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Middle school students' perceptions of multicultural education in visual art education

by

Heather Marie Miller

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Education

Program of Study Committee:  
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Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2002

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This is to certify that the master's thesis of

Heather Marie Miller

has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signatures have been redacted for privacy

**DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to

Thomas and LaMona Miller

Thank you for supporting my goals and helping me become the person I am today. It was your model of work ethic that taught me I could accomplish this goal. I love you.

Thank you.

and to

Halden Martin, Holly Baker, Joe Baker, Hadley Martin, and Kris Piazza

You have taught me life lessons that only big brothers and big sisters can teach. Thank you for not only being my family, but also my friends.

I love you.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The importance of addressing multiculturalism in general education was brought to public attention by the civil rights movement in the 1950s, desegregation in the 1950s and 1960s, and in the women's movement during the 1960s and 1970s (McCormick, 1994). Since, the Supreme Court decision concerning civil rights was made in 1954 with the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, it has been assumed that desegregation would improve the school experience for children from diversified backgrounds. Unfortunately, the emergence of a diversified curriculum to support students' learning did not appear in educational institutions until the early 1970s, when, for the first time, there were requests and even demands for the inclusion of histories and cultures of people other than those of the European American mainstream (Walling, 2001).

The first multicultural programs were designed to address the concerns of African-American, Hispanic American, and women students, (black studies, Chicano studies, and women's studies) (McCormick, 1994). These programs have developed into comprehensive programs open to all, and are now required of education students in many higher education institutions. In visual arts education there is a rich opportunity for multicultural inclusiveness, which currently includes multicultural education as a national standard. In teaching multicultural art education, educators help build a sense of personal dignity in all students. According to Chalmers (1996) the main goals of art education in a multicultural society should be"

...to foster an understanding of art from the perspectives of a variety of cultures, to enhance understanding of other cultures, to demonstrate for

students that art is an important part of all human activity, and to promote social change. (p. 9)

In the 1970s, government had supported the arts and worked to keep art education in schools. However, in the present day, many universities do not have a class that is required for art education students to take that focuses on multicultural issues in the K-12 classroom. Chalmers (1996) explains how cultural diversity in art education can be taught in several varied and ambiguous ways:

Only a few programs have emphasized commonalities across cultures by showing how art reflects the meanings that cultural groups give to their actions. Often attempts at multicultural art education have been little more than superficial; for example, students “copy” art forms from other cultures—the totem-poles-out-of-toilet-rolls approach. Multicultural art education should not be viewed simply as a response to a “problem”. Multicultural art education provides students with positive ways to deal with art and life under any circumstances. Respecting our differences and by celebrating what we have in common, we who make up this culturally diverse society can hold it together. We may be from different ethnic groups and have different social and economic backgrounds, religions, genders, ages, occupations, sexual orientations, and so on, but in our reasons for making art, for exhibiting and using art, there is much that unites us. (pp. 2-4)

Multicultural art education offers students the ability to see their own positionality in relationship to the rest of the world. By teaching about multicultural issues through art, we

can teach students about a truthful, complex, and diverse version of our history, in order to allow for social change in the present.

### Statement of the Problem

We perpetuate positions of dominance when we teach students isolated information about people of diverse cultures. Multicultural education needs to extend to all areas of the curriculum in order for all students to receive equity in education. A major goal of our schools should be to prepare young people for the future, by helping them to live in an increasingly multicultural world.

In the area of K-12 art education curricula, non-mainstream concerns are still left as adjunct subjects taught on special occasions. For example, African-American art is taught during Black History month in February, or, Hispanic art is taught during festivities of Cinco de Mayo (Chanda, 1992). Similarly, women's art typically is only taught during Women's History month (McCormick, 1994). This may cause students to conclude that issues of multiculturalism do not concern them, therefore, when moments arise where the students could act as "change agents" to help diminish acts on fellow students that are hurtful or hateful in nature, instead they walk away. Students and teachers alike will be able to produce changes within the school environment with adequate understandings of multicultural issues and their effects on a learning environment. To simply add-on lessons concerning diverse peoples is not going to produce the change needed. Instead, this type of uninformed education can have almost an opposite effect. For example as Curtis (1998) stated,

....starting at a 'flavor of the month' (Black History, Women's History) has merit; ending there is ghettoization. We perpetuate positions of dominance if we settle for cultural safaris designed to give students occasional 'sightings' of the exotic. (p. 2)

### Purpose of the Research

The educational objectives presented in the literature review provide the foundation for the statement of the problem to be addressed in this study. It is the researchers belief that we must be sure our curriculum is reinforcing the celebration and appreciation of all people involved in the educational setting. The purpose of this research was to conduct a qualitative study of the perceptions of middle school art students regarding their learning environment. Students were asked to express, in confidence, their thoughts, feelings, and concerns about the state of multiculturalism in their school environment.

### Methodology

Qualitative research techniques were utilized to gather information regarding the students' perceptions of multicultural education at Miller Middle School in Marshalltown, Iowa. Qualitative research was chosen due to its capability to establish a broad array of data and to allow a personal relationship between the researcher and her research. In qualitative research, the research evolves according to the directions indicated during the interactions within the questioning process. This method allows the research to be free of overly restrictive boundaries and to address various research aspects that will contribute to the findings. In contrast, quantitative research is more rigid and maintains that the researcher stay focused on a very specific route to certain findings (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992). Quantitative

research does not allow the researcher to take many perspectives into consideration.

Qualitative research allows themes to emerge from the environment and the participants to influence the direction the research takes while maintaining a general focus.

The participants consisted of three 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes within the middle school. This research was conducted as a qualitative study looking at the students' perceptions of multicultural art education in their own environment. Using the qualitative study approach allowed me to collect relevant information from the students in order to determine their perceptions of what is occurring in the art education program.

### Limitations

The intention of specific survey and interview questions of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at Miller Middle School, was to provide a clearer understanding of where multiculturalism is lacking, or more optimistically, where it is enriching the school environment. This study's focus was on the students' perceptions of the learning environment. This research did not look at the faculty and staff's perceptions of the environment. In this study possible limitations include: (1) failure of students to complete the survey (see appendix A), (2) the inability of some participants to answer survey questions honestly and openly, (3) student fear of being held accountable for responses, (4) and the inability of the researcher to conduct interviews in an unthreatened, comfortable setting that would allow for open discussions and the sharing of honest thoughts on multiculturalism as it exists in the middle school setting.

### Significance of the Study

To create equity for all students, the United States' educational system must reflect our national diversity. In order to reflect our nation accurately, schools must incorporate multiculturalism effectively throughout the curriculum. In the past, and to some extent in the present day, the art classroom has been the most popular environment to teach about issues of pluralism and diversity. This idea needs to expand throughout the curriculum in order to make a change. We need to see if current efforts in teaching about multicultural issues are effectively reaching students. This qualitative study examines the students' perceptions of multicultural art education in their school environment.

### Summary

This chapter introduced major historical themes that have greatly influenced multicultural education. Also, in this chapter is an overview of the research problem, the purpose of the research, the methods used, and finally, limitations and significance of the research study. In Chapter 2, the literature on multicultural education in the art classroom is discussed in greater detail. The literature addresses the history of art education and offers clarifications of the 'melting pot' idea. Chapter 2 also explains in greater detail the definitions of multicultural education and multicultural art education. Also included in this chapter is a discussion of why art is important to the curriculum and suggestions for implementing multicultural issues into the art curriculum.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the literature on multicultural education, the history of art education and the definitions of multicultural education and multicultural art education will be defined. This chapter also includes sections concerning why art education is important to the curriculum in general and suggestions of ways to implement multicultural educational strategies and address multicultural issues in the art curriculum.

### Emergence of Self Expression and Creativity in the Curriculum

The emergence of self-expression and creativity in the curriculum was a refreshing change from the earlier objectives of the educational system that emphasized producing individuals that would contribute to the increase in American prosperity. The 1920s has been described as a time of serious cultural conflict. Although there was a rise in social optimism, there was also a rise in intolerance and isolation. With the restrictive immigration laws that were put into place, curricula began to be developed based on “efficiency, economic functionalism, and bureaucratic exigencies.” According to Zimmerman (1997) a specialist in art education, deeper issues of inequities relating race, class and gender, however, were not being addressed. Reacting to the focus on how economics affected education, educators in the late 1930s were greatly influenced by the writings of John Dewey and the Progressive Education movement. According to Dewey, education was a matter of personal growth and should focus on the interrelatedness of individual, school, and society. Educators began finding greater importance in the individual achievement and development of the students. At this point in the educational timeline, noted psychologist and educator Viktor Lowenfeld’s central emphasis on self-expression and creativity emerged, having a large impact on the

world of art education. Lowenfeld's notions quickly became popular and dominated the art education scene for the next five decades (Zimmerman, 1997).

Today, the young people who fill our classrooms are increasingly diverse, which is a reflection of the United States as a whole (Anton-Oldenburg, 2000). According to the most recent figures available from the United States Census Bureau (2000) nearly 8 million new immigrants settled in this country between 1981 and 1990. Recent surveys indicate 34.9% of our population includes people identified as some ethnicity other than Caucasian. This illustrates the diversity of our nation. It is important to recognize that this diversity extends into the classroom. When given opportunities to expand the educational goals to include issues of diversity, students learn that our nation is based on not only differences, but also commonalities. These human commonalities are what guide us to a better understanding of one another.

### Melting Pot or Ajiaco Soup?

The myth that has been promoted by assimilationists is that the United States is a melting pot of people from diverse countries, which should be assimilating into a homogeneous mass. In reality we are a multiethnic society where people of diverse cultures strive to maintain their individuality. Lucy Lippard (1990) describes the important contrast between the 'melting pot', and the more favorable 'salad bowl or ajiaco soup' metaphor of American society:

It has only been recently that the ways different cultures cross and fail to cross in the United States have come under scrutiny. More or less taken for granted for two hundred years, the concept of the monotone melting pot, which



assumed everyone should end up white is giving way to a salad bowl or “ajiaco soup”—the flavorful mix of a Latin American soup in which the ingredients retain their own forms and flavors. This model is fresher and healthier; the colors are varied; the taste is often unfamiliar. The recipe calls for an undetermined simmering period of social acclimation. (p.5)

The latter concept conveys the idea that within society each race, gender, and religion—each person—is important to the society as a whole. We are a mixture of different people, with different individual characteristics unique to each of us as individuals.

### Defining Multicultural Education

Multiculturalism, as I used the term here, is defined as the acknowledgement of all types of cultural diversity. I believe the term should always be approached with care and sensitivity, as no one person can ever truly know another’s culture. “Listening and learning from one another is much more important than telling” (Chalmers, 1996, p.5). Multicultural education has also been defined by Tiedt & Tiedt (2000) as follows:

Multicultural education is an inclusive teaching/learning process that engages all students in (1) developing a strong sense of self-esteem, (2) discovering empathy for persons of diverse cultural backgrounds, and (3) experiencing equitable opportunities to achieve to their fullest potential. (p. 18)

In order to understand what multicultural education means one must reexamine historical thinking, for example, assimilation theory, that has negatively influenced the way multicultural education has developed. The goal of multicultural education is to create a

learning environment that encompasses and develops self-esteem, empathy, and equity for all learners.

### Multicultural Art Education

Recognition of cultural diversity has redirected the educational emphasis from the things that make people alike to things that make us unique. Chalmers (1996) a scholar in the area of multicultural art education, believes art education should:

...include art educational programs, materials, and activities, and student learning in art to promote cross-cultural understanding through the identification of similarities (particularly in the roles and functions of art) within and among cultural groups; recognize, acknowledge, and celebrate racial and cultural diversity in art within our pluralistic society, while also affirming and enhancing pride in each individual's own artistic heritage; and address through all of the art disciplines (including aesthetics, art criticism, art history, and studio production) issues of ethnocentrism, bias, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and racism.  
(p. 8)

In art education this assumption has not completely taken hold. According to Curtis (1998), students are being taught from a Eurocentric frame of reference where education in the arts highlights only the “great masters” of Europe, primarily white, males. The masters selected from art history, such as Monet, Picasso, Matisse, or Renoir are significant; however they do not represent the true diversity of great artists. This assumption of a universal aesthetic has grown out of Eurocentric perspectives of history and art history (Curtis, 1998).

These perspectives only focus on the contributions of Anglo-Europeans, thus ignoring and distorting the contributions of other ethnic groups. According to Curtis (1998), there is still a belief that there is a universal aesthetic, which assumes that all people respond to art, or things of beauty, in the same way.

Current multicultural art education (including National Standards in Art Education) is beginning to change this narrow view. Because students enter our classrooms from increasingly different life experiences, artists and other contributors to our society are being introduced in the art classrooms to our students in order to reflect our global diversity. In teaching students about multicultural achievers they are given opportunities to see a reflection of themselves in what they are learning. Viewing art and artists that are from one dominant group of people, leaves many students feeling unimportant and unworthy.

One way the challenge of multiculturalism in art education can be met would be to focus the curriculum on comparative aesthetics. According to Chanda (1992), comparative aesthetics encourages the practice of viewing and interpreting works of art from multiple perspectives. For example, the Chinese symbol of good luck can be interpreted differently from a western society point of view. The dragon, which is a symbol of good luck to a Chinese student, could be viewed as frightening to a student educated from a western society point of view. This is why it is important to not only study the richness of cultures, but to study these cultures as closely to the source as possible. Only when we reach across cultural divides to celebrate and appreciate one another, will the learning environment have stepped closer to effective multicultural implementation in the active curriculum.

### Why Teach Art?

Art is an asset to us because it enhances our lives. Defined in cross-cultural terms, art addresses the global human need to create beauty and express emotions about the human condition. As art educators, we can help students discover the ways in which art has influenced human development. For example, the pictographs of the cave dwellers, the art of Native Americans, and murals of Mexican artists (Tiedt & Tiedt, 2000).

Art can offer students an environment that allows everyone to express their individual uniqueness. In the past, it has been argued that educational systems that have excluded the arts as a basic component to the curriculum have, as a result, failed some of their most talented students. Lintner (2002) describes the importance of art class for students in our schools:

Art class is one of the few places where students have the opportunity to manipulate materials, to experiment with expressing ideas visually, and to solve problems with multiple potential solutions in a creative way. True, there are a growing number of creative opportunities for students outside the art room, as other departments seek to incorporate “hands-on” experiences in their curricula. But these experiences rely on skills and abilities the students have already developed. It is in the art room that these experiences are guided, providing students with the techniques and structured learning designed to increase their skills, creativity, and in-depth-knowledge. (2002, p. 12)

In addition, students taking art are engaging in more than simply learning about skills, techniques, and developing their creativity. The art classroom is a unique educational setting because students are developing a sense of self and a greater awareness for others.

### Implementing a Multicultural Focus

There are many ways that educators can implement a multicultural focus in art education. James Banks (2001), a leading researcher in the study of multicultural education suggests that one historical reason for the failure of diversity efforts was lack of understanding among educators about how the goals of such movements meshed with the overall goals of the schools. “Teachers may see multicultural education as an appendage to the school’s goals and resist embracing an orientation to schooling they perceive as ephemeral” (Marshall, 1998). Banks describes five dimensions of multicultural education that supports a framework for a diverse curriculum. These dimensions implemented in the art classroom would increase students’ awareness and appreciation for differences, as well as, human commonalities:

**Content Integration**—The use of examples, data, and information from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories in a subject area and/or discipline

**Knowledge Construction**—Instruction designed to help students recognize the various assumptions, frames of reference, biases, and perspectives that undergrid the legitimization of knowledge in the traditional disciplines and the social, behavioral, and natural sciences

**Prejudice Reduction**—Strategies directed toward eradicating prejudice and other forms of discrimination among students while facilitating the development of more democratic attitudes and values as they relate to cultural diversity

**Equity Pedagogy**—Use of techniques and methods (e.g. attending to learning style differences, linguistic diversity, etc.) that facilitate the academic achievement of all students including those from historically oppressed cultural groups

**Empowering School Culture**—The process of restructuring the culture and organization of schools, and reconceptualizing school policies such that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups experience educational equity and cultural empowerment through school experience.

According to Banks (2001), integration of these five dimensions will help break down stereotyping that is prevalent throughout our schools. Eui-Kyung Shin (2001) described what happens when we fail in educating our students about other cultures:

Young students often possess one-dimensional stereotypes about other countries.

When I conducted informal surveys in an American and a Korean classroom, I found that each group had formed stereotypes about the other. For example, many American children thought that every Asian man could do kung fu or karate. Children in Korea believed that every American has a gun. (p. 110)

### Schools and Multicultural Education

Critics of multicultural education believe that education about diversity brings problems to the educational setting. It is believed that teaching children about their racial and ethnic heritage will create practical problems such as, predominantly African American schools will learn one set of lessons, while a predominantly Hispanic school will learn yet another, and what an ethnically mixed school will learn is impossible to define.

More realistically, schools are increasingly becoming richer in ethnic mixtures of students. The problem does not occur when an overly diversified curricula is put into use, the problem is quite opposite. Schools that ignore that cultural diversity as a reality fail students by not educating them about people of other cultures, and as a result students often times they learn very little of their own ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, to focus on any one cultural group will deny all groups of students from receiving an education that benefits them in understanding the counterparts in their school, and society. For example, in research conducted by McLean-Donaldson (1994), how students perceived racism and its effects on student learning were studied. One student that was interviewed expressed this point of view:

I wasn't learning anything about me. It made me feel very discouraged. I didn't have the urge to go to school. I just felt I wasn't learning anything about myself, therefore I was not important. It can do that to you if you are not a strong person. Also, when teachers do not allow you to participate sometimes in classes, it makes you feel that you don't have a part in the educational process. Like in my algebra class, the teacher has the tendency of teaching the white side first and then teaching the minority side afterwards (very often, students choose to sit according to ethnicity; especially when teachers do not encourage students to integrate). That makes you feel like you're getting the leftovers, second best or whatever. With racism, so far I find that I am a very angry individual. (p. 82)

The idea of multicultural education is to teach students about a variety of cultures within the art classroom, which will include those cultures present in the learning

environment, as well as, provide students with the advantage of learning about all people that make up our society rather than only a small portion.

Our society continues to grow more diverse, however, the curriculum does not reflect the same diversity. Without recognition and appreciation of this diversity, our learning environments will fail our students. Furthermore, this increase in diversity shows the absolute necessity for a greater awareness of how to be an effective multicultural educator.

### Summary

This chapter discussed the emergence of self-expression in the curriculum and explains the social metaphor of the melting pot as compared to ajiaco soup. In this chapter definitions of multicultural education and multicultural art education were discussed, as well as, the importance of teaching students about the arts, and how it contributes to the development of students. Also in this chapter, was a discussion of implementing a multicultural focus in the art classroom. In Chapter 3, there is a detailed review of the methods used to conduct this research at Miller Middle School in Marshalltown, Iowa.



### **III. METHODOLOGY**

This chapter contains the methodology that was used to conduct this research at Miller Middle School in Marshalltown, Iowa in order to gain an understanding of middle school students' perceptions of multicultural visual art education. In this chapter I will discuss qualitative research as a method of research, the setting in which the study was conducted, the participants involved in the research, the instruments used, and the procedure carried out throughout the study.

#### Overview of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research techniques were utilized to gather information regarding the students' perceptions of multicultural education at Miller Middle School in Marshalltown, Iowa. I chose to use qualitative methods because it helps develop a more personal relationship between the researcher and her research. Allowing this type of relationship to develop builds trust with the participants and enables the researcher to gather much more meaningful and useful information. Qualitative researchers avoid simplifying social phenomena and instead explore the range of behavior and expand their understanding of the resulting interactions (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). This type of research evolves according to the interactions within the questioning process. This method allows the research to be free of many boundaries looking at all the aspects that will contribute to the findings. In contrast, quantitative research does not allow the researcher to take all perspectives into consideration. Qualitative research enables the researcher to examine themes that emerge during the research process. This allows the environment and the participants to influence the direction the research takes while the researcher maintains a general focus.

Study Setting

This study setting was Miller Middle School in Marshalltown, Iowa. According to U.S. Census Bureau (2000), the population of Marshalltown is 39,438. The ethnicities (see Figure 1.1) that make up this total population are: 90.4% Caucasian, 0.9% African American, 0.3% Native American, 0.8% Asian, 0.1% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 9.0% of Marshalltown's population is of Hispanic or Latino origin.

**Figure 1.1**

Demographics of Marshalltown, Iowa

<b>Total Population</b>	<b>39,438</b>
African American	0.09%
Asian American	0.08%
Caucasian	90.40%
Hispanic or Latino	9.00%
Native American	0.03%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.01%

The location of the research study was Miller Middle School which consists of 599 students. This total student population is made up of (see Figure 1.2) 534 Caucasian students, 9 African American students, 9 Asian students, 42 Hispanic or Latino students, and 3 Native American students.

**Figure 1.2**Demographics of Miller Middle School, Marshalltown, Iowa

<b>Total Students</b>	<b>599</b>
African American	9
Asian American	9
Caucasian	534
Hispanic or Latino	42

Participants, Instruments, and Procedure

All participants involved in the research were treated in accordance with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) following the Iowa State University human subjects treatment guidelines (see Appendix I). The participants consisted of 52 students representing two 7<sup>th</sup> grade classes, and one 8<sup>th</sup> grade class within the middle school. During the first visit to the school, participants were asked to complete a multicultural art education survey (see Appendix A) that I designed with the use of a 1-7 point likert scale. It was during this visit (see Figure 1.3) to the school that I formed students into groups of four and five students. I was careful to arrange the students in diverse groups (gender, ethnicity, etc.), in order to obtain information that was rich in multicultural content. For example, the system I used to diversify students was to construct groups that did not contain all female or all male students. Also, there were to be no groups containing students of the same ethnicity.

During the second visit to the school I led the students in a classroom discussion of the terms: prejudice, diversity, multicultural, racism and stereotype (see Appendix C). This session with the students was intended to clarify misconceptions the students might be

**Figure 1.3**Procedure: Visits to Miller Middle School

**1st visit,** Conducted survey and grouped students

**2nd visit,** Large group discussion about terms: prejudice, diversity, multicultural, racism, and stereotype

Students given instructions for multicultural collage art activity and shown teacher example “Heroes”

Students began deriving lists of images to include in collage as a group

**3rd, 4th and 5th visits,** Visualization exercise, students worked collaboratively on “Multicultural Collage” art activity and completed “Artist Statements”

**6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th visits,** Informal small group interviews for 20-30 minutes with all 52 students in their assigned small groups of 4-5 students

holding about the meaning of these terms. This also allowed me to better understand how familiar the students were with the terms.

On the third visit to the school students began the art activity, “Multicultural Collages”. This art activity was a way for students to express the term *multicultural* through visual imagery. To introduce this activity I began each class with a visualization exercise. After the exercise, students first generated a list of types of images related to magazine images to look for when creating their group collage. I had previously collected magazines that contained culturally rich and positive images for the students to use. These magazines included; *O Magazine*, *Rosie*, *Jet*, *Women’s Day*, *Time*, *Art News*, and a few selected *National Geographics*. It was not the goal of this activity for students to focus on culturally distant and exotic images of ethnically mixed groups of people such as those that *National*

*Geographic* magazines portray. The goal of this activity was for students to use multicultural images that reflected the diversity they experience personally in their everyday lives.

However, I did not dictate to students what they were allowed to include and what they could not include.

After each group had generated a list of possible images to include in their collage that represented the term “multicultural”, they were asked to begin working collaboratively to create collages that would reflect what they, as a group, thought the term *multicultural* meant. It was emphasized that all students should be participating, and all students’ input was necessary for a successful result. I walked around visiting each group as they created their lists of images. I was careful to ask each student what they had contributed to the list. Only when each student in the group had contributed to the list were they able to begin working on the collages. I distributed a worksheet (see Appendix D) and showed students a teacher example that expressed the term ‘heroes’ in visual images in order to help students clarify their understanding of the project.

### Visualization Exercise

The visualization exercise was intended to encourage students to begin creating mental images. I read them a story by Faith Ringgold, an artist and author with whom the students had previously become familiar. The story was called, “How the People Became Color Blind” (see Appendix E). I asked students to get comfortable and close their eyes. I told them I was going to read them a short story. I told them that their only job was to visualize the story in their mind. After I read the story, students began sharing what pictures were painted in their minds as I read the story. Then students were asked to share what they thought the story was trying to say to the audience. Once students shared their mental images

and thoughts about the story by Ringgold, they began working (see Figure 1.3) on their *Multicultural Collages* by cutting images that expressed the group's visual definition of the term *multicultural*.

The students worked on their collages for approximately four sessions. Once students completed their collages they were asked to individually complete "Artist Statement" worksheets (see Appendix F) intended to help them express their thoughts and new understanding of the term "multicultural" acquired after completing the collage. This assessment was designed as a way to help students reflect about what they created within their group. The student reflections included the questions: What did you contribute to your group's collage? What does the word *multicultural* mean to you? How does your collage show that? What did you gain from this project? As the artist, is there anything else you would like to say about your collage?

During the next visit to the classroom, I conducted informal group interviews that were stimulated by open-ended questions (see Appendix G) related to the general subject of multicultural art education. I left the discussion open enough to allow the subjects to feel as though they were helping direct the conversation. These interviews were conducted with the same groups of four to five students that worked together during the collage activity. Each interview lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. I conducted the interviews in a small classroom attached to the regular art classroom during four visits to the school. I chose to conduct the interviews in the adjoining classroom because it was a comfortable and familiar setting for the students that also allowed privacy with few distractions. Throughout the interviewing process I audiotaped the conversations. To diminish the subjects' feeling of

being “tested” I used good listening skills (reflective, supportive feedback and prompting) to help the interviewees feel comfortable during the interview process.

It was important for me to keep all data collection materials very organized in order to make it easier to analyze the data collected. I used color-coding and a number-coding system to separate the age and grade of students. Once the surveys, artist statements, and interviews were completed and reviewed, I began to analyze and interpret the collected data. At this phase of the research I began a detailed review of the findings to determine emergent themes, trends, and patterns.

### Summary

This chapter has shared an overview of qualitative research, described the study setting, participants involved, instruments used and the procedure carried out throughout the study. Chapter 4 will detail the findings of this research and the significant themes that emerged as a result of this study at Miller Middle School.

#### IV. GOALS, FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

In this chapter I will discuss the goals that were set for each research session in order to obtain information about the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students' perspectives of multicultural education in the visual art setting at Miller Middle School in Marshalltown, Iowa. The sessions were conducted in three phases (see Figure 1.4) that occurred over nine visits to the school: Phase One, surveys, Phase Two, art activity, and Phase Three, interviews. After explaining the goals of each phase, I will discuss the findings and analyze these findings from each of the three phases of the data collection activities that I used. After analyzing and summarizing each of the findings, I will discuss the themes that emerged as a result of each of the data collection techniques. Finally, there will be a discussion of the implications of this research followed by a conclusion.

##### Goals, Findings, and Analysis of the Research

###### Phase One: Surveys

###### Goal

The goal for phase one of the research was to conduct a survey with the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade art students at Miller Middle School. I conducted the survey with the students before fully explaining what the purpose of my research was going to be. The only information students knew was that I was from Iowa State University, and that I would be visiting their classes over the next few weeks to do three activities. The goal of the survey (see Appendix A) was to gather information that would help in interpreting the data collected throughout the following phases of research sessions. Also, the survey was intended to help me, as the researcher, to determine what attitudes and perspectives the students had before I began



working with them on issues of multiculturalism. This also enabled me to see how the students benefited from engaging in this research study.

Figure 1.4

### **Phases of Research Study**

**Phase One: Surveys**

**Goal:** to gather information that would help in interpreting the data collected throughout the following phases of the research. The survey also gave me a better understanding of what perceptions and attitudes students were bringing to this research study.

**Findings and Analysis**

School and Classroom Environment in General  
 Visual art Class Setting  
 Issues of Multiculturalism

**Summary**

**Phase Two: Group Discussion, Multicultural Collages and Artists Statements**

**Goals of Group Discussion:** to discuss the terms; *diversity, prejudice, racism, multicultural, and stereotype*. With a clearer understanding of these terms students were able to better understand the goals of the art activity, and also were able to contribute more to the small group interviews

**Findings and Analysis**

**Summary**

**Goal of Multicultural Collages and Artist Statement Worksheets:** students could illustrate their understanding of the term multicultural by expressing the term through visual images as they worked collaboratively in groups of 4-5 students.

**Findings and Analysis**

**Summary**

**Phase Three: Small Group Interviews**

**Goal:** to gain students' perceptions of issues concerning multiculturalism in their school and visual art classroom

**Findings and Analysis**

**Summary**

Fifty-two students from two 7<sup>th</sup> grade classes, and one 8<sup>th</sup> grade class, were surveyed in an art classroom that was connected to their regular art room. At the beginning of the classes on the day of my first visit to the school, the students' regular art instructor began by introducing me as a student from Iowa State University. She also explained that for this visit

I would be doing a survey with them in the other room. Their teacher asked each student to get a pencil and to meet me in the next room.

Once students arranged themselves at each of the four tables, I handed out the survey and asked them to follow along as I read the instructions. I explained that the survey was voluntary and no one would be penalized in any way if they chose not to participate. I read through the directions, to explain further the confidentiality of the survey. I wanted students to clearly understand that the survey was in no way going to effect their grade, and that no one would see the survey besides me. I told students if they were confused with a statement or a word while completing the survey that they should go on to the next statement. I wanted students to feel no pressure in completing the survey.

Once the instructions were explained I gave students a small note card and asked each student to write the code number that was on their survey, on that note card. Each survey had a code number on it that identified it from all the other surveys. Students were instructed that this code number would be how they identified themselves as we did other activities during my visits to the school. I clarified to students that this was in no way to be used to identify them, however, this enabled me to look at the information that a particular student shared throughout the research in the survey, art activity, and the small group interviews.

After students completed their survey they were asked to hand them to me and then return to their regular art class. Students went back to working on art projects once they completed the surveys. Once all the surveys were collected, I returned to the regular art classroom to begin arranging students into groups. I made an attempt to diversify students as much as possible. I diversified students by making sure there were no groups of, for example, all female students or all Hispanic students. By observing how students arranged themselves

in their classroom I was able to determine who they were used to talking and working with, therefore, I made an attempt to diversify these students with one another as much as possible. Mainly, I did not want friends, ethnically homogeneous, or same-sex students working together.

### Findings and Analysis

#### School and classroom environment in general.

As a result of interpreting the data from the survey (see Appendix B), students seemed to have relatively positive perceptions of their school environment. Students felt as though they “fit in” in their school environment, regardless of their cultural ethnicity. It was promising to see that most students surveyed felt very strongly that they are appreciated for who they are in their school. For example, in question seven, 13 of the 46 students that responded to this question answered that they “strongly agreed” that teachers appreciate them because of who they are, regardless of their ethnicity, culture, or gender. In question 12, 34 of the 47 students that answered the statement, “I feel like I don’t fit in at school because of my culture.”, responded that they “disagreed” with the statement. And in question 20, 19 of the 48 students that answered this statement shared that they “strongly agree” with the statement, “I feel appreciated in my school setting because of my culture.” These responses show that students are in a learning environment that supports them and makes them feel appreciated.

In response to statements concerning multicultural issues, the majority of students agreed that they want to learn about diversity. For example, in question six, 30 out of 51 students that answered the statement, “I will wait until college to begin learning about people

that are different from me personally.” “disagreed” with this statement. This illustrates that the majority of participants indicate an interest in learning about people who differ from themselves.

In question nine, 14 out of 50 respondents answered that they were “undecided” about whether or not the majority of their teachers actually teach them about people from diverse backgrounds. In question 15, “I have been taught about other cultures’ contributions to our society” 15 students out of the 49 that answered this statement shared that they were again “undecided”. This demonstrates that there is a discrepancy in how much students would like to learn about cultural diversity, and their understanding of whether they have been taught about cultural diversity.

According to the responses in the survey concerning the school and classroom environment, students shared that teachers make the majority of students feel appreciated in their learning environment. However, students made it clear that there is only a small amount of cultural information has been clearly taught. Students share a desire to learn about multiculturalism, however these responses show that students are receiving ambiguous, or isolated instances of multicultural learning experiences. Students’ responses suggest that they feel teachers’ approaches to teaching about diversity is inconsistent.

#### Visual art class setting.

From the survey that the students completed, art class proved to be a place that most students felt free to express themselves. However, students did not feel that art class taught them the most about other cultures. When responding to question one on the survey (see Appendix B) , “I have learned about art from many cultures in art class.” 15 of the 29

students that responded to this question said that they were “undecided”. In answering question three of the survey, 11 of the 51 students that answered the statement “My art class teaches me more about other cultures than my other classes do.” said that they “disagree”. In comparison, only six of these same 51 students “agreed” with this statement. This demonstrates that, although some information has come from their art class, respondents believe the majority of information about cultural issues has come from other areas of the curriculum. Most often students thought social studies class offered this the most information about cultural diversity.

When asked about the content of the art history that they learn about, 20 of the 50 respondents said that they “disagreed” with question seven that states, “All of the artists we study are white, men.” This illustrates that students are learning about diverse artists in their art class.

When responding to question 4, “I believe it is important for me to learn about many different kinds of people in art class.”, ten students of the 52 that responded “strongly agreed” with this statement, while 12 students of the 52 were “undecided”. In question 10, the majority of the students surveyed “disagreed” with the statement, “Other cultures are really not important to learn about in art.” This demonstrates that students are divided in whether or not they believe cultural diversity is important in their art class. Students often expressed the most interest in materials and techniques in art class.

Also, in question 14, “I feel safe to express myself in my art class.”, 19 of the 50 students that responded to this statement “strongly agreed”. This illustrates that many students, but less than half, feel as though art class offers a safe environment for them to express themselves.

### Issues of multiculturalism.

When responding to statements concerning multicultural issues, students expressed some knowledge of multicultural issues. Students overall shared a desire to learn about people of different cultures. For instance, in question 11, 18 of the 49 students that responded to the statement, "Learning about people that are different from me, will help me in the future." "strongly agreed" with this statement. In question two, 18 of the 50 students that responded to the statement, "There is a mix of people from different cultures in my school." "strongly agreed" that many different ethnicities make up their learning environment. Students' responses demonstrated that they are aware of the cultural diversity that makes up their school environment. They also showed that they value learning multicultural information.

In question five, 22 of the 48 students that responded to the survey "disagreed" with the statement, "I do not think prejudice exists anymore." This illustrates that students are aware of issues such as prejudice and racism. In question 16, 23 of the 46 students that responded to the statement "I do not like studying about people from other cultures." "disagreed" with the statement. In question 19, "Other cultures have contributed to our society in many ways.", 23 of the 48 students that responded to this statement responded that they "strongly agreed". This made it evident that students realize prejudice and racism exists and they have learned a fair amount about what different cultural groups have contributed to our society.

Finally, in question 18, 33 of the 51 students that responded to the statement "I want to make friends with people that are different from me." "strongly agreed" that they do want to make friends with others. No students disagreed with this statement. This implies that

students have a genuine interest in building friendships cross-culturally, and they will build these friendships if given opportunities to do so.

### Summary

Students' responses to the survey questions suggests that they believe most of their teachers teach a fair amount of information concerning ethnicity, culture, and other areas of multiculturalism. The students expressed in their survey responses a definite interest in learning about diversity and other multicultural issues, which suggests students are being taught multicultural information to some extent within their educational setting. Students agreed in their responses in the survey that racism and prejudice are problems that exist in their school setting.

### Phase Two: Group Discussion, Multicultural Collages, and Artist Statements

#### Goals of Group Discussion

The goal of this phase of the research (see Figure 1.4) was to discuss definitions of multiculturalism, create *Multicultural Collages* and *Artist Statements* with the same 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students that completed the survey. This first session of this phase of the research was to discuss definitions of terms relevant to multicultural issues and to inform students of what they would be doing for the multicultural collage art activity.

In this first part of phase two, we discussed vocabulary significant to the research. The discussion of these terms was conducted in a large round table discussion format with each of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes. The terms we discussed were: *diversity, prejudice, racism, multicultural, and stereotype*. I chose these words to discuss with the students

because they expressed the range of issues that were used in creating the survey statements, as well as, the small group interview questions. These words covered the range of thoughts and ideas that I wanted students to think about when working through each phase of the research data collection activities.

After handing out worksheets that listed these terms and their definitions (see Appendix C), I asked individual students that volunteered to read each word and its definition. Then I would ask another student to clarify “in his or her own words” what this definition meant. Then I would ask someone to volunteer and give an example of each term. This would spark a group discussion about each of the terms. Students began giving examples and sharing personal stories, which induced rich dialogue and clarifications for all people involved in the discussion.

### Findings and Analysis

By discussing these terms, students were able to share examples and personal stories which helped all students clarify each definition. When discussing the term *prejudice* one student gave an example of how this term has affected her personally by saying, “People call me white trash and a hick because I live out in the country, but I am not. Just because we don’t have the newest car, people think we are poor and stupid.” When discussing the term *diversity*, one student shared the perspective, “So diversity can be in sports, right? Like NFL teams and NBA teams. There are athletes that are from all different places.” To help students clarify this term further I used their school environment as an example of diversity. Then I explained that the people making up our group discussion were also an example of diversity.



I explained that their school and classes are all made up of diverse groups of females, males, African-Americans, Hispanics, Asian, and Caucasian students.

When talking about the term *multicultural* I expressed that this was going to be a “focus word” in the following activity and that students should think carefully about what this term means to them. As a group we talked about how “multicultural” differs from the term “diversity”. I explained to the students that diversity is all different aspects of humankind, such as; race, talent, interest, ability, gender, age, religion, or language. I explained multicultural as; when a person or group of people acknowledge, celebrate, respect, and operate within more than one culture. I then gave students time to share examples and ideas about the term *multicultural*. One student shared, “I watched this couple getting married on T.V. where the lady was Indian and the guy was white. They did all this different stuff that you don’t normally do at weddings. So that would be multicultural, right?”

When talking about the term “racism”, one Hispanic student said, “Racism is when people don’t like you just because of your color. Like just because I am brown some people might not like me.” Another Hispanic student added, “Yeah, that happens a lot. It’s stupid!” Then another student contributed by sharing, “I think there is a lot of racism at this school. The Mexicans are made fun of a lot.” Students began sharing that other students make fun of the way the Hispanic students talk and dress. One student said, “Everyone is against the Mexicans in this school.” Students shared that there was a definite problem when it came to the manner in which the Hispanic students are treated. Students thought that prejudice and racism are very common in their school environment.

Finally, during this large group discussion we discussed the term *stereotype*. I asked students, “Have you ever heard people say women are not good drivers?” or “Because she’s

Asian she must be really good at Math.” Students began laughing, and agreed that they had heard those comments. I explained that these are examples of stereotyping. I explained that these comments can be hurtful to people even though sometimes the comment sounds positive. Students shared that they had heard people say things that they had not realized were stereotyping. One student shared an example saying, “Prejudice is like when they say all black guys are good at sports, like basketball, right?”

Conducting this large group discussion was a way for me, as the researcher, to better understand to what level students felt comfortable with issues of multiculturalism, as well as, what notions they held upon beginning this study. Students seemed to be hesitant to discuss the terms to begin with, however, once a few students began sharing personal stories many other students began contributing to the conversation. Generally, students were unclear about the definitions of the terms prior to our discussion. In working through these definitions with the students, they were able clarify what these terms mean. As a result of this discussion, students were able to engage more fully in the small group interviews that touched on many of these terms.

### Summary

The large group discussion facilitated the students’ ability to talk about these terms in a format that was conducted in a “volunteer-only” manner. This discouraged students from feeling on-the-spot to participate in the discussion. This group discussion ended up serving a second purpose because students were able to gain new understandings and insights of each other, as well as, strengthen their knowledge of the terms. I had not anticipated the numerous,

personal responses that students offered to the group discussion. Students were able to share thoughts and feelings that they are unable to discuss in a structured format elsewhere.

### Goal of Multicultural Collage Art Activity and Artist Statement Worksheets

Phase two was also the beginning of the *Multicultural Collage* art activity. On the same day that the students shared in the group discussion, students were anxious to know what the art activity was that they would be doing. I distributed another handout (see Appendix D) detailing the guidelines for the art activity *Multicultural Collages* that they would be beginning at the next session. These guidelines explained that the students were going to be creating collages that express, through pictures, the term *multicultural*. The directions stated that it was the group's decision how they would define the term through the use of images. Also, the guidelines emphasized that students should work together to decide how they would create their collage. After the group discussion, when time allowed, students began developing a list of potential images they would include in their collage. Students began their *Multicultural Collages* at the next session when I visited their classroom at Miller Middle School. The activity took four sessions for all students to complete.

Working collaboratively, in groups of three to five students, students began making a list of words, or images, that they could use in their collage to express, or define, the word *multicultural*. I walked around to each group in order to look at the lists, giving suggestions if needed. While at each group I asked each student what they had contributed to the list. If they had not yet contributed in some way, I explained that they needed to include an idea, and that I would be back to find out what they had contributed. Once everyone had contributed an idea to the group, they were able to begin cutting out images for the collage.

Students began creating their collages during my third visit to the school. Their regular classroom teacher supplied glue and scissors for the collages. I supplied the round, cut-out mat board on which they would be applying their images. I also gathered a variety of culturally rich, modern day magazines for students to use. When a student seemed to be having difficulty finding an image I would pose the question, “Does this image express your group’s definition of multicultural?” If the student said yes, then that image was included in the collage. If the student responded that they were confused about an image, I asked he or she to look at the handout of definitions (see Appendix C) for clarification or to talk with fellow group members for help. Once students began completing their collages they were asked to individually fill out a worksheet called *Artist Statements*.

The *Artist Statements* worksheets (see Appendix F) were designed to guide students to create a personal artist statement for the group collages they created. The information that I collected from these artist statements was a way for me, as the researcher, to interpret what the students included in their group collages. I was able to interpret students’ attitudes toward the multicultural images they included, as well as, the attitudes students had toward working in a diverse manner. As stated earlier, students were to work collaboratively in diverse groups to complete the collage activity. The questions in the artist statement worksheet included: What did you contribute to your collage?, What does the word ‘multicultural’ mean to you?, What did you gain from this activity personally?, and Are there any other comments you would like to share? In the following section, I will interpret the collages by looking at the responses that students shared in their *Artist Statements*.

## Findings and Analysis

In the statements highlighted below that the students answered were intended to give me, as the researcher, a clearer understanding of; what each student felt they had contributed to the group project, what the term multicultural means to each student personally, what each student feels they gained from this project, and any other comments they wanted to share concerning this project. Students shared a range of responses to each of the questions. In the following four sections I will share the students' responses to each question posed in the *Artist Statements* worksheet.

### What did you contribute to your group's collage?

Of the forty students that completed the artist statements, they most often listed images of the world, globe, different people, words to express thoughts, art, and different foods as the images they contributed to their collage to represent the term *multicultural*. Students carefully chose images of that represented African-American, Asian-American, Indian, Caucasian, Pacific Islander, Native American, etc., groups of people. Students also included assorted maps of different countries, words that express feelings of peace, love, and togetherness, and artwork from numerous cultural groups. Students very easily found images to symbolize all colors of humankind, such as a box of crayons and a rainbow. Some students chose to include foods that represented different areas of the world as well. Students expressed through the images that they chose to include in their collages, that they were conceptualizing the idea behind the term *multicultural* through the use of visual representation.

Some students understood this question as what it was they contributed in the form of group interactions. For example, one student wrote, "I tried to keep a positive attitude and

share my ideas and thoughts to the group.” Another students shared, “I contributed just by sharing my thoughts and ideas.” One student said, “I thought it was wonderful, the pictures touched me. They showed me that people shouldn’t judge other people by their races.” These statements exhibit how students contributed good and positive attitudes, hard work, thoughts, and ideas to the collage activity. One student responded that, “We worked together in a multicultural way.” This question allowed me to account for what individual students were able to contribute to the entire group. Forty of the 40 students that completed the “Artist Statements” worksheet shared something that they contributed to the collage. Students demonstrated through these responses that they consider working in groups fun and enjoyable. Also, students expressed individual feelings of accomplish while working in a group setting. This illustrated to me that individual students that participated in the collaborative work setting were able to experience unifying feelings of success as a group.

What does the word *Multicultural* mean to you?

In answering the question what multicultural means to them personally, students had many variations of often the same thought. One student response was, “to combine all people and create one community even though there are differences within”, another student shared, “a world full of differences, living peacefully”. Students in general felt that this term means a wide range of differences among groups of people, coming together to support and respect one another. One student said, “To me, multicultural means combining beliefs of all different people to make one community, even though there are different cultures within.” Students repeatedly expressed that this term represents many cultures coming together to share races, celebrations, religions, sexual orientations, genders, and ages. One student shared, “Respecting many different cultures, races, ideas, opinions, etc.” Overall, students defined

multicultural as the celebration and appreciation of all people. Students very effectively expressed through their responses that they believe it is important to appreciate others for their unique qualities, not only their commonalities. One student said, “It means having lots of people that are different, together.”

How does your collage show that it is multicultural?

Students shared many aspects of their collage that express the term ‘multicultural’ to their group. Students chose to include people of different cultures, religions, artwork of other cultures, different kinds of food, diverse people. One student shared, “our collage expresses our feelings toward other people.” Another student said, “We have different races of people and different kinds of food from around the world in our collage.” One student shared the visual placement of images in their group’s collage by saying, “We have totally different pictures of people and objects placed in a certain way to show our understanding of more than one culture coming together.” One student expressed, “Our collage shows many different types of cultures within one collage and shows several things each culture does that is special.” This kind of understanding of what a certain group’s collage represents showed me that students understood the conceptual goal of the activity.

What did you gain from this personally?

Students shared that they completed this activity with a better understanding of other cultures. For example, one student shared, “It is important to respect people for who they are.” Another student said, “I learned to show respect to all people even if you share differences.” Another student shared the statement, “I learned that you should not judge people by their race or religion.” Out of the 40 students that completed the artist statement worksheets (12 students involved in this research project did not complete the worksheet),

there were five students that responded that they had gained nothing from this experience. The other 35 respondents shared that they had gained a new understanding of the term *multicultural*. For example, one student shared, “I learned how many people are different from me.” Another student said, “I feel better about myself.” This demonstrates clearly how students can learn about diverse people, while gaining personal strength and knowledge through in the visual art setting.

#### Any other comments to share about this project?

This question allowed students to share any other comments they felt was important to the collage art activity. Overall, students shared that they were pleased with their visual definition of the term *multicultural* and used this question to share what their group had accomplished in completing the activity. One student shared, “I think we did a good job in showing what the word multicultural means in our collage.” Another student expressed, “I think our group did a good job on the collage.” One student said, “Our collage explains the world as one.” Another student stated, “We learned about each other by working in groups.” Five students expressed the desire to work in groups more often. Thirteen of the 40 students that completed the *Artist Statements* shared that they thought their group had done a good job on the collage. Overall, students shared that they felt successful in their efforts by working collaboratively.

#### Summary

Students responded very positively to this project. The majority of students shared something positive that they had learned about diversity and multicultural issues. The responses the students shared about working collaboratively were also very positive. More



often then not, students expressed a desire to learn about people that are different from themselves. I think it is important to note once again that I had made a very intentional point to mix the groups as much as possible so that they were not working with friends or students of the same gender or ethnicity. Students showed a clear understanding of the term *multicultural* through the images they chose. Also, the artist statements demonstrated that students are interested in multicultural issues. These students proved that when they are given opportunities to learn about these issues, they will have fun and grow as individuals.

### Phase Three: Small Group Interviews

#### Goal

The goal of this third and final phase (see Figure 1.4) of my research at Miller Middle School consisted of the small group interviews. The small group interviews lasted for three sessions during my sixth, seventh, and eighth visits to Miller Middle School. Once students had completed their collages they were asked to sit down with me to conduct 20 minute interviews. Students were to remain the same small groups of four to five students that they worked in during the collage activity. The purpose of the interview questions (see Appendix G) was to gain students' perceptions of issues of multiculturalism in their school and visual arts classroom. The students were audio taped in order not to lose any valuable comments shared by the students. I explained the audiotaping to the students as a way for me, as the researcher, to be able to listen without missing valuable information by writing every word that they said.

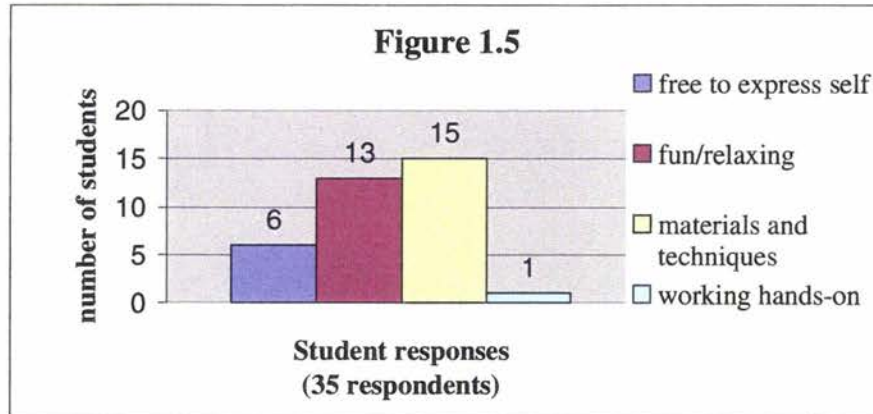
## Findings and Analysis

The interview process was set up in a qualitative manner which allowed all relevant information generated in the interviews to be taken into account when talking with the students. This occurred by guiding the interview discussions with the questions I had prepared prior to meeting with the students, as well as, allowing for moments when students would share relevant information unique to their specific learning environment which could help me gain a clearer understanding of the setting in which I was conducting this research. Common to the nature of qualitative research, I allowed this information to evolve without putting boundaries on what was acceptable for students to share, what was not acceptable. In the following discussion of findings and analysis, I will list the questions I posed to the respondents, and follow each question with a graph showing the range of responses given, as well as, the most frequent responses that the students shared with me throughout the interviewing process.

### Question #1: What are some things you enjoy about art class?

This question was designed to ask students what they thought about their art class in a very straightforward manner. It was intended to be easy for everyone to answer in order to open the students up to talking throughout the interviewing process. I wanted students to feel comfortable in the interviewing setting, and this question was a way to get everyone talking. Fifteen students (see Figure 1.5) of the 35 students that responded to this question shared that they liked the ability to use different materials and they enjoy doing different projects in their art class. Thirteen

of the 35 students that answered this question shared that they enjoy art class because it gives them an opportunity to express themselves through their artwork.



Question #2: If you were describing your art class to a friend, what things would you tell him or her about?

This question was designed to discover what students find most valuable in the art class setting. Students shared a very wide range of descriptions (see Figure 1.6) and aspects of the class setting in order to share what they find most important about their art class. Five of the 30 students that responded to this question shared that they liked art class because it is relaxing. Five of the 30 students also shared that they thought art class was fun. Finally, another five students of the 30 that answered this question shared that they enjoyed using the different materials in art class while working on different art techniques. Four of the 30 students shared that they enjoyed learning about different kinds of people. The remaining students said that if they were

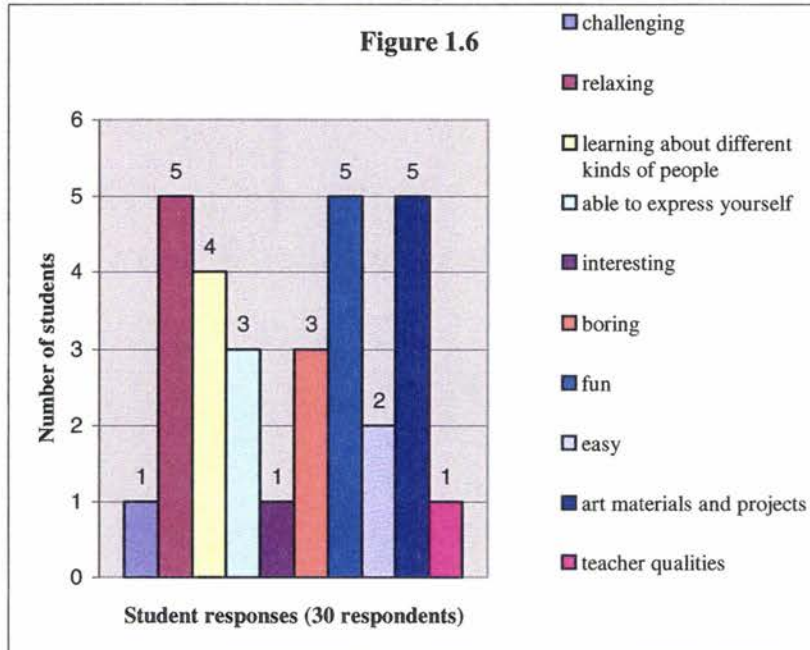
describing their art class to a friend, that they would include that they are able to express themselves (three respondents of 30), that they think art class is boring (three respondents of 30), art class is easy (two respondents of 30), and the remaining three students said that they would tell a friend about characters such as art class is challenging, interesting, and certain qualities about the teacher.

This question gave me similar information as the first question, however, as I had stated earlier, I wanted the first two questions to open students up to answering questions. The students were nervous to talk with the tape recorder on at first, however, once they answered the first two questions they began sharing comments and experiences freely. Students seemed to enjoy answering these questions. They also seemed relieved that they were so easy to answer. I believe students enjoyed answering these questions because it gave them an opportunity to express an opinion without the fear of being judged. I did not want students to be scared to speak during the small group interview setting. These questions seemed to establish a good interviewer/interviewee rapport, and helped develop a good point to begin asking more in-depth questions.

Question #3: Thinking about all of the classes that you have, in what class do you think you learn the most about people that are different from yourself?

This question was one that emerged (see Figure 1.7) throughout the interviewing process. This question was intended to allow students to share where in the school environment they believe they are being taught about people from other cultures. This also allowed students the freedom to discuss other areas of the curriculum that they believe teaches them about multicultural issues besides art class.

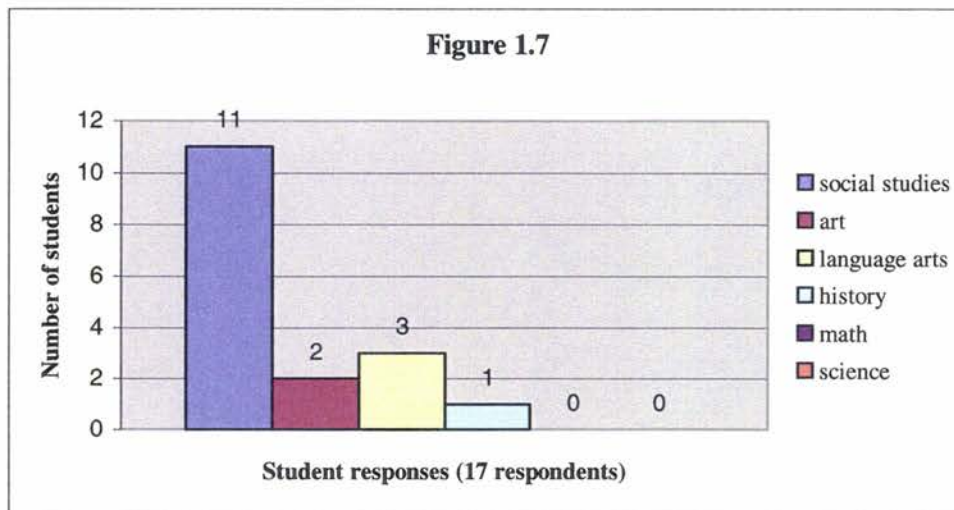
As a result, students feel that Social Studies teaches them the most about issues concerning diverse groups of people. And repeatedly students said that their language



arts teacher did one lesson on Martin Luther King Jr. and therefore used that class as an example of where they learn about multicultural issues. Two of the 17 responses that students shared during the interviews thought that art class teaches them the most about people that are different from them. One student thought that history class teaches them the most about diverse people.

Of the students that were interviewed, they seem to have received very little information about multicultural issues. Teachers in math, science, and history seem to be teaching the least amount of cultural issues. In social studies, students said that they talk mostly about government and political issues concerning people from diverse groups. Students said that they did not learn about cultures in any other

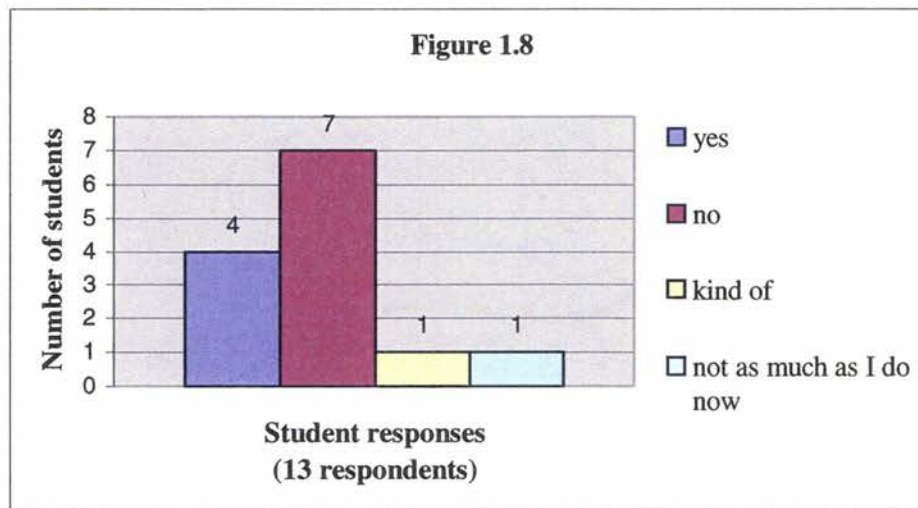
classes besides social studies, language arts, and art class. Students expressed through their responses to this question that they are not receiving information about multicultural issues on a regular basis. Students remembered very specific instances when teachers talked about people from diverse groups, however, these lessons seemed to be added-on, or appendages, to the regular classroom routine.



Question #4: Did you know what the term multicultural meant before we talked about it as a class?

This question also emerged throughout the sessions, as a way for me to understand if the students had any past experience with the term multicultural and its meaning. This question gave a very direct answer to the students' past knowledge of the term *multicultural*. There were more students that replied that they had not heard of the term (see Figure 1.8) than those that shared they did know what multicultural meant. Seven of the 13 students that responded to this statement shared that they did not know what "multicultural" meant before we discussed it during the large group discussion in phase two of the research. Four students of the 13 that responded to this

questions shared that they did know what the term meant before we talked about it as a group. One student shared that they “kind of” knew what the term meant, and one student shared that they did not understand the term as well as they did once we had discussed it as a group. If these responses reflect the entire population of the school, it is clear to me that the students at Miller Middle School are not receiving enough information concerning multicultural issues.



Question #5: If you had to tell a friend the meaning of the word ‘multicultural’ what would you tell him or her?

Before I began asking the following questions, it was important that the students understood what the term multicultural meant. This question was meant to help me understand what the students actually thought of when I said the word “multicultural”. We had spent time discussing what multicultural means during phases one and two of the research sessions, and I wanted to check their

understanding of the term. During the large group discussion I defined the term as; when a person, or group of people acknowledge, celebrate, respect, and operate within more than one culture.

There were a wide range of responses that would have been difficult to interpret in a bar graph to express the responses that I received during the interviews. I felt it was much more beneficial to take each students' response into individual account. I have categorized the following quotes into three sections. These sections include; the group of students that fully defined the term, those students that partially defined the term, and students that had only a vague definition of the term "multicultural".

In the first section, 12 of the 23 students that defined the term "multicultural" acknowledged that the term means many differences, and cultures, coming together to share each others individual uniqueness. These students shared the following definitions during the small group interviews.

- "... Living together, all people."
- "...Different cultures together celebrating."
- "...Getting together, like in sports for example." "People coming together and having fun, ethnicities."
- "People of other cultures to live in the United States and have the same rights as everyone else."
- "Different cultures and races coming together."
- "When there is more than one culture, and each culture does its own significant thing."
- "More than one culture, and how they do things."
- "Comparing more than one culture together."
- "Different things combined."
- "Different ways of living, in other cultures."
- "A collection of things that you don't want to be the same."
- "A lot of different people together."



This section of responses expresses the seven students, of the 23 that responded to this question. These students acknowledged the term “multicultural” as being a term that expresses only the differences among people. These students did not acknowledge that these differences is what makes the individual or group unique.

“...Diversity.”

“Different ways of thinking about people, like homosexuals.”

“...Food, culture, religion, and celebrations.”

“Different things, from different cultures.”

“Languages.”

“...Very diverse.”

“Different everything.”

In the third group of students that responded to this question, four of the 23 students shared a much broader definition of the term “multicultural”. These students did not give clear statements of how they define the term “multicultural”. These definitions only touch on aspects of the definition.

“Freedom of religion.”

“A way of life.”

“Not to judge people by their color.”

“Traditions and stuff.”

The majority of students that answered this question defined the term “multicultural” by acknowledging that the term means many differences and cultures, coming together to share each other’s individual uniqueness. The fact that the majority of students answered this question effectively shows that these students understand more deeply the full meaning of the term “multicultural” than they did prior to working through these activities. This demonstrates students gained a solid understanding of the term “multicultural” that they did not have before. Students that took part in this research showed that they can now correctly define the term when asked.

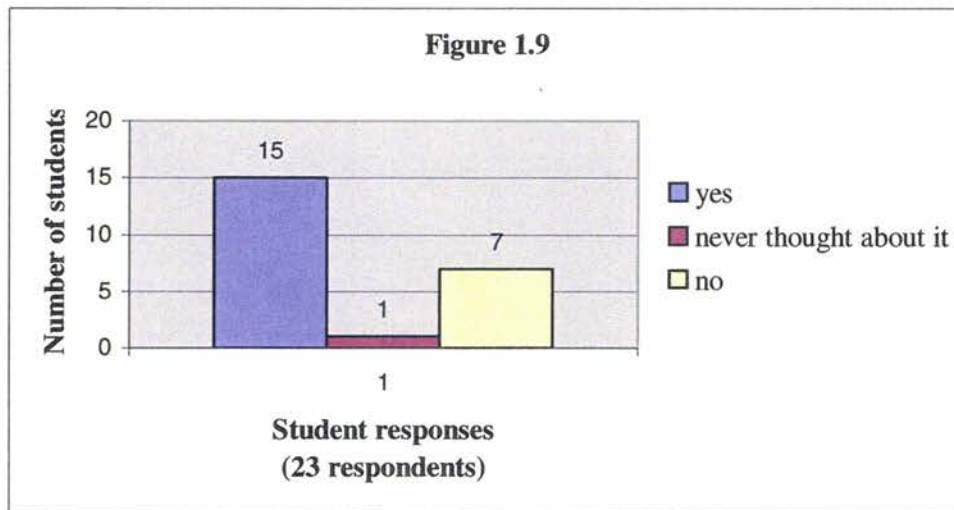
Question #6: Do you think kids are made fun of because of their culture?

This question was stated very directly, in order to gain a simple yes or no response. I wanted students to continue thinking about cultural issues, rather than thinking about general ways in which fellow students are teased in school. I also wanted to understand whether or not students think that kids are being verbally harassed due to their culture, or if there were other reasons for such teasing. The majority of students were very adamant (see Figure 1.9) about the fact that there is a lot of teasing and making fun that occurs toward students because of their culture. Fifteen of the 23 students that responded to this question said, “Yes”, that students are made fun of because of their culture. For example, one student shared, “Oh yeah! Kids are definitely made fun of in our school. The Mexicans are teased a lot because they don’t speak English very good.” Another student shared the comment, “Yes, the Hispanics are made fun of a lot.”

Unfortunately, after this was said, the student that made this comment proceeded to make fun of culturally diverse students right in the middle of the interview. He began laughing and said, “I have heard an interracial boy called an ‘Oreo’.” Later this student referred to Hispanic students by saying, “ ‘They’ just walk really slow in the hallway. And then ‘they’ talk but you can’t understand them.” Another student added, “ ‘They’ speak Spanish and we can’t understand them and they cuss in Spanish.” I was letting the students talk about this without interruption when one student added to the discussion, “I am going to a new school because my Mom doesn’t like all the Mexicans moving into our school.” Another student said, “People say the Mexicans are taking over.” One student shared, “Mexicans are the

way they are so they can have a sense of their own self and their culture.” Through this question it became obvious that some students from the majority school population hold negative attitudes toward the Hispanic students.

Seven of the 23 students that answered this question, “Do you think students are made fun of due to their culture?” thought that students are not made fun of because of their culture. One students of the 23 interviewed said, “I have never thought about it.”



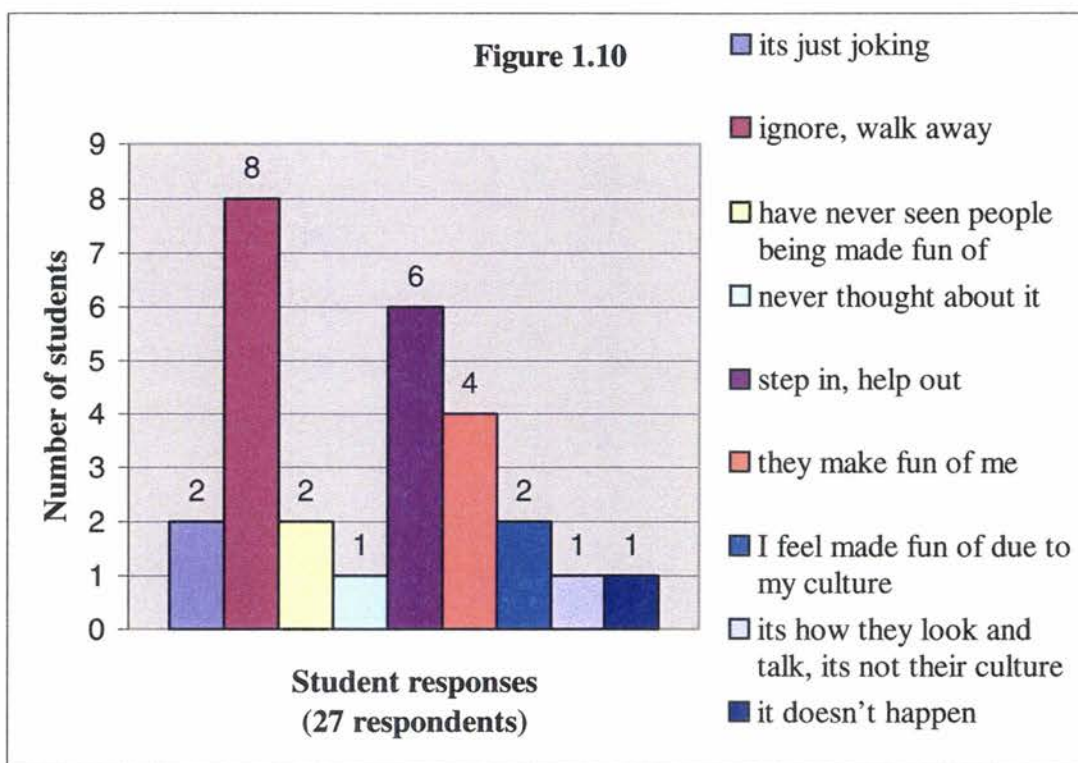
Question #7: What would you do if you saw a student being made fun of because of his or her culture (the way they look, speak, etc.)?

This question was intended to get an insight into what brings students together, and what separates them. I also wanted to more clearly understand what students’ perceptions were of teasing and why they thought the teasing was occurring. Students shared a vast number of responses (see Figure 1.10). With each group that I posed this question to, the students were eager to get their point into the discussion. Eight of the 27 students that answered this question said they would ignore teasing

and just walk away. Six of the 27 students that shared their responses said that they would step in and help the student being teased. Four students of the 27 that responded said that they themselves are made fun.

One student shared that she thinks teachers play a part in the amount of teasing students have to endure. She shared the statement, “My Math teacher tells religion jokes. He asks the class if it is okay to tell the joke, and then goes ahead and tells it.” This statement prompted other students to begin adding their points of view to the conversation. Another student added, “Teachers tell the Mexicans that they aren’t allowed to speak Spanish anymore at school.” One student shared her perspective by saying, “There isn’t any racism. We are all the same in our school. No one is made fun of. I never see anyone getting made fun of really.”

The most frequent response to this question was for students to ignore the fact that fellow students are being teased. This showed that students do not feel as though they are capable of being “change agents” in their school environment. Students feel that the problems that exist in their school will disappear if they are ignored. Although, some students do find it their duty to step in and stand up for fellow students, the majority said that they would not. This shows that students have not been given the necessary tools to deal with issues such as racism, prejudice, and stereotyping.

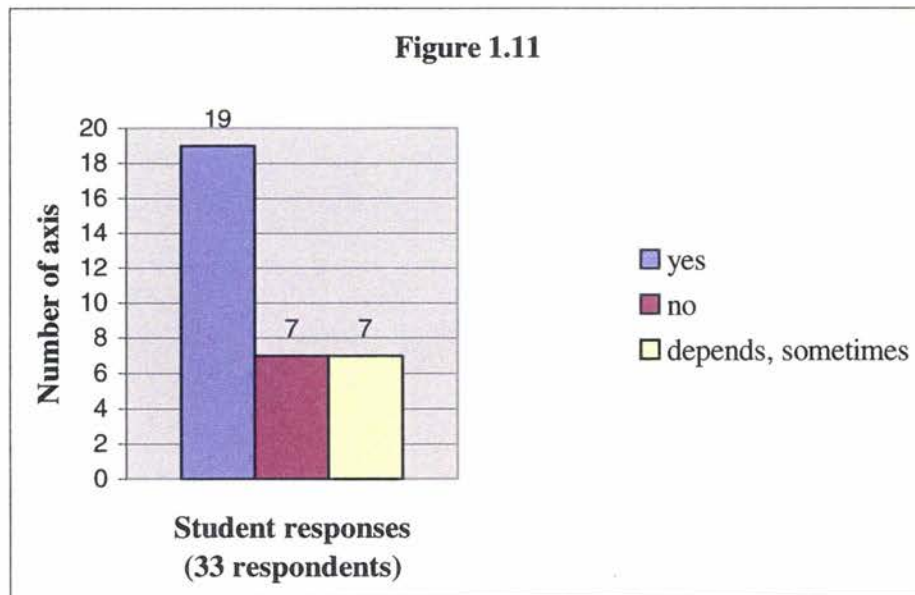


Question #8: Do you think students feel safe to be themselves in your school?

I wanted to better understand the level respect that students feel that they receive in their school environment. I explained that by using the word “safe” that I did not mean safe from harm and physical hurt, but the feeling of being safe to express one’s own thoughts, beliefs, ideas, and interests. Of the 33 students that responded (see Figure 1.11) to this question, 19 students shared that they did in fact feel safe to be themselves. However, seven of the respondents said that, at times, they did not feel safe to be themselves. The other seven students that answered this question said that they sometimes feel safe to be themselves, however, sometimes they do not. To the last group of students, their level of safety depended on such things as the classroom population or particular teachers. The students that responded

that they did not always feel safe to be themselves in their school environment were often students from marginalized groups. For instance, four of the five Hispanic students that responded to this question said “no”, that they do not feel safe to express themselves. The one Asian student that I interviewed shared that she “sometimes” felt safe to express herself. The students that seemed to make up the majority of the student population, Caucasian males, most often responded that they did feel very safe to be themselves.

Because issues of diverse cultures are not being taught and discussed in the learning environment, students that are from minority groups do not see a reflection of themselves in their educational setting. As a result, students of marginalized groups are not feeling secure in expressing their true selves. These students are fearing teasing and harassment because they do not “fit” into the larger school population.

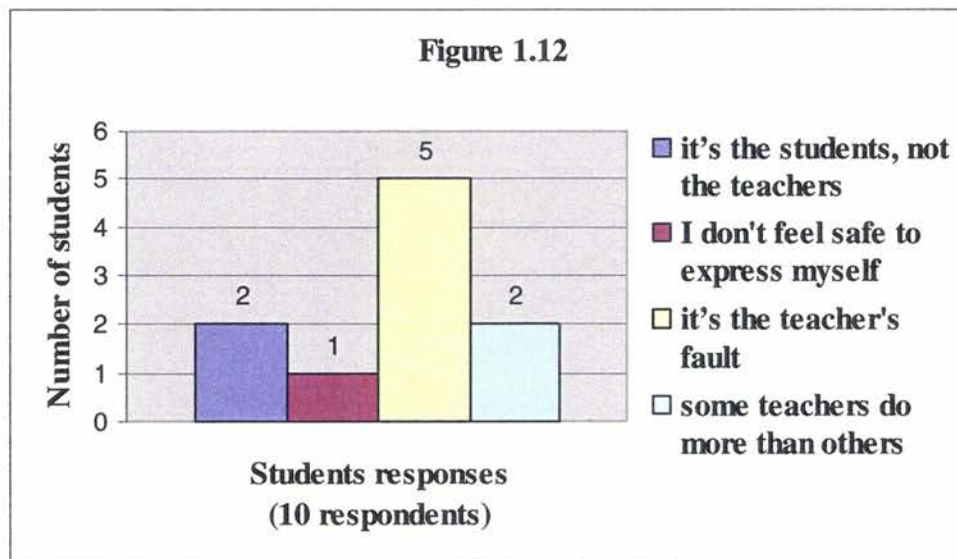


Question #9: Do certain teachers, classrooms, etc., make you feel safer than others to be yourself?

This question emerged throughout the interview process. I wanted students to be able to elaborate on their responses from the previous question. Students shared that it is the teacher that can make them feel safe, or unsafe, to express themselves in the classroom (see Figure 1.12). For instance, five of the ten students that responded to this question said that when they did not feel safe to be themselves in certain classes, it was due to the teacher. Two of the ten students said it was the students that make them feel unsafe to express themselves. Two of the ten students interviewed, thought that some teachers make you feel safe to be yourself, and some do not. These students said it depended on the particular teacher. Finally, one student out of the ten that answered this question said they do not feel safe to express themselves regardless of the teacher, students, or classroom.

Students shared in the interviews that teachers are the main cause of their feelings of insecurity in expressing themselves. One student shared what her social studies teacher has said when assigning reading on different cultural groups, “The teacher tells us, you will read it but that’s it. You won’t really do anything with it. You won’t need it for anything.” This research study focuses on students’ perspectives of their learning environment, and does not ask questions of the teachers, however, this raises the question; what are teachers’ attitudes toward learning about diversity? Also, what are teachers doing to ensure that students will feel safe, secure, and equal in their classrooms? If this perspective is congruent with the majority of the student population at Miller Middle School, then teachers need to become aware of

the influence they are having on students' feelings of safety and security in their classrooms. It is evident through students' responses that some teachers are contributing to students' feelings of being appreciated and valued in the school environment, however, students shared that some teachers are causing them to feel insecure as well. When students do not feel this sense of safety, they will withdraw from participation in the classroom. Furthermore, students see teachers as role models. Students will model the same behavior teachers display. If teachers ignore the culturally diverse population in the learning environment, student will as well.



Question #10: If you could design a new friend, what would make that friend special to you? Follow up question: Would you want a friend to be more like you, or different from you?

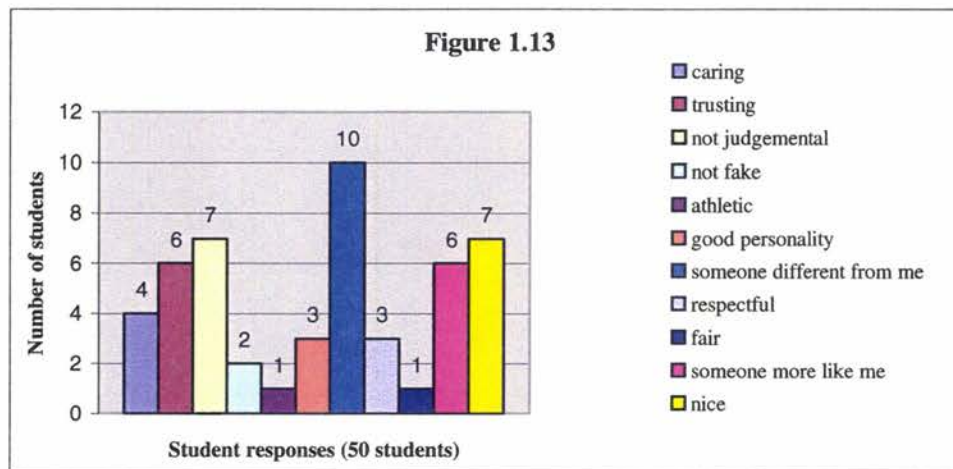
This question was asked in an open-ended manner in order to generate a list of qualities that students value in a friend. If a particular group was having difficulties



answering the question I would pose the latter questions, “Would you want a friend to be more like you, or different from you?” I wanted to better understand how open students are to expanding their relationships with students that may come from diverse cultural groups. Students shared a large number of qualities that they find important in a friend (see Figure 1.13). For example, the characteristics that would make a friend special to the students were things such as: someone that is caring, trusting, not judgmental, not fake, athletic, good personality, someone different from me, respectful, fair, someone more like me, and nice. Of the 50 students that responded to this question, ten students said that they would want a friend to be different from them personally. They expressed that they did not want a friend that would “copy” or “imitate” them. Seven of the 50 students shared that it was important that their friends be nice. Another seven of the 50 students that answered this question said that they did not want a friend to be judgmental. Six of the 50 students said that it would be important to have things in common, so they would like a friend to be more like them, rather than different. Six students also said that they would like a friend to be trusting. The remaining 14 students of the 50 that answered this question shared aspects such as caring, not fake, athletic, good personality, respectful, and fair.

In the students’ answers to this question, they made it clear they were interested in becoming friends with someone different from them personally. This illustrates that with more educational opportunities concerning multicultural issues, students will more effectively know how to embrace the commonalities they share with their fellow classmates. Currently, because students have not been taught about

the unique differences within their school environment, it is difficult for students to build friendships with students that are culturally different from themselves.



### Summary

The majority of students that were interviewed find their art class to be a very welcoming and relaxing atmosphere in which to learn about interesting techniques to use with different kinds of materials. Students feel that art projects teach them about other cultures somewhat, however, they would like to learn much more than they are learning presently. Social Studies is the only class that students feel teaches them a great deal about diverse people. The interview questions allowed the students to talk in more depth about the topic of multiculturalism. When asking if students had previously been familiar with the term multicultural, students generally said that they did not understand what that term meant before we talked about it as a large group. Students shared that at the point of the group interviews, after they had completed a group discussion of terms, and the collage activity, they felt much more comfortable giving definitions of the term in their own words. When we moved to the discussion about students being “made fun of” because of their culture, the

majority of students agreed that indeed students, specifically the Hispanic students, are made fun very much at their school. Even more bothersome, were the small number of students that thought there was no racism in their school. They felt that no students get made fun of in their school. Students shared that when they do witness teasing, most likely they would choose to ignore the situation and walk away. The second most common response was that they would step in and help out the student being teased.

One group of students took this question as a time to start commenting on types of teasing they had witnessed, such as, "I've heard an interracial boy called an "Oreo". Commonly I heard students refer to the Hispanic students as "they" or "them". The Caucasian students seemed to put themselves in contrast to the Hispanic students. However, this only occurred when there were no other Hispanic students in the small group interview. Students agreed that in general, students feel safe to express their individual personality. The problem occurs when specific teachers do things within the class environment to cause students to feel uncomfortable and unimportant. The students that shared that they did not feel comfortable in their school environment made comments regarding teachers telling hurtful jokes, playing "favorites", and teachers not allowing students to speak their native language at school. One student shared, "Some teachers don't let us speak Spanish so I don't feel like I can be myself. Some classes do though." This manner of conducting a classroom tells certain groups of students that they are unimportant and not appreciated within the school community. Another student shared, "No one can take our language or our religion or our culture away from us. Even though they say we are stupid because we are Mexican.

Some students tell us to go back to Mexico, or, you're in the United States not Mexico, so speak our language." Students also shared that they at times feel uncomfortable in certain classes due to the mixture of students that make up the specific class. This referred to the teasing that many students feel is a major problem in Miller Middle School.

The final part of the small group interviews gave students a chance to describe qualities in friends that they find important. There was a wide range of responses that touched on positive aspects that students felt were important in a friend. The most revealing aspect students shared as valuable to them personally, was that the friend be different from them in many ways. They shared that it is important for a friend to be their own person so that they could learn from one another. One student shared, "Its nice to have differences so that you can learn from another culture."

### Emergent Themes

Throughout the three phases of data collection (see Figure 1.4) the emergent themes that developed, fall into the three following categories; school environment and art class environment, issues of student relations, and more general ideas of multicultural issues. In the next section, I will explain the emergent themes under each of these three headings. These themes represent the students' perceptions of multicultural education, with an emphasis on the visual arts classroom. Although students shared many diverse ideas and thoughts about the issues that were presented throughout the nine sessions that I visited Miller Middle School, the emergent themes are a result of the statements and perspectives that were repeatedly expressed by the students throughout this research project.

### School Environment and Art Classroom Environment

Student participants agree that they generally feel accepted in their school environment. Also, they feel free to express themselves for the most part. Students overall enjoy their art class, and feel it teaches them mostly about art techniques and materials. Multicultural issues are discussed in their art class, however students feel social studies is where they learn the most about people from diverse cultural groups. The information they receive in social studies pertains mostly to government, politics, and most recently, issues that concern the people of Afghanistan. Other than these topics, discussion of culture and diverse people's ways of living, as well as, their contributions to American society does not seem to be discussed very much, if at all.

### Issues of Student Relations

Students agree that racism and prejudice are issues that they must deal with on a daily basis at Miller Middle School. Students have made it obvious that they have not been taught how to appreciate and understand one another's differences. The only management techniques these students are using right now are hurtful and hateful. The majority of students agreed that the Hispanic population is often made to endure racism and prejudice. Hispanic students are being made fun of for reasons that put down their culture. Hispanic students are unable to feel what it is like to be accepted and appreciated by the mainstream school population, simply because of their ethnicity. Many students are being made to feel inadequate by fellow students, as well as, teachers. Teachers are sending a message to students that they do not support diversity when they enforce an "English speaking only" rule. Most students share a desire to learn about one another, however, they have not had the

opportunity to learn how to appreciate someone that is different from them personally. Student relations in Miller Middle School are suffering due to the students' lack of understanding of others. The general student population has not been taught about multicultural issues and this is hurting student relations.

### General Ideas of Multicultural Issues

Students agree that their school teaches them very little about cultural issues. Even though Miller Middle School is highly diverse, the majority of students (7 of the 10 respondents) did not know what the word multicultural meant. It was evident that students were unfamiliar with many of the issues that were discussed throughout the research study. For example, on our first meeting when I gave the survey to the students, many were unclear about what the word "prejudice" meant. Students were also very interested throughout the group discussion of the terms "stereotype, racism, prejudice, multicultural, and diversity". They had not been given opportunities to talk about these issues, although they deal with these issues on a daily basis.

### Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the goals that I set for each session in order to obtain information about the targeted population. After explaining the goals of each phase, I discussed the findings, and analyzed these findings from each of the three phases of the data collection activities that I used. Finally, I discussed the themes that emerged as a result of each of the data collection techniques and the implications of this research. In Chapter 5, I will discuss recommendations I have as a result of doing this research study. The

recommendations will include areas for future research, as well as, suggestions for how to infuse multicultural issues into the active curriculum.

## V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 4 explained the goals, findings, and analysis of the research conducted at Miller Middle School. Chapter 5 includes a summary of the findings, implications of the findings for teachers and students, recommendations for curriculum reconstruction, recommendations as a result of conducting research at Miller Middle School, and recommendations for future research in the area of Multicultural Art Education.

### Summary of Findings

Throughout this research students generally express the feeling that they are accepted in their school environment regardless of their culture. Most students also shared that they feel free to express themselves in their school setting. Students overall enjoy their art class, and feel it teaches them mostly about art techniques and materials. Multicultural issues are discussed in their art class; however, students feel social studies class teaches them the most about people from diverse cultural groups. Students agreed that racism and prejudice are issues that they are confronted with at Miller Middle School. Hispanic students, in particular, expressed feelings of inadequacy in relationship to fellow students. These students feel unaccepted due to the teachers' and students' lack of understanding of their culture.

Overall, students agreed in their responses on the surveys, during the group discussion, and during small group interviews, that they have not been taught how to appreciate diversity in their school. The only "management" techniques being used presently by these students are hurtful and hateful tactics toward one another. Students overwhelmingly agreed that their school teaches them very little about cultural issues. For instance, many students did not know what the word *multicultural* meant even though their



school is highly diverse. It was evident that students were unfamiliar with many of the issues that were discussed throughout this research study. However, students became more aware of multiculturalism as we worked through each phase of the research study.

Prior to my visits to the school, students had not been given opportunities to talk about diversity, even though they deal with these issues on a daily basis. To begin with, many students were unclear about what many of the terms meant. However, they expressed examples of the terms with ease, once the terms were defined for them. This indicated that students deal with issues of diversity; however, they have never been taught about multiculturalism. Students expressed genuine interest in learning about multicultural issues, and showed improvement in understanding of terms as we worked together through the art activity and interviews. With adequate support, students that are given opportunities to learn about one another through multicultural educational practices, will flourish in the school setting.

### Implications of the Findings

Reporting the findings and then analyzing each of the three data collection strategies proved to be a very interesting. The implications of this study are based on the results of the responses made by 52 Miller Middle School students that contributed to this research. Teachers, staff, and administrators were not asked to contribute to this research; however, their perspectives would be valuable for a clearer view of the questions raised by the research.

In organizing the data collected, I was able to look at survey responses, artist statements, and interview responses, to see how these three data collection techniques

overlapped and confirmed responses made by students. At times, students would respond to a question once in the survey, again in the artist statements, and then finally in the small group interviews which gave me confidence in the findings that I reported. I felt that students were sharing valid and honest perceptions of their learning environment.

From this research study it became obvious that students would benefit from a curriculum that is more richly focused on multicultural perspectives. Students at Miller Middle School would be able to socialize more easily in a diverse environment, when they have been taught how to appreciate this diversity. With a multicultural framework in place, students would help diminish teasing, hateful, and hurtful comments toward one another. With greater awareness and appreciation of one another, students would be less likely to segregate themselves from one another as a way of handling their misunderstandings.

Education about the global community in every classroom, whether it is an inner city or a rural setting, would help students grow into positive, contributing, and self-aware members of our society. Students shared in our interviews that the “stick to their own group” mentality is very prevalent in their school environment. However, with more educational practices rooted in multicultural awareness, students will build appreciation and understanding for one another.

The last implication of the findings that I discovered at Miller Middle School is that teaching students with a curriculum that embraces a multicultural framework, will help end the cycle of ignorance, intolerance, and hate. With education about these issues, we are saying that we want all people to feel special and important in society and in our schools. It is important that children grow and learn in environments that confirm their importance and magnify their special qualities.

### Recommendations for Curriculum Enhancement

As discussed in Chapter 2, I believe that James Banks' five dimensions of multicultural education that supports a framework for a diverse curriculum would greatly benefit any school system. These dimensions implemented in the art classroom would increase students' awareness and appreciation of differences, as well as, human commonalities. The art classroom is a very valuable place to learn about cultural diversity; however, implementing these five dimensions into the general school curriculum would ensure a richer, more holistic way of learning for all students. Throughout this research study, students repeatedly said they receive some information about other cultures in their art class, they receive plenty of information about social structure and politics of other cultures in social studies, but the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders did not perceive that they are taught about issues of diversity in any other area of the curriculum.

The students I researched, generally, did not express an awareness of the cultural richness that their school provides. Students shared that they are having negative thoughts and feelings towards one another. They are unclear about how to diversify their social groups to include students from other cultural groups. This made it obvious to me that this school setting would greatly benefit from the implementation of Banks' five dimensions of multicultural education. All students in the school would be engaging in a much more enriching school environment if they were able to grow and share the diversity that is present in their school system.

It is imperative that students learn how to interact with people who are ethnically, racially, and culturally different from themselves. The United States and the world are becoming increasingly more diverse, compact, and interdependent. This research conducted

at Miller Middle School confirmed that isolation from diverse people results in negativity that is hurtful to all people involved in the educational setting. With effective multicultural education we can ease these tensions by teaching skills in cross-cultural communication, interpersonal relations, understanding other points of view, and analyzing how cultural conditions affect values, attitudes, beliefs, preferences, expectations, and behaviors.

### Recommendations for Future Research

As a result of my research study, I believe that there is a need for more research in the area of multicultural education and multicultural art education. Specifically, I recommend the following topics for further research.

I believe that research that considers the teachers' perspectives of multicultural art education would be beneficial to the field of education. The information that this type of research study would provide would help educators understand the necessary steps to take in order to teach from a more culturally sensitive point of view.

I think that it would also benefit the educational community to conduct a study on student relations, over a long period of time, in a highly diverse school where a multicultural framework has not previously been implemented. I believe rich information would be gained from looking at what happens to that same school system when a multicultural framework is put into use in the curriculum. This information would be most beneficial if the study was conducted over an entire school year or longer.

Another area for research that I believe would greatly benefit the educational community would be to study what students choose to do with their lives after high school when they have been taught from a strong, culturally aware framework, and also what they

choose to do with their future when they have not been taught about cultural issues. For example, looking at students' choices in their future careers, college, apprenticeships, etc., would help the educational community to understand the valuable effects of a multicultural framework on students' lives after elementary and high school.

And finally, the last recommendation I have for future research in the area of multicultural education would be to research the patterns of socialization that students display in school settings that support a multicultural framework versus a school system that does not. This would help educators understand how students' attitudes toward fellow students affect their ability to socialize with one another.

### Conclusion

The ultimate goal of multicultural education is to begin a process of change in schools that will ultimately extend to society. This goal can be accomplished by cultivating in students attitudes, values, habits, and skills that enable them to become social change agents that are committed to reforming society. To do so, students, as well, as teachers need to improve their knowledge of ethnic issues, as well as, develop decision making abilities, social action skills, leadership capabilities, a sense of political efficacy, and a moral commitment to human dignity and equality (Banks, 2001).

Discrimination and racism are evident in the patterns of unemployment, imprisonment, poor health care, and educational failures, in which the numbers of individuals of color are disproportionately high. These attitudes and behaviors directly contradict the American democratic ideals of freedom, equality, and justice for everyone. Multicultural

education programs that help children learn to value and celebrate diversity and engage in social action, have the potential to help society live up to the spirit of its democratic ideals. The increasing ethnic diversity of the United States population makes multicultural education for all students necessary, particularly if education is to fulfill its basic functions by being personally meaningful, socially relevant, culturally accurate, and pedagogically sound.

Students should be given opportunities to learn about all people. The actions taken in schools to adopt multicultural education should reflect the race, language, gender, ethnicity, and culture of people throughout the global community. These opportunities to learn about multicultural issues should exist in all areas of learning, not only at special times of the school year. Promoting diversity means acknowledging diversity, incorporating diversity into all levels of schools, and demonstrating pride in cultural pluralism along with a sincere belief that diversity is desirable.

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Aloha nui loa.

## Appendix A

~20 Questions~

*This survey is necessary for me to complete my degree at Iowa State University. What you have to say is very important to me, and I will take each response very seriously. Remember that your responses are confidential, and in no way will affect you.*

**Please note:** Do not put your name on this survey. All information collected is for research purposes only. Your responses are confidential.

**Instructions:** This is not a test. All I need are honest answers. No one else will see this paper. Please circle number 1-7.

1=You **disagree** with the statement

7=You **strongly agree** with the statement

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
1. I have learned about art from many cultures in art class.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	7 6 5 4 3 2 1
2. There is a mix of people from different cultures in my school.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	7 6 5 4 3 2 1
3. My art class teaches me more about other cultures than my other classes do.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	7 6 5 4 3 2 1
4. I believe it is important for me to learn about many different kinds of people in art class.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	7 6 5 4 3 2 1
5. I do not think prejudice exists anymore.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	7 6 5 4 3 2 1
6. I will wait until college to learn about people different from me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	7 6 5 4 3 2 1
7. Teachers appreciate me because of who I am, regardless of my ethnicity, culture, or gender.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	7 6 5 4 3 2 1
8. All of the artists we study are white, men.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	7 6 5 4 3 2 1
9. All of my teachers try to teach me about other cultures.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	7 6 5 4 3 2 1
10. Other cultures are not really important to learn about in art.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	7 6 5 4 3 2 1

	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>11.</b> Learning about people that are different from me, will help me in the future.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
<b>12.</b> I feel like I don't fit in at school because of my culture.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
<b>13.</b> I have witnessed prejudice at my school.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
<b>14.</b> I feel safe to express myself in my art class.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
<b>15.</b> I have been taught about other cultures' contributions to our society.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
<b>16.</b> I do not like studying about people from other cultures.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
<b>17.</b> I want to go to college when I complete high school.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
<b>18.</b> I want to make friends with people that are different from me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
<b>19.</b> Other cultures have contributed to our society in many ways.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
<b>20.</b> I feel appreciated in my school setting because of my culture.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

**Thank you** for taking the time to answer these questions!

## Appendix B

## SURVEY DATA TABLES

## 1. I have learned about art from many culture in art class.

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	4	1	2	3	2	1	1
7 <sup>th</sup> period	1	1	3	3	7	2	5
8 <sup>th</sup> period	0	1	2	3	6	2	0
	5	3	6	9	15	5	6

No response=3

## 2. There is a mix of people from different cultures in my school.

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	1	1	0	2	5	1	4
7 <sup>th</sup> period	1	2	1	3	4	3	8
8 <sup>th</sup> period	0	3	0	3	1	1	6
	2	6	1	8	10	5	18

No response=2

## 3. My art class teaches me more about other cultures than my other classes do.

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	7	5	0	1	0	0	1
7 <sup>th</sup> period	2	3	4	6	3	1	3
8 <sup>th</sup> period	2	4	1	2	2	1	2
	11	12	5	9	5	2	6

No response=1

4. I believe it is important for me to learn about many different kinds of people in art class.

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	3	1	0	3	2	2	3
7 <sup>th</sup> period	1	0	2	6	4	5	4
8 <sup>th</sup> period	2	1	2	3	1	2	3
	6	2	4	12	7	9	10

No response=0

5. I do not think prejudice exists anymore.

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	8	3	0	0	0	0	3
7 <sup>th</sup> period	8	0	2	3	1	3	3
8 <sup>th</sup> period	6	0	1	2	1	1	3
	22	3	3	5	2	4	9

No response=4

6. I will wait until college to learn about people different from me.

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	8	0	3	2	0	0	1
7 <sup>th</sup> period	14	2	1	4	0	0	1
8 <sup>th</sup> period	8	1	5	0	0	1	0
	30	3	9	6	0	1	2

No response=1

**7. Teachers appreciate me because of who I am, regardless of my ethnicity, culture, or gender.**

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	3	0	3	0	2	6	4
7 <sup>th</sup> period	1	1	1	1	2	5	4
8 <sup>th</sup> period	0	0	1	0	2	5	5
	4	1	5	1	6	16	13

No response=6

**8. All of the artists that we study are white, men.**

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	6	3	1	2	1	0	1
7 <sup>th</sup> period	15	2	2	1	0	0	2
8 <sup>th</sup> period	8	4	2	0	0	0	0
	29	9	5	3	1	0	3

No response=2

**9. All of my teachers try to teach me about other cultures.**

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	3	1	2	3	4	1	0
7 <sup>th</sup> period	3	0	2	4	6	1	6
8 <sup>th</sup> period	1	1	1	7	1	0	3
	7	2	5	14	1	2	9

No response=2

## 10. Other cultures are not really important to learn about in art.

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	7	3	0	1	1	1	0
7 <sup>th</sup> period	13	1	0	2	3	1	4
8 <sup>th</sup> period	9	1	3	1	0	0	0
	29	5	3	4	4	2	4

No response=0

## 11. Learning about people will help me in the future.

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	1	1	0	2	5	1	4
7 <sup>th</sup> period	0	0	2	5	3	4	7
8 <sup>th</sup> period	0	0	0	2	3	2	7
	1	1	2	9	11	7	18

No response=3

## 12. I feel like I don't fit in at school because of my culture.

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	10	2	1	0	0	0	0
7 <sup>th</sup> period	15	2	2	0	0	1	0
8 <sup>th</sup> period	9	3	2	0	0	0	0
	34	7	5	0	0	1	0

No response=5

**13. I have witnessed prejudice at my school.**

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	2	1	0	1	2	1	7
7 <sup>th</sup> period	6	0	2	3	3	0	5
8 <sup>th</sup> period	1	2	1	2	3	1	4
	9	3	3	6	8	2	16

No response=5

**14. I feel safe to express myself in my art class.**

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	3	1	0	5	0	1	4
7 <sup>th</sup> period	1	1	0	7	2	3	8
8 <sup>th</sup> period	0	1	1	1	2	2	7
	4	3	1	13	4	6	19

No response=2

**15. I have been taught about other cultures' contributions to our society.**

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	2	0	2	5	3	0	2
7 <sup>th</sup> period	1	1	1	8	2	3	5
8 <sup>th</sup> period	0	1	0	2	4	2	4
	3	2	3	15	9	5	11

No response=4



**16. I do not like studying about people from other cultures.**

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	8	2	1	2	1	0	0
7 <sup>th</sup> period	8	1	2	4	2	0	1
8 <sup>th</sup> period	7	2	2	1	2	0	0
	<b>23</b>	5	5	7	5	0	1

No response=6

**17. I want to go to college when I complete high school.**

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	0	0	1	0	0	0	13
7 <sup>th</sup> period	0	0	0	4	0	1	16
8 <sup>th</sup> period	0	0	1	0	2	2	9
	0	0	2	4	2	3	<b>38</b>

No response=3

**18. I want to go to college when I complete high school.**

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	0	0	0	2	2	0	10
7 <sup>th</sup> period	0	0	2	2	2	2	14
8 <sup>th</sup> period	0	0	1	0	2	2	9
	0	0	3	4	6	4	<b>33</b>

No response=1

**19. Other cultures have contributed to our society in many ways.**

Per.	Disagree						Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	0	0	0	2	2	2	10
7 <sup>th</sup> period	0	0	4	6	1	4	6
8 <sup>th</sup> period	0	1	0	0	3	4	8
	0	1	4	8	6	8	23

No response=2

**20. I feel appreciated in my school setting because of my culture.**

Per.	Disagree					Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6 <sup>th</sup> period	1	0	2	3	3	0	5
7 <sup>th</sup> period	2	0	2	7	1	1	8
8 <sup>th</sup> period	0	0	0	2	3	2	6
	3	0	4	12	7	3	19

No response=4

## Appendix C

**Let's talk!***Group discussion on the following terms*

**Prejudice**- to believe something about a person, usually hateful or hurtful, that judges a person's race, religion, culture, or gender.

Example: I'm not his friend because he's Mexican.

**Diversity**- differences among people shown through many different things like; race, talent, interest, ability, gender, age, religion, or language.

Example: We live in a diverse society.

We go to school and work with diverse people.

**Multicultural**- when a person, or group of people acknowledge, celebrate, respect, and operate within more than one culture.

Example: (Can you share an example?)

**Racism**- any action or attitude that holds a person down because of their color. Racism is when a person does, or says, hateful things to another person just because of the color of their skin.

Example: (students share)

**Stereotype**- an oversimplified generalization about a particular person or group of people, which is usually hurtful.

Example: She can't be a good driver because she's a girl!  
(students share)

**Quotable Words: "I am a human, therefore nothing human can be alien to me...."**

—Maya Angelou

## Appendix D

## **Multicultural Collages**

**You will be creating collages that express through pictures the term MULTICUTURAL. It is up to your group to decide how you will define this word through images. Work together to decide how you will do this.**

### **STEP #1:**

Make a list of words, or images, that you could use in your collage to express or define the word *multicultural*. I will come around and look at your list, and give you suggestions if you are having trouble. Also, everyone needs to contribute to the list!

### **FOR EXAMPLE: Cultural Collage: Heroes**

<b>firefighters</b>	<b>Mother</b>
<b>teachers</b>	<b>Father</b>
<b>elders</b>	<b>women</b>
<b>police officers</b>	<b>service men &amp; women</b>

### **STEP #2:**

Begin gathering magazines and cutting out images that your group thinks will best express the term MULTICULTURAL.

### **STEP #3:**

Work, work, work together! : )

### **STEP #4:**

Each student will write an individual 'artists statement' about the collage your group created. It is possible these collages will be displayed in the school somewhere!

**Quotable words: “We must be the *CHANGE* we wish to see in the world.”**

*–Mahatma Gandhi*

## Appendix E



## How the People Became Color Blind

By

Faith Ringgold

Once upon a time the world was a small place and all the people lived together and were very happy. No one noticed that everybody looked the same and was the same color. Until one day the world grew, and the people multiplied and wandered off to far away places. In time the earth and the people became separated by vast bodies of water. But then the people crossed the seas to explore these far away places, and discovered that there were now people of different colors in the world. And they began to compare the color of one people with another. And some people disliked those people who were a different color from them.

Despite this some people of different colors mated and their children were now a mixture of their colors. The world was even bigger now and a shortage of food and other necessities of life plagued the people. So the people began to use the different colors to separate the people who could eat and live well, from those who could not. And so there were many wars over land and other possessions. And many of the world's people lost their land, suffered and died due to the wars. And so one day the people prayed to the Angel of Color for a world where all the people could live in peace and forget about color.

And so the Angel of Color listened and made everything and everyone in the world black. All the rivers and seas and all the flowers and trees and all the animals and people and all the houses and churches and steeples were made black-- as black as night. Even the sun and the moon were black. And there was no day only night. So everyone was silent and very sad because no one could see anyone or anything. There was no light only

darkness. And so all the people in the jet black world, and all the animals in the jet black forest, and all the birds in the jet black sky, and all the fish in the black-black sea prayed that they could have another color because there was too much blackness in the world.

And so the Angel of Color listened and made everything and everyone in the world white. All the rivers and seas and all the flowers and trees and all the animals and people and all the houses and churches and steeples were made white-- as white as snow. Even the sun and the moon were white. And there was no night only day. So everyone was silent and very sad because no one could see anyone or anything. There was no contrast only light. And so all the people in the snow white world, and all the animals in the snow white forest, and all the birds in the snow white sky, and all the fish in the white-white sea prayed that they could have another color because there was too much whiteness in the world.

And so the Angel of Color listened and made everything and everyone in the world gray. All the rivers and seas and all the flowers and trees and all the animals and people and all the houses and churches and steeples were made gray-- as gray as dust. Even the sun and the moon were gray. And there was no day or night only dusk. So everyone was silent and very sad because there was no beautiful color in the world only gray-gloom. And so all the people in the gloomy-gray world, and all the animals in the gloomy-gray forest, and all the birds in the gloomy-gray sky, and all the fish in the gray-gray sea prayed that they could have at least two colors because there was just too much grayness in the world.

But the Angel of Color thought about the people fighting when there was color in the world and decided to leave things as they were. So everyone was very silent and very sad until one day a school of gray fish swimming in the gray sea looked up at the gray sky and saw a gray bird flying by and they turned green with envy. And the gray bird seeing the bright green fish fell on to the gray beach and broke his wings. The gray bird was so embarrassed that the beautiful green fish saw that he could no longer fly, that he turned red with shame. A flock of gray birds seeing the beautiful red bird with broken wings laying on the gray beach flew down out of the gray sky and plucked out his red feathers. Then the gray birds turned red too and they flew away to show off their beautiful colors in the sky.

The gray sky now happily dotted with bright red birds became blue when it looked down at the gray mountains below. But the gray mountains loved the beautiful blue sky and so the gray mountains turned brown and purple

with respect. And the giant gray trees looked at the beautiful brown and purple mountains, and like the fish, they turned green with envy. And the flowers and plants were so happy to see the brown and purple mountains and the green trees that they turned all kinds of colors and everything in nature was happy because they were now all beautifully colored.

But the people remained gray, silent and very sad. They remembered how awful it was when everyone and everything was all black and how it was just as awful when everything and everyone was all white. And now that all the people everywhere were gray no one could compare one people's color with another. Everything in nature had color and was beautiful but not the people. The people were still gray and looked ugly, gloomy and sad-- And that was that!

"Now we have only the inner beauty of our good deeds, to distinguish us not our color," said the people. "And though we are not so good looking, as we were, when we were many colors, we can no longer use color to separate one people from another."

And that, my friends, is the true-story of How the People Became Color Blind.

The End

Appendix F

**Artist Statements**

What did you contribute to your group's collage Ideas? Images? Thoughts? Attitudes?

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What does the word **Multicultural** mean to you?

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How does your collage show that?

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What did you gain personally from this activity?

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As the artist, is there anything else you would like to say about your collage?

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Appendix G

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. What are some things you enjoy about art class?
2. If you were describing your art class to a friend, what things would you tell him or her about?
3. Thinking about all of the classes that you have, in what class do you think you learn the most about people that are different from yourself?
4. Did you know what the term multicultural meant before we talked about it as a class?
5. If you had to tell a friend the meaning of the word 'multicultural' what would you tell him or her?
6. Do you think kids are made fun of because of their culture?
7. What would you do if you saw a student being made fun of because of his or her culture (the way they look, speak, etc.)?
8. Do you think students feel safe to be themselves in your school?
9. Do certain teachers, classrooms, etc., make you feel safer than others to be yourself?
10. If you could design a new friend, what would make that friend special to you? What do you find important in a friend?

## Appendix H

**DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**Culture-** A culture consists of structures and practices that uphold a particular social order by legitimizing certain values, expectations, meanings, and patterns of behavior (Wood, 2001).

**Cross Cultural-** The interaction, communication, or other connections between people from two or more different cultures.

**Desegregation-** An intermediate point on a continuum that extends from segregation to integration. The bringing together of students of different races (or other factors, e.g. sex and national origin) in common schools.

**Diversity-** Differences among people or peoples reflected in a variety of forms, including but not limited to race, culture, perspective, talent, interest, ability, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, language and socioeconomic status.

**Ethnicity-** A sense of togetherness shared by members of a group who are linked through cultural tradition, ancestry, national origin, history or religion.

**Ethnocentrism-** Belief in the superiority of one's own ethnic group.

**Equality-** Sameness of status or competency (everybody gets the same).

**Equity-** Fairness and justice or impartiality (getting what you need). Beyond equal educational opportunity (which means providing the *same* resources, opportunity and treatment for each student).

**Gender-** Refers to a means of classification based on female or male designations including the feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that are identified as either female or male; the culturally determined behavior of males and females.

**Integration-** The process of bringing together, or unifying, different groups to coexist as a whole.

**Multiculturalism-** The ability of an individual or an organization to acknowledge, adapt, and operate within more than one culture.

**Pluralism-** A state of society in which members of diverse gender, ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain autonomous participation in both a common civilization and in separate cultural ones.

**Prejudice-** A preconceived, usually unfavorable opinion marked by suspicion, fear, intolerance, or hatred, that is directed against a certain racial, religious, cultural, ethnic or gender group or individuals perceived to be members of such a group.

**Race-**An arbitrary and artificial concept with multiple meanings and thus with very limited usefulness in describing groups of people.

- **Biological definition** - a concept used by physical anthropologists to differentiate between various human subgroups based on their physical characteristics.
- **Social definition** - a group of people who others believe are biologically distinct and whom they treat accordingly; a concept used to isolate, separate, and stigmatize groups, which results in differential treatment of people of different skin colors. (Iowa Department of Education, 1989)

**Racism-**Discriminatory beliefs and behaviors directed against people of color.

"Any attitude, action or institutional structure which subordinates a person or group because of their color. (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights)

**Stereotype-**An oversimplified generalization about a particular group, race or sex, which usually carries derogatory implication. (Derman-Sparks, 1989)

**Xenophobia-** A fear of or hostility towards foreigners; an extreme form of nationalism which can contribute to protectionism and isolationism. Debates around immigration law reform include xenophobia schools of thought.