist's needs, objections, and struggles. Dewhurst declared that despite the importance of the artist's intentions and process, social location dictates the artist's ability to generate work. Dewhurst highlighted the *social justice* component to facilitate the understanding, evaluation, and analyzing of social justice-based arts for educators or researchers.

Dewhurst (2014) sought to understand what actually happens in the creation of social justice art when students aimed to make a change, as well as how educators can support students in their mission. Dewhurst asserted that the creation of activist art is a profoundly unique educational experience, though this learning phenomenon has not been adequately examined through an educational lens. With the growing utilization of social justice art in students-centered learning, Dewhurst (2014) sent out a call for practitioners to increase empirical research in this area. She asserted that educational researchers should discover the unique learning moments that occur during the process of creation that eventually lead to transformation. In my practitioner research, my focus was on the students' experience of the art making process in order to shed light on such transformation in my students. In doing so I focused on both the powerful educational phenomenon taking place and students' engagement with others and community. In this way, this study added a new lens through which to see the art making process as a unique educational tool.

Viewed through the social justice art analytic lenses, my research addresses a continuing and significant problem in art education practice: recognizing how the qualities of art making can expand students' awareness and engage them in deeper investigations that will contribute to social reforms and create a more equitable society. Addressing this problem will require art educators to interrogate art education policies and recognize their limitation. Acuff, Hirak, and Nangah (2012) and Acuff (2013) discussed the limitations of art education textbooks, then put out a call for researchers and educators to develop better materials, policies, and practices that will lead to a more equitable curriculum. Their work highlighted one of the main gaps in art education that encouraged me to contribute to this area.

Limitations of Traditional Art Education Materials and Practices

Acuff, Hirak, and Nangah (2012) interrogated the limitations of many of the art education textbooks used in schools. The authors asserted that many current art education textbooks, such those by as Efland (1990), Logan (1955), Smith (1996), and Wygant (1983, 1993), tend to ignore minority groups and focus exclusively on an elite white European canon. These textbooks have a strong influence on students, presenting many with a one-dimensional history that only illustrates the perspectives of those with power. According to Acuff (2013), this implicit bias reflects a master narrative that imposes an authoritative posture and isolates many groups from history. Such art education textbooks, for example, rarely refer to the contributions of people of color in art and aesthetics. Master narratives in art education sustain the power of elitist groups by shaping idealistic views about historical events from their perspective and ignoring other voices so as not to disrupt images that have achieved dominance and sustain power.

Acuff, Hirak, and Nangah (2012) put out a call to dismantle the master narratives in art education textbooks by encouraging educators, researchers, and scholars to include the

contemporary art of diverse cultures, races, and ethnicities. The role of art educators is to build comprehensive curriculums that engage all perspectives so students they can see themselves in the content (Acuff, Hirak, & Nangah, 2012). Students need to see that textbooks contain merely one ideological perspective, and are organized by individuals representing the dominant Eurocentric male identity. They need not be obligated to view the world from the singular perspective of an elite, but have the right to see and understand the world from different perspectives. Students also need to feel they can engage themselves in a curriculum by raising their interests, background experiences, or current social issues of concern. Since multiple perspectives enrich students' understanding about others and themselves, comprehensive curricula should include diverse views that address different interests.

Acuff (2013) asserted that art educators should recognize the influence of the mainstream power structure within curriculums and try to provide more accurate and inclusive ones. An inclusive curriculum is more rational and fair, respects a wide variety of experiences, and encourages broad social and cultural systems rather than glorying just one. Art educators need to understand how they can play a more meaningful and effective instructional role by exposing students to voices that have been overlooked in the classroom. Doing so will enable teachers to create more equitable art education curriculums containing dynamic and complex experiences, revealing the forgotten voices within historical events.

Art education can highlight the abundance of traditional artifacts that describe the struggles and stories of another era. Since art education honors all aesthetic and lived experiences, it also sheds light on excluded or forgotten peoples and their stories (Acuff, 2013). Within the context of a truly comprehensive curriculum, art educators can complete the historical picture by adding these overlooked stories and expanding the base of cultural experiences. Acuff

(2013) asserted that a quality curriculum, one that includes the experiences and products of individuals with diverse experiences and backgrounds, could interrupt a master narrative and work as a counter-narrative. As Acuff stated:

> [In] art education history, there needs to be a more fluid, complex, interconnected conception of art education wherein various cultures are present and recognized as pivotal in building contemporary art education practices and theory. This is what comprehensive art education looks like. (p. 223)

Theoretical frameworks like social justice education theory can help educators explore with students the complex and dynamic reality of culture, which in turn can enrich conceptions of art education and revive aesthetics have been ignored (Bell, 2016; Kraehe & Acuff 2013). One of the dangers of excluding minority cultures from art education history is that it can erase historical memories that influence current and future events (Cary, 1998). Art educators, then, have a significant role to play in reviving such memories and unmasking assumed universal truths. In fact, art educators can diminish the unequal power of different cultures by revealing the value in each (Acuff, 2013). Art education can provide an outlet for voices that have been oppressed, countering research findings (Gasman 2011; Huggins 1991: 31; Loewan 2008) indicating that current curricula show a clear hierarchy that places dominant knowledge as the ultimate truth and subjugates the knowledge of other cultures to the bottom rung. When art educators fail to recognize that their practice exclusively supports a mainstream ideology, they unwittingly continue to exclude and oppress minority cultures.

A common mistake of history books is viewing cultures as static, separated, and fixed (Saleebey, 1994). Teachers should instead present history as multilayered and interactive, both within and between cultures. Highlighting the dynamism of cultures elucidates for students the

fluidity of culture and the complex relations resulting from experiences of exchange. Saleebey (1994) contended that there is no culture that can claim centricity of truth or knowledge; each culture has its own beliefs, values, and attitudes that may or may not contrast with those of other cultures. Cultures itself are not immutable, but constantly in the process of dynamic transformation, with corresponding changes in the worldviews and notions of truth of their people. Students need to understand that world is fluid, as are the constant interaction between its peoples. Recognizing this reality will deepen students' understandings about how particular cultures are related to others (Acuff, 2013).

Art education, then, can play an important part in elucidating historical and cultural relationships through human-made evidence (Acuff, 2013). Yet, art education textbooks typically portray cultures as disjointed. They show cultural groups in separate categories, each with its own narrative and without impacts on or from other cultures. African Americans and Native Americans, for example, each are presented as having their own separate narratives that contain no reference to their influence on the dominant cultural group. Arranging cultures in separate categories presents them as irrelevant to each other, while a comprehensive history reveals the reciprocity that exists between cultures, showing learners how narratives actually mingle and impact each other. This inclusive approach makes for a more realistic storyline that portrays more accurately the complex relationships between cultures. Art educators can help students build a sense of this clearer, more unified reality through narratives that show art and communication across cultures that are neither static nor isolated from each other.

Using an analytical discourse to frame art education curricula will enable students to investigate cultural narratives like the subjugation of marginal cultures' knowledge and memories (May, 1999). By considering knowledge as something created and sustained by certain groups,

students will gain the skills needed to examine current narratives and re-think some of the content of art education textbooks. Acuff (2013) asserted that current art education narratives are narrow and limited to certain privileged groups. She encouraged analytical discourse in order to encourage students to explore a wider view of history. Teachers who promote critical analysis, then, can help students move beyond centralized knowledge, opening them to more diverse experiences that raise their awareness. On the other hand, teachers who exclusively support centralized dominant narratives continue to contribute to the subjugation of marginal groups, whether intentionally or not. Acuff (2013) argued that, "It is apparent that there needs to be a destabilization of dominant narratives and official histories that are foundational in the field" (p. 277). When we, as art teachers, ask students to engage in critiques and investigations of historical writing and images, they gain the opportunity to share their and others' stories, histories, and heritages with all.

Art Education and Gender Equity

After discussing democracy and social justice principles in art education, I will bring attention to gender equity. Researchers frequently understand social justice education in the context of race and class struggle. In this section, I will shed light on the historical view of women's art and women's struggles from art education perspective. Recognizing the historical view of women's art elucidates the reasons its exclusion from art movements, an exclusion that has still not diminished significantly in our era (Hopper, 2015).

Feminism and Art Education

Hopper (2015) elucidated several historical issues related to women's art and women's artistic abilities. In the eighteenth century, women's creative productions were devalued by

society. Artwork by women like embroidery, crochet, and other crafts were considered pastimes made just for fun or to decorate the home. Crafts were never attributed to genius; rather, they were characterized as simple and socially inferior (Battersby, 1989). Korsmeyer (2004) noted that Immanuel Kant once said, "Genius is the talent that gives the rules to art" (p. 29), placing European art as the epitome of artistic genius. For centuries, realistic paintings, sculptures, and art featuring complex religious and historical topics were highly valued—and associated with men—because they were thought to require hard work and intellectual abilities that were beyond women (Hopper, 2015). Further, women were extremely marginalized; their contributions were forgotten or diminished in historical accounts. High art was evaluated and produced by a few elite, educated white males, while women's art was seen as amateurish and excluded from the genius art movement.

Through the eighteenth until nineteenth century, working to create art was associated with a male perspective of culture and females who practiced and studied art under the dominant rules were considered deviant and more masculine than feminine (Hopper, 2015). For a woman to maintain her femininity, she was therefore ineligible of being an artistic genius, to be seen as feminine in a traditional way. Even if a woman worked beyond the expected crafts, she was expected to protect her feminine sensibility by using particular artistic materials, like pastels, and draw appropriate topics like flowers or paint miniatures. Yet, these topics and materials had low prestige; they were suitable for female abilities because they could be produced at home and were not thought to require a higher intellectual level. This view of women's arts and crafts continued until the mid-twentieth century and still influences contemporary views about women as artists.

Even after the onset of modern movements, masculinity continued to control Western art and diminished women's access to museums and history (Hopper, 2015). Men controlled the narrative knowledge of art as connoisseurs, art historians, and so-called art experts. The artistic readings of men were highly related to a predetermined narrative and acceptance of art, influencing the audience's familiarity with what is considered high or low art.

In the mid-twentieth century, narrative artistic readings were valued based on a male identity that gave credit to male artists who exemplified power and toughness, such as Jackson Pollock (Hopper, 2015). His work represented the masculine sexual drive, for instance, the large scale and action in Pollock's abstract expressionist paintings represented strength and vitality. Pollock's wife, Lee Krasner, was an abstract expressionist painter who art critics referred to as Pollock's widow, not as an artist in her own right. The critics largely ignored Krasner through the 1950s and 1960s, viewing her as a wife rather than an artist (Barton, 2015) and she lived in Pollock shadow until the rise of the feminist movements in the 1970s, when she became an important female abstract expressionist. After her death, many scholars began to focus on her life and work (Landau & Grove, 1995; Levin, 2011; Rose & Krasner, 1983; Wagner, 1989).

In the course of the political awakenings of the 1960s and 1970s, feminist art came into prominence, and feminists began to reconstruct a new history of art from the female perspective (Hopper, 2015). Women artists began explaining their own values and worldviews, elucidating the notion that feminist art is not limited to a singular theme or type, but consists of diverse styles and expressions that affirm individuality. Feminist movements played a big part in revealing and confronting the historic subordination of females, which was sustained and reinforced through art practices. In the period since the 1970s, females have challenged

traditional art by using self-reference and non-standard materials, thus contributing to postmodern art.

Despite the long dominance of male subjectivities, many female artists questioned the exclusion of crafts and domestic art from the scope of fine arts (Hopper, 2015). In the1970s, feminist artists challenged the rigorous art rules constructed by men and purposely used craft materials and domestic items. Artists such as Miriam Schapiro (Jones, 2010) and Faith Ringgold focused on female activities and domestic crafts as central ideas in their work, emphasizing feminine qualities that had previously been condemned (Hopper, 2015). Judy Chicago's (Jones, 2010) work, *The Dinner Party* (1974 to 1979) aimed to present women's heritage and the creative qualities in women's traditional art, such as embroidery, weaving, and sewing alongside Chinese painting. Chicago and Schapiro's conceptual work combined domestic and women's collaborative practices, dismantling the hierarchy in art and blurring the division between female and male art practices.

Our young generation of men and women needs to understand the struggles of feminist artists and their achievements for many reasons. First, the historical timeline can elucidate the complex vision that characterizes feminist artwork in the 1970s. Second, they can better build on these achievements by learning more about them. Additionally, non-feminists want to take advantage of the ignorance of the past by separating feminist art from its historical roots. In doing so, they stand to make feminist art seem shallow. Students must understand the deeper meanings and goals of feminist art, particularly because it was with great effort that feminists have been able to dismantle longstanding sexist hierarchies and make once radical conceptions seem almost mainstream.

Gender Equity in Art Education Curriculum

An attempt to shed light on gender equity represents an addition to social justice curriculums. From outside the art education field, Tetreault (2013) discussed how an equitable curriculum generally looks in regard to gender equity. Tetreault investigated gender-balance in curriculums generally, taking into account the different perspectives and experiences of women and men. Tetrault asserted that the traditional curriculum usually defines male experience as universal and representative of all human beings. Students, male and female, gain knowledge that has been explored, taught, and articulated by and about men; women are mostly invisible and subsumed under the male experience.

Tetreault (2013) discussed the importance of a bifocal curriculum that shows the world from different perspectives rather than solely from the man's experience and cites two major reasons for doing so. First, different perspectives provide multiple dimensions of the same subject, and even change the way we might see a subject. Second, adding a female perspective enables both male and female students to see the world through women's eyes, a dual that prompts questions about women's points of view and the similarities and differences with men. The spheres and conditions within which women experience life impact their their corresponding interpretations of the world—which typically differ significantly from those of men. Thus, imposing a singular vision of the world distorts the workings of the actual social system in which we all live. Therefore, women's positions must be seen as complementary to men and equal in value.

Tetreault (2013) concluded that traditional disciplines represent women in a passive way and limit their abilities, thus, educators must shed light on women's social, economic, and political status in society. Women's relationships and needs are different within these spheres,

and their stories and experiences equally contribute to human history. For this reason, women's voices and perspectives need to be included in the curriculum. Tetreault's (2013) work shed light on the importance of gender equality, and the inclusion of women's voices—in educational curriculums.

Clover (2010) took a historical view of equitable curriculums in art education and highlighted the power of critique to support her points. She discussed the inequities in the representation of women artists, their historical struggle in the art world, and the dominance of elite white men who are considered so-called "masters." Historically, women's art has been seen in derogatory terms, as a craft or decorative pastime. Clark and Folgo (2006) argued that many might get the impression that no great women artists have ever existed since women rarely are mentioned in the textbooks, museums, or in history books. Further, Clover (2010) has indicated that educational curriculums generally fail to give attention to feminist aesthetic theories, a body of scholarship that could raise students' awareness of this female dimension of the arts.

Clover (2010) expounded feminist aesthetic theory in order to enrich the insights of adult scholars unfamiliar with this approach. Her research has included critical analysis of women's aesthetic art that in turn offer a deeper understanding of the value, importance, and function of arts in contemporary society. Clover highlighted the powerful role of feminist critiques in supporting and bringing attention to overlooked minority and women artists. Women artists need support to reach larger audiences and give their art visibility—actions that may provoke social change. Additionally, museums need to provide visitors with more representative and pluralistic experiences rather than restricting viewers to historically elitist aesthetic authorities.

Ehrlich (2011) emphasized the importance of feminist artworks for contemporary education and program planning. She contended that exploring women artists moves the

educational paradigm toward greater equity by exposure to and understanding of a wider range of experiences. Through a museum case study, Ehrlich examined the influence of feminist artworks on adolescent girls. Ehrlich sought to explore women's perspectives and their position in the art world; she pointed out that this type of lesson enables educators to help students develop their awareness of feminist artwork. Ehrlich emphasized the importance of understanding various perspectives through symbolic aesthetics, which could be found within the artworks in question. Ehrlich argued that aesthetics help students evolve as they actively and emotionally interpret and appreciate artistic experiences. This occurs as students engage with the teacher in authentic discourse as they respond to artworks. Ehrlich asserted that such processes of exploration expand the students' perspectives and understanding of their own standpoints as women, ultimately leading to some level of personal transformation.

In order to apply critical pedagogy in an art education classroom, Yokley (1999) made a lesson plan that focused on building identity through sociopolitical art and art making. Yokley used Giroux's (1992) concept of resistance to help students decode imagery and visuals from popular culture. She argued that art educators can provide students with powerful instruments that reveal the contradictions, ideological struggles, and questions about domination and power that are implicit in visual images (Yokley, 1999). For this purpose, she created lessons that would help students learn how to decode metaphors, symbols, and icons by looking at the relationships between form and content within their cultural and historical contexts.

Yokley (1999) chose the work of two female artists in order to explore female political stances. Working with pre-service teachers, she created a sample lesson on sociopolitical artists using *On the Border Between United States and Mexico* by Frida Kahlo and *Self Portrait* by Leonora Carrington. Her lesson and the two rich metaphoric artworks it encompassed illuminate

the power of art when integrated with critical pedagogy, since the artworks of these female artists encouraged students to consider their perspectives on social and political issues. Kahlo and Carrington made self-portraits that expressed a political stance and social views in life, and Yokley's (1999) lesson taught students how to decode the artworks and then make a self-portrait. In the process of artmaking, then, they learned how to build connections between form and meaning, taking them to a deeper level of understanding visuals as they simultaneously experienced the power of self-portrait. Thus, in creating self-portraits students investigated themselves, discovering their identities, opinions, and interests within their society and the world. Further, in learning from the perspectives of those outside their culture, students were able to see cultural images through the eyes of another.

Yokley's (1999) lesson asked students to investigate the historical and cultural contexts of selected paintings and question the economic and political strategies of the United States within those contexts. Kahlo's work, for example, addressed United States imperialism by showing less noble aspects of U.S. government actions in the world than the ones students typically learn about in school or on the local news. The rich metaphors in the artworks taught students to explore layers of meaning and look carefully at how each sign and symbol may have been related to others. The instructions for the students' self-portrait projects were designed to manifest engagement with social issues as well. Each art project, then, became a tool for expressing personal opinions and creating a dialogue about one's sociopolitical stance. Yokley (1999) argued for the importance of displaying the students' artworks in public in order to fully achieve the lesson goal of making the students' work into a political act. The students' artworks, then, became an educative learning experience about self and society through self-examination. Instead of making students into passive receivers of information, art lessons like Yokley's can

encourage students to become active learners who facilitate the development of their own perspectives.

Yokley enhanced the identities of female students by investigating female contemporary artwork that shed light on female perspectives. Next, Lai (2009) discussed different strategies for enhancing women's self-concepts by critically analyzing women's representation in visual culture. Lai's goal was to give female students opportunities to reflect on their own perceptions and experiences.

Teaching Feminism Through Visual Culture

Lai (2009) integrated feminist pedagogy and Visual Culture Art Education (VCAE) to create a student-centered curriculum that encouraged critical thinking. Her aim was to help students recognize the influences of visual culture on women and then give students the opportunity to create their own meanings through the analysis of existing visuals and creation of their own visuals. By integrating the two pedagogical concepts of feminist pedagogy and VCAE, Lai (2009) made visual culture and women the central topic of a curriculum unit. One important component of this curriculum was facilitating critical discussions about the impact of visual culture on women's lives.

Lai (2009) argued that women throughout history have been deprived of opportunities to contribute to the systems of meaning created by a few elite men, who used their positions to construct representations that tended to disadvantage or misconstrue the experiences of women (Hopper, 2015). Traditional art paintings, for instance, frequently portrayed the female body simply as an object of men's desires, showing female inferior to men. Women's artwork, on the other hand, was often ignored in mainstream art circles and considered lower status (Chadwick,

2002; Hopper, 2015). Further, despite the progress of the feminist and civil rights movements, the portrayal of woman-as-object is still ubiquitous in current popular culture.

By integrating VCAE with feminist pedagogy in the classroom, Lai (2009) enables students to investigate women's representations in visual culture as a way of learning larger lessons about themselves and culture. Given that sexism that still holds sway over many people's perspectives and actions, she designed her unit to make the classroom a safe space for discussion as well as for creating new perspectives to shape what people see. VCAE, as a new method of teaching in art education, has been advocated by many art educators as a means of exploring contradictions and invisible hegemonies in visual images, especially those portraying stereotypes about race, class, and gender (Barrett, 2003; K. Freedman, 2003). Lai, however, specifically applied VCAE to focus on women, and to give her students the opportunity to learn about themselves and the world.

Lai (2009) observed that art educators should be aware that the growing trend toward teaching through visuals highlights concerns about content and context applications. To make visuals a successful critical tool, teachers need to use visuals to investigate issues that have meaning to students' lives instead of focusing primarily on modern art principles. At the same time, while potentially effective, VCAE as a critical tool poses the risk of causing an uncomfortable teaching environment, as some students may struggle to share their beliefs or to discuss others' beliefs.

In applying a feminist pedagogy to art education, teachers must draw attention to the unequal presentation of gender and the division between male and female artwork (Chadwick, 2002; K. Freedman, 2002; Garber, 2003). Students must have the opportunity to discuss how such inequities have created boundaries for women, preventing them from pursuing particular art

practices that are valued in the context of masculine art and devalued in the context of feminine art. Without acknowledging such disparities, students will be deprived of understanding different perspectives and useful knowledge (Lai, 2009). Even with the recent efforts to include female artists in art education textbooks, male artwork still dominates (Clark & Folgo, 2006). In addition, the majority of artists, art historians, and art critics are men who interpret and criticize art from a male view.

Art textbooks are overwhelmed by the stories, perceptions, desires, and experiences of male artists, blocking both female and male students from learning about women's perspectives and artistic contributions, both historically and in modern times (Lai, 2009). When the contributions of women to the world of art are overlooked, female students in particular become isolated from the art curriculum and disempowered from the learning process. This disengagement is not surprising, since the curriculum shows females have almost no role and are speechless within the art world. When women are exposed repeatedly and exclusively to male standards for them, it can create in women subordinate identities that are disinclined to speak for themselves (Garber, 2003).

Lai's (2009) effort to empower students through a thorough investigation of female representations in visual culture involved a critical analysis of their impact on women's self-concepts. She asked students to employ self-reflection in examining visual culture and to explore the connections, contradictions, and influences that have impact their lives and self-concepts as women. Her overarching goal was to create proactive students who take charge of their own learning.

Lai (2009) emphasized that it is important for teachers to understand that engaging feminist pedagogy with VCAE may create some uncomfortable learning situations, since both

pedagogies encourage discussion about sexism and ones own sexuality. Therefore, she argued, teachers need to take steps to ensure a safe classroom environment that encourages students to share and discuss their personal opinions freely. Teachers also should be careful not to provide one *right* model of women's representation because such a presentation actually generates another sort of oppression (Chadwick, 2002). Lai and Cooper (2016) conducted a study employing VCAE to address gender issues in an atypical way. The researchers aimed to raise preadolescent students' awareness about the gender divisions implicit in visual culture and then destroy gender stereotypes by engaging all students in a gender-focused project. Their purpose was to encourage students to discover their abilities and step out of gender boundaries that restricted them.

Undoing Gendered Stereotypes

Lai and Cooper's (2016) exploratory study investigated the perceptions of preadolescent students about gender divisions in visual culture. Cooper was the teacher who facilitated student learning. She began by asking the children to categorize issues from visual culture that signify girls and boys. After group discussions, the children listed six categories: "attributes, merchandise, cosmetics, connotations, academic subjects (arts or STEM), and sports" (p. 101). The visual presentations gave the children the opportunity to think about their gender identities and speak about their gendered influences. The results demonstrated the great extent to which students are familiar with these gender divisions in visual culture.

The researchers also attempted to use pedagogical art education strategies to diminish the gender gap through safe explorations (Lai & Cooper, 2016). The researchers chose a gender-based pedagogy to enhance playful learning, creativity, and imagination as means of empowering students across genders, allowing them to gain lived experiences of diverse gender

practices. The teacher asked the children to decide on an art project that would address gendered connotations. After collectively discussing the assignment, the children chose to design a car. Their choice was built on their common desire to make a car and their interest in the Disney movie *Cars,* the location of memories of images of different cars. This consensus decision gave the children confidence to create their own car, and valued everyone's contributions to the design.

Students worked on a three-dimensional design using their imaginations and playfully utilized recycled materials. One of the girls expressed her identity through the color pink and other girly symbols, while ensuring the accuracy of technical aspects of the car. The girl indicated that her focus was to make a traditional car that has an accurate structure with an emphasis on the beauty elements. Lai and Cooper (2016) concluded that although the girl's perception of a traditional car was masculine, she chose to emphasize a girly identity. The authors noted, "We consider this gender mixed conceptualization and visualization of a car a possibility for children to disrupt or bridge the gender lines in the art classroom" (p. 104).

The gender projects, grounded in visual culture as they were, cultivated gender-inclusivity among the students, enabling them to overcome gender divides and diminish stereotypes. The researchers attributed these outcomes to the structure of the assignment and its focus on empowering learning, creativity, and imagination (Lai & Cooper, 2016). The discussion of gendered visual culture first raised the children's awareness and laid the groundwork for them to understand more fully the gender implications in visual culture. Additionally, the teacher worked as the facilitator, encouraging children to learn collectively, in teams, through discussion and decision-making based on common interests. These strategies gave students the opportunity to be active thinkers and cooperative learners. Lai and Cooper (2016) explained that the

preadolescent students' choice to design a car was a gendered topic with a masculine stereotype that they took pleasure in undoing. Their choices fulfilled the purpose of the activity, which was accomplished by unleashing the children's creativity and focusing on fun and imagination. In doing so, the students overlooked the gender assumption about car's masculine connotations by highlighting originality and extensions of each gender's abilities. The authors contended that the students created a new artistic type, a hybrid that went beyond masculine and feminine stereotypes.

Summary

In the existing literature researchers have discussed the importance of developing comprehensive equitable curriculums, with attention to providing students with tools to help them become self-learners. Researchers have highlighted the qualities of art education that made it a field with significant potential for strengthening democratic principles. In these studies, researchers and practitioners have provided useful guidelines and ideas, adding their perspectives in an attempt to improve education for a better democratic society. My role as a practitioner researcher is to add my perspective with its unique context and vision. My research aimed to relate each lesson with real life challenges, about which students reflected their understandings through art making. The art making process highlighted and discussed within group critiques as an important phase of transformation. Finally, students shared their art products in public, and in so doing engage with their community and witness the uses of their artworks. In the next chapter I will discuss my methodology, explaining in more detail the setting, lesson plans, data collection, and plan for analyzing the data.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This dissertation was designed to take place in a graduate art education class in the Art Education Department at Florida State University, a setting that enabled me to directly observe and interact with participants. Conducting my dissertation in my department facilitated the research process for me because I had access to and knowledge of the environment. The data I collected concerned students' values and worldviews about social justice issues in the context of art education, and was collected during and after three lessons I implemented. One of my ultimate goals was to determine how the students' classroom experience might affect their future teaching. To this end, I observed their interactions in discussions and other interactive activities as well as personal reflections, all of which were guided by a particular set of teaching strategies I utilized.

Given that this study occurred in a natural social setting, the use of qualitative research methods seemed to be highly appropriate (Slavin, 2002). In qualitative research, the researcher is considered a key instrument for data collection (Creswell, 2014). Since the primary purpose of this research was to capture the meanings participants attributed to their experience of the art education classes I conducted, the use of qualitative methods enabled me to learn from the participants about the situation they were experiencing. More specifically, I collected data through observations, interviews, and examination of the students' artworks and reflections, with particular attention to insights or problems the participants experienced. For this reason, the research process, while guided by an initial plan, changed to some extent depending on emergent situations (Creswell, 2014).

The interest motivating this dissertation extended beyond the outcomes of my implemented lessons, however. My motivation also was grounded in the goal of self-development, that is, the improvement of my teaching practice. Given my stance as a teacher and researcher I sought to collect practice-based evidence through practitioner research, a decision that reflected my belief in the reciprocal relationship between theory and practice (Pilkington, 2009). Thus, I have used research to enhance my practice and, in this study, I used my practice to enhance my research.

In this chapter I discuss my research design and methodology, including details about participant selection and location, as well as data collection and analysis techniques. Because I conducted practitioner research, I have provided my three lesson plans, including the approaches and strategies I used. Finally, I have shared my overall plan for the collection, analysis, and writing of the data. I end this chapter with limitations and potentials for further development of this research.

Research Design

I chose practitioner research for the study design, a type of action research that teachers frequently conduct in educational settings for the explicit purpose of improving practice (Pilkington, 2009). This method is rooted in the work of Kurt Lewin, who developed the skills of this practice through a cyclical process. The process has four major steps: (1) diagnose a problem or situation, (2) collect data to solve the problem, (3) make plan before acting, and (4) reflect on action (Coghlan & Brannick, 2001; Lewin, 1946; McNiff, Whitehead, & Lomax, 2003). The approach lends itself to solving practical problems through investigation and reflection and finding new insights that may lead to improvements in practice (Pilkington, 2009).

Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2005) described practitioner research as a method aimed at enhancing professional development through systematic inquiry that tests ideas. In the same way, my aim was to examine my implemented lessons through direct practice and systematic inquiry. Such direct problem solving practice can provide better insights about a real world situation, including as its limitations and possibilities, and such insights can subsequently lead to the discovery of convenient and effective solutions. Practitioner research was consistent with my ultimate research purpose, which was to contribute to the development of art education practices that enhance democratic values and raise pre-service teachers' awareness of social justice issues (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2007).

After diagnosing the problem about art education K-12 textbook limitations (Acuff, 2013), I began to search recent literature for a solution to this problem. In the course of my research I found many interesting articles and empirical studies that investigated the problem in different ways. I formulated my own plan by choosing the views that seemed most meaningful to me and then adding my own perspective. In this way, I clarified my goal: to contribute to art education research by addressing the development of pre-service art teachers, particularly in regard to the importance of developing an equitable curriculum that incorporates ideas about social justice, gender equity, and diversity. From a pedagogical point of view, my overarching objective was to provide pre-service art teachers with tools that emphasized students' voices and promoted social action.

The research design I chose, then, aligned with ideas in critical pedagogy, particularly in regard to engaging students at both intellectual and action levels in order to ensure they fully collaborated in their own educational development (Adams, 2016; Freire, 2002/1970; Giroux, 2010; Kellner, 2003). Critical pedagogy focuses on learning processes and emphasizes critical

thinking and reflection, encouraging students to gain insights into their own lives and current social situations in order to inspire them to action that can positively transform their world. Accordingly, critical pedagogy rejects the ideal of students as passive participants, and instead encourages educators to create student-centered classrooms that give students opportunities to engage in action in their larger world outside of the school setting. From this standpoint, the process of empowering students to create better lives for themselves would gradually lead to social transformation.

In reviewing the relevant literature on critical pedagogy and art education, I was particularly interested in Dewhurst's research and analysis of social justice art (Dewhurst, 2010; 2011; 2013). This work led me to incorporate critical pedagogy with art making as a means to empower students. Dewhurst highlighted the commonalities in critical pedagogy, social justice education, and art education. Her ideas about the ways in which art making can enhance learning influenced my decision to use students' art making as an active learning tool, while encouraging students to explore the phases of the art making process. In addition, I included a group critique activity to encourage the exchange of students' personal views, thereby advancing a democratic classroom atmosphere.

Practitioner research aligns with my dissertation framework in that it encourages democratic engagement by advising teachers to exercise professional judgment, relay their knowledge of practice in the field, and seek to better understand their local community (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2005). Critical pedagogy advocates have emphasized that educators need to have the freedom to break away from official curriculum restrictions (Apple & Beane, 1995; Giroux, 1983). As local practitioners, they need to be able to respond creatively to their insights about the needs that exist within their communities. This guidance is consistent

with one aim of practitioner inquiry, which is to address and seek to improve local problems, both by identifying the conditions that create problems as well as finding solutions (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2007). Practitioner research serves to increase knowledge about a range of topics, since practitioners discover, through the research process, ways to solve problems through thematic interpretation, problem definition through broader shared debate, and openness to further engagement through research (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2005).

The teacher's autonomy in conducting practitioner research for the purpose of professional development does not suggest isolation from peers, but freedom to improve his or her own field practice (Campbell, McNamara, & Gilroy, 2004). Currently, there is a strong trend toward evidence-based practice research as a basis for educational theories. This type of research encourages teachers to take a critical stance as they endeavor to solve complex problems in classrooms or in the local community through the integration of theory and practice.

One of the significant characteristics of practitioner research is it has more direct relationship to social change (Lewin, 1946; Sachs, 2003). The emphasis on activism and ethics in practitioner research in the education sphere gives it an emancipatory quality and heightens its potential to contribute to broader social and political goals (Sachs, 2003). Building community through improved educational practice is one of the outcomes of such practitioner research, which includes sharing information about the research processes and results. Such dissemination of knowledge, whether locally or internationally, contributes to more informed societies (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2007). Thus, practitioner research goes beyond self-development, to a more collaborative enterprise aimed at engaging colleagues and others in debate in order to improve and transform practice, and ultimately, society. Practitioner research,

then, always has two goals, one explicitly aimed at developing practice and another indirectly aimed at improving the human condition (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2007).

Therefore, with the goal of improving and helping to develop better societal conditions, I conducted dissertation research that involved creating and implementing arts-informed lessons for pre-service teachers that reflected elements of critical pedagogy. The lessons were designed to enrich pre-service teachers' critical thinking about social justice and democracy. In addition, the lessons focused on the role of art as an instrument of social change and a facilitator of deeper understandings about self, others, and society.

Research Methodology

Setting, Participants, and Sampling

This arts-informed practitioner research occurred in a class in the Art Education Department of Florida State University (FSU), a Research 1 accredited university accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The FSU Department of Art Education specialized in social justice education that prepares students to become leaders in the art education field. The study took place in the course, *Contemporary and Historical Issues in Art Education,* led by Dr. Sara Scott Shields, an Assistant Professor of Art Education, as well as my dissertation chair. The course is offered every spring and is required for a Master's degree in Art Education. Partnering with Dr. Scott Shields and her class was an essential part of this study, as the selected course was relevant to my research goals since Dr. Scott Shields uses arts-based methods with her pre-service students. The course goals included preparing pre-service art educators to be critical thinkers and raising their awareness about the significance of their role in educating students. The course covered different dimensions of social and educational theories

through an art education lens. I taught three classes during this course, and in them I discussed three topics related to social justice and democracy. These three topics were social justice principles, gender equity, and diversity. By situating the study within the course I was able to engage with pre-service art teachers as a practitioner researcher in order to examine my curriculum grounded in social justice and democracy. Participant Demographics

Table 1. Participant Demographics

	Name	Gender	Race	Age	Teaching Experience	Graduate level
1	Gray	M	Mexican American	25-30	1-5	Traditional MS
2	Teresa	F	White/Native	50-and up	15-and up	PhD
3	Julia	F	White	40-45	15-and up	PhD
4	Rose	F	White	20-25	0-1	BA/MS (5years)
5	Mary	F	White/Cuban	20-25	0-1	BA/MS (5years)
6	Ann	F	White	20-25	0-1	BA/MS (5years)
7	Amy	F	White	20-25	0-1	BA/MS (5years)
8	Shelly	F	White	20-25	0-1	BA/MS (5years)
9	Linda	F	Hispanic	20-25	0-1	BA/MS (5years)
10	Wendy	F	Polish	20-25	0-1	BA/MS (5years)
11	Clara	F	-	20-25	0-1	BA/MS (5years)
12	Lori	F	-	20-25	0-1	BA/MS (5years)

Because the study participants were the students enrolled in the class, a purposeful convenience sampling method was used (Mertons, 2009). The spring 2017 course included twelve students: two female doctoral students, nine female master's students, and one male master's student. The racial/ethnic backgrounds of the students were one Hispanic, one Mexican American, one White/Native American, and nine Whites. (see Table 1) The course met for three hours once a week. The students in the course were informed about the study and given a choice about whether or not to participate at the beginning of the semester. It is important to note that the participants were not be subjected to any reward or punishment as a result of their choice. The participants completed the consent forms and were informed that I would use their art productions in the study. Particularly because the nature of the study requires collecting data that

reflects the participants' personal experiences, I gave a pseudonym to each participant to ensure their privacy and anonymity.

Positionality/Role of the Researcher

I began the study with ten years of teaching experience in Kuwait; five years teaching high school painting and decorative art and then five years as a teacher assistant in the Art and Design Department at Kuwait University. I taught and assisted in studio art and survey classes, such as Art Appreciation, Medieval Art, and Contemporary Art. I am also a practicing professional artist, participating in national and international exhibitions and activities for over 20 years. As an educator I have gained different perspectives from teaching in different institutions. As both an artist and an educator, I have interrogated the relationships between education, art, the real world, and practice. I have found that it is important to connect students with their community through art engagement and meaningful learning. Especially while teaching high school, I recognized a big gap between the generation of students I was teaching and their traditions. My goals were to emphasize student identity and cultural belonging by enhancing their understanding of traditional artifacts.

In my academic experiences as a teacher assistant during my master's degree at the Rochester Institute of Technology and as guest speaker for undergraduate students at the Florida State University (FSU), I found students responded to my appearance as a female Arab wearing a hijab. I could see the wonder in my students and colleagues' eyes and the curiosity. I was not offended by these responses, rather I felt that they indicated these others wanted to learn about me as much I wanted to learn about them, and I openly talked about my beliefs and social life when asked. Because I have witnessed the failure of the media to bring viewers accurate images

of both our cultures, I actually was happy to be able to counter the media's influence in regard to inaccuracies and stereotypes about Arabs and Islam.

Teaching in different institutions and communities has changed the way I see myself as a teacher. It has caused me to reflect on the extent to which my identity as a female Arab teacher and adherent to the Islamic faith has influenced my teaching. I see the ways in which I diverge from Western culture as positive, at least in part because I can offer a different perspective from my Western colleagues on various topics. I believe that some areas of particular interest are the perceptual and actual differences between Western and Middle Eastern cultures in regard to, diversity and gender equity.

As a researcher I understand that my personal perspective is influenced to some degree by the place and community where I am teaching. Certainly, my perceptions of my students at FSU are different than my perceptions of my students in the Middle East. Each culture has a different definition of democracy, for example. Correspondingly, students' perspective about my identity would shape their responses to my curriculum. The topics I covered in this study (and in the curriculum I followed) discussed sensitive issues that touch on beliefs and values, and it is very likely that my beliefs and cultural values are very different from those of others in the classroom. It stands to reason that the students would relate differently to an Arab teacher wearing a hijab than to a Western teacher in discussions about Islamic culture or Islam. They certainly would be curious to know my position toward this dilemma, the differences between traditional Islamic and Western values. In fact, the situation we faced presented a practical example of cultural differences that may occur in any academic classroom, and provided excellent "grist for the mill." Though, it was necessary to provide a safe environment in which to discuss controversial issues, and this enabled us to discuss how they will face such differences in

their own classrooms. All these experiences were reflected in the data collection and analysis, and served as an excellent case of how identity impacts the classroom.

The sample in this study consisted of mostly white females from the South. One of my purposes in the curriculum was to engage them with their community via art. In so doing, their work and our discussions touched on recent political events, particularly as they related to issues about gender and diversity that followed Donald Trump's inauguration in 2017. These issues have effected women in the United States in particular and I thought it would be an opportunity to engage them to release and respond about these political issues.

The decision to use a practitioner research method derived from my position as a teacher and my desire to facilitate change and make the world a more compassionate and equitable place. I believe a teacher is a leader whose goal is to illuminate pathways for students. My intention, then, was to contribute to education in general and art education in particular, this by creating a curriculum that incorporated democratic principles and prepared students to engage more fully in their lives, and by connecting their studies with real-life contexts. A quality curriculum applies knowledge in direct ways that enhance student learning and utilizes knowledge to help students face challenges. Thus, in my role as an art educator I see the capacity to help students develop their self-confidence and self-direction, in this way becoming more empowered and responsible citizens eager to contribute to the positive transformation of their society and communities.

Because my study focused on using art as a tool to facilitate students' understandings of themselves and the conditions in their community—particularly in terms of democracy and social justice—the underlying pedagogic principles led me not to simply teach skills or give students static knowledge. I believe that real life challenges can motivate critical thinking and prepare students for life, and that alternately, students become frustrated when they discover that

the lessons they learned in school were merely ideals. Thus, I selected appropriate pedagogical materials that discussed social issues and the influences that can shape the community structure. I made the classroom conducive to a style of learning and instruction grounded in discussion, and I presented students with real life problems that challenged some of their preconceived ideas about education and prompted them to think about how they will deal with relevant situations that may pose difficulties in their own classrooms. I used approaches that emphasized idealistic principles and combined them with similar real-life dilemmas as illustrated in news, visuals, and other media. By bringing this into the classroom I hoped to help students realize that some important ideals we advocate as teachers, such as democracy and social justice, need continuous advancement. Interacting with these concepts at the pre-service level can give prospective teachers alternate perspectives on real-life topics and ideas about how to deal with them in the classroom. Fundamentally, I believe that successful educators facilitate learning by giving students opportunities to share their opinions and by cultivating their active involvement at the classroom and community levels.

Data Collection

Video. I videotaped each of the three seminars. Because I was the practitioner in the classroom, I was not able to write field notes directly in the moment. For this reason, I videotaped the three classes and group critique discussions from beginning to end to capture the general environment in the classroom and record the effectiveness of both the curriculum I designed and my practice of it. This method enabled me to view the impact of my lesson strategies on the perspectives of students, that is, through their discussion of the materials and

other group interactions. These qualitative videotaped materials, then, represented a large part of the documentation for my observations (Creswell, 2014).

Observational field notes. Immediately after each seminar, I reviewed the in-class discussions and wrote my reflections on my laptop. In addition, I sent the videos to a professional credited secured company to transcribe the discussions. I kept all the transcribed class proceedings on my laptop. In my qualitative observations I described the participants' behavior as they engaged in classroom activities. Throughout my lessons I tracked students' perceptions by asking open-ended general questions that allowed students to freely share their views (Creswell, 2014). The observational fieldnotes I composed served as a frame of reference in the analytic portion of the study, when they provided contextual information concerning the overall course design and students' reactions to in-class activities.

Visual journals. I asked the students to reflect their opinions about the reading assignments in their visual journal. The visual journal was a way to reflect in a visual form that enhances students' perspectives. Students in the end of the semester documented their visual assignments and sent it via email. I saved them in my secured laptop, and used these weekly visual reflections to provide data on students' understandings of and responses to the readings as well as the creative choices they made in order to visually translate those understandings and responses (Creswell, 2014).

Final art project. During the three-week lessons, the students were assigned to complete one art project focusing on a local problem or social justice issue. The final art project conceded the physical final outcome—not only the final product itself but also the process of making it. I considered the art making process, then, to be part of the learning process and outcome. In the

group critiques, we discussed three phases of the art making process: (1) the topic and intentions of the outline or first sketch, (2) the complexities of the aesthetics within the subject at the mid-point of the process, and (3) the outcomes of the experience at the completion of the project. The art making processes were crucial to my observation. The final artwork rubric was derived from Dewhurst's (2011) article and based on the assignment instructions as follows:

> *Create an artwork in response to our subject of social justice art. Choose from one of the subjects we have discussed previously, including diversity, gender, race, or social class. The artwork has to include these main ideas:*
>
> - *You need to create social justice art that aims to solve a problem through questioning, motivating, or notifying about an issue, whether of a personal or community nature. For instance, you can discuss or explore your dreams for a more democratic educational system or society, or you can highlight a negative or positive experience you want to express.*
> - *In the group critique be prepared to discuss the process of creating, in other words, how you reflected your ideas in your aesthetics, for instance:*
>
> 1. *What was your main idea in creating this work?*
> 2. *How did you translate your ideas in aesthetic terms? Explain your choice of forms or symbols and how they connected with your feelings or your experience?*
> 3. *Justify your choices of objects, positions, and colors, and discuss what the main characters and their relation to the other objects?*
> 4. *Explain how you used the minor details to emphasize your main idea.*

- *Consider how this artwork relates to your social location in particular, or how the ideas reflected in your artwork related to your experience, background, or beliefs.*

Group critique. Dewhurst (2011) identified process as a critical phase in any creative endeavor: "Freire (1970/1998) writes, 'In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation' (p. 64). Through the lens of process, the act of critically deconstructing and recreating one's world defines the practice as uniquely social justice." (p. 371).

The purpose of the group critique strategy is to shed light on this learning process, and it was a crucial to my observation strategy. I am not the only one who led with questions; the entire classroom participated in the critique in order to yield more data about art making as a learning process. Three group critique discussions were conducted during the classroom period, each lasting around 60 minutes. The students were asked to discuss their own and others work in terms of the meanings of the symbols they used, their feelings as they proceeded, and the relationship of the artwork to their experiences. The group critique questions were provided previously in the final project rubric assignment.

Student reflections. In addition to their artwork, students were asked to write two brief reflections: one was an artwork statement and the second was about their opinions on the group critiques (the art making process discussions). In the artwork statement students were asked to discuss or explore their visual art making, and this written reflection was used as a complement to the artwork. This procedure helped me understand more clearly the students' thoughts about the art making and the lessons learned. The two reflections were considered private data

documents that included personal views (Creswell, 2014). The artwork statement assignment questions were:

Discuss briefly your artwork using the following questions to help you outline your ideas:

- *What is your main idea in the artwork?*
- *What was your intention in creating the work - was it notifying, questioning, or motivating?*
- *What was your critical inquiry and what did you learn from it?*
- *How do you think reflecting ideas in aesthetic terms could increase your knowing about this subject?*
- *How does the artwork relate to your social location and affect your identity or self-knowledge?*

The second reflection was conducted at the end of the group critique discussions. The purpose of this reflection was to determine the effectiveness of sharing personal information related to art making, as well as the benefits of the art making process as a constructive tool. The group critique reflection assignment included the following instructions:

Tell me about your experience of the group critiques and your art making using the following questions to stimulate your ideas:

- *What is your opinion about sharing your personal experiences with peers and hearing from others about their personal experiences with art making?*
- *On a personal and educational level, what did you learn from discussing your ideas and their artwork with peers?*
- *After the discussions and personal sharing, to what extent has your opinion of your peers become different, clearer, or more comfortable? Why?*

- *How did discussing your ideas with your peers affect your learning? Specifically, how did it help you understand your work and yourself?*
- *What are your opinions about discussing the art making process? To what extent do you believe it can give you clearer ideas about the complexity of aesthetics?*
- *What did you learn from this art making experience? How do you think applying this art making strategy can be useful in your teaching?*
- *How do you feel about sharing your artwork in a public exhibit?*

Interviews. Interviews are an important technique for data collection. One-on-one communication can clarify opinions or aid in interpreting situations. According to Wengraf (2001), interviews reveal and resolve ambiguity, since the clearest way to understand a participant's point of view is to engage in direct conversation. Accordingly, I conducted semi-structured one-on-one interviews with each student at the end of the three lessons (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). These interviews gave me insights into the effectiveness of the lessons for each student. I audio-recorded the one-on-one interviews and then transcribed them in preparation for the next step of data analysis.

The one-on-one interview questions were:

- *What are your perceptions about social justice issues before and after these lessons?*
- *Tell me a little bit about your beliefs and values after this experience? Do you think that it will affect your teaching in the future? If not, why not?*
- *What is most important to you in forming an equitable curriculum, and why?*
- *Tell me about experiences that have challenged your ideas about life's realities?*
- *How will the activities/experiences we have had in class affect your teaching in future?*

- *What is your mission as an art teacher, and what changes have you made to that mission? How?*
- *What strategies in these lessons motivated or sparked your critical thinking about life? Which strategies, if any, do you think you will apply in your personal life and in your teaching?*
- *How might you add to or otherwise alter this lesson?*

Exhibit. Students were able to share their artwork with the public via a department exhibition. Accompanying their artwork were their reflections on the work. In the interviews I asked students how they felt about sharing their personal views in public. This was an important part of my research, since the purpose of the curriculum included helping students actively learn to participate in their society and see how artwork can function as an action tool.

Procedures

In the first week, Dr. Sara Shields introduced students to the course, her program and evaluation policy, and me and my research project. I introduced myself and explained that my voluntary program was aimed at giving them a better sense of how democracy and social justice principles can be viewed and taught through an art education lens. I explained that my program was part of the course but that they would not be punished or rewarded if they did or did not volunteer. The purpose of the first meeting with students was to break the ice and begin to establish a relationship with them. Finally, I reminded the students of the assigned readings and the visual journal reflections. In the second week, I began to conduct the lessons in the first of three three-hour long class sessions, one per week. The schedule design was as follows:

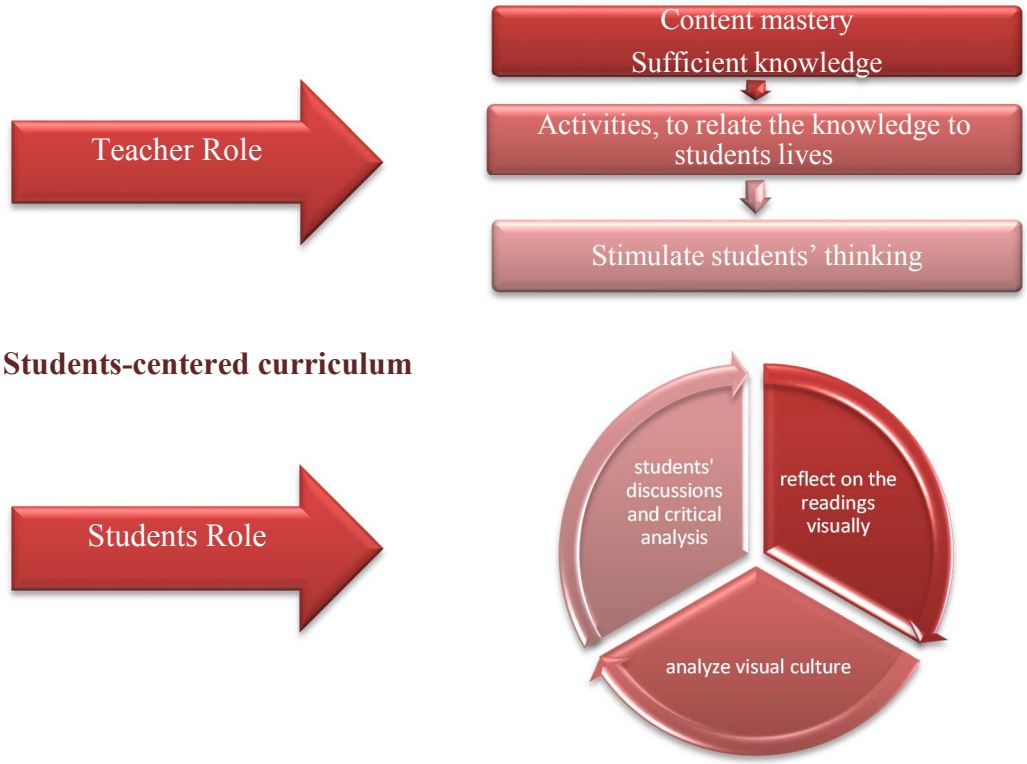

Figure 2. Comprehensive lessons in a student-centered curriculum.

Week One: How might art education inform student's understanding of social justice principles? The goal of this week was for students to learn different educational social justice theories to increase their awareness about the problem of underserved populations and provide a philosophical framework for their future teaching. Prior to class, students were asked to read two articles highlighting different social justice education theories. The first article, "Lessons from Paulo Freire" by Giroux (2010), concerns Paulo Freire's ideas and the need for critical theory in education. The second article, "Theoretical Considerations for Art Education Research with and about Underserved Populations" by Kraehe and Acuff (2013), addresses progress made in employing social justice theories in art education. In Giroux's article, he discussed the importance of critical pedagogy in education because it empowers students through

the development of their self-reflection and self-governance, both of which enable them to contribute to the transformation of their societies. In the spirit of Freire, Kraehe and Acuff argued for the importance of framing art education with social justice theories in order to provide a more equitable education that addresses the problems of underserved populations. In addition, they described the differences between theories involving intersectionality, race theory, multicultural education, and social justice education.

After I discussed with the students the readings, with particular attention to their understandings of the differences between the various theories and their applications, I conducted a simple activity. The aim was to give the students a better understanding of the theories, in particularly liberal theory (the old version of multicultural education) and critical pedagogy as it relates to SJE. I divided the class into two groups and distributed to students a paper with a drawing of a butterfly and colored pencils. Those in the first group each received one pencil, while those in the second group received 3-4 pencils. I asked them to color the butterfly and I collected the papers after the class break.

Next, I described a real life dilemma from the news that related theory to societal conditions. I showed a CNN documentary segment accessed via YouTube called *Income Inequality in America: Across Lake Providence* (2013). This documentary discusses the significant gap between social classes in the United States. I showed the first part, with interviews of two individuals from different socioeconomic classes, at the beginning of class. Both individuals work hard, but the documentary indicated that the poverty gap seemed to persistent over generations. I discussed this issue with the students and encouraged them to think critically about why some areas in the United States have persistent poverty while other areas have better conditions. In other words, I asked them what variables may contribute to this

disparity. I played the devil's advocate with students and asked questions that encouraged them to examine their understandings of the relationship between education and economic status. The subsequent discussion was based on such questions as:

- *The video shows two persons, one is low-income and the other is a wealthy, successful person. What do you think of these two examples?*
- *The rich man took a path that enabled him to become rich, while the poor women was not well educated, had a lot of children, and was not married. Who is fault for her economic condition? How do this case relate to social justice?*
- *How do you think the case of the man and the woman are related to the education system in some way?*
- *How do think their different cases are related to the political and economic system under which they live?*

Following the discussion, I showed the remaining half of the video, which presented the historical roots of this problem and clarified the cause of this gap between poverty and wealth. The documentary news segment explained the economic, political, and educational factors that contributed to maintaining this gap, so I began the subsequent discussion with these questions:

- *How do you think the historical roots of slavery have contributed to this gap for the social class?*
- *How do you think the schools and education system have contributed to maintaining this social class system?*
- *How do you think the economy and politics have contributed to maintaining this social class system?*

After the class break, I collected the students' papers with the butterfly colorings, and showed them the group differences. I helped the students consider the meanings of this activity and its relationship to the themes raised in class already by posing these questions:

- *I treated you the same, I gave you the same assignment - why do you think there is a clear difference in the results in both of these groups?*
- *The colors in this assignment represent students' resources, what do you think students' resources depend on?*

Liberal theory emphasizes the need for equal treatment in education, but without solving the conditions that create the problems in the first place (Kraehe & Acuff, 2013). SJE, on the other hand, aims at discussing structural issues like economics and politics that influence resource distribution. In this way, SJE provides tools designed to solve the societal problems at a more fundamental level. Guided by these ideas, at the end of the class period, I reminded students to prepare the next readings and the assignment. Students had to search for a social justice artist and post the artist's work in a shared online document with a brief information about the artist and the purpose of the artwork. Students shared their assignments in a PowerPoint document posted online. I posted an example of my own as well so students could learn from it and those of their peers.

Week Two: How can art education inform diversity? Students were asked to come to class having read the assigned article, "Social Justice through a Curriculum Narrative: Investigating Issues of Diversity" by Ballengee-Morris, Daniel, and Stuhr (2010). In this article the authors investigate the role of media and visual culture in our lives and society. This article was a good resource for a discussion of the impact of visuals and media. Visuals for art educators can be a powerful means by which to prompt students to engage in critical thinking. A second

article, "Critical Visual Literacy" by Chung (2013), shed light on social theories that are important to include in art education. Chung discussed different critical approaches that would help to prepare students to have better understanding about critical visual literacy. The combination of these two articles created a focus on contemporary art and the development of a critical pedagogy approach.

Along with the articles I shared with students a real life dilemma by showing them an example of media influencing people's perceptions. I showed the first part of a YouTube video entitled *Bill Maher, Ben Affleck, Sam Harris Debate Radical Islam* (*2014*). The video contains dialogue between three well-known U.S. liberals participating in a stimulating debate about democracy and religious principles, specifically those of Islam. The video shed light on the conflict between the Western definition of democracy and Islamic principles—in particular those related to women's rights and gay rights. I asked students to analyze the arguments presented in the video and give their opinions about this conflict. More specifically, I discussed with students how they, as teachers, might deal with these types of different beliefs in the classroom.

In the second part of the class I showed students a video entitled, *Reza Aslan Slams Bill Maher for Facile Arguments About Muslim Violence (2014),* also accessed via YouTube. In this CNN interview, Dr. Reza Aslan, writer and religious scholar, gives his opinions about the debate provoked in the Bill Maher described above. Dr. Aslan's discussion clarifies some social justice principles that these pre-service teachers would be able to use to solve dilemmas like those presented in the first video, that is, views that associate otherness or prejudice derived from generalizations about particular races or religions. One of my goals in showing students these videos was to prompt them to think about the Western definition of democracy and whether this

definition is universal? In addition, I extended the discussion by asking them to consider the question of whether the West has the right to impose its values and beliefs on other cultures.

The purpose of showing students these videos was to enable them to analyze news and media content and connect it with real-life problems (Ballengee-Morris, Daniel, & Stuhr, 2010). I knew that any discussion of Islamic issues would be sensitive given current political events, and I chose these videos particularly because they relate to my identity as a female Muslim teacher. Teachers need to be selective in the material they use, of course, and consider how it relates to their identity (Hackman, 2005). While I realized that it might be challenging to discuss such sensitive religion issues, I believed my intimate knowledge of Islam would give me a perspective that would facilitate more meaningful discussion. I encouraged students to share their opinions even if they were contrary to my beliefs and I assured them that there could be no wrong or right answers. I then reinforced the understanding that the main point of the activity was learning how to deal with cultural and other differences that might arise in their classrooms.

Because social justice art and art making played a big part in these lessons, students also were asked to read, "Where is the Action? Three Lenses to Analyze Social Justice Art Education" by Dewhurst (2011). Dewhurst analyzed the nature of social justice art using three perspectives and then divided the art making process using three main lenses: intention, process, and social location. I chose the article in order to clarify for students the structure of social justice art and provide suggestions about how it can be evaluated. The article to provide students with a tool for guidance, one that they can use in their future teaching.

Further, I wanted students to understand how social justice art can be effective in shaping public opinion, it was for this reason that I assigned an online assignment aimed at helping students understand the power of art to counter media forces and promote critical thinking. I

posted online an example of social justice art and students shared their findings as well. The assignment also was designed to help students to think about their upcoming art projects, and at the end of the class, I reminded the students to prepare for the next class by doing the readings. Finally, I assigned half of the students to post a visual commercial or product that demonstrated gender stereotypes and the other half to search for a female artist and write a brief sketch of information about her artwork. All students posted their findings in an online PowerPoint and I posted my examples as well.

Week Three: What does visual culture and art education say about gender equity?

Gender equity was one of my primary focuses under the topic of democracy, because women still face a great deal of inequality. Before we began to discuss the readings, I stimulated students' thinking by presenting a real case of gender inequality based on an article accessed from an online website, "Why Women Are Poor at Science," by Suzanne Goldenberg (2005). The article discussed a declaration by then-President of Harvard Lawrence Summers that men are superior to women at science and math because of biological differences, Summers supported his claims by indicating there is a persistent gap in SAT tests for boys' advantage.

My aim in bringing these challenges into the classroom was to provoke students to analyze a real situation and question the trustworthiness of the information, and by extension, other information. In my opinion, instead of teaching pre-service teachers about ideal situations, they should be guided to confront some realities. Outside the school walls, pre-service teachers may face challenges at work, in their communities, or in their personal lives. In an effort to help students learn to analyze and think critically instead of assuming the veracity of the status quo I discussed with them the possible reasons for this SAT tests. Further, I sought to prompt them to

think about the different dimensions of the study results and facilitate discussion with such questions as:

- *There is SAT proof that a large gender gap exists in the area of math, with an advantage for high school boys. What is your opinion?*
- *Do you think the gap in math achievement between girls and boys is caused by a social problem, an educational problem, or a local cultural problem?*
- *Who and what contribute to gender stereotypes in our society?*
- *As an art educator, what is your role in addressing gender inequities?*

Next, we discussed students' visuals about media influences on gender that they were assigned to find. The assignment aimed to stimulate students' thinking about the influence of media on social expectations, so in class we analyzed the visuals and commercials and looked at them with more critical eyes. The discussion revolved around two main questions: *How does media impact society?*, and *How is our identity impacted by society?* We discussed issues that are imposed by society on our gender identities and the way that these issues affect our learning and that of others. Students also were assigned to post an artwork by a female artist, as a means of deepening our understandings of female art and the importance of including female perspectives in the curriculum.

The lesson used three readings: "Classroom for Diversity: Rethinking Curriculum and Pedagogy" by Tetreault (2013), "Adolescent Girls' Responses to Feminist Artworks" by Ehrlich (2011), and "A Contemporary Review of Feminist Aesthetic Practices" by Clover (2010). The Tetreault article clarifies the importance of women's perspectives in educational curricula and calls both for equity and for listening to women's voices rather than only representing the world from men's perspectives. Both the Ehrlich and Clover articles focus on the art education field and

discuss women artists' perspectives and highlight the need to include women's art in the art curriculum to provide an equal opportunity to understand female views, worlds, and needs.

Data Analysis

I organized my data analysis around my research questions (Saldana, 2016). Accordingly, in the analysis I explored students' values in order to determine if they had been influenced by my implemented lessons. More specifically, I sought to determine if my learning strategies had had an impact on these pre-service art teachers' perceptions about social justice issues generally and in relation to their teaching mission. I have listed each research questions below and a description of how I collected and analyzed the data to answer that particular question.

1. How can critical pedagogy be used to prepare pre-service art teachers to teach about social justice issues in their own classroom?

Students learned about critical pedagogy in multiple ways, including reading articles, writing reflections, discussing ideas, and applying the readings in classroom activities. I brought up questions to see the progress of students' understandings. I also collected data from: (1) the weekly visual reflection, (2) classroom observations, and (3) interviews.

2. How can pre-service art teachers use art making to develop an identity sensitive to social justice issues?

Because SJE aims to help students learn tools and strategies that will help them become leaders in social change, I focused on art making as means of both learning and action. My curriculum was designed students would learn to share and respect others' opinions and backgrounds through the art making process, since the artwork they produced would be a type of action on personal level and in community level. To examine these assumptions, I collected outcome data on: (1) the artwork, (2) The art making process—group critique, (3) the art making

reflection, (4) the artwork statement. These different forms of data gave me multiple dimensions of information that resulted in better insights about this art activity in this social setting (Creswell, 2014). Through the art making, the visual data became the medium I used to develop pre-service teachers' identity and understanding, so it was the outcome that most reflected what values students learned. The observations, reflections, and the interviews were direct and indirect ways of clarifying students' thoughts about their learning and art making experiences. My observations yielded information about the general atmosphere, and the reflections and interviews allowed me to explore students' opinions about their experiences of these lessons. I engaged in the content analysis of visual and written data using thematic coding while I focusing on the changes that occurred in the students' identities and perspectives as they progressed.

Visual data. The visual data in the study included the students' productions of their weekly visual reflections and their final art project. Because I used artwork as an educational method, students learned how to use art as an instrument through practical experiences. The artwork was a medium for constructing new understandings about themselves and their society through the art process. Therefore, I used Gillian Rose's (2007) interpretation of visual materials. She asserted in her book that visuals have unique influences on our interpretations of the world. Visual interpretations are never simple, but provide a complex view of our social realities at the point in time and space when they are constructed. I applied Rose's (2007) interpretation guide first to the group critique in order to explore and analyze students' work through the group critique discussions, when students interpreted their symbols and ideas. Finally, I analyzed the students' work at a deeper level, through compositional interpretation and semiotics.

Rose (2007) provided different approaches to analyzing visuals, specifically paintings and images. I chose two of her approaches that seemed relevant to my research. The first is

compositional interpretation, a way to develop a good eye through which to look carefully at content, and the second is semiology, an approach that looks at the meanings of images. According to Rose (2007), both of these analytic approaches can provide comprehensive criteria for a critical visual methodology. The visual analytic procedures I followed in my research, then, began with compositional interpretation, since this approach describes the image and focuses on the appearance of the artwork.

In the group critique, with the students I employed the first step in compositional interpretation; we looked at content, color (hue, saturation, value), spatial organization, light, and expressive content. This approach was an initial step that represented an effective way of seeing and analyzing the details of the artwork. Again, in the group critique, students were asked to explain their choices of object positions and colors. Their clarifications helped me to have accurate answers from which to work. As Rose (2007) noted, the analysis of an image's appearance is important preparation for a deeper analysis.

I also used semiology with students to analyze the meaning of the visual materials (Rose, 2007). Semiology was a lens through which to look carefully at the image and trace its relationship to its broader context, as well as a useful form of critique and interpretation since it relies on a culture's symbols and signs. Each culture has its own compositional modalities and signs that are culturally encoded, so after identifying all the compositional details, I related students' artwork to their backgrounds in an attempt to show how the artworks contained meaning related to their cultures. The group critique played a big role in understanding these relationships, since students were asked in the critique to explain the meaning of the symbols or forms in their artworks and how they were related to their personal/cultural backgrounds.

Analyzing the students' contributions within the group critiques helped me to detect and break down the visual work to smaller units called signs. Rose (2007) called the sign "a unit of meaning" (p. 79) and the basic element of human language, such as occurs in a poem, a painting, or a conversation. According to linguistic researchers a sign has two parts: the signified and the signifier. Ferdinand de Saussure was a 19th century linguist whose ideas lead to the significant developments in semiology and linguistic studies (de Saussure, 2011). The signified is an object or concept; the signifier is an image or a sound that symbolizes the signified (Rose, 2007, p. 79). Signs have different ways and modes of conveying meaning and they may be represented as icons, symbols, or indexes. As an artist I have experience in understanding the complexity of signs and the different ways one can read them and I know that signs need to be understood in connection with other signs in a visual work. The artwork analysis starts from a part, and then connects with other parts, ending with a whole meaning. To explore the whole meaning of a visual work, then, one must relate to it within a wider system of ideologies. Sometimes one must even return to signs to explore the encoded meanings of longstanding mythologies and ideologies. Identifying the connections between signs and the students' backgrounds was one important way to make bigger connections to meaning, as each culture has its own signs and social modalities.

Rose (2007) provided comprehensive analytical tools to understand the structure of visual material and how it can convey meaning. With the assist of these tools beside the group critiques helped me to understand its complex relationship to the wider meaning of artists' world. I provided the interpretation of my analysis of each student's artwork and related this interpretation to students' own words from their group critiques and reflections.

Written data. The second part of my data analysis concerned the interviews and observations. Both of these sets of data were transcribed and prepared as written data in my computer (Creswell, 2014). Coding the raw data was the second step in preparing and analyzing the data. In this part of the data analysis I also explored how the pre-service teachers' art making experiences impacted their understandings of democracy. The research questions were my guide during this coding process.

I prepared my observations of the three lessons for analysis. Immediately after conducting the first lesson, I wrote an analytic reflection that represented an early stage of analysis (Saldana, 2016). These analytic memos helped me to make connections and raise questions, and led to emergent patterns or categories in the early stages of the study. Thus, the qualitative research methods I used enabled me to analyze my first impressions as soon as observations were made (Creswell, 2014). Writing memos helps researchers tap into a deeper level of meaning and organize themes that may be relevant in the final stages of analysis. At the early stage of analysis, I also began the first and second cycles of deeper systematic analysis by following Saldana's (2016) procedures for data analysis and coding processes. The first cycle included a holistic coding approach and values coding approach, while the second cycle included pattern coding, and focused coding.

First cycle. In the first cycle I labeled symbolic codes and created data chunks (the symbolic codes were descriptive and inferential). I used a holistic approach by reading through all the data in order to gain insights about how to arrange the general ideas (Creswell, 2014). This preparatory stage helped me reflect on the general data in order to grasp the overall meaning (Saldana, 2016). The holistic approach is a macro-level kind of coding that aims to reveal some

of the basic themes of the data as a whole. I began to code large units, a process that set up the categorizing processes in the next step.

I used values coding as the second approach in the first cycle of data analysis (Saldana, 2016). The values approach to coding aligned with my research questions and was useful for exploring the extent to which students altered their worldviews about social justice as a result of the curriculum I implemented. The values approach traces students' values as manifested in their actions, conversations, and attitudes, and then categorizes them in themes. I was interested in exploring the extent to which students' values and beliefs may have changed or progressed through the discussion and art making processes. The coding method focused on capturing three types of codes that reflected students' values, attitudes, and beliefs (Saldana, 2016). A value (code V:) was one's standards or judgments about what is important to oneself or one's life. An attitude (code A:) was a way of feeling or thinking about self, someone, or something that is reflected through behavior. A belief (code B:) was a perception about life that included values and attitudes, as well as what is learned from life experiences such as ethics, opinions, prejudices, and personal knowledge. The three codes affected each other in complex ways and were reflected in the data capturing students' actions, feelings, and thoughts (Saldana, 2016).

Values codes are not easy to differentiate, but they were important for me because I wanted to explore the students' perspectives and how they might change. I paid attention to key words that help to distinguish values, such as "I like," "It's important that," or "I need" (Saldana, 2016) as well as obvious phrases like "I feel," "I think," and "I want." In the interviews I used direct questions to gain even clearer answers, such as, "What is most important to you?" "What do you believe about…?" and "How will you act if…?" In this way, I gradually evolved into more detailed coding that I analyzed line by line. I labeled each type of value with its first letter

to differentiate it. Finally, I categorized the coded data according to their collective meaning, keeping in mind that the three codes were interconnected in one system (Saldana, 2016).

Second cycle. The second cycle was a more advanced stage of organizing and analysis, also following Saldana's (2016) procedures. I began with pattern coding, grouping the summarized segments from the first cycle. The pattern coding stage aims to organize the segments into smaller categories of themes, such as pulling together segments within bigger meaningful groups. The next steps focused coding, were procedures I used to compress the data by pulling groups under main themes. Through focused coding I dragged meaningful groups under themes or concepts based on similarity; I coded the major themes based on my lessons topics and structure as well as emerging themes.

Validity

Qualitative research differs from quantitative in that the latter is supported by numerical measures to give it scientific credibility. Qualitative research instead captures meaning, and this meaning is experienced through the senses rather than captured as numbers, which cannot be felt (Barone & Eisner, 2012). I agree with the contention of Barone and Eisner that research focused on meaning has more power to explain phenomena than studies that reduce phenomena to simple numbers.

In the case of this study, numerical judgments were not effective in establishing reliability because the data was collected in a school environment where the behavior and attitudes of the subjects involved complicated social interactions (Barone & Eisner, 2012). My qualitative data analysis was supported by triangulating data from a variety of sources in order to establish internal validity (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Further, the data on which I depended,

including interviews, observation, and participants' self- reflections, was drawn directly from the participants. In addition, asking the participants about their opinions and perspectives made it possible for me to obtain direct and clear answers to my questions. Thus, my interpretations of participants' perspectives were verified through the analysis of data from the class discussions, interviews, and reflections and confirmed and expanded through detailed observations, videotaping, and the artwork products. The validity and coherence of the data was established by the extent to which each source confirmed the other. I coded my interpretations and arranged them into themes to make the raw data clear and easy to read, and I elaborated on the coding strategies so that my findings could be tracked and examined (Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

In addition, the validity of the results was strengthened by the students' art making, which played a central role in my lessons and was a central focus of my research and findings. This art making supported my analysis and gave it more creditability because the artwork and the curriculum were logically connected and mutually shaped (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). In fact, the artwork will affirm the findings of the study, whether they are positive or negative. Because the relationship between the artwork and the research is consistent, coherent, and uniform throughout the study.

I asked the pre-service teachers who participated to examine and check the interpretations, analyses, and conclusions I came to in order to ensure the reliability of the results (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). This examination also helped them to gain further benefits from their participation as it gave them a deeper understanding of the study goals and final analysis. Conducting this sort of "member check" helps to verify the accuracy of qualitative research findings and enhance their credibility.

Establishing external validity was important for my research because one purpose of the

study was to generalize the findings to other settings (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). Given that the research was conducted in a certain classroom under particular conditions and with a small number of participants, I was able to provide detailed descriptions of the procedures that facilitated the transformation of the material for practitioners interested in curriculum development. Because my study was designed for a qualitative setting, replication is not appropriate for statistical research purposes.

Limitations and Delimitations

The purpose of this study was to examine and explore art making as an educational tool for active engagement in social justice issues. Students were involved in critical thinking activities that explored how art education could be a vehicle for increasing students' awareness of social justice issues and thinking more reflectively. Students actively analyzed and critiqued visual culture—both media and contemporary art—and engaged in social action through art making at the classroom level and at the community level by participating in public exhibitions of their artworks. My dissertation, then, was restricted to examining how teachers can utilize art education to increase students' capacities for exploring social justice issues and participating in social reform. However, one limitation of this study was the short period of implementation, as I only had the chance to teach three sessions. This short period was not long enough to see or examine students' actions in the community or in a larger context.

The lessons I implemented in this dissertation integrate democracy and social action by emphasizing reflection and action through art making. Democratic principles such as those employed in this curriculum diversity, social class, and gender equity are useful for addressing local issues and cultivating communication and acceptance between students inside the classroom. The topics that arose in the classroom touched on very sensitive issues of social class,

religion, gender, and politics. One limitation to the study is that some students may not have been comfortable sharing personal experiences in discussions, reflections, or artwork, or they may not have wished to exhibit their personal opinions through their artwork. For this reason, I made the assignments more open and clearly stated that participants could choose to discuss personal issues or discuss generally their dreams for better society, depending on their preference. In this way I hoped to minimize students' discomfort around facets of assignments that would otherwise be uncomfortable or too personal. Another limitation of the study, as I mentioned above, is that its generalizability is restricted to a qualitative research methodology.

The benefit to participants was the potential for them to raise their awareness about identity and social realities through art by decoding everyday life visuals, media, and products. The participants engaged in art making activities as a way of learning and shaping new understandings about themselves and their communities. Students had the opportunity to express their interests, opinions, and backgrounds and gain ideas that may one day be useful in their own future classrooms. Participation in this alternative mode of learning may help students see art as a way of emphasizing self-governance, developing a responsible viewpoint, and developing the self as an active societal change agent.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

In this chapter I describe the analysis of data derived from the curriculum I developed and conducted with pre-service art teachers. The overarching goal of the study was to contribute to the development of the art education field, particularly in regard to a limitation found in most art education textbooks, that is, a one-dimensional mainstream Western perspective on art education. Acuff (2013) has called upon art education scholars to recognize this gap and include minority perspectives in art education curriculum, and this study represents an effort to do so by creating students-centered curriculum. I designed curriculum strategy focus on emphasizing students' perspectives, including their unique voices and backgrounds, and give them a safe space in which to share their opinions and relate their experiences with the social justice topic being addressed. In addition, a group critique offered an opportunity for students to explore their art making process with their peers and discover more about self and others. Finally, as a practitioner researcher I analyzed the curriculum structure and student interactions within this structure. This chapter, then, contains my analysis of data derived from observations, discussions, visual journals, assignments, art works, writings, and interviews.

In analyzing the data, I used values coding to explore how students' worldviews about social justice evolved over the class sessions (Saldana, 2016), as evidenced by changes in their values, beliefs and attitudes. Under each of the social justice topics or "big ideas," Social Justice Theories, Gender Equity, and Diversity, I pulled meaningful data into groups based on similarity and searched for emergent themes. As a result, I identified three main themes: how theoretical learning interacted with students' lives, how visuals worked as an educational tool, and how art making functioned as an investigatory process (see Figure 3). A key strategy within my

curriculum design was the use of group critiques, and as a result I identified two other themes pertinent to curriculum development: art as medium for acceptance and understanding the process (see Figure 4). Tow sub-themes emerged from the first theme: the role of a safe environment, and art as a tool of exploration. This chapter is organized according to the weekly topic, that is, Social Justice Theories, Gender Equity, and Diversity, under which I subsequently discuss the themes that emerged from my analysis.

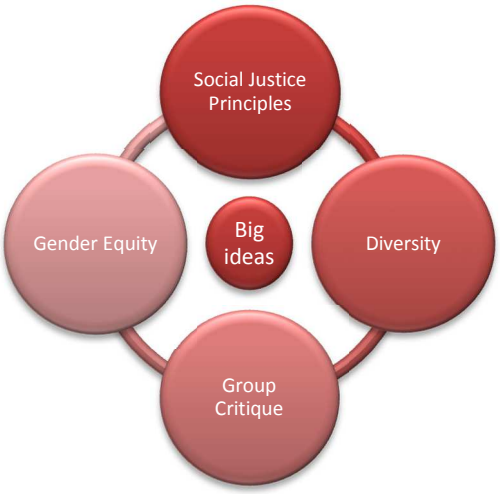

Figure 3. Big ideas.

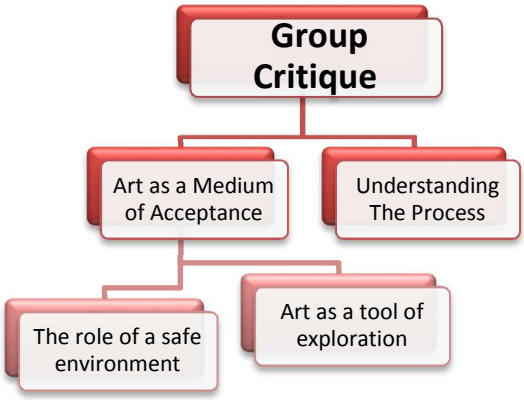

Figure 4. Group critique themes and sub-themes.

I began to conduct the lessons I designed for this study during the third class session of the Spring 2017 semester of an art education course called *Contemporary and Historical Issues in Art Education.* The class contained eleven females and one male. Most were pre-service art teachers from a Master degree in Art Education program and two were doctoral students, Teresa and Julia, each with over 15 years of teaching experience.

In each lesson, I provided a video or an activity that would meaningfully relate to the readings such as references from popular culture or news. I facilitated the discussions by engaging students through questions designed to stimulate their thinking and open up a

controversial topic. I sought to help the students see the controversial issue in a multi-dimensional way. In this way, the students were able to recognize that there was *no one right answer* but many contradicting viewpoints. This notion of no one correct point of view was the theme for the three lessons, all of which mostly involved student-guided discussion. I saw my role as mainly directing the conversations through open-ended questions.

Big Idea: Social Justice Theories

In the first session my goal was to introduce social justice theories in art education to increase students' awareness of the problem of underserved student populations. In this first week students were required to prepare readings and reflect visually on the readings in their weekly visual reflections. I also provided activities such as videos and drawing to relate the theoretical learning to the students' lives. Therefore, I organized the data from this first class session under two themes: visuals as an educational tool and theoretical learning in relationship to students' lives.

Students prepared for the class by reading two articles (Giroux, 2010; Kraehe & Acuff, 2013) that articulated ideas concerning intersectionality, critical race theory, critical multiculturalism, critical pedagogy, and social justice education (SJE). These articles also discussed the importance of such frameworks in art education contexts. After the video and prior to the discussion, I provided a butterfly drawing activity prior to the discussion in order to make the concepts more concrete and applicable to real-life contexts. I distributed a butterfly drawing (see Figure 5) and divided the class into two groups. I gave one group one colored pencil and the other group three to four colored pencils and asked the students to color the butterfly. I gave them five minutes to finish the drawing, these drawings will be discussed later in the chapter.

Following this initial butterfly activity, I began with a discussion of the readings and the students' perspectives about the social justice theories described in the readings. The students shared a variety of views and connected the ideas in the readings to their experiences of social justice in our department and other classes covering critical multicultural studies by noting how the theories overlapped.

Figure 5. Butterfly activity.

Julia, a doctoral student, recognized two important elements in social justice teaching, diversity, and the rejection of centralized knowledge. In her future teaching, she aimed to consider students' backgrounds and explore different ways of knowing that have been ignored. Julia believed strongly that diverse perspectives are important for students' intellectual development. Ann and Wendy favored SJE because they had experienced it in in their master's program in the department. Wendy was excited about learning how to apply SJE in her classroom; she believed that one of the main functions of the four theories "intersectionality, race theory, critical multicultural education, and social justice education" (Kraehe & Acuff, 2013) is art education development, and that categorizing theories for certain aims makes it easier for teachers to apply them in the classroom. Rose indicated that SJE made learning meaningful and

exciting, though she acknowledged that she did not fully understand SJE theory and that she was excited to learn about its application.

Linda favored multicultural education and engaged deeply with the critical component of this theory. She indicated that all social justice theories valued social equity but each arose from different contexts. Mary's focus was on race; she thought it was important to understand and be aware of the role race plays in the classroom in order to provide a better educational environment. Mary saw critical race theory as a focused lens and SJE as a more general educational lens. Gray highlighted the importance of the teaching framework as a lens that teachers may use to raise their awareness about diversity and better understand differences for an improved educational environment. Teresa added that the choice of a teaching framework may be based on both the teacher's perspective and classroom conditions. In regard to different theoretical orientations, Rose noted that a focus on theories such as critical race and intersectionality helped students enhance their understandings of general theories like SJE and multicultural education.

When I asked the students about why a teacher might want to frame his or her instruction around social justice theories, Ann noted that sometimes we have unconscious racism, such as dealing differently with gender or race, this is something important to consider. Gray believed that the theory of intersectionality could provide a better understanding of how different people perceived the world from gender lens in particular. Ann was motivated by the passion in the reading by Freire and reflected visually on some quotes she liked. She felt that individuals, and teachers especially, must engage in questioning and rethinking as a continuous process by which to renew and liberate themselves. Inspired by critical pedagogy, Linda emphasized that it is the responsibility of the teacher to provide students with critical tools that will help them make their

own choices. Rose also rejected passive education and highlighted the importance of encouraging students to be active and critical thinkers. Mary also recognized that similar to SJE, critical pedagogy encourages students to express their own ideas. In addition, she highlighted the importance of a student-centered curriculum and active students.

In their discussion of the primary goals and various orientations of the different theories, students added their perspectives and understandings of the readings, relating them to their previous experiences. The different perspectives of the students built a richer discussion that benefited everyone, though one that largely centered on abstract thoughts. The students were excited about putting these theories to practice, so after the discussion of the readings, we moved on to a discussion of the visual reflections the students had been assigned to complete in conjunction with the readings. The visual reflection was an activity/method originated by Dr. Sara Shields for this course; it represents a reflection in visual form that enhances deeper exploration and emphasizes identity (Shields, 2014).

Theme One: Visuals as an Educational Tool

When we began to discuss the visual journals, the students shared their creative ideas and discussed important issues related to the readings. In their comments they emphasized critical thinking, student backgrounds, intersectionality, and diversity. The visual journals showed more clearly the ideas about social justice held by the students, who pushed their thinking to translate their ideas in visual form. Clara talked about the meaning of citizenship and how we could explore it in a more practical and concrete way with students (see Figure 7). She also was concerned about the problem of equity in the distribution of job forces—employment, where elite groups have better jobs than others. Linda argued that diversity should not be considered an add-in but should be an integral part of an art education curriculum because it can add multiple

layers of perspective that make teaching even more fruitful. She depicted her thoughts by drawing a rainbow of colors symbolizing different perspectives, noting that a variety of colors is more beautiful than a single color and that all are equal (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Linda visual journal.

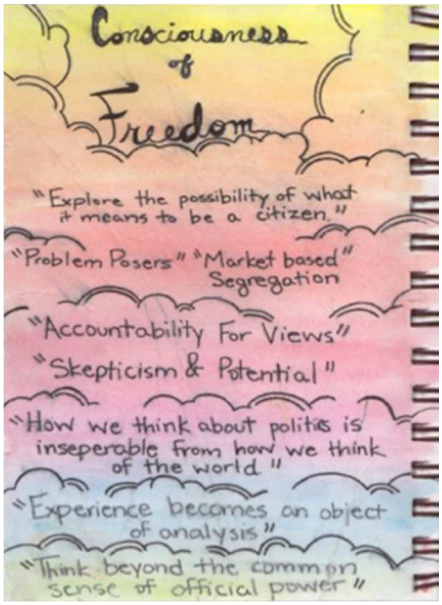

Figure 7. Clara visual journal.

Lori (see Figure 8) connected critical pedagogy with the Women's March that followed the inauguration of Donald Trump as U.S. president. She suggested flipping the negative situation and making it a positive by rejecting assumptions and labels and showing who we are as women—and not what others (authorities or policy makers) might think we are or should be,

and by "others" she meant authorities or politics makers. She emphasized that this kind of discussion is something we must engage in with our students. I asked Lori if she thought the Women's March was effective and she answered that social engagement is effective. The Women's March was an opportunity to revive forgotten organizations as well an opportunity for different organizations to interact and even join with each other to achieve the same purpose.

Figure 8. Lori visual journal.

Julia elaborated most of the goals of SJE in her visual journal. She emphasized diversity, the rejection of universalized knowledge, and understanding intersectionality, particularly for the same race or gender (see Figure 9). Julia rejected a one-dimensional curriculum designed exclusively by and for men and encouraged active learning by giving students space to express themselves. She conveyed a belief that the art classroom is the place where students can engage—through their art—with their society and their lives. Commenting on a box she drew in her journal she wrote:

> The first page of my journal reflects the dominant culture's historical control over what is taught and what is considered viable/valuable. The squares represent how people have been put into a box/categorized/marginalized by race/color of skin, but this no longer represents or works for our world. The next page is meant to show the breaking away

from these simplistic categories that negate the individual and moving toward a world and way of learning that relies on unique individual perspectives, experiences, ways of being, and contributions. It is meant to represent how vibrant and creative art education can be when the uniqueness of our students is considered and brought to the forefront and celebrated.

Figure 9. Julia visual journal.

Amy (see Figure 10), though also interested in Freire's pedagogy, had her own ideas and goals for her future teaching revolving around resistance, rejecting normalization, and raising awareness. Amy's idea was to incorporate students' different backgrounds in the classroom by providing opportunities for them to share and experience diverse perspectives. Teresa (see Figure 11) depicted the political and social order using visual symbols. She depicted elite groups as glittery butterflies with better access to better things and marginalized individuals as butterflies trapped in a net. Mary (see Figure 12) created a transparency revealing multiple layers; it was meant to signify the importance of not ignoring history, as it can inform our understandings about the disparities of today.

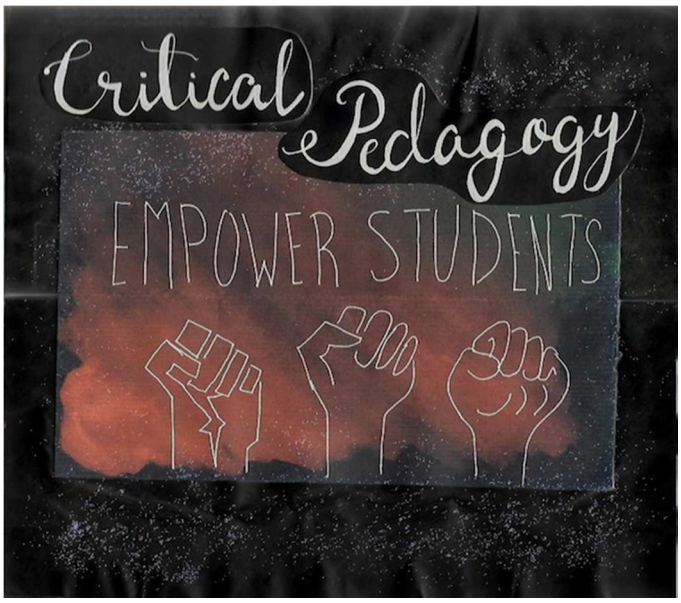

Figure 10. Amy visual journal.

Figure 11. Teresa visual journal.

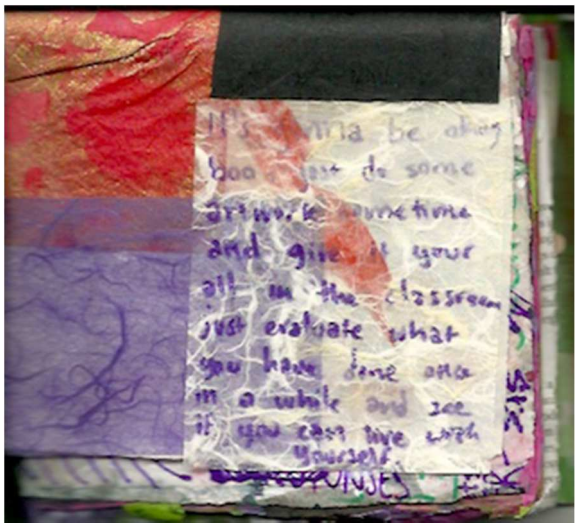

Figure 12. Mary journal.

The students' visual reflections provided a more detailed look into how they understood the readings. Students discussed many of the goals of social justice theories, such as rejecting universalized knowledge and rejecting passive traditional education, and related their experiences to recent social issues. I found the journaling method consistent with my goals for my curriculum, and it was useful in preparing students for their final art project. Amy indicated that the journaling motivated her critical thinking because it forced students to translate their ideas visually, this makes it easier for others to understand. Amy stated in the interview "I definitely want to use journals in my teaching, and have it as a way for students to express themselves and help them kind of make their ideas more concrete." Shelly also liked the journaling strategy, and said she will apply it in her teaching and in her personal life. She made the point that the visual journal would allow students to open up to different perspectives by learning how others approached the same issues, an experience that motivates critical thinking. Ann noted that a visual journal is a space where students can release their feelings and opinions, pushing their thinking and artistic skills:

I think that's a great way to get students to react. It is an easy way to challenge students in art making. And also, if you give them a topic to journal about, then they're going to have to think about that topic and kind of push their artistic skills and their thinking skills.

After introducing the social justice theories in the first half of the session and encouraging students to discuss the readings and visual reflections. In the second half of the class session, I attempted to guide students to relate more deeply and meaningfully with the theoretical readings. My goal was to help the students gain an even better understanding of the purpose of the theories and how to apply it their classroom.

Theme Two: Theoretical Learning in Relationship to Students' Lives

During the first class students watched a video that presented social class disparities. The video, a CNN documentary segment called *Income Inequality in America: Across Lake Providence* (2013), introduced social class disparities through a real-life situation in U.S. society. Most of the students were saddened after viewing the video. They knew that such disparities existed but were moved by seeing a real situation. I asked the students about their perceptions of the problems presented in the video. Lori argued that the American dream of "working hard" failed before the harsh reality of an entire system that worked against citizens without similar opportunities. Clara argued that solving social class injustices is a government responsibility, as the government needs to ensure income equality and equal education. Linda added that the government fails to remedy the problem of unequal access, that is, some elites simply have better opportunities based on their privileged position in society. Teresa agreed with Linda and provided an example relating with the video we watched:

> He started from a position of privilege as a white male. When he went into the bank to ask for a loan he was viewed in maybe a more favorable light than this lady that comes in without a high school diploma and has six children.

Clara also emphasized that unequal opportunities result from unequal knowledge, showing an awareness that knowledge provides access. To support this statement, she emphasized the relationship between social location and access to resources. Teresa questioned Freire's idea about school as a starting point, suggesting schools cannot become starting points if they do not have adequate resources. Because her view was informed by more than 15 years of experience as an art teacher, it added reality to the discussion. Julia added another important point concerning the historical roots of poverty or privilege, that is, that either condition is part of a kind of persistent chain that is inherited over generations and from which it is difficult to break away. Amy added that those who do break the chain often do not fit in their culture anymore and are seen as outsiders. Therefore, who breaks from the chain will not provide help, but will go to a new culture that is suitable for them. Shelly proposed a reason for this continuous chain reaction; unaware parents who cannot provide resources and knowledge for their kids. Teresa added that the expectations of parents and teachers play a powerful role in determining a student's abilities.

Clara argued that students should learn practical knowledge like financial literacy and democratic participation in order to demand their rights. Because many lower-class individuals do not know about the variety of resources that are available for citizens to gain such knowledge, teachers need to educate their students about them. Gray pointed to these and other big gaps that result in a distance between social classes. Clara summarized the general sentiment of the students that these gaps are why teachers must accept the responsibility to educate students from different perspectives, thereby allowing them to understand others.

As the discussion ensued, the students continued to offer multiple productive suggestions for practically addressing a variety of classroom situations. Linda hit on an important point in Freire's pedagogy, that the educators' mission is to raise students' awareness of their abilities and motivate students to act for change. She stated, "Freire is saying that his pedagogy is helping people be aware of the forces that are creating their education forces, that are ruling their lives or trying to rule their lives and that it's not determined." Lori also discussed the responsibility that comes with privilege, highlighting another element of SJE, the contention that transformation is not only the mission of the underprivileged but the privileged as well. Lori noted that teachers are privileged because they have the knowledge and know the system. She argued that as teachers they should also like using our privilege to play the system on behalf of the students, "I know how the system works and I'm going to use the resources to get students to where they want to be." Teresa supported Lori's point by sharing an example that happened at her school and explaining how she provided help for students whose parents were not familiar with the system. At the end of the lesson, we discussed the value of the video as educational material. Lori recognized that the video was made to expose social disparities and educate people who deny such problems exist.

After the class break, we engaged in the butterfly drawing activity I introduced earlier in the chapter. With this activity I aimed to bring about a more concrete and experiential understanding of the meaning of unequal resource distribution and shed light on the fundamental structure of political and economic problems that were presented in the video. When I gave students the butterfly activity, they soon figured out that I was aiming to discuss privilege and disadvantage because one group received more colors than the others. I explained, however, that the exercise went deeper than this dichotomy and went on to describe the differences between

liberal theory and SJE. While liberal theory focuses only on tolerance for differences, SJE focuses on the structural nature of social and economic inequities. Thus, in this butterfly activity, liberal theory represented in the *same assignment* I gave the students—by treating students equally with tolerance, but SJE is the *discussion* of why students still not have equal resources. The students' understandings seemed to be enhanced by the butterfly activity. Ann said, "The butterfly activity was just a simple lesson that showed kind of obviously the ones with three colors are going to have better looking butterflies." Mary found the butterfly activity to be effective: "I really enjoyed the butterfly activity. I think it was simple, but it had an impact at the end…the impact when you didn't have a lot of colors. It kind of makes you go into a different situation."

The video we watched juxtaposed the lived experience of low-income families with the lives of high-income society located on the other side of town. The students discussed the structural reasons for this disparity in terms of the roles of government, education, the economic system and source distribution. In addition, they drew connections between the problems presented in the video and ideas in the readings, including Freire's pedagogy of hope, resistance, and transformation. They went on to highlight other issues as well, such as parent and teacher expectations, the historical roots of social inequality, the responsibility associated with privilege, and the privileged position of teachers. Students then offered suggestions about how to use their role as teachers to solve the problem of inequity. Throughout the discussions, students shared different perspectives and insights, in this way building up their knowledge and understanding of each other. Some students clarified points that were unclear to others, while some inspired others who felt powerless and showed them how to take action. The classroom became a small intimate

community of equals who supported and encouraged and learned from each other. My role was to facilitate the discussions, highlight the important ideas, and clarify the missing points.

I saw that the students became emotional when they saw the video. I worried that they might be depressed by a discussion about injustice and social disparities, or feel powerless when thinking about how to influence big systems such as the economy and politics. For these reasons, I tried to direct the conversation in such a way as to use the video as a motivating tool rather than a depressing commentary. As a result, many students engaged positively with the information in the video and began to dig down to find solutions. Ann stated, "The videos really were very intense for me. I'm very easily moved by videos for some reason. They make me cry sometimes." She additionally proposed that the videos were very effective because they displayed realities in way that allowed the viewers to live the experience. Amy realized, after watching the video, the extent of the problem. She stated, "it brings it into reality to see that this is actually happening." Also, Shelly stated, "the videos we watched were really interesting and eye-opening, and I would want to incorporate something like that into my teaching." Arguing that the teacher should understand what is important for the students and consider their perspectives, Shelly suggested that media must be chosen for students with consideration of their age and interests, such as popular music, in order to help them think critically about the messages. Mary shared that the video and discussion sparked her desire to find a solution:

> It kind of makes you critically think about how can we make this better, how can we fulfill this gap, how can we show people who are struggling and need help and deserve it, instead of the people who are often portrayed as, like, not deserving, and just lazy, but it's not the case.

Overall, though some activities seemed to be intense for the students they interacted positively with them. In particular, the butterfly drawing and the video added a concrete learning experience that inspired them to connect the reading with their social community. They realized how these activities could prompt their own students' meaningful thinking. In this first session, I introduced the first big idea—social justice theories-to enhance the students' understanding of the importance of such frameworks in their future teaching. In the next two sessions I narrowed my focus to the big ideas of gender equity and diversity.

Big Idea: Gender Equity

I introduced gender equity when discussing intersectionality as part of the instruction on social justice theories in the first session, and then later, in the third session with its primary focus on gender equity. Students prepared the readings and were required to post their assignments on a shared online PowerPoint (see the link) https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1eaK6sEpUZUmicO1NsEhxBJqe7Eicwa4d59YyxowmChw/edit?usp=sharing. For the gender session, students were assigned to add a post concerning visual culture's influence on gender and a brief discussion about a female artwork. These posts, along with the students' discussions, assignments, and visuals journals, were among the data I collected. In addition, I presented the final artwork on gender equity that students created. Under the gender equity topic three themes emerged: relating theoretical learning to students' lives, visuals as an educational tool, and art making as an investigatory process

Theme One: Relating Theoretical Learning to Students' Lives

As I mentioned previously, I sought to relate the theoretical readings to students' lives in a meaningful way by sharing examples from their society. I also aimed for students to discuss

how the issues raised in the readings could influence their identities. We began the gender equity session by discussing the reading *Why Women Are Poor at Science* (Goldenberg, 2005). Harvard President Lawrence Summers claimed that men are superior to women in science and math because of biological differences. Summers' declaration was the springboard for a discussion on gender in which students interrogated the reasons for gender-related social expectations.

As the students began to express their views towards this issue I focused on biological differences by posing a question about whether biology created unequal differences between men and women. Lori responded "There are biological differences but not in the intellectual level." I continued, "What about the statistical proof that Summers uses to support his claims?" Clara commented that some psychological studies proved social expectations could affect girls' and boys' abilities. Clara indicated that females have lower expectations for themselves that are mostly created by society. Lori added that societal expectations have a role in shaping gender identities and abilities and that for this reason teachers need to be careful in their expectations toward students. Clara also discussed how other studies supported the influence of society on gender. She mentioned the influence of the "hidden curriculum" the informal learning that occurs as a result of the way teachers deal with students (Giroux, 1983), and how it can suppress females from a very young age. Lori and Shelly discussed the media's hidden influence on people. Lori noted, "Women are seen emotional versus logical to men." Shelly observed that we deal with kids differently based on their gender. Clara shared a personal experience that affected her: a family doctor tried to convince her that women are emotional and cannot pursue certain medical jobs. Overall, the students felt that the effects of social expectations pointed girls and boys in different directions.

In the discussion of the influence of society on gender, Rose made some meaningful points by comparing her natural environment at home with college. At home, she competed with her brother in school exams and never felt they had different abilities. She stated, “I never realized that women were discriminated against until I got to college, because I always felt like I was fully as capable as my brother.” In reflecting on this discrimination she he asked, “Why can't I do this because I'm a woman?" At the same time, Rose indicated how social expectations can limit one's abilities, such as the idea that women are detail-oriented and men are not. She contended that gender becomes deeply rooted in identity when we limit specific features to one gender that it makes us afraid to cross our gender’s line.

The students built their conversation on each other’s views; they highlighted social influences and other important elements shaping gender identity. They also emphasized the role of educators and the hidden curriculum on the development of gender identity. As students concluded that cultural and social expectations affected gender identity I introduced my plan to discuss the media and question how visuals play a role and impose certain gender stereotypes.

Theme Two: Visuals as an Educational Tool

Students were assigned to post about visual culture's depictions of gender using commercials or products. In our discussion of the students’ findings from visual culture, Gray brought up a commercial about a truck (see the PowerPoint hyperlink): “I saw this commercial in a football game about thirty times.” He questioned why beer and truck commercials always play during football and wondered if the advertisers assumed that football games were just for men. Further, in analyzing the commercial he noted that it seemed to be oriented only for men who are tough, smart, and hard working. According to Gray, the commercial basically said, “I know you're dumb and you cheated in the exam but you are a hard worker. So, these smart guys– not

you–but these other smart guys made a good truck for you." The scene came with aggressive rock music to emphasize the idea of male toughness. Lori and Linda commented that this commercial stereotyped both males and females. Linda noted that in school when the boys were emotional, they got called names. Clara added, "Also, girls are expected to be emotional or they will be seen as weird." Gray highlighted several aspects of the commercial that reflected stereotypes about the male gender: aggressive music, all males in the commercial, the commercial's timing during a football game, and the type of product (a truck). The students agreed that these kinds of commercials influenced social expectations about toughness and emotional expression by males. They all seemed to believe that the expectations that girls are emotional and boys are tough and supposed to not cry put boundaries and pressure on both sexes.

Gray was the only male in the classroom. He had 5 years of experience as an art teacher and had chosen this program in order to obtain a traditional master's degree. I wondered how he saw himself in a classroom with 11 females discussing gender, women's rights, and feminism. For this reason, I paid careful attention to ensuring equal space for the views of all genders, and was sensitive to his responses in class discussions. In the interview after the sessions, I had the chance to ask him directly about his perspectives. He stated:

> Being the only male in the classroom gave me a chance to listen to a lot of views and perspectives the students had, and I think that is just as important for social justice artworks to be able to listen, especially when we talk about gender. I have opinions and I have my own beliefs, and it was good to listen about women rights, it was important to sit and listen to form more complete beliefs.

Lori researched pink products and noticed that pink products are priced higher than the same products designed for men, even if the quality is the same (see Figure 13). She mentioned

examples like razors, shampoos, and fancy deodorants. She questioned why this "pink tax" exists, and observed: "Even men's shirts…you can buy a big pack in Walmart that has more material than women's shirts for less money because women were trained that they need specialized products." Lori raised a related point about gendered products: that the media seeks to convince females they need specialized products—which are more expensive than comparable items of the same quality—to make them prettier.

Figure 13. Lori "The Pink Tax."

Ann discussed a commercial with a more positive gender message (see the PowerPoint hyperlink), one in which a little child wore a Spiderman suit. The little Spiderman was jumping around the house performing gymnastics moves and at the end took off the Spiderman head to eat a meal, revealing it was a girl. Ann said Spiderman is typically associated with a male, thus the name Spider*man*. But this commercial broke with this stereotype by showing that a female can be a hero and not just gain value by looking sexy. Shelly also discussed a car commercial in which a girl raced cars and her dad was supportive (see the PowerPoint hyperlink). The father questioned the equality of women and men through a narrative conversation comparing family members, such as who was worth more, the mother or the father, or the grandmother or grandfather. The commercial ended with a phrase saying, "Equal pay for equal work." Shelly

commented that she felt the commercial had a positive impact and emphasized how this visual could have the effect of changing one's expectations about gender.

In the second part of the assignment, students were assigned to share in an online PowerPoint an artwork by a female artist (see the PowerPoint hyperlink). Though we did not have time to discuss the students' choices in the class, I was able to analyze these choices as part of my data. The assignment was designed to counter media expectations about females and emphasize the importance of including the female perspective in an art education curriculum. My general purpose in requiring the students to find gender-related examples from advertising and the art world was to demonstrate the use of visuals as an educational tool.

Julia posted artwork by Jenny Saville, who paints large-size female nudes that challenge the history of idealistic portraits of women by males. Saville wanted to bring attention to these idealistic male expectations about women's appearance in order to question society's generalized understandings about beauty. Teresa posted an artwork called *Seer Bonnets: A Continuing Offense* by Angela Ellsworth (2009-2010), who re-imagined the community of women by installing women's bonnets from the 19th century. The bonnets were adorned with beautiful patterns of pearls on the top, but were filled with sharp metal pins inside. Ellsworth's concept was to shed light on women's oppression in society and control in domestic life. Linda posted artwork by Natalie White, an artist who is known for demanding equal rights. White wanted to bring attention to the many sacrifices women have made for the United States and convey the message that women are the majority and deserve equal rights.

Additionally, the students used their artistic skills to reflect on gender equity through their visual journals. Amy (see Figure 14) depicted conversations about gender that she heard between people around her. She observed, "It brought to my attention to how people still think

that women shouldn't be treated as equals." Shelly's (see Figure 15) work was an effort to show that those who seek to put a greater value on women are not seeking to compete against or threaten the value of men. Similarly, in her journal Linda (see Figure 16) questioned how gendered identities affect us. She indicated that the quote "internalized our absence" stood out to her, as it reflected an acceptance that women are secondary to men. On a black and white collage of feminist artwork, she poured red paint all over to represent a scream. She wrote, "We do not assume equality or authority over men but rather accept that this is our reality."

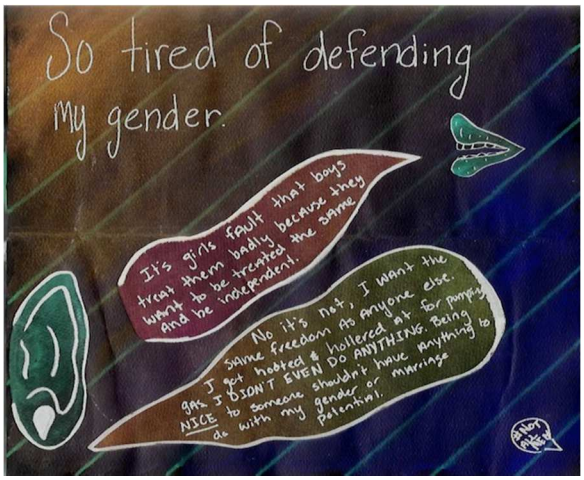

Figure 14. Amy visual journal.

Figure 15. Shelly visual journal.

Figure 16. Linda visual journal.

In summary, in the third session the students challenged Summers' claims about gender and gave rational responses (Goldenberg, 2005). They shared their visuals and explored gender. They brought different perspectives to the assignment as they discussed positive and negative media, visuals, and products. The students analyzed everyday visuals and realized the invisible power of visuals in our lives. Students also recognized the importance of gender equality in the curriculum. Overall, the readings, assignments, and discussions aimed to prepare the students to reflect on and develop their own perspectives through the art making investigations. For my part, I came to see that the majority of the students were highly interested in on the topic of gender equity, both in theory and in their own lives.

Theme Three: Art Making as an Investigatory Process

In the first session, after I initiated a discussion of social justice theories, I assigned the students to prepare sketches of an artwork that related to a personal experience or interest so students would have an opportunity to express their own thoughts or discuss experiences related to their backgrounds. This assignment was intended, to include students in the curriculum as well as use art as an inquiry tool, challenging pre-service teachers to create social justice art. Over the three weeks of class sessions, in three group critiques, we discussed their process of art making: the intention and first sketch, the mid-process, and the outcome. The majority of the

students chose a gender-related topic for their artwork. The four examples in the next section demonstrate the interrogation of a social norm through the discussion of gender roles and the students' reflections on the extent to which we take for granted the norms in our lives.

Rose: The feminism definition struggle. In the first group critique, Rose was nervous about sharing her idea for her artwork because she knew her opinions were different from much of those in the class. She said she battled with the idea of feminism because she believed abortion should not be legal. She felt herself struggling with this aspect of the strong feminist movement in the United States, particularly since it was a featured issue in the January, 2017 Women's March following Donald Trump's inauguration. She noted that she felt like the feminist march became a pro-choice march, and she felt that being pro-choice was advocating against being pro-life. This problematic situation made her struggle and think about her identity.

Dr. Sara Shields, who was present during this discussion, commented to Rose, "There is a whole group of feminists that are following in the tradition of Susan Anthony, who was pro-life and anti-abortion. I think that it might be interesting for you to think what does feminism look like for you?" Dr. Shields tried to clarify that feminism is a big concept that includes many groups with somewhat different viewpoints. She noted that feminism is not rigidly defined but can be seen from different perspectives. Rose agreed but noted that society defines it in a certain way. Clara highlighted an important point, that the media transformed the reality of the Women's March and focused on abortion. Clara stated, "I think it was more the media actually making it all about abortion. Because when I was there, it wasn't about that. It was about coming together as a group of people that want human rights."

Rose was still thinking how to portray her ideas. She did not want to make a condemning artwork, but she wanted to bring attention to this dilemma. She stated, "I'm trying really hard not

to be offensive to anyone with my views." Rose still felt guilty that her values appeared to be against the majority, but her friends supported her. Lori suggested depicting the struggle aspect of it. I shared with Rose my sense that her topic would motivate the audience to question their definition of feminism, while at the same time, her art making would be a process of inquiry for her.

In the second group critique, Rose indicated that she wanted to do a black and white cyclical film representing a cycle with no end. The scene would be in a forest to represent nature, where a naked woman would put on multiple layers of fabrics and then struggle to take them off again. Embedded in Rose's project would be an inquiry about what defines a woman. Through a process of unraveling and unmasking, and then adding on and taking away, the artwork would represent society's pressure on women about what they should be and what they should not be.

Figure 17. Rose: The feminism definition struggle.

Rose's ideas motivated the class to think about her struggle, and resulted in her peers giving her some suggestions. The group critique did not only help Rose and other students to develop their ideas, then, but it empowered and supported them in raising their voices as artists.

In the last group critique, Rose presented her final artwork (see figure 17): a video collaboration with Linda playing the gendered role of the woman. In the first scene a woman sleeps on a small rug in a nature setting. The camera is close up and shows only the upper back of the naked body. The woman stands up and walks around, crossing a stream with rocks, and then coming back to the rug. She covers herself with a layer of fabric and continues to add more and more layers until the character is overwhelmed and struggles to take them off one by one. After the layers are removed, she goes back to her rug again.

Rose indicated that the rug was a symbol of society and the fabrics were society's demands on females. She wrote in her statements:

> In my artwork I chose to concentrate on the fabrication of feminism. At its core, feminism is equal rights for men and women. However, society has complicated this definition through stereotypes and politics. I was inspired by recent events in politics, that have defined what a feminist should be, to create a piece that strips away these definitions and reverts back to the bare essence of feminism. I intended this piece of art to embolden contemplation and inquiry. My intention was to engross the viewer in the film in order to inspire reflection. The viewer should reflect on what fabrics of society they are using to hide or add to their identity. The process of the piece began with a threat to my identity. Politics were placing me in a box that I did not fit in. I believed in equal rights for men and women yet I could not support the plethora of criteria that came with this definition. I wanted to go back to the heart of feminism. As I continued in the creative process, I

realized this was not just a problem for feminism. Our society is constantly telling us what and who we should be based on genetics and cultural backgrounds. It entraps us in this exhausting, continuous cycle of taking on and stripping off our identification. It is a fight of who I am and who I am supposed to be.

Amy: Challenging the beauty norm. In the first group critique, Amy expressed her interest in interrogating social norms about gender roles. Amy's idea was to challenge the viewer's expectations about beauty norms, particularly what we see as beautiful. She explained that her artwork would be in journal form. She planned to do relief prints and bind them into a book, and then invite the audience to interact with it. Amy's idea was to bring attention to the normalization of the gender roles that the society creates and that become part of our everyday lives.

In the second critique, Amy still had same idea, but she narrowed the topic focus. She wanted to discuss social norms about gender, and inquire specifically about the social expectations for the female. Amy's interrogation related to her daily life. She stated, "I feel like I have to defend myself as a woman for the choices that I make with my body and with my decisions when other people are trying to make those decisions for me." Amy made two pages of printmaking. Her goal was to do a series of books about gender and question society's norms. Amy's idea in the first book was to discuss the typical lady and what she is supposed to do. She was still experimenting with colors, ideas, and element arrangements. She took feedback from her peers about her work.

In the final group critique, Amy shared her progress (see Figure 18). She had almost finished her journal project and shared several pages of gelli prints she had made about gender norms. Amy's ideas stemmed from her daily conversations, though she was rejecting social

expectations about females. On the first page, she printed unshaved legs and on the bottom wrote, “shave your legs,” and on the next page, she wrote the word “NO” in large capital letters. The following pages were a series of social norms and expectations of the female, each followed by a page that said, “NO.” In the last critique she shared, “It used to be discouraging because it used to make me really upset. But now, it kind of makes me a stronger person, being more confident in myself.” Amy indicated that she hoped that sharing her experiences might bring confidance to others who experienced similar social pressures. Amy got a lot of encouragment and admiration from her peers about her final work.

Figure 18. Amy: Challenging the beauty norm.

Lori: Questioning the norm. With a similar topic as Amy’s artwork, Lori’s project addressed a different perspective on gender norms. While Amy challenged society's gender norms generally and in regard to standards of beauty for women, Lori questioned segregation between genders. In the beginning, Lori had different ideas and did not decide her own interest right away. By the second critique, Lori was more interested in questioning the social obligations for a woman like shaving the hair on her body, an obligation not shared by men. Lori researched history to learn when shaving began in modern society and she found related advertisements from the early 1920s, when women’s fashions were changing. She learned that around that time, women rebelled and began to wear sleeveless tops, and she made sketches of different parts of

the body that have hair. For the final critique, she decided to use watercolor because of the fluidity of watercolors, especially in the Chinese style (see Figure 19). She felt this medium would be suitable for her feminine topic and noted that her art making was not about finding an answer. Instead, she said, her goal was "to produce an opportunity for dialogue about the issues surrounding gender." Lori wrote in her statement:

> *Feminine Landscape* is a series of artwork that explores the abstract definitions of femininity. There seems to be an unspoken code of conduct that women must follow in order to be accepted in society: how to behave, how to speak, and even how to think. These expectations are so ingrained in culture that the majority does not feel the need to question where and why these rules exist. It is only recently that I have become conscious of these separations and decided to dissect and reflect on them through art.

Figure 19. Lori: Questioning the norm.

Julia: Undervalued sex. Julia was a doctoral student with art teaching experience. Julia reflected on her experiences related to her gender role and in general, how much is expected from women. She observed that women are always obligated to do multiple jobs, the most

important of which is raising children. Yet, despite this, women throughout history have been treated as something not necessary. The wallpaper in her painting was designed to signify women: though the wallpaper was beautiful, its function was only to provide a decorative background and only as part of the home. In her work, Julia aimed to pose questions about how that view of women still exists in our era. Julia depicted armless women because of the paradox of societal stereotypes that simultaneously portray women as helpless and incapable on the one hand, and responsible for childrearing, housework, and many other tasks on the other.

Figure 20. Julia: Undervalued sex.

Julia made progress to the painting by the time she brought it in for the second critique. She worked with more details, painting an armless woman merging with the wallpaper and wearing a big skirt looking at water filled with pennies. She shared that she intended to use a whitewash or cover the painting with a layer of wax so the image couldn't be seen clearly. Julia

liked the idea of the whitewash because females are supposed to not talk about important issues and instead stay quiet and nice. She said that the water represents motherhood because motherhood is like a fast-moving stream. The pennies with the head side up—a man's head—signify that women do not take credit for their work. Julia's work (see Figure 20) was a reflection on women's role in society and her personal experiences of caring for her family while simultaneously working for a living outside the home. She argued that though women essentially work two shifts, at home and at work, society still thinks women are not smart enough and pays them less. She shared that during the art making process she recalled many memories of experiences throughout her life. The following is a portion of Julia's statements:

> There is a pervasive unfairness to life that women have to contend with, even if we are unaware of this problem. Women are still blamed and vilified as in the biblical story of Adam and Eve and countless other narratives and myths from history. We are still stuck in the wallpaper, so to speak, treated as we have been for far too long as decoration or adornment in a man's world. We have tried to gain equal rights by performing as men do but this has caused us to have to work harder and longer for less pay and in a way that limits our freedom and choices. Before we can pull ourselves out of this wallpaper we're stuck in, we need to make this quietly pervasive problem more recognized in society.

Even though we are living in modern times, women still don't have equal rights and are treated as the inferior sex just as we have been throughout history. Yet now, instead of more freedoms/rights, women have even more responsibilities that limit their freedoms. Women work in a man's world that doesn't take into account the unique and important roles women fulfill in our society such as childrearing and running the household. Women not only bear the burden of these important unrecognized jobs, we are also expected to work for less money than men (79

cents to the man's dollar in 2016). We have fewer freedoms and are still subjugated due to responsibilities that continue to fall to our sex without question.

Big Idea: Diversity

After focusing on social justice theories, I conducted a lesson focused on diversity. Under the diversity topic three themes emerged: relating theoretical learning to students' lives, visuals as an educational tool, and art making as an investigatory process. In this session, Together, we highlighted the media's influence on people's perspectives about diversity and the educator's role in relation to these issues. Also, I assigned the students post to online PowerPoint about activist art that showed art's influence on social change. See the link: (https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1vOXjHVgnWELn6gMxkQaA5WOzA5KNJ_3WmZijhroN6ak/edit?usp=sharing) Additionally, we also discussed a real example in the media, the readings, and the assignments. More data emerged from the students' discussions, visuals, and reflections; here I will share details of two of the students' artworks about diversity.

Theme One: Relating Theoretical Learning to Students' Lives

The students were required to read two articles discussing the impact of visuals and media (Ballengee-Morris, Daniel, & Stuhr, 2010; Chung, 2013) in addition to a third article discussing social justice art (Dewhurst, 2011). These readings were chosen to highlight the influence of visuals in our era and the need for art teachers to provide students with critical skills to raise their awareness. In the classroom, I attempted to meaningfully connect the readings to students' lives by providing an example of the influence of the media on societies perceptions of diversity. I showed the first part of a YouTube video entitled *Bill Maher, Ben Affleck, Sam Harris Debate Radical Islam* (2014) containing a dialogue about Islamophobia.

After viewing the video, Rose and Clara noted at the beginning of our discussion that the conversation was not fair because it was about a whole group that was not there to defend the claims, that is, there was no one Islamic at that table. Lori thought the dialogue was not reasonable and stated, "Grouping the entire religion based on these extremist philosophies that the idea of Islam itself is wrong." Amy was focused on freedom of speech as a component of democracy, and so believed that no one had the right to silence anyone on the other side. Amy felt that all should have the opportunity to speak and respect other's ideas, and that when people have different ideas, no one has the right to silence anyone with a different perspective. Mary brought up good points from the video debate, commenting that the liberals were not consistent with their principles. She stated, "If he says, like, you have to respect, I have to be consistent in my beliefs, can't he just give that same respect to someone else? Does he have to blame the person for what they believe in?" She also added that it was not acceptable to judge the religion itself, rather one can only judge individual actions. Clara added that it was not acceptable to impose someone's beliefs on other cultures.

After the video discussion, I asked the students how they might relate to the idea of diversity and the freedom of belief in their classrooms. Shelly thought that students come to school already fed with beliefs by their parents and that the teacher's role is to encourage students to understand the others' views. Linda felt that developing a rule of respect in the classroom would lead to respectful opinions, critiques, and lessons even when students disagree. Lori similarly emphasized the role of respect, and the need to make it part of the class rules since doing so makes the classroom a safe environment where students can interact freely. When respect is a class rule, those who break it will take the consequences of breaking the rule.

In Ann's opinion, teachers need to practice listening and giving space for students to have the freedom to speak. Rose discussed the importance of creating a safe environment in the classroom like we did at the beginning of our class, so no one feels offended and all understand it is an academic discussion. Rose also suggested a free zone in the classroom where students can express any opinion and no one will judge them. Rose learned about creating this type of area from experiences in previous classes. Clara suggested that art education is a good place to learn about cultures through art because when students place themselves in others' shoes, this could create empathy toward other cultures and greater understanding of their beliefs. Amy had a different opinion. She indicated that if the teacher only sees the students 30 minutes a day, students cannot successfully develop empathy given what they may be taught at home. Amy suggested that in the worst case she would separate students who cannot get along and emphasize respect in dealing with each other.

Next, I showed a second video entitled, *Reza Aslan Slams Bill Maher for Facile Arguments About Muslim Violence* (2014), in which Reza Aslan replied to Bill Maher's claims about Islam. After watching the video, the students recognized the danger of generalization, that is, of painting a whole group with one stroke. Students discussed the danger of the media's ability to create fear, hate, and generalizations about specific groups. Clara and Ann discussed how the media can create fear and encourage bias toward a large group of people. Clara noted a skeptical journalistic perspective can create skeptical viewers. Lori added that most people take media news as facts because they do not research the topic, and/or do not know where to find trustworthy sources. Clara discussed the problem of communication when people want to win instead of trying to reach mutual ground. She indicated that everybody should benefit because

communication should be mutual. Lori replied saying that to reach mutual ground people need to adjust their opinions and be flexible.

I asked students about how the readings and our discussions might be related to the video. Linda commented that their curriculum should be guided by social goals and values that help students better understand the meanings of empathy, democracy, and social justice. Mary indicated that social justice art shares personal experiences and allows us to experience them deeply through senses. Social justice art can create empathy because it allows us to experience other people's experiences. Lori added that we need to teach students to question everything, not in a negative way, but to make sure they are not taking in others' ideas without thinking about them, particularly visuals and other media. Linda argued that because everything around us is like text, we even read visuals in certain ways, we need to teach our students to understand visual messages clearly and raise their awareness about them. Both the readings by Ballengee-Morris, Daniel, and Stuhr (2010) along with Chung (2013) encouraged disturbing the media and visual influences and fostering student's ability to express their own voices. Lori commented that the Dewhurst reading showed how art teachers can encourage action and solve problems in a practical way. Teresa added that this reading elucidated the meaning of social justice art as bringing about clarification and questioning issues in the community.

The videos inspired the students to look meaningfully at the relationship between real-life life and the readings. Amy liked the videos we watched because they brought the students more in touch with world realities and current issues that are happening. She stated, "The videos related the issues more to us." Amy indicated that she will use this strategy by using suitable references to relate to her students because,

people actually watch those TV shows. So it was kind of a pop culture reference. I will find ways to relate it to my students in the future. So bringing up their own kind of references, like videos that are popular with them, in the future.

Ann stated, "Those videos that you showed really kind of hit home, because I'm not really aware of those kind of things, and so it was intense to see those videos. They kind of brought it more into perspective." Linda indicated that the way social justice was discussed was totally different. She liked the controversial videos and topics that opened up dialogue. Linda indicated that she intended to build lessons that will relate with students' lives, keeping in mind current events, media, and social issues, and then relate them to relevant art.

In my later one-on-one interviews, I asked students what was most important for them in forming an equitable curriculum. Lori wanted to build the lessons based on different teaching strategies because students have different abilities and ways of learning. Additionally, it was important to Lori to consider diversity in the classroom, because students frequently come from different backgrounds and have different beliefs. She planned to create flexible lessons designed to empower students by giving them voice through open-ended discussions that give them opportunities to share if they wish. It was important to Clara to consider each individual student's interests. If students are not interested they will not engage with a topic but if they are they will pursue it and engage more fully with the curriculum.

Linda said she would consider diversity in the classroom because most everyone comes from different backgrounds and has different beliefs. The curriculum should be created based on actual differences between students rather than on assumptions. She noted that for her it was important to build an art curriculum based on students' interests and not on routine lessons and to spark student engagement through activities and discussions. Shelly indicated that an equitable

curriculum needs to be built on students' interests and not only on what the teacher thinks is important. Thus, the teacher should understand what is important for the students and consider their perspectives. Rose wanted to encourage students to voice their opinions in the world around them.

Additionally, in interviews I asked the participants about strategies they would apply in their future teaching to emphasize students' voices and respect for diversity. Many were interested in the open-ended discussions. Clara liked learning based on dialogue, giving space for students to discuss their opinions and relate ideas in class with their personal experiences. Such dialogue, Clara noted, would facilitate learning by helping students develop their thinking. The conversation would be open-ended but the teacher would direct students toward certain goals. Clara emphasized that the readings play a big role in a successful discussion. Mary also liked nurturing open-ended conversations to give students an opportunity to discuss their ideas, a process that she believed would make the course material more relatable and meaningful for them. Mary observed, "I think this class has opened me up to accepting more of the students' ideas in the classroom because I think that's really how to make it meaningful for them, to first relate to them where they're at." Lori reflected that controversial topics allow students to open up to different perspectives, reminding her that the teachers' role is to facilitate discussions rather than impose knowledge. Rose added that controversial topics allow students to open up to different perspectives and learn from each other how they might be processing different ideas, creating an educational environment that motivates critical thinking and authentic conversation. Rose said she liked the strategies we used in class and plans to apply them in her teaching in the future.

Theme Two: Visuals as an Educational Tool

Students were required to post an online PowerPoint (see PowerPoint hyperlink) containing an artwork by a social justice artist. In the classroom, after we finished discussing the video and readings, I took the time to discuss some of the assignments posted online. Lori showed a female artist who used social media as a platform to engage with her audience. The artist made simple drawings representing the female body with the aim of encouraging self-empowerment and self-love among individuals of all different shapes, sizes, and colors. Teresa chose an artist from Chicago who paints portraits of African-American professionals wearing a hoodie. The artist aimed to get viewers to check their perceptions against reality in order to stimulate discussions about prejudice, stereotypes, and generalizations. Julia posted artworks by Kerry James Marshall, whose work sheds light on African-American experiences that have been invisible in museums and in history. Linda posted artwork by a Latino artist born in Puerto Rico, Gerardo Castro, who focuses on topics related to the masculine figure and ethnicity and gender, in particular shedding light on popular fantasies about sexuality and the Latino masculine identity. Amy posted work by Megan Nicole Dong, who lives in Los Angeles and works at Nickelodeon as a director and storyboard artist. Megan's work is comedic, and in comics, and refers to social issues such as stereotypes and feminism. Ann posted work by street-based activist artist Tatyana Fazlalizadeh, who addressed gender-based street harassment with her famous street art series *Stop Telling Women to Smile* (2012). I went through the PowerPoint slides the students posted and noticed that many of the social justice artists discussed social issues related to gender, race, media, and (dis)ability.

Additionsally, students reflected through the visual journal. Wendy highlighted many notions associated with critical pedagogy goals, such as the dominant group, gender equity, and

unleashing students' creative thinking (see Figure 21). Wendy wrote, “Critical pedagogy is about offering a way of thinking beyond the natural state of things. It’s a mode of intervention. Changing the way we teach students art will help them learn efficiently.” In her journal Amy (see Figure 22) asserted that we must resist oppressive attitudes by rejecting them. She made it clear that she cannot accept racist, sexist, transphobic, and words and attitudes. Amy resists these attitudes by showing how they are not acceptable and should not happen around her. She drew two stairs—one going up and one going down—and she stated, “I want people to be lifted up, not brought down by words.” Shelly (see Figure 23) drew a skeleton to show that we are all humans rejecting racism, ageism, sexism, and other such prejudiced attitudes.

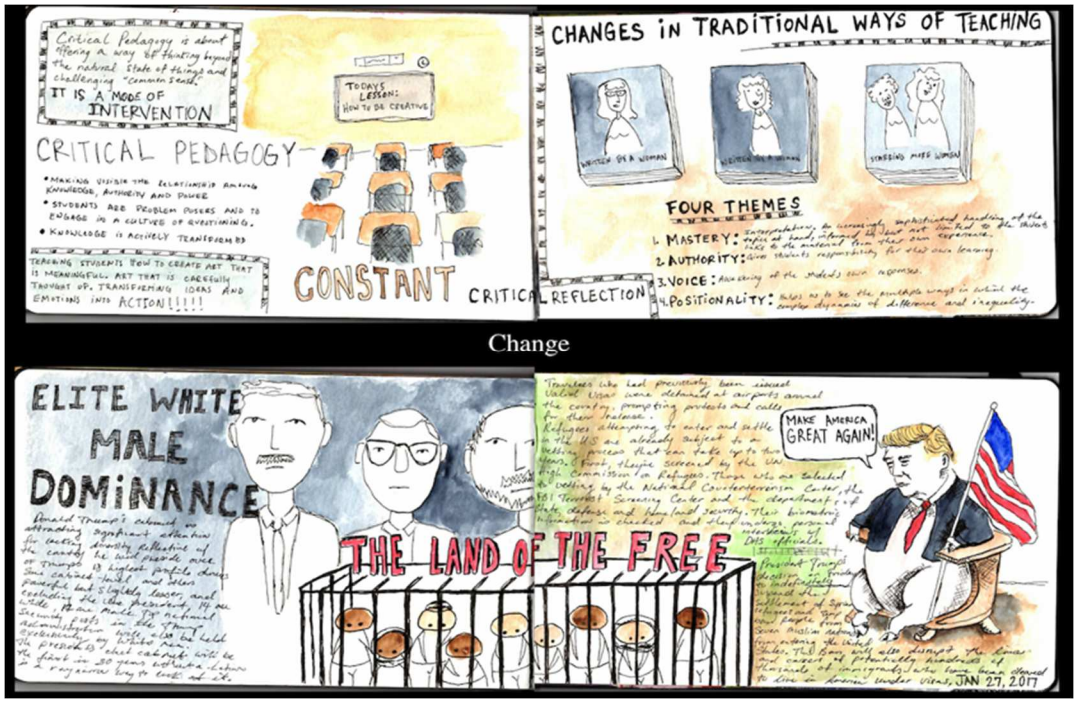

Figure 21. Wendy visual journal.

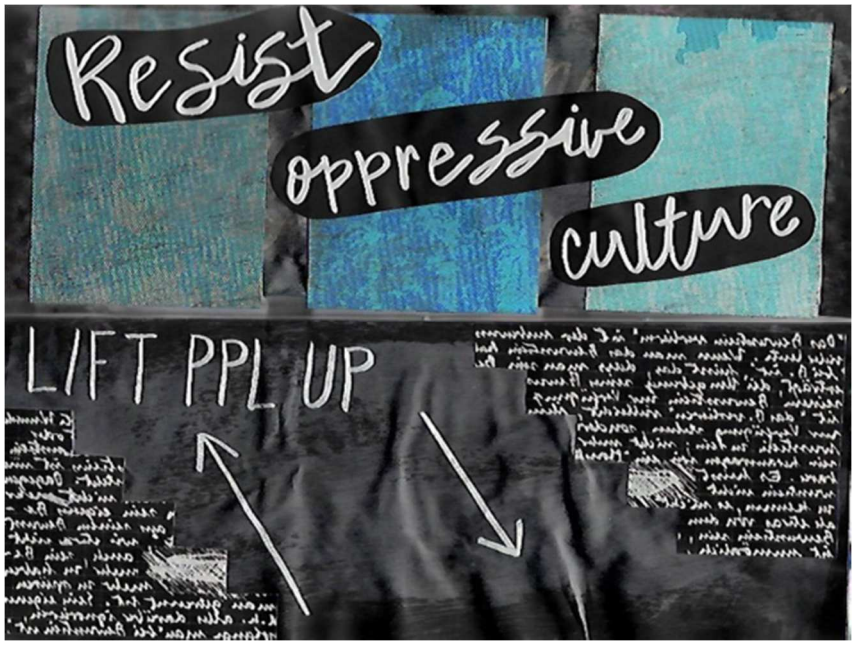

Figure 22. Amy visual journal.

Figure 23. Shelly visual journal.

Theme Three: Art Making as an Investigatory Process

The students were required to create an artwork that concerned issues around diversity, one related to a personal experience or interest. The artwork should be intended to engage with society and influence social change. The purpose of the assignment was to guide students through an investigatory experience—investigating both self and society. In the group critiques, students were able to discuss the art making process and shed light on their experiences. In this section, I present two examples.

Linda: The hidden stereotypes. In the first group critique, Linda discussed her idea about stereotypes of race. She shared an actual experience that had occurred in her teaching in the past. She had drawn a portrait of an African American and asked some of her students what stereotypes came to mind. The answers were basketball, guns, dirty money, and jail. Linda explained that she then had asked her African American students, "What is your inspiration or how do you express yourself"? One student said he wanted to be a writer or poet. Linda sketched out what he said on one side and the other side the other side was what people have against certain races. Linda indicated that she would continue creating a series of stereotypes of different cultures, such as Asian and White American cultures. Gray responded to Linda's idea and said that using the image of a specific person alongside items that reinforced related stereotypes might be not appropriate. Gray recommended that the use of a random person—one with less stereotypic cultural or racial physical characteristics—would be more acceptable. He suggested she use her own self-portrait, in fact. Linda liked Gray's advice and said that she would spend some time reflecting on it.

In the second critique, Linda developed her idea further based on the previous advice from the group critique. Though she was still in the process of thinking and searching for the

final decision, she presented a small sketch on watercolor paper. She drew a portrait surrounded by patterns of flowers among which were hidden objects representing stereotypes. She was thinking she might do three others and perhaps put a mirror between them. She hoped that when viewers saw the different stereotypic objects, they also would look at the mirror and reflect on their response. Linda's project shed light on the problem of negative stereotypes by challenging the viewers' perceptions and using a mirror to enable the viewer to reflect on them as well.

By the final critique, Linda had made progress on her watercolor drawings. She had cut out the face from the portraits with the thought that putting a particular identity because it would indicate acceptance of a stereotype. Linda noted that we unconsciously have hidden stereotypes toward people and for this reason she hid objects associated with positive and negative stereotypes (such as a needle, drugs, and a bouquet of knives) among the patterns of flowers. Julia suggested putting a mirror in the cut out portrait space so the audience could reflect on themselves (see Figures 24). Linda wrote in her statement:

> Stereotypes are so prevalent in our society today. Through my series of watercolor paintings, I wanted to address common positive and negative stereotypes for various races. Painted around the border of the paper are a variety of foliage and flowers, it looks beautiful from afar, until you take a closer look. Flowers on one side look faded, dull and sad with knives, bandanas and more negative objects symbolizing stereotypes that are still associated with that race. On the opposite side the flowers begin to lighten and brighten in color and as you look more intently musical instruments, food and family are beginning to appear to show the positive stereotypes that are beginning to overpower the negative. The human face is carved out to leave a negative silhouette and a mirror is hung behind in order to address the internal stereotypes we hold towards other people. I want

to bring awareness by notifying people that we all still hold these ideas and stereotypes. This will hopefully motivate people to begin addressing and ridding themselves of these negative ideals on humans they do not even know.

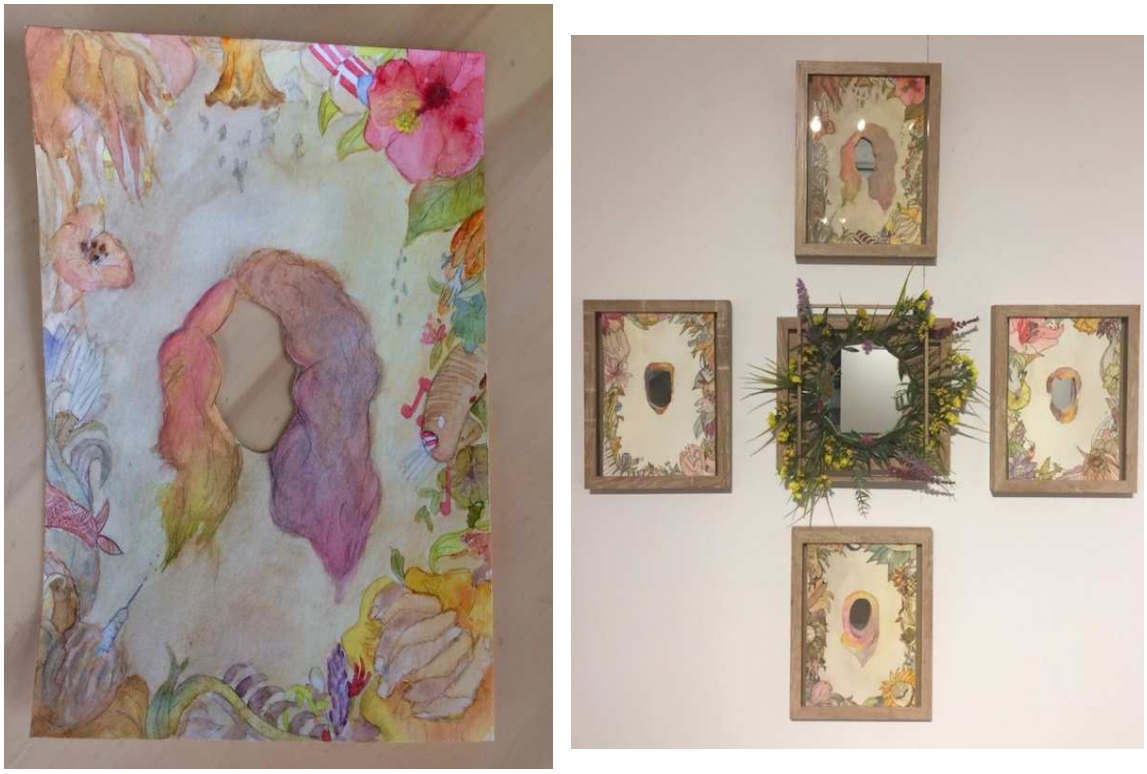

Figure 24. Linda: The hidden stereotypes.

Ann: Re-think about yourself. In first group critique, Ann discussed her ideas, which involved motivating the public to think about themselves positively and put a smile on their faces because she believes in equality for all regardless of race, age, or gender. She wanted to wheatpaste graphic stickers around the city with positive words such as "You are beautiful" and "You are worthy." She would document her work by taking pictures of these places, including one in our gallery exhibit. She considered also conducting some conversations with the audience and documenting them.

By the second critique, Ann had worked on her idea of the wheatpaste stickers. She designed a logo: A peace sign surrounded by recycling arrows, which she explained as: "The world goes around and if peace was there we'd all be great." Ann was thinking that each place in the town needs a certain phrase. Her peers explained to her that the phrases she assigned to certain places suggested some stereotypes, and they recommended that instead she post mixed phrases in each place. More specifically, they recommended that on campus, girls need to hear that they are necessary, not only that they are beautiful. Ann agreed on these collective suggestions, and in the final critique, she showed us the documentation of her project (see Figure 25). She had posted positive phrases in different places throughout the city, such as, "You are necessary, you are worthy, and you are beautiful." Ann noted that her work aimed to make people stop and re-think themselves during random moments and remember they are necessary and beautiful. Ann wanted to post one of her graphic phrases in the gallery, and Teresa suggested putting a book next to it to invite the audience to write their own favorite positive phrases.

Figure 25. Ann: Re-think about yourself.

Big Idea: Group Critiques

One of my primary goals in the group critique was to help students develop their sensitivity to social justice issues. After analyzing the data from the group critique I found that two themes emerged: art as a medium for acceptance and understanding the process. Under the first theme, I recognized the emergence of two sub-themes: the role of the safe environment and art as a tool of exploration. The first theme refers to the process of art making as a tool for exploring oneself and society, while the second theme refers to my finding that the students recognized the importance of this process for their own development as artists and art teachers.

Theme One: Art as a Medium of Acceptance

Linda indicated that in sharing their personal opinions, the members of the class were more inclined to explore each other's perspectives. Further, Linda found that in hearing others' opinions, she became motivated to explore her own deeper ideas about social justice. She recognized that art was a beautiful way to express diverse opinions. Even though Linda had known her peers for years, she gained a new viewpoint on an issue from her closest friend, Rose. Linda indicated that the group discussion gave students an opportunity to release internal frustrations that open up alongside a controversial topic. Linda wrote, “This project really gave Rose the opportunity to open up not only to herself about internal frustrations with her femininity but to all of us.”

For Lori, sharing about the art making process was a way of exchanging ideas. Lori learned the importance of having a civil conversation with someone who holds different beliefs, noting that this approach facilitates productive conversation better than a discussion with people on your side only. Lori also discussed Rose’s stance, and she recognized Rose’s difficulty with sharing her views. Lori wrote, “I could tell that she was choosing her words very carefully and

her hands were visibly shaking." Lori noted that sharing opinions that are different from others requires a great deal of strength and bravery. Lori said that her experience in our class helped her to realize the importance of a safe classroom environment where everyone is comfortable sharing and has an opportunity to express his or her views. Wendy noted that it is important to respect different opinions even if they go against the common flow. Wendy indicated that this sharing experience confirmed her beliefs, while Shelly, on the other hand, found that the experience actually challenged her beliefs about life's realities because she encountered opinions inconsistent with her values. She concluded, however, that it is fine to accept differences and not be aggressive about them.

Rose observed that in our era there are many voices speaking to us on a daily basis from a variety of sources, such as TV, the Internet, and visuals. Yet, one finds few opportunities to release one's feelings in response. She believed, therefore, that it will be helpful to her students to create conditions that encourage them to express their thoughts and communicate more effectively with others through art. Rose stated, "I did a piece on feminism, and I was taking in all the different things that were happening with Donald Trump and the marches, and then I was able to release that through art." Amy learned that sharing during the group critiques was not an easy task, and that she, like most people, got nervous during this experience. Nevertheless, she found that sharing was beneficial because she obtained a lot of useful feedback from different perspectives. She added that it was interesting to listen to others' personal experiences because it opened her up to new ideas. Amy gradually became more comfortable on a personal level with her peers' support, particularly as she learned more about their experiences and recognized her similarities with some peers.

Clara indicated that art making was a different experience when given the chance to relate to others throughout the art making process. She continued, the art making process became more meaningful because of the input of others. As they listened to each other and sought to understand the different perspectives, the students began to see how others processed their experiences. Julia also noted that personal sharing fostered an environment of trust and support. She wrote, “When interaction transcends the academic to the personal, trust and a better understanding of 'other' is formed.” For Ann, sharing personal experiences expanded her points of view. She noted that the different perspectives broadened her mind and encouraged her to think outside the box. Ann acknowledged that when others shared values different from hers it was uncomfortable, but she considered it an opportunity to think differently. She saw that being open to others' opinions challenges the way we view the world. Thus, the art making discussions made Ann, like many others, more open minded as she began to see different stances on an issue.

Amy indicated that the experience of listening to others' perspectives throughout the sessions taught her how to accept others’ ideas even if they are different. She explained, “Like, when one of our classmates brought up her view on abortion, which was different than my own, but it was really nice hearing her explanation of it and being able to understand someone else’s perception.” She noted it was interesting to learn that the definition of feminism wasn’t a one-size-fits-all, but rather the term has many different meanings to different people. Based on this experience, Amy came to value everyone else's opinions more. She stated that in her classroom she will encourage students to listen to each other and understand others' perspectives and backgrounds, “because it shows me how I need to accept my students and remember where they’re coming from in their home lives.” In addition to the role of art in mediating acceptance

students recognized that a safe environment has a big role to play in giving students opportunity to release their thoughts.

Subtheme one: The role of a safe environment. Linda noted that her experience in our class sessions gave her ideas and values she wanted to apply in her classroom in the future. She plans to build a safe and open environment in her classroom in order to give students an opportunity to hear each other's voices. Linda also noted that exploring the art making process with others gave her the opportunity to know her peers even better. She indicated that creating a comfortable environment plays a big role in encouraging discussion and the expression of everyone's opinions.

Mary thought that the teacher's role was to facilitate learning and not impose knowledge or what she or he thinks is important. Lori noted that she learned from social justice art to consider the individual's unique interests, thus she will allow students to express their own thoughts. In her own classroom, then, Lori will ensure she makes it comfortable for students to have different opinions. Amy wanted to create a safe environment in order to nurture her goal, which was to engage everyone in the classroom and empower students' voices to demonstrate to them that their opinions and ideas are important.

Rose indicated that to form an equitable curriculum we need to hear everyone's opinions. Again, such a curriculum requires the creation of a safe space for students to discuss their beliefs and values. Further, "by creating that space, you can create an equal curriculum that allows students to open up and to hear each other and their beliefs, and where they're coming from." Linda noted that students need the freedom to learn individually as well as within the context of a community.

Julia highlighted a critical point related to creating a safe space within the classroom. She believed that because the teacher represents the authority in the classroom students may tend to express what seems to be acceptable to the teacher or the majority around them. Thus, it is imperative that the teacher ensures that the students feel comfortable expressing what is true to them. Julia wrote,

> If students do not feel safe, the danger is that they will not feel comfortable to express what is true to them, and will instead attempt to try to express what they think will be acceptable to the teacher (authority figure).

Julia's comment made me think of the stance of one of the student's in the class. Even though I tried to create a safe space for all students to express their opinions freely, Mary did not have the courage to express openly her desire *not* to share her work in the exhibit. She wrote her thoughts about it in the group reflection assignment, however, so I was able to email Mary before the exhibit that participation was optional.

Subtheme two: Art as a tool of exploration. Linda was interested in how art can hold thoughts, beliefs, and values, making it a good medium for motivating critical thinking and a tool for exploration and learning. The art making process gave her the opportunity to express herself and examine social justice art in a practical, hands-on way. Through this experience, she explored such topics as feminism, diversity, and race. Linda liked using art as a tool to help students to express their opinions or to discover more about issues with which they might be struggling. She felt that beyond just expressing feelings, social justice art allows students to both explore who they are and discover knowledge and ideas they may not have previously been aware of.

Lori was glad to have made social justice art in class because it gave her the chance to experience it before she teaches it. After discovering social justice art, she shared, she thought of it as a rich educational tool. Further, she saw art making as an analytic tool that can help students in their social lives in the future. Lori stated, "By focusing on art as a social justice tool, I've become more positive in how we can equip students to go out into the world." Shelly noted that although she had learned about social justice art theory she had never explored it practically. Her experience with it in our class made her become more passionate about its use as a helpful social tool for students. Giving students key knowledge was important to Mary, who stated, "The most important thing for the students is to take something away from it that will be lasting, and for it to be worthwhile." Ann indicated that art is a powerful way to reflect students' thoughts. Ann stated,

> Art is a great way to influence people with their passions. Like, it's a good way to reflect. And so I think it would be really cool to let the students interpret it [art] on their own through their artwork.

Theme Two: Understanding The Process

Linda believed that sharing their personal experiences of the art making process was a beneficial experience for all the students because it gave them more insights and allowed everyone to understand each other's art methods and concepts. The discussions gave her more ideas about how to express her ideas and ensure they were translated through her artwork. The second critique, which occurred midway through the process, also enabled her to discuss some of the frustrating issues she was facing. She noted that the feedback she received from her peers strengthened her ideas and motivated her to continue with her series. Linda believed that art

making is personal and thus, is necessarily biased to some degree. Being open to other opinions, however, gave her clearer ideas about aesthetics and strengthened her artwork.

For Lori, the art making discussions were very helpful. She reflected that especially when she felt stuck in her process it was beneficial to hear a variety of opinions. The input from her peers helped her ensure that her ideas made sense and were translated effectively through her artwork. In this experience for Lori, then, the art making process was very meaningful, consistent with her strong belief that art should mean something. She reflected on her K-12 experience, in which art was only about gaining skills that paralyzed her passion and self-interest. In her future teaching, she wants to make sure that her students do what they are passionate about. Lori commented that art teachers need to focus on the learning process instead of the final product, such as focusing on the students to learn from the critique and discussions. This process itself is the product of learning not the physical result of it. Shelly added that art is not about the quality of a product but about inspiring and discussing important issues: "It's not just about making good art. Maybe it's about inspiring other people or just bringing up good discussion topics, or just getting good responses."

Clara learned to release her personal experiences through her artwork and realized that art experiences should reflect personal perspectives, not universal judgments. At the same time, she acknowledged that her personal artwork in the class developed more through a kind of collective thinking because of the group feedback: "My work changed and adapted in response to others' feedback so the group setting affected the outcome of my work." Clara explained that her peers' responses helped her develop her ideas throughout the process such that her artwork eventually changing completely from what she had originally envisioned. The feedback helped her to understand more about her own thinking and her art, and she was appreciative that the class

focused more on process than on the final product. Clara indicated that many ideas were sparked through these discussions, and she suggested having even more time for group critique discussions because they were very helpful.

Mary proposed that discussion of the art making process will raise students' awareness about their process and that of others, in turn helping students develop a better understanding of the complexity of the aesthetic. From the point of view of an art educator, Julia recognized that this strategy reinforced meaningful learning, which, in turn, emphasizes the concept. Julia indicated that discussing the process may shed light on the complexity of aesthetics and raise students' awareness of the importance of the process. She wrote, "In my opinion, learning through art making, rather than strictly through the abstract concepts of/about art, is the best way to learn in any art discipline." Highlighting the process was an opportunity to explore different ways of thinking about art making for Ann, who noted that it was great to see different processes and styles of work. Discussing the art making process raised Amy's awareness about her artwork and herself, mainly because she had to explain her work and why it was meaningful to her. This requirement not only gave her an opportunity to learn about others, it benefitted her by clarifying her ideas and understandings about her own and others' artworks. The discussions trained Amy to better express her ideas and feelings, and she became more aware of her interests. In the same way, she noted that the feedback helped her to see more clearly the flow of her ideas.

Summary

In this chapter I described the outcomes of the students' discussions, assignments, artworks, interviews, and reflections, both written and visual. I organized these findings per the aspects of the lessons plan structure that were most significant, the big ideas of social justice theories, gender, diversity, and the group critique. In this way, I analyzed the implanted

curriculum and allow readers to evaluate the strengths and the weaknesses of each strategy. The three sessions had three main themes: relating theoretical learning to students' lives, visuals as an educational tool, and art making as an investigatory process. Also, the group critique was an important strategy to cultivate tolerance for differences and shed light on the process of art making. In the next chapter, I will discuss these outcomes in relationship to my research questions and offer broader recommendations for the field of art education.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As art teachers, we instruct and encourage our students to express their inner experience of the world. In this study I created a curriculum that used the capabilities inherent in art to raise pre-service art teachers' awareness about social justice and facilitate the development of a culturally sensitive identity. Art can hold beliefs and values that reflect students' perspectives and worldviews (Freedman, 2000). Many educators have employed art to stimulate powerful reflection and enhance students' identities as a manifestation and concrete evidence that emphasized students' viewpoint (Chung, 2013; Gude, 2008; Lai, 2009; Yokley, 1999). In my own way, I sought to contribute to existing literature by examining the impacts of a curriculum designed to empower pre-service teachers to reflect on their viewpoints and dispositions through engagement in individual and group inquiry and artistic processes. In this way, I focused not only on concrete art outcomes but on the creative process and the sharing of opinions and experiences related to three established curricular themes—social justice, gender inequality, and diversity. I structured the three classes in the curriculum around my two research questions:

3. How can critical pedagogy be used to prepare pre-service art teachers to teach about social justice issues in their own classroom?
4. How can pre-service art teachers use art making to develop an identity sensitive to social justice issues?

The first question concerns the development of students' understandings of social justice theories. As a first step toward elucidating the need for pre-service teachers to understand the different backgrounds and needs of their students, I provided my students with suitable readings,

activities, and a video that would cover the topic from different angles and prepare them for the next step, which concerned the second question. To prepare students to develop greater sensitivity to social justice issues, I sought to emphasize practical learning strategies, culminating with an investigatory art making project (see Figure 26). The students were required to create social justice art that stemmed from social location, background, or interest. Through the group critique strategy, I expanded the discussion about the art making process to create more space for participants to discuss their artworks and how the art works related to their beliefs and values. The students had an opportunity to defend their opinions and release their feelings about some societal issues in a safe environment of mutual respect. The dialogue between group members in the course of the critiques shed light on our similarities and differences and created an intimate exchange between the participants.

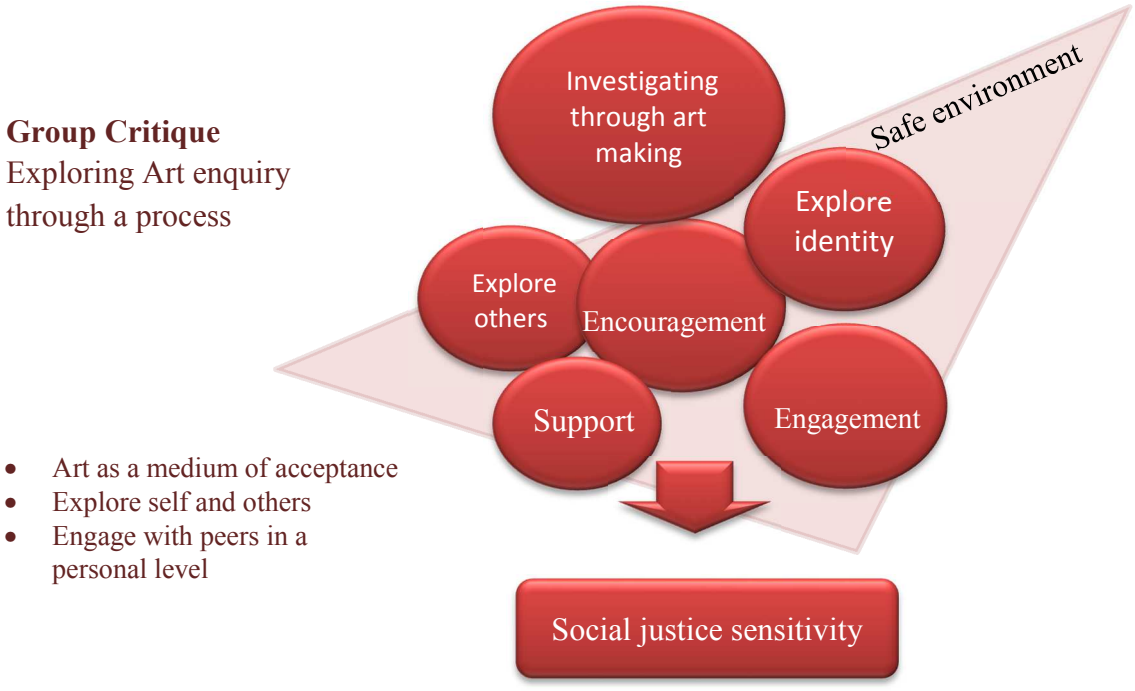

Figure 26. Social justice sensitivity.

It was from the structure of the classes that I organized my findings. Each of the following sections is focused on a broader research question with subsections containing my discussion of the findings. For the first research question I organized my discussion around both the thematic class structure and later the emergent themes I identified in my analysis from Chapter 4. In the discussion of the second question I organized my findings around specific students' artistic responses and then later around the role of the group critique. In the final sections of this chapter I included recommendations for other pre-service educators and suggestions for further research.

How Can Critical Pedagogy Be Used to Prepare Pre-service Art Teachers to Teach About Social Justice Issues in Their Own Classroom?

The data indicated that the pedagogical approaches used in this study benefited the pre-service art teachers who participated in the class. Their reflections, art works, and discussions revealed a greater awareness of the need to integrate social justice issues in their own art classrooms. The initial readings on social justice theories and their applications in educational contexts were important for helping students enrich their knowledge and develop an appreciation of the need for educators to utilize such theories. The students' visual reflections highlighted the particular points they found most meaningful. The videos and activities I provided also brought to life the experiences of certain underserved populations, stimulating the students' empathy and creativity. Students experienced what it was like to step into the shoes of others who are disadvantaged by class, race, culture, or gender and the experience prompted both their thinking and their desire—as educators—to find solutions. The videos and visuals also served to train students in the use of some analytic strategies that might broaden their minds and the minds of

their students. My intention was to both help pre-service teachers master a more nuanced understanding of critical tools and recognize the importance of transferring such tools to their own classrooms, and the analysis of the data suggests that these goals were accomplished. In the next sections, I explore these findings in more detail.

Big Idea: Social Justice Theories

In the first session, I introduced social justice theories in art education. This effort represented my first attempt at using a critical pedagogical framework to teach about social justice in art education. We began the class by discussing the assigned readings, and though different theories resonated with different students, all saw the need for these different theoretical approaches. While Linda favored the critical component of multicultural education, Mary thought critical race theory was important to raise students' awareness of those from different backgrounds, and Gray highlighted the importance of intersectionality to broaden understandings about gender. Many of the students already liked SJE because they had experienced it in other department courses. In all, the students recognized and endorsed the common thread running through all the different theories: social justice principles and democracy.

I observed that students were particularly motivated by the passionate ideas in the reading on Freire's work (Giroux, 2010), suggesting that it might continue to serve as an effective tool for engaging students in critical dialogue beyond this class. For instance, Ann emphasized in her responses the importance of a continual process of questioning to liberate oneself from the norm, while Linda emphasized the responsibility of the teacher to equip students with critical tools instead of imposing knowledge. Similarly, Rose was enthusiastic about active rather than passive learning and Mary discussed the need to activate students' voices by creating a student-centered curriculum.

The discussion that ensued was built on the students' keen perceptions. In it, they raised many significant points from the readings concerning critical pedagogy, but from different angles. Because the discussion contained many abstract ideas, I saw that the students were anxious to learn about the practical side of these theories, supporting assumptions that the theory and practice of education should be viewed in tandem. Giroux (1983), for example, emphasized the link between theory and practice, asserting that critical theory is not powerful enough without integrating it with action. Similarly, Ballengee-Morris, Daniel, and Stuhr (2010) argued that critical skills are not sufficiently meaningful without practical learning. Most important, students saw how they may practically and conceptually apply these skills through the lens of art education, such as exploring concepts and current social issues by investigating references from popular culture.

Students in traditional schools learn theoretically through readings and discussions without much chance to apply theory practically. Traditional education, in which teachers primarily aim to deliver to students a set of existing information, creates passive students, however. Freire (2002/1970) called this traditional method of instruction "banking education," the aim of which is to deposit information into students as a means of maintaining control over their thoughts and perceptions. Teachers aiming to teach students about social justice issues must be careful not to impose their knowledge and understandings on students as truth, or they are creating another subjugated learning experience (Hackman, 2005). Effective SJE learning offers students opportunities to engage in active learning, thus challenge the old system of traditional education (Adams, 2016).

Therefore, my effort in these sessions was to enable students to experience the power of action by exploring for themselves the expression of social justice ideas through the art making

process. By requiring students to respond to the readings visually by depicting the significant ideas that captured their attention, I was able to guide them toward more meaningful critical reflection. In class I asked students to spread their visual journals on a table before we began to discuss their reflections. I noticed that the visual journals added more coherent thoughts to our discussions. Using visual language, students reflected more concrete and deeper understandings of the topic. Linda recognized the importance of making diversity an integral part of the curriculum instead of considering it an add-in. Her rainbow colors drawing was meant to express that many perspectives were more beautiful than just one. Clara discussed the inequities in job opportunities for minorities, indicating elite groups had access to certain powerful jobs that others did not. Lori related the reading to the recent Women's March and discussed the need for women (and men) to act against gender inequities. She explained that such actions make it possible for us to take positive action against negative situations by challenging assumptions and labels. Most important, I observed that the students, after completing and sharing their visual journals, moved beyond just discussing the readings to relating them with real conditions in their lives and their communities. As Freedman (2003) observed:

> Artistic production is a critical path to understanding, partly because the process and the product of artmaking enables students to experience creative and critical connections between form, feeling, and knowing. It empowers students through their expression of ideas and construction of identities as it gives insight into the artistic motivations, intentions, and capabilities of others. (p. 147)

My attempt was to actualize democratic teaching by engaging students in sharing their perspectives. The visual journal served as a form of critical reflection and gave the students the opportunity to engage with their own vision about the topic. The creative process and subsequent

in-class discussions revealed a heightened and more comprehensive idea of social justice than students may have achieved through the readings alone. This finding is consistent with Hackman's (2005) assertions that static knowledge is not powerful enough for transformation, and that the critical lens engages student in meaningful dialogue that motivates them to become active in their learning. Approaching knowledge as a reciprocal dialogue between students and teacher moves students from passive participants to become self-determining agents.

Relating Theoretical Learning to Students' Lives

To give students more insight into the usefulness of social justice theories, we watched a documentary video that shed light on social class disparities and the experiences of low-income and high-income individuals. When we discussed such economic disparities, Lori quickly pointed to the failure of the American dream: even when people work hard they may not "make it" because the country's economic and political systems do not create equal opportunity for all citizens. Clara discussed the government's role in providing equal education and funds for those in need and, like Lori, recognized the economic and the political structures that affect the social order and additionally pointed to the power of education. Linda and Teresa similarly took an economic view of the structure of inequality and highlighted the government's role in failing to provide equal access to earning opportunities for citizens. Thus, the video seemed to stimulate thought that was grounded in the social justice readings. The students' answers indicated that they recognized the conditions that created the inequity problem, which is an essential goal in SJE. It is essential to SJE directs us to investigate the structural issues that created the social disorder to highlight the real causes of disparities (Bell, 2016). In this study, the students' explorations gave them deeper insight that led to a quest to solve the problem, rather than relying on a shallow view like thinking that if individuals just treated others equally it would be enough

to solve the problem. SJE, then, encourage students to analyze systems of oppression with a deeper analytical lens, thus engaging them in active learning.

In showing some of the social disparities in society, I achieved my aim of motivating students' critical thinking by putting social justice theories into practice. I used Freire's (2002/1970) pedagogy to encourage this critical thinking practice and raise students' awareness about the social and political conditions in the United States, and perhaps their communities. I used that video because it emphasized a lived reality that would engage students' senses with the problem. As the discussion unfolded, my role was to prompt questions that would encourage authentic dialogue. Using open-ended questions was essential to giving students an opportunity to search for the conditions that had created the social problems they were considering. In fact, the students built up the conversation between themselves and went beyond the readings. I saw this as an indication that they were making connections between the readings and the social problems they saw in the video by creating true dialogue and analyzing the injustice issue critically.

As the discussion ensued, the students addressed the reasons for persistent, generational poverty and included such topics as the history of inequity, social location, parents' unawareness, and the social expectations from both parents and teachers. Students then spontaneously began to search for solutions. Clara emphasized the need for practical learning to teach students how to actively demand their rights. She suggested that students from low-income families should know about the many resources available to help citizens. Lori highlighted the notion that it is the responsibility of those who are privileged to help, indicating that social reform should not only be the mission of the minority. She saw how her privileged position as a teacher with knowledge of societal systems made it even more possible for her to help others. Linda connected the video

and Freire's pedagogy of hope (Giroux, 2010). She asserted that by raising students' awareness about the forces that exert influence over their lives, teachers can help them see that their lives are not pre-determined but instead under their control.

After the first seminar discussion, I found that the students had covered many SJE elements and goals. The visual journals helped students bring deeper meaning to their discussion and think critically about issues they were passionate about. Sharing the visual journals cover the topic from different angels to give us more comprehensive ideas. The video gave the students further insight and inspired them to deepen their thinking about social justice. In this way, they could move beyond the readings to search for structural conditions that create inequality and possible solutions. I took their response as explicit evidence of how, in art education, teachers can help students gain some rich understanding of theory by moving beyond and utilizing student centered activities where students construct connections together.

Thus, this first class gave the pre-service teachers sufficient knowledge of social justice theories and frameworks to move into the next two sessions. With their theoretical understandings in place they were ready to address two focus topics, diversity and gender, as well as experience art making as an inquiry process.

Big Idea: Gender Equity

Prior to the second class, on which the focus was gender equity, students were required to prepare readings and post on the course website a visual from popular culture demonstrating a gender stereotype. We began the class by reading Harvard President Lawrence Summers' declarations about men's superiority in math and science (Goldenberg, 2005). This reading was a springboard for a discussion about social expectations about gender, and at the same time, about related situations from the students' lives.

Relating Theoretical Learning to students' Lives

After we read the short article out loud, Lori immediately rejected the assertion that biological differences were related to intellectual abilities. Clara shared her belief that social gender expectations had a big role in influencing abilities, and for this reason, females tended to have lower expectations for themselves in the areas of math and science. Lori agreed and added that societal expectations shape gender identities as well, and extended the discussion by highlighting the need for teachers to be aware of their expectations about students. Students went on to discuss the many factors that impact social expectations—media, hidden curriculums, and parental expectations—and then related some relevant experiences from their personal lives. Importantly, the students were insightful enough to recognize that gender stereotypes influence their perceptions as well. Together, the students concluded that expectations limit genders ability and create boundaries for each gender. By reading Summers' claims (Goldenberg, 2005) in the class, my goal was to give them an opportunity to analyze and decode a real situation. Based on my analysis of the data, this way of encouraging the students to be active thinkers both inside and outside of the classroom appeared to be effective. This finding is consistent with McLaren's (1994) assertion that providing activities from the real world outside of school tends to raise students' consciousness and stimulate resistance. Such experiences allow students to rethink concepts and issues in their society and investigate the problems from different points of view. McLaren also observed that democracy does not exist naturally in life, and that students need to see democracy as an ideal toward which we aspire, one that needs incessant effort to maintain and recreate.

Visuals as an Educational Tool

After we discussed the article we turned to a critical analysis of popular culture as one of the prime forces affecting social expectations about gender. This part of the lesson relied on the visuals from popular culture that students posted to demonstrate a gender stereotype. Gray analyzed a truck commercial, in which he noticed three elements that portrayed gender stereotypes: aggressive music, all male characters, the placement of the commercial during a football game, and the type of product (the truck) assuming the product only for male. The students recognized that the assumptions about men implicit in the commercial. During their discussion, the class noted how these assumptions create social pressure on both genders because they reinforce a boundary between men and women. Lori interrogated gender inequity in the so-called "pink tax," the fact that women pay more for some items marketed specifically to women. She concluded that this disparity has been created by the commercialization of certain lifestyles and advertisers' efforts to convince women of their need for specialized products to enhance their femininity and beauty. Ann and Shelly noted the existence of positive commercials that assume that women's abilities and worth are equal to men— commercials that don't tie women's value to their appearance and sexiness. Ann and Shelly emphasized the need to fix the social expectation. Thus, as students critically analyzed visual culture, they highlighted how assumptions implicit in popular culture can limit gender abilities and benefit the advertiser, not the consumer.

Ballengee-Morris, Daniel, and Stuhr (2010) asserted that when students are taught to deconstruct visual culture it can help to clarify economic and political complexities in their lives. Because visual culture is not merely constituted of simple images, but rather contains multiple perspectives and contradictions, when students look deeply at its meanings they gain a deeper

sense of the about complexities in society. Lai (2009) used visual culture analysis in conjunction with feminist pedagogy to help female students explore the influence of visual culture on their self-concepts. Analyzing how women are portrayed in visual culture empowered students and encouraged them to be active investigators. Visual culture assignments such as this and the ones I used in my curriculum taught students how to put Freire's (2002/1970) pedagogic coding strategy into practice. First they generated "codes" representing their worlds and then decoded them through dialogue and discussion. Jointly, they facilitated meaningful learning in relationship to theoretical ideas relevant to their daily lives. By applying a decoding strategy to visual culture, these pre-service teachers began to recognize their responsibility to pass along this critical tool to their students to help them understand the visual forces in their everyday lives.

The second part of the assignment showed students how social justice art can counter stereotypic assumptions about gender, and was devoted to artworks created by female artists. Prior to class, the students were assigned to post a work and information from a female artist. Julia posted an artwork by a female artist who challenged social expectations of women and the idealistic view of women by male artists. Julia's example emphasized how the female perspective is essential to depicting the humanity of women. Teresa posted an artwork by a contemporary female artist who highlighted women's communities of the 19th-century, signifying their inner struggle in domestic life while shedding light on the oppression and control they experienced. Linda posted an artwork by a female artist who depicted women's sacrifices for the country, demanded that women gain equal rights, and reminded us that women are the majority. Teresa and Linda's examples similarly emphasized the importance of making the female voice heard and seen to understand women's needs and struggles. When students had the opportunity to analyze female artworks, they began to recognize the importance of the female

perspective. Thus, in this lesson, students came to understand at a deep level the significance of including women's voices in their curriculum instead of only work that presented assumptions about women from a male point of view.

Additionally, students shared their critical understandings about gender in their weekly visual reflections, allowing them to respond to the readings more concretely and analyze them with a deeper vision. For instance, Amy depicted daily conversations about her gender, ultimately rejecting the assumption that women are not equal to men. Shelly tried to clarify that valuing females should not threaten males because women are not competing with them. Linda showed how the readings raised her awareness about her internal sexism and the ways she had been holding herself back. Thus, the students' visual journals showed how they meaningfully integrated their understandings about the readings with their personal experiences and translated them into a visual language.

The assignments and weekly visual reflections gave students space for self-learning and sharing the findings of their personal analyses with peers. We all enjoyed the different perspectives we shared on the different topics. The students' findings went further than my expectations; they not only identified negative visuals, but also emphasized the need for positive ones and what those might look like. Interestingly, students were quick to identify the roles of commoditization, commercialization, and consumer awareness regarding their impacts on gender equality and gender identity. In this second assignment, students also recognized the importance of gender equality in the curriculum.

One of the benefits of directing pre-service teachers towards self-learning is that it prepares them to be active agents in their community. Educators need to create their own curriculums and choose the educational materials that they find to be appropriate for their

classroom conditions (Apple & Beane, 1995). Educators should not have to follow a rigid or routine curriculum, and instead seek to gain insight into the local needs of their communities to develop curriculums appropriate for their students' growth. Throughout my sessions I found that students were quite responsive when I emphasized practical and meaningful learning, encouraging them to put theories into practice and guiding the discussions to relate to their lives.

In this lesson I asked pre-service teachers to analyze visual culture by comparing commercials and contemporary female art as a means of motivating their self-learning to gain critical insights about gender. I used visual culture as an educational tool to equip the pre-service teachers with strategies they could use in their future teaching and we highlighted their responsibility as art educators by illuminating the daily visual forces in the lives of students (Darts, 2004). Many students declared their desire to use references from popular culture in their teaching because it is a part of students' daily lives. Additionally, visual journaling helped students to encounter these cultural forces in such a way that they were able to emphasize their own identities and protect their beliefs and values (Shields, 2014). Importantly, students enjoyed the journaling component as they indicated it motivated critical thinking and allowed them to open up to different perspectives

Big Idea: Diversity

After introducing social justice theories, I began with diversity as one of two topics I focus on. In this session, I attempted to highlight the influence of visual culture on perceptions about racial minorities and different cultural groups. As in the session on gender, my goal was to highlight the art educator's role in raising students' consciousness about the everyday forces that shape their understandings of self and others. In the same way, students were required to post

activist artwork—this time on the topic of diversity—along with brief information about the purpose of the artwork, and finally created visual reflections on the required readings.

I began our session with a video that showed a part of a Bill Maher episode entitled *Bill Maher, Ben Affleck, Sam Harris Debate Radical Islam* (2014) criticizing Islamic religion. This subject of the video connected with recent U.S. events such as reports of increased Islamophobia and President Trump's 2017 Muslim travel ban. The broad goal of the video was to highlight the media's role in creating fear. After we listened to the show, I asked students about their opinions and the first thing they noticed was *what was not there*. Rose and Clara immediately pointed out that no one of the Islamic faith was at that table to respond to the claims being made about Muslims. Lora and Mary noted that the conversation was built on extremist views that blamed the religion rather than individuals responsible for blameworthy actions. Clara observed that it was not logical to impose one's beliefs on other cultures. Overall, the students agreed that this debate failed because it was not democratic.

As McLaren (1994) once asserted, elite groups control the media, create unequal representations, and emphasize otherness to keep their privileged positions. Instead of relying only on idealistic readings, I used this video to prompt students' critical thinking by showing the realities that exist in their society, especially for racial and cultural minorities. My goal was to motivate the students to analyze the news by investigating concepts and re-thinking assumptions.

I next moved to the discussion of a pertinent question: How would you deal with diversity and ensure respect for freedom of belief in your classrooms? Shelly said that students come to school with preconceived and sometimes prejudiced ideas from home, and that the teacher's role should be to cultivate understandings of different views. Linda and Lori suggested that developing rules in the classroom that would lead students to show respect for the opinions,

critiques, and ideas of others, even if they disagree. Students mentioned some standards that would help to emphasize respect: Ann emphasized the role of listening as a way of giving space for students to speak freely and Rose discussed the role of a safe environment, noting how we established our session by clarifying that our discussion would be for academic purpose, to ensure no one feels offended before we began our session. Clara suggested utilizing the inherent qualities of art education to open students up to learning about different cultures, especially because it is the lived experience of others that helps to create empathy and greater understanding of others' values. Amy was thinking about the reality of some difficult situations, noting that students do not always respond positively to efforts to help them develop empathy. Teachers have a small amount of time with students compared to what they have at home, where what they hear and learn may be quite different. For this reason, Amy felt it would better to work towards developing mutual respect rather than just empathy, so that students who cannot empathize with others can at least learn to respect their differences.

The discussion between students developed and deepened as they built on each other's thoughts, agreeing or adding different ideas. After giving the students a chance to watch and analyze the video, I saw how they began to recognize that democratic dialogue should consist of a variety of voices. I watched as they identified the lack of an authentic Islamic voice at the table, thus the absence of a truly credible source to defend the claims. Students rejected the constant extreme judgments and imposition of opinions on others throughout the video. I then showed a second video *Reza Aslan Slams Bill Maher for Facile Arguments About Muslim Violence* (2014) featuring Reza Aslan's reply to Bill Maher's claims about Islam. He discussed Maher's generalizations and attempts to brush a whole group with one stroke and asserted that the actions of individuals who espouse a certain religion do not represent the religion.

Reflecting on the second video, the students recognized how the individuals in the video used generalizations and distortions in their arguments that could shape public perceptions. Even more specifically, the students noted how the media can create hate, bias, and fear about specific groups. Lori added that one danger associated with information propagated in the media is that people often take it as fact without question, and many do not know where to find trustworthy sources. I guided the conversation to explore how the readings related to the video. Linda felt that it was important for teachers to consider the social goals and values guiding a curriculum, and recognize their ability to help students meaningfully learn about empathy and social justice principles. Mary emphasized that social justice art can engender empathy in students because it invites us to understand others' values at a deep level, through our senses. It was important to Lori to equip students with the critical tools they need to question everyday forces rather than just receive them passively. Linda agreed and added that everything around us has meaning and can be read in different ways, therefore students need to learn to how to read the visuals in their lives in a more critical way to make more conscious choices in their lives. Lori appreciated that the Dewhurst (2011) article provided guidance that would help art teachers solve practical problems that may arise in the classroom and make promote social activism through art.

I noticed that after watching the video, the students discussed the readings in a meaningful way, deeply aware of their responsibility as art teachers to address social issues that might arise in the classroom, such as dealing with stereotypes. They recognized the many ways that art could be a tool for mediation, exploration, and examination. In the interviews I conducted after the sessions I learned more about the class activities or experiences that were most effective for the students. For Amy, it was the videos that highlighted current issues and made them more compelling and relatable. She observed that because TV shows are integral parts of most

students' lives, it is important that teachers use popular culture references that will be personally meaningful to students. Linda liked the video activity and hoped to make her future lessons more beneficial for students by creating lessons that enable students to communicate more about their lives and their experiences with popular culture and current events. Ann shared that the videos showed some realities she was not aware of and brought others more into perspective.

Most of these pre-service teachers realized the benefits of connecting with students through relatable issues that can improve their lives. To inquire about how they would deal with diversity in the future, I asked students in interviews what was most important to them in forming an equitable curriculum. Lori believed that individuals have different abilities, accordingly she plans to build her lessons based on different teaching strategies. Her lessons also will be flexible, giving students a space to express their thoughts in open-ended and mutually respectful class discussions. Clara indicated that because students frequently are driven away from their interests by the teacher's priorities, she will engage them by building a curriculum based on their interests. Linda agreed that the curriculum should build on what is important to the students, not what the teacher thinks is important, and added that she would consider students' perspectives and backgrounds. Many of the students shared an interest in the open-ended nature of the discussions. They noticed that such in-class forums give students space, empower them to speak their truths, and develop self-learning and collective learning. Thus, I found that these pre-service teachers were moved to express the importance of paying attention to students' interests and backgrounds and empowering students' voices through dialogue.

Hackman (2005) asserted that quality SJE aims to meaningfully connect knowledge with students' lives through micro- and macro-awareness. In other words, knowledge is more meaningful for students when they can relate it to their life experience at a micro level in the

classroom, such as through activities that raise their awareness about their responsibilities. In addition, knowledge can be more meaningful and student insights are greater when connected to their role in society on a macro level, which was the goal of the activities I conducted with students. I was careful after every experience to see how students applied their understandings as educators, and I reminded them about their role in the bigger society.

Visuals as an Educational Tool

As in the other lessons, the students reflected their understandings of the readings in their visual journals. Wendy's visual journal contained a comprehensive picture of many critical pedagogy principles and their connections to current political issues and the role of education. She highlighted topics such as the elite white male, gender equity, and the promotion of creative thinking, and criticized false political campaigns. Amy's journal invited students to resist oppression in our culture by rejecting racism as unacceptable. She made the point that people need to be lifted by words, not brought down by them. Shelly rejected racism, ageism, and sexism in her drawings by depicting them as a skeleton. At the same time, the image conveyed that all humans are the same underneath the skin. I refer to these selected reflections to show the details, interests, and future goals the pre-service teachers adopted after reading powerful materials and applying theory to their heightened awareness of current societal contradictions. Most important, they seemed to deeply understand their responsibility as educators of students in a democratic society.

This heightened awareness may have derived from to the content mastery they gained throughout the class. According to Hackman (2005), content mastery may play a big role in inspiring students and raising their awareness about issues and influences related to social justice disparities in society and (Hackman, 2005). Quality SJE is designed to help students gain

sufficient knowledge about the social conditions that create problems and impact societal stability, and just as in my class, this knowledge motivates them to think about the role they should play in order to solve the problem. The readings I selected not only focused on social problems but highlighted positive actions that educators can take to actively participate in their society. The visual journal as well gave students a designated space to think about the readings critically encourage them to reflect on points that most interested them. In fact, I consider reflection to be the first step on the road to action that represents their intents and values.

Furthermore, students were required to post an artwork by a social justice artist. Students chose artworks that questioned conventional perceptions, prejudices, and stereotypes, on topics ranging from empowerment to identity, feminism, and self-love. These topics indicated that students understood how artwork could shed light on social issues and provide pathways to debate, criticism, or motivation. The assignments they completed seemed to inspire them with ideas for their art projects and with a greater sense of how to use art as a powerful form of support for social justice. Through the three sessions, my aim was to enrich students' understandings about social justice principles: I gave them readings that covered different point of views, and brought videos and activities to connect the readings with concrete situations. I gave space for students to process their views through discussions, analysis, and reflection—all to prepare them to take action for social change. In fact, I required that students take action through art in order to increase their engagement in society and experience the power of action. Because information and knowledge are not enough to stimulate action I attempted to provide students with tools of hope move them from passivity to hope and possibility (Hackman, 2005), this will be discussed in the next question.

In regard to the first research question, the results indicate that the curriculum better prepared the pre-service art educators to perform effectively and incorporate social justice concerns in their own classrooms. Critical pedagogy can broaden the minds of educators, not only in regard to the classroom but in regard to larger context of the goals of the educational system and society. At the educational level, lessons like those conducted in this study may help to develop better outcomes for both teachers and students. Such lessons prepare teachers with critical tools that not only help to develop their abilities as classroom teachers but that offer a new vision for educational practice. The vision of local educators is important for educational organizations, where evidence-based approaches can enhance classroom practice and be adapted to the conditions of different social locations. In addition, training students with critical skills can create better outcomes in their school performance and post-secondary success.

How Can Pre-Service Art Teachers Use Art Making to Develop an Identity Sensitive to Social Justice Issues?

After the discussions and classroom activities relating to social justice issues took place, the students were required to respond to the experience through an artistic inquiry—demonstrating their unique understandings of social justice art and develop their identities as socially just art educators. The students were asked to select one of the social topics we discussed in our sessions, create an artwork stemming from their interests or a personal experience, and incorporate social engagement that influences social reform. The goal of this assignment was to help students practically understand the function of art as a powerful instructional tool, as well as to give them an opportunity to explore a personal interest, develop their own identities, and share their personal discoveries with peers. The group critiques were

designed to shed light on the art inquiry process to enhance students' voices and give them a forum to express their beliefs and values. I hoped that the open conversation structure would enable students to more readily recognize their different backgrounds and encourage mutual acceptance. Below I revisit several representative student experiences from Chapter 4 and discuss how these students used art to develop identities sensitive to social justice issues. Following these individual examples, I discuss the group critique format as a valuable tool in both developing artwork and identity in pre-service art educational contexts.

Rose: The Feminism Definition Struggle

The recent active response of feminists (male and female) to the inauguration of Donald Trump as U.S. president, had a great impact on one of the students in the class. Rose struggled with the overwhelming response to the Women's March in January 2017. While many professors and students in our department participated, and encouraged participation in the march, Rose remained silent. She did not wish to participate along with her peers because she felt an inner conflict that prevented her from accepting the complicated meanings—from her point of view—of the new feminism movement. Yet, Rose had a chance to release her frustrations through the art making inquiry project. She was nervous in the beginning about sharing her divergent view, but explained that feminists advocated for a pro-choice approach to abortion and she was not convinced that anyone should have the choice to kill a fetus. She bravely shared her view with the class as she shared her dilemma: she believed that abortion should not be legal and preferred to take a pro-life stance.

The students listened respectfully and began to analyze the problem as they discussed the Women's March and the role of the media. Clara brought to Rose's attention that the media played a big role in shaping the portrayal of the Women's March and focused on pro-choice to

the exclusion of pro-life participants. Clara shared her own experience as a participant and noted that it was not about advocating pro-choice but all standing together for human rights. Additionally, Dr. Sara Shields clarified that the definition of feminism is not rigid but includes many perspectives. Rose recognized from this discussion the role of media in imposing ideas about certain political and social concepts like feminism. Rose now had an opportunity to engage in making art as an investigatory process—one involving a deeper exploration of her identity and a broader vision as she engaged in societal inquiry.

When Rose began to think about how to depict her confusion she chose to make a black and white film set in a forest. Her choice of the place and the black and white effect signified a return to the real meaning of feminism. The black and white effect conveyed a feeling of times long gone and the forest represented nature. The scenes did not have an end or beginning, but were presented in a circular manner that represented her continuing confusions. In the film a naked woman lies down on a small rug, then moves around and returns to it, then begins to put on multiple layers of fabrics until she becomes overwhelmed and begins to take them off, and then returns to her rug. The rug was a symbol of society and the layers of fabric represented the demands on females.

The short cyclical film was Rose's way of depicting her confusion about society and its continuous demands of women and expectations about who they should be. Rose interrogated who made these definitions and why they should be imposed on women. The film ran in loops to relate the feeling of how we cannot escape from society's pressures. Rose indicated that her artwork was not aimed at finding a solution but was meant to discuss the struggle itself and bring attention to it. In sharing about her art making process Rose elucidated some of the confusions imbedded in her inquiry. Also, as she eventually heard about the inquiries of others in the class,

Rose realized that others feel the same pressures on their identity but from different directions. She wrote in her statement, "I realized this was not just a problem for feminism. Our society is constantly telling us what and who we should be based on genetics and cultural backgrounds."

Rose's artwork was the outcome of her inquiry; she realized more of the aspects of the problem and in her artwork, she expressed them materially. Rose's decision about what to accept or refuse from the feminism definition concept indicated how she worked through the problem and came to a solution. Throughout the class discussion, Rose received support from her peers, giving her confidence in her opinion and encouraging her to continue her inquiry. At the classroom level, Rose motivated us all to question our definitions of feminism: Is feminism one size fits all? Can we accept everything the definition implies? We also questioned media fabrication of concepts. That all these questions were brought forward was an indication of the success of her artwork.

On a micro level, the social action aimed to move students from the feeling of hopelessness to possibility. By providing students with the appropriate tools for the task, teachers give them the opportunity to experience the power of action (Hackman, 2005). On a macro level, Rose gained the courage to take social action in her community. Through the exhibit, she shared her artwork beyond the classroom, as my goal in these sessions was not only to encourage social change at a personal level, but also at a community level. The students' engagement with their communities gave them further insight about their roles in the larger society (Hackman, 2005). In addition, Rose even posted her work on online. See the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Dqk11qGxE0&feature=youtu.be

In the group critique, Rose's discussion highlighted my goal of creating an environment of acceptance for divergent points of view. Rose had the opportunity to release her struggle

through art making, and the disposition of the group, through guidelines established at the start of the class, gave her a chance to explain her point of view without fear of rejection. Her different stance added a new perspective for our class, and even though her classmates had different opinions than hers, they recognized that different perspectives enrich our views. In fact, I was gratified to see that her peers appreciated her courage and supported her divergent stance.

Amy: Challenging the Beauty Norm

Amy wished to interrogate social norms about gender, in particular, the social expectations associated with being female. Amy's inquiry stemmed from her daily life; she argued regularly with her family, who preferred to follow traditional gender norms and wanted her to do so as well. Amy's artwork was in journal form; she created relief prints and multiple paintings and bound them to create a book. She printed a series of social obligations and orders about the female body such as shaving legs or how to sit like a lady. She followed each order by a page that said, "NO." In her journal, she challenged the idea of the typical woman and criticized social expectations as merely unnecessary pressures on females.

Amy depicted her struggle to defend her body choices and reject decisions imposed on her. She indicated that these arguments used to be discouraging for her, after discussing her struggle with the group and accomplishing her artwork she felt empowered and more confident. Further, she wanted to share her experience in the public exhibition because it might inspire others to shed the social pressures they experience and become more confident. Amy's project showed an understanding of social pressure as interrogative artwork that questioned the norm. Thus, the art making was not simply representing a personal story, but re-representing and re-thinking experiences as a method of investigation about identity in relation to the community (Gude, 2009). Her project was typical of social justice art because it directed our attention to

aspects of our everyday lives that we accept or take for granted. Further, at the classroom level, Amy inspired her peers to question the social norms; they encouraged her ideas and liked her final outcome. Beside this journal, Amy was motivated to do a series of journals for the exhibit show.

Lori: Questioning the Norm

Lori had an idea for her artwork that was similar to Amy's. Lori's artwork inquiry took a different turn on gender norms, however. Like Amy, she discussed the social expectations about the female body, but she was more interested in the segregation of male and female expectations. As watercolor paintings, she made a series of female body parts emphasizing the appearance of body hair, a way of challenging the expectation that women should be different than men. Yet, Lori's challenge was not about the female body in particular, but about the issues surrounding gender separation. She sought to produce a dialogue to question and discuss how and why these different gender rules exist.

Lori's interest was motivated recently, when she began to look critically at the differences in behavioral expectations based on gender as well as separations between genders. She wanted to bring our attention to issues we might take for granted, which I believe arose for her as she engaged in the readings, peer discussions, and the analytic assignments. She mentioned when the notion of the "pink tax" came up in the visual culture assignment she was curious about why this gender gap in products and social lives exists.

Lori's artwork conveyed her realizations about unspoken codes related to gender norms. Her artwork questioned familiar aspects of our everyday lives, opening up a dialogue about issues may take for granted. Lori questions extended to the separation of genders, the definition of feminism, and the female body, and revealed how the students were inspired by and learned

from each other. I found similarities between the questions students posed throughout our assignment discussions, critique discussions, and readings discussions—questions about feminism, the gender gap, the female body, and gendered social expectations. The collective thinking that our group inspired as small democratic community occurred in the process of trying to reach mutual understandings.

Julia: Undervalued Sex

Julia's artwork reflected her experiences as a mother and a teacher. In her artwork, she discussed gender roles and in general, indicated that she perceived many expectations of women. Julia pointed to the multiple jobs inside and outside the home to which women are obligated, including the significant role they play in raising our young generations. She asserted that despite the extensive responsibilities put on women, they have been ignored throughout history and considered an inferior sex. Julia depicted an armless women standing next to decorative wallpaper, a critique of the notion that women are incapable and merely a decorative domestic item. In addition, she painted apples on the decorative wallpaper to signify the historical mythology around blaming women for the ills of the world. Julia aimed to question how far this historic view has changed in our era, writing, "Women are still blamed and vilified as in the biblical story of Adam and Eve and countless other narratives and myths from history."

Julia's work revealed her sense that this vision of women still exists in our society today, illustrated, for example, by how women are paid less for the same work as men. Julia's artwork recalled her memories of experiences in her life by rethinking and re-experiencing these thoughts. She highlighted critical views about the unfairness women must deal with in their lives, questioning whether women have equal rights in our modern era and discussing the deceptive notion that women have more freedom now than ever before. Julia asserted, women have more

responsibilities than ever, which limit their freedoms. Women now have double jobs: running a household and nurturing a career alongside men who consider them an inferior sex who should work for less money. Julia's deep insights stemmed from her life experiences and benefited everyone in the classroom. Her peers recognized the validity of her assertions and saw how gender inequality is camouflaged in different form in our era. Julia highlighted the importance of continually discussing women's rights in order to clarify that women still face a struggle for equality in our modern era.

Group Critiques

The group critique was the key strategy I used to help the pre-service teachers develop greater understanding of and sensitivity to the relationship between their developing identities and social justice issues. As I analyzed the content and process of the group critiques I identified two pertinent themes: (1) art as a medium for acceptance of others and (2) understanding the process. The first theme refers my finding that art and the process of art making can be a valuable tool for exploring oneself and society—a tool that fosters mutual acceptance in the context of a safe environment. The second theme refers to my finding that these pre-service art teachers recognized the importance of the process of art making for their own development as artists and art teachers. In regard to the first theme, the role of a safe environment and art as a tool of exploration are key components.

Art as a Medium for Acceptance

Linda noted that the group critiques not only gave her the opportunity to explore others' perspectives but to explore herself by hearing others' opinions about her ideas. She recognized art can be a medium through which to express different values and noted that she discovered a

new viewpoint after hearing from her closest friend, Rose. Linda felt that because Rose had the opportunity to release her internal frustrations about her femininity in the group discussion, she opened a controversial argument to discussion from multiple dimensions. Thus, the discussion gave all of us the opportunity to re-think our beliefs. Linda also mentioned Rose's courage in sharing her divergent views. From this experience, Lori realized the importance of creating a safe environment in the classroom to ensure comfort for everyone. She added that it was more productive to have conversation with a person who holds different beliefs than with one who agrees entirely with your side. Additionally, Lori appreciated the art making process discussions because she thought they provided an effective way to exchange ideas. Many students recognized that sharing different perspectives was challenging because they were dealing with opinions inconsistent with their own values. Students concluded it was an opportunity to think outside the box, however, because sharing different perspectives would expand their points of view and broaden their minds. Amy acknowledged, for instance, that she learned to accept others' values even if she did not agree with them. Because the class gave her the opportunity to hear the other side's opinions and explanations, she could better understand other perceptions.

According to Gude (2009), quality art education curriculums encourage democratic dialogue and the sharing of different visions. The artworks enable students to share thoughts and life experiences that develop a greater awareness of self, better recognize the different perceptions of others, and better realize that everyone perceives life differently (Gude, 2009). To expand the democratic aspect of art education, I sought to facilitate dialogue throughout the process of the students' art making inquiries for them to have these kinds of opportunities for deeper understandings of others' perspectives. In doing so, I hoped to cultivate democratic habits

and attitudes by teaching students how to listen to and value others' beliefs, even those beliefs they do not agree with.

The role of a safe environment. Linda noted that she learned from our class experiences that the teacher needs to hear everyone's voice and must cultivate a safe and open environment. Further, the safety of an environment can be strengthened through art making and exploration with others because it creates the opportunity to know one's peers at personal level. Linda mentioned that she learned firsthand in our class the role that a comfortable environment plays in supporting the expression of everyone's views. Linda and Amy hoped to cultivate a safe environment in their own classrooms to encourage all students to engage and express their own thoughts. The students recognized how a safe and comfortable classroom supports students' unique interests and empower students' voices. Rose echoed this notion - that an egalitarian curriculum requires a safe space that ensures freedom of speech and allows students to listen to others' beliefs, understandings, values, and backgrounds. However, creating a safe space is not an easy task. Julia indicated that in the classroom, the teacher represents the authority, which might push students to express what they believe the teacher or majority thinks. Thus, it is necessary that the teacher constantly ensures that each student is comfortable and expresses his or her own truth.

Julia 's comment made me re-think and critically evaluate my lessons. First, I realized that ensuring a safe space does not occur in a single step in the first session, but must constantly be reinforced during each class to guarantee that everyone is comfortable. I saw that some students chose a personal experience for their inquiry project and were motivated in the beginning, but felt less comfortable sharing as they progressed through the process. One of the teacher's important roles is to remind the students that they are not obligated to share and can

make their contributions more abstract to protect their privacy. I also realized that although I had informed the students they would have an opportunity to share their artworks in a public exhibition, some thought the participation was required. For this reason, I recommend that teachers reiterate to students that participation is always optional.

As this theme emerged, I became aware that students recognized the significance of cultivating a safe environment for an equitable curriculum. Certainly, a democracy requires a safe space for disagreement where ideas are open to discussion and the goal is to understand each other's perception. McLaren (1994) contended that solidarity is not about individuals constantly agreeing with each other, but about a mutual understanding and the effort to move closer to common agreement. Because life is not static we need to continuously work toward the betterment of ourselves and our communities. Thus, I believed it was significant for me to actualize a democratic practice in the microcosm of our classroom to give students the opportunity to practice and then think about how to apply these practices in their classrooms or the larger context of the community. Given that the art education classroom can hold different perspectives and value different students' backgrounds I sought to use these qualities to include and empower students' voices in the curriculum. This approach is needed for the development of our field as well.

Art as a tool of exploration. Linda recognized the richness of art; she observed that its ability to hold thoughts, values, and beliefs makes it an appropriate medium through which to prompt critical thinking and act as an instrument for exploration. In examining social justice art, Linda discovered the power of art to help her introspect on a deeper level. She learned more about many topics from this art exploration experience, including race, diversity, and feminism.

Linda noted that she plans to use art as educational tool in her future teaching to help students to explore and express themselves.

Lori indicated that she recognized the many ways that art can serve as a rich educational tool. Lori and Mary came to understand that art making can be used as an analytic tool and inform students' lives that can help students in their social lives. Shelly noted that exploring social justice art practically inspired her how to use art with her students in future as a social justice instrument. Ann also recognized that she could use art to help students express their thoughts and passions.

The action and contemplation that is fundamental to art making is what distinguishes art as a powerful tool of reflection (Dewhurst, 2011). Through the complexities of creation, the artist synthesizes artistic symbols, re-thinking about a topic, living with it, thinking about it, and finally, finding an artistic solution. It is not necessary for students to solve a problem, rather it is the process of learning and exploration it is most instructive (Dewhurst, 2011).

Going through the experience of art making and critical analysis in our classroom broadened the pre-service teachers' minds and gave them further practical insight about art's functionality and benefits. Students realized the power of art as an analytical and educational tool for learning and exploration. After this experience, many students planned to utilize art on deeper level in their teaching. My lessons gave the pre-service teachers the opportunity to experience and master tools they can transfer to their students. Additionally, the benefit of equipping pre-service art teachers with critical tools is that it gave them the chance to avoid following a routine curriculum and be flexible in creating their own educational material.

Understanding the Process

Many students reported that sharing the art making process benefited them. Linda, Rose, Lori, and Ann enjoyed the experience of different ways and styles of processing art making. This gave them further insights into a variety of concepts and art methods. Lori and Linda indicated the midway process discussions allowed them to benefit from peers' feedback when they felt stuck. The discussions provided a variety of opinions and helped them to translate their ideas properly through the artwork. The group discussion feedback gave students better insight about aesthetics by strengthened some ideas and avoid the weaknesses.

The students in this experience appreciated the art making process because it reinforced meaningful learning and emphasized the concept. Lori understood that the learning process is more important than the physical result of it because the critique discussions was the product of learning as well. Shelly and Clara, also, appreciated the inspiring discussions through the artmaking. They thought this provided productive discussions better than focusing only on the quality of art product.

The group discussions about the art making process gave Clara better insight about the complexity of aesthetic sensibilities. Throughout the process, Clara's thoughts developed because of discussions sparked many ideas with peers. Shedding light on the process allowed her to deeply understand her art and her own thinking. Mary also found the focus on the art making process raised students' awareness not only in their process but also the process of others. This process developed students' insight of the complexity of the aesthetic.

By highlighting the art making process through the group discussions, students recognized the significance of the process in shaping the result. They valued the learning that took place during the discussions of the art making, and recognized these discussions were the

product of learning alongside the art product. Social justice art should focus on both method and form (Felshin, 1995). One of the qualities of social justice art is reinforcing meaningful art, which in turn increases higher thinking skills and avoids passive learning. Through their conceptual art, students became active and engaged in their own learning.

After their experience of art as a medium for acceptance, the pre-service teachers in this study learned a practical lesson about the realization of social justice education in the classroom, helping them to see what it actually looks like. By enhancing theoretical learning through application, the curriculum helped pre-service teachers become more sensitive to the ways in which they can frame social, gender, and cultural differences and support minorities in the classroom. This expanded understanding will not only enhance their teaching in their classrooms and potentially enhance their students' educational outcomes at a larger level.

Preparing art teachers to incorporate social justice issues in their classrooms -is an important endeavor for art education as well as for the entire educational system. By and large, individuals in underserved populations do not have the same educational opportunities or access to educational benefits as other, more privileged students (Apple & Beane, 1995). Educators who are more aware of social inequities can provide a better chance for students to enhance their education, and give minorities more chances to achieve success in their society. Thus, when we prepare more effective social justice educators we create the conditions for better outcomes for students and for the society at large.

I faced some challenges in the application of my project in these three sessions. I discuss these challenges in the next section to help educators who may be interested in applying this study to their particular contexts. I hope in this section to provide a clear and more reliable vision

of the difficulties they could face. Additionally, I offer a brief critical self-reflection discussing some of the limitations of the study.

Challenges

Teaching social justice in general was not an easy task. Educators need to understand the challenges they will face before they begin. In my case, because of the teaching context, many potential problems were avoided. First, the number of participants was convenient; there were 12 individuals of an academic level and age that gave them experience that facilitated my teaching. Additionally, my participants already were self-motivated to engage in SJE. They chose this program because it contained this emphasis and shared similar experiences with SJE in other courses. It is important, then, that educators consider the number and backgrounds of the participants.

In drawing conclusions from the data, I sought to translate the challenges associated with social justice into the successes that emerged from the class experience. My intention was to acknowledge our differences and face uncomfortable experiences, while at the same time encouraging acceptance and mutual understanding. Most of the students engaged in this challenging experience and realized my teaching/learning goals for them. My recommendation for educators who are interested in this strategy is to be aware of sensitive moments and try to direct them in a positive way, otherwise the class sentiment could flip negatively. For instance, in the moments after a student has the courage to express a different belief from others, the teacher should give encouragement to the student and ensure that everyone respects his or her opinions. If minority students' opinions are not taken seriously, this lesson will be a racist rather than democratic exercise in which the teacher encourages mainstream influences and ignores minority perspectives.

In the first lesson, I faced the thin line between motivating and depressing students. Yet, in order to recognize the importance of the social justice mission of the class the students need to understand and learn about disparities and injustice in our society. These topics could create a feeling of hopelessness and powerlessness among students. In fact, when students watched the video and saw the social class disparities many became very emotional. Though I worried in the beginning, I considered this response to be a sign of their level of engagement. Accordingly, I attempted to direct their engagement in a positive direction by encouraging them to search for reasons for the social problems and find solutions. My recommendation is for educators to move students away from hopelessness to pro-active by reminding them that their position as teachers gives them the privilege of power.

One of the unanticipated challenges I faced in the classroom occurred when Clara chose to work with a very personal experience. Clara unexpectedly went through a difficult time during the art making process. She recalled bad experiences that had caused her difficulties, and in the process of self-dialogue she began to think of artmaking activity as annoying process or one geared toward rationalization and acceptance. However, she indicated that the artwork symbolized these bad experiences and put them outside rather than inside her. Thus, her artmaking became a kind of release these bad experiences. Though Clara wondered what type of information she would share because her stories were very personal, another classmate, Teresa, advised her that she has the right to protect herself and I suggested to she choose what was best for her and what she feel comfortable with. Dr. Sara suggested that Clara abstract her thoughts and focus on displaying the process of the story, rather on the story itself. Clara liked the suggestions, and she felt more comfortable with abstracting her ideas.

Sharing personal experiences is never an easy task, and this was the very sensitive part of this assignment. The teacher should be careful to pay close attention to students when they are struggling with sharing, teacher's role to advise them to choose comfortable information. In Clara's situation, Dr. Sara helped her to turn her project toward more of a healing process, thus avoiding a frustrating process, by highlighting the importance of the process rather than the content of the experience itself.

Critical reflection. During the first three classes I taught, I recognized that one student mostly kept silent. I wondered if she was comfortable with the topic or if she had a different opinion than others in our discussions. During our one-on-one interview, I had the chance to ask her directly about the reason for her silence. First, she indicated that SJE is not going to be her main objective but would be a part of the curriculum, as she is more interested in exploring other topics in art such as how to use art materials along with it. She stated, "I don't want my classroom to be a protest against a lot of topics if that makes any sense." Then she continued and admitted that she felt powerless; I understood from her words that she was depressed by current political events and felt that good practices often are overridden no matter what. She stated, "I mean just like the whole Betsy DeVos, like it just seems we are override no matter what. It seems we are overrun by people who are higher up." I tried to clarify for her that the teacher's mission is not to solve problems directly, but to focus on the process of learning. I remind her that the tools I gave in my lessons were for awareness and action for our students, because awareness and hope are the first steps toward making a change. In the last group critique, I raised these points again with the students.

From this interview, I realized two important points I needed to highlight with my students. First, the pre-service teachers needed to understand that we were not solving a current

political or economic problem, but that the lessons focused on raising their awareness about their rights and encourage them to engage with their society. Such engagement is a political action in itself.

Secondly, I realized in what ways my project was not democratic. As a teacher, I have the power and the authority to choose the topics that I think it are important. Though I gave my students a lot of space for discussion and analysis, and encouraged them to choose a topic of personal interest, still I was the one who chose the SJE topic. Similarly, pre-service teachers need to realize their power within their classrooms as they try to balance their curriculum in a way that satisfies different the interests and experiences of their students. This brings me to another limitation of my lessons: that I only had three sessions in which to cover complex social justice issues. I addressed this limitation by focusing only on SJE.

This research experience led me on a long journey to explore what democracy is and how I can apply it in my classroom. I searched relevant academic literature to find an appropriate philosophy that would enable me to frame my teaching with democratic values as well promote these values through action. I found interesting literature that approached democracy from different perspectives. After my experience in the application of my curriculum, I formed my own understanding of democracy. In the educational setting of the classroom, I attempted to create mutual understanding and agreement as well as acceptance of disagreements. Democracy in the classroom is not agreement with the majority, but honoring minorities with different beliefs who may not otherwise have the courage to show their divergence from the mainstream. In fact, ignoring minority perspectives is a symptom of racism.

I chose the practitioner research method instead of the observer method because the actual practice gave me greater insight into the limitations and the possibilities of my curriculum,

to develop better pedagogical improvement. In particular, the results of the study informed my abilities as an educator and showed me how to make my teaching and lessons development even better. Based on the findings, I wrote a list of recommendations that practitioners, teachers, and pre-service teachers can apply to improve their teaching, keeping in mind that the applications must be suited to the particulars of academic level and classroom conditions and settings.

Recommendations

I developed the following recommendations based on the findings of this research and the basic structures on which I built my lessons. The recommendations highlight the strongest pedagogical features that in turn lead to the best applications, and avoid some of the limitations that I faced in my actual practice. The following recommendations can be appropriate for pre-service teachers as well for undergrad students. The recommendations can also be applied for K-12 art education by using more appropriate materials and teaching strategies suitable for the age level.

- My first recommendation that the teacher spends sufficient time for preparing the topic. This style of teaching is a student-centered curriculum that needs much effort of planning and less effort in teaching, where the topic is more to incorporate students' opinions, background, and vantage points.
- The participants need preparation before they begin their art making inquiry. First introduce the target topic through readings, popular culture, and discussion. At the college level, students need to prepare with relevant readings. The younger students can learn from visuals or popular culture.

- Consider the art making project as an inquiry journey where the participants will explore issues about themselves in relation to their surroundings. The participants need the space and freedom to discuss their own interests and values.
- Link the discussion to relevant popular culture references related to the participants' age, such as news, visual culture, TV shows, songs, and film etc., aiming to relate the discussion to the participants' lives and motivate their interest.
- To enrich the art making inquiry, enlarge the participants' background about the topic. For example, if discussing gender, the participants need to read and search about gender through readings or discuss popular culture references. At the college level, the participants can be assigned to do the popular culture analysis by themselves.
- Give examples of art making inquiries, such as contemporary social justice art. Doing so broadens students' minds and inspires their thinking. At the college level, the participants can be assigned to do the analysis of the contemporary art by themselves.
- Prompt participant thinking by asking open-ended questions about social topics, facilitating meaningful discussions, connecting the participants with recent social issues. Aim to motivate students' inner drive in searching about his or her interest.
- It is recommended for participants at the college level to reflect on the readings visually to ensure they participate in sharing their perspectives and to prepare them for the bigger project of the art making. Students at the younger level can reflect visually after the discussion.

- To begin the art making inquiry, give the participants helpful guidelines and questions. Ask them to relate the experience to their interest and their backgrounds and elaborate on the type of exploration. This guide can be the evaluation for their artwork.
- Divide the art making discussion into at least three phases. Discuss the attention, mid-process, and outcome phases. Be sure to give students adequate and equal time to discuss their artwork. A timer is useful.
- Prompt students' thinking with questions throughout their art making discussions. This will encourage the participants to go deeper in their inquiry. Encourage all the participants to engage in this discussion to support their peers.
- You can make smaller group discussions between the participants to develop their ideas and encourage interaction.
- Help the artist with his or her idea and encourage all others to do so. In this way, you are encouraging collective thinking and engaging the participants with each other, even if they have different values.
- Be sure to constantly create a safe environment, reminding the students they are not obligated to share personal information. Also, be sure that everyone respects each other's values and the role of the safe environment in creating optimal outcomes.
- Be sure the participants have sufficient time between the art making discussions to allow them to think about their project and for art creation.
- If you engage students in a public exhibition, ensure students their participation in exhibition is optional. Doing so promotes a sense of the power of choice.

I enjoyed the teaching experience on which these recommendations are based because it involved teaching as a systematic experimental inquiry that required a lot of reflective observation. When teachers take these steps to diagnose a problem, investigate it and record their observations, they will avoid repeating mistakes or become stuck in a routine but uninspiring curriculum. I encourage educators who interested in these recommendations to first gather systematic reflective observations to inform how to best facilitate application given their unique classroom conditions.

Future Research

The focus of my study was enhancing students' sensitivity to social justice issues through art making inquiry. My direction was greatly influenced by Gude (2007; 2008; 2009) and Dewhurst (2010; 2011; 2013; 2014). Gude explored art making as a practice that reinforces democratic values and generates meaning, while Dewhurst focused on dissecting the qualities of social justice art to provide better art liberation tools. From my experience, the art making phases on which I focused in my research contained transformation moments for students, just as Dewhurst (2014) asserted in her book. She encouraged researchers to do more empirical studies to explore this educational phenomenon; my aim was to do so as well as engage the students in an intimate dialogue that would enhance their acceptance and tolerance. Additionally, I am interested in applying this research in a totally different context in Kuwait, where students have no background in SJE and hold non-Western belief systems. In my future research, I intend to examine differences in the results of the same project but different contexts.

Based on this study of art education teaching and self-development through practitioner research, I identified several potential questions for future research. These questions highlight important ideas that need further research and development to improve the art education field:

1. What would the application look like in different contexts, such as with different numbers of participants, in different social locations, and with individuals with different belief systems?
2. What thoughts, feelings, and behaviors do students experience in the process of social justice art making during social justice art inquiry process?
3. How can in-class discussion of the art making process serve as a vehicle for enhancing acceptance and tolerance in students?
4. How does the art making inquiry process for social justice art act as a lens for self-learning—learning by oneself?
5. To what extent do popular culture references facilitate learning and self-learning in the art education field?
6. How does the critical phase inherent in the art making process develop students' learning and engagement?
7. How do we continue to raise pre-service art teachers' sensitivity to social justice issues through practical learning about social justice art?
8. How do we continue using the qualities of social justice art to help students develop their critical thinking, self-empowerment, and social engagement?
9. To what extent do social justice art courses impact pre-service teachers and improve their future teaching?

Conclusion

In my view, some of the most basic educational goals of any teacher should be helping students to care more about humanity and see how they can play a role in improving societal conditions. Many aspects of art education lend themselves to such educational goals and in my

art teaching, my target always has been to see myself in this larger context, that is, serving and improving the social conditions of my community. In this practitioner research project, my effort was to build on qualities inherent in art and art making and put theories into practice for the sake of individual and community growth. Having the opportunity to work with pre-service art teachers was my pleasure, because the benefits I wish to impart are doubled once they are transferred to their students. My focus was on arming pre-service art teachers with lasting tools and knowledge for their professional advancement, not least of which were individualized learning experiences and a sense of self-determination.

With the group of smart independent individuals who composed the class, I felt I did not do a lot to teach them, but spent more time and effort preparing the class sessions and building a prominent literature and philosophical framework from which to construct coherent, purposeful, and rich lesson content. In addition, I focused on developing myself as a practitioner and improving the structure of the lessons. Therefore, my personal goals and role in directing my participants peacefully to the targets guided the development of the curriculum. I put my mind to seeing *how they perceived* the knowledge, not *how I wanted them* to take it. In other words, I relied on the students to conduct much of their own learning themselves.

In searching the art education literature, I focused both on strengths and weaknesses; I sought to fill the gap and expand the strengths of art education. The gap was the limitation in art education textbooks, most of which isolated minority groups and focused on one-dimensional mainstream influences (Acuff, 2013). For this reason, I created a student-centered curriculum that would include all students' voices, with the lesson strategies focused on creating dialogue, sharing perspectives, and working together. To enrich student participation, I utilized the quality

of art education to expand the strength and build up from previous literature to enhance this quality.

The students were at the center of their own learning, with my role to bring the appropriate educational materials and applied strategies. My effort was to broaden the students an insight into the topic of each class session by understanding the topic from different angles. My strategies were: (1) to assign and prepare suitable readings to enrich their discussions, (2) to require students to reflect visually and share their perspectives on each topic, (3) to employ an example from society with the readings discussion, (4) to relate the discussion with students' social lives and motivate them to find solutions, (5) to assign students to analyze references from popular culture and contemporary art, and finally (6) to engage the students in inquiry research as a final outcome and master the use of art as an instrument for social change.

In addition, I found that the group critiques enhanced students' inquiry research and engaged them as members of a small community full of support and encouragement. By stimulating students' interest and valuing their perspectives, the class activities moved students to do more research and exploration. Also, the class sessions focused on recent issues that may affect students' identities and views about themselves, giving them an opportunity to respond to these forces. All these features of the classes enhanced their identities and empowered their voices as unique individuals.

It was a pleasure to work with and observe such an intelligent group of art educator leaders. Consistent with my belief in the unique value of each individual, I found that I only needed to push each student a bit to find his or her interest. This experience only reinforced my core pedagogical belief: when we provide students with the right tools, they will find their way to actively engage and participate in their learning and communities.

APPENDIX A

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM LETTER

Office of the Vice President For Research
Human Subjects Committee
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742
(850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM
Date: 01/13/2017
To: Fatemah Alazmi
Dept.: ART EDUCATION
From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair
Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
Art Education as Means of Promoting Democracy

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the research proposal referenced above has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Committee at its meeting on 01/11/2017 Your project was approved by the Committee.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 01/10/2018 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request

renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing, any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: Sara Shields, Advisor

HSC No. 2016.19218

APPENDIX B

FSU BEHAVIORAL CONSENT FORM

Fatemah Alazmi Art Education Department

FSU Behavioral Consent Form

Art Education as Means for Social Justice

You are invited to be in a research study about social justice art education and pre-service art teachers. You were selected as a possible participant because you are enrolled in a course with Dr. Sara Scott Shields. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Fatemah Alazmi, doctoral candidate in Art Education Department at Florida State University.

Major Professor: Sara Scott Shields Assistant Professor, Department of Art Education skshields@fsu.edu (850) 644-2312

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to examine and explore art making as an educational tool for active engagement in social justice issues. Students will be involved in critical thinking activities that explore art education through raising awareness and thinking reflectively. Students will actively engage in social action at the classroom and community level through making and exhibiting artwork. My studies specialized in social justice issues and social reform through utilizing art education capacities.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to share the following things over the course of a six-week-long period:

1. The first three lectures will combine readings, activities, and discussions about social justice art, follow up with another three-week 30-minute group critique (about the artwork project) in the beginning of the class. These will be documented through videotaping and will be recorded in a teacher/researcher secured laptop *

2. Critical thinking and art making activities (visual journal entries and artwork). Throughout the six weeks, these will be documented through videotaping and photographs of student work *

3. Follow up written reflections exploring or discussing the artwork project. This will be

documented in the field notes in a teacher/researcher secured laptop *

4. Students will exhibit their artwork in a gallery space.*

5. At the end of the of the program there will be a 30-45 minute interview to explore student perceptions of the overall lessons such as discussions and activities. The goal of the interview is to explore outcome of the implemented lesson *

Please note these activities are already a part of normal class activities, participation in the study simply allows me to collect copies of these to use in this research study.

Risks and benefits of being in the Study:

While there is a low potential for risk, discomforts or stresses are possible. Potential discomforts or stresses may occur when sharing personal experiences through reflections or artwork. To ensure this discomfort is minimized students will be able to withhold assignments or facets of assignments that are uncomfortable or too personal.

To minimize risks, participants will be encouraged to only reveal what they are comfortable revealing in their coursework. If any participants write or create something that they do not wish to be included as data, they can withhold these documents in whole or in part, if discomfort is detected.

The benefit to participants is the possibility for raising awarenesses about identity and social realities through decoding everyday life visuals, media, and products. The participants will engage in art making activities as a way of learning and shaping new understanding about themselves and their communities. At the same time, students will have the opportunity to express their interests, opinions, and backgrounds. Participation in this alternative mode of learning has potential to use art as a way of emphasizing self-governance, developing a responsible viewpoint, and developing the self as an active societal change agent.

Compensation:

You will not receive payment for participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private and confidential to the extent permitted by law. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it

possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

These consent forms will not be shared with the researcher until the conclusion of the course. Once the course has ended, an outside faculty member will disclose participants to the researcher. Once participants are identified, the investigator will assign a code/identifier, since artifacts will come from course assignments, students' names will be on the artifacts. These identifiers will be obscured when the artifacts are digitally scanned or photographed, and a code will be applied to the artifact. The data will not be labeled with any individually identifiable information (name, SSN, school ID, address, phone number, email, etc); however, the data will be labeled with a code that the researcher can link to an individual (pseudonym). Paper records and electronic records will be used; however, these records will be secured in a locked container in a locked room and the coded data files will be maintained on a password-protected computer.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or submit any work and withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Fatemah M. Alazmi. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the FSU IRB at 2010 Levy Street, Research Building B, Suite 276, Tallahassee, FL 32306-2742, or 850-644- 8633, or by email at humansubjects@fsu.edu

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

_____ Signature and Date _____ Printed Name

FSU Human Subjects Committee approved on 01/12/2017, void after 04/12/2017. HSC #2016.19218

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Career aspiration

To be an artist and art educator allows me to understand myself and my community, Arts is human production that we construct our experiences, perspectives, and our voices. Art is a rostrum of liberty where we can speak our opinions. Thus art for me is a social instrument for democracy and social action.

Work Experience

- September 11-June 12, Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT)

Position: Graduate Assistant & Assistant in Gallery (R) in RIT.

Responsibilities: Assisted in painting and sculpture classes beside assistant curator in Gallery (R).

- March 05-May 10, Kuwait University, Art & Design Department

Position: Teacher Assistant

Responsibilities:

  - Assisting in survey classes such as: (Art appreciation, Contemporary Art, Professional artist, Medieval Art and more).
  - Assisting in studios such as: (Painting, Drawing, and Printmaking).
  - Arranging exhibitions and gallery curator.

- February 2000-June 2000, Nusseibeh School for Girls, Kuwait

Position: Middle School Art Teacher Grade 4-8.

Responsibilities: Teaching all levels for the middle school, students learn different skills, crafts, and techniques in art, such as drawing, mix media, print making, and fashion design.

- September 2000-March 05, Qurtuba High School, Kuwait

Position: High School Art Teacher Grade 9-12

Responsibilities: Teaching two levels, beginners and advance classes for painting and drawing skills and techniques, in addition the course include art history

- 1999-2003, Teacher in several organizations dedicated to fine arts Such as: Kuwait Arts association, and Institute of Fine Arts, Kuwait

Personal Profile

- Energetic, social, and enthusiastic artist and educator, I believe in: Democracy and social justice, Multicultural education, and I believe in action and put theories in practice.
- Passionate about the education message and it role of social reform and building individuals and societies.
- Excellent skills: an active artist local and international.
- Believe in art as social action instrument and mediation to accept our differences.
- Interested in politics, economic, religions and how they are effect on education polices.
- Curious to explore different culture, building new relationships, and non-stop learning.

Education

2013-2017 Florida State University. PhD Art Education

2010-2013 Rochester Institute of Technology, MFA. NY, Rochester

1997-1999 The Public Authority for Applied Education & Training- College of Basic Education, Kuwait, BA/BFA Art Education, Minor Interior Design

Exhibitions:

Selected Exhibitions in USA:

- Jan 2014 Cultural Exchange Exhibition, 621 Gallery, Tallahassee, FL.
- Jan 2013 Fluidity (Juried Exhibit) NY, Rochester. (Winning in Jury choice)
- Jul 2012 Graduate Exhibition, NY, Rochester
- Feb2012 Redefining PCP Exhibit, NY, Rochester
- Jan 2012 CIAS Faculty & Student Invitational Exhibition.
- Dec 2011 Solo Exhibition in College of Business in RIT.
- Dec 2011 Annual Members Exhibitions in Contemporary Art Center.

- Dec 2011 Carving Ice (public art), Rochester NY.
- Sep 2011 Solo exhibition in Show Case, Imaging Art and Science.
- May 2010 Benefit Auction, Rochester NY.
- Mar 2010 Here and there exhibit, Rochester NY.

Selected Exhibitions in Kuwait: 1993-2010, Participated in over 20 exhibitions.

- 1993 Mutual exhibitions for applied Institutes. (Winning in Jury choice)
- 1997 The First Exhibit for College of Education
- 2001 The Thirtieth Year for Liberation Exhibition
- 2002 The Eighth Al-Qurin Exhibit for Kuwait Fine Arts
- 2009 Biennale Kharafi
- 2009 Annual Spring Exhibition. (Winning in Jury choice)