

**Building Effective Arts Programs that Reflect and
Include Our Community**

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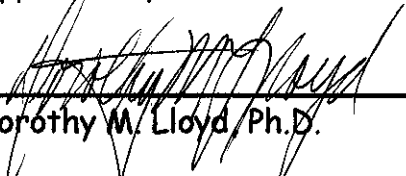
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Building Effective Arts Programs that Reflect and Include Our Community

By


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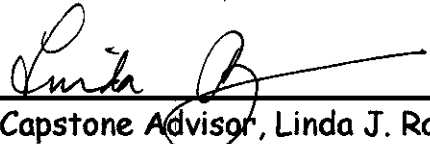
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Abstract

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Historically artistic expressions from marginalized groups have been negated and denied. Schools should affirm the importance of students' lives and languages through the arts. Students, parents, teachers and community artists were interviewed for insights on what is needed to build school arts programs that better reflect the community.

Students have a hunger for historical and cultural knowledge that is not being satisfied by the current arts curriculum at the middle school. Arts teachers often lack the experience and training to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse students population. Parents want their children to be proud of their cultural heritage. People who have artistic cultural knowledge in our community should be treasured as invaluable resources. Involving the families of the children we teach is the only way to have a lasting impact and promote real change.

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Chapter One

Statement of Problem & Purpose

The purpose of this research is to investigate what would be a model collaborative school arts program, which connects the school and community more effectively utilizing local artists.

How can community artists help bridge the gap of knowledge between public school arts teachers and the culture of the community where they teach? How can the schools better utilize the many funds of knowledge in the community? These questions will be addressed in this study as well as any others that come up through the serendipity of this research.

This research will give interested people insights on how an arts curriculum can be developed that better reflects and utilizes the community, and will serve as a resource for arts teachers and educational institutions to build an arts curriculum that includes their students' lives and backgrounds.

Background

I initially became interested in dance as a means and vehicle to teach a culturally relevant folkloric art form while working in a desert city near the California/ Mexican border. I was teaching in a school with 99% Mexican or Mexican American students. Every Cinco de Mayo, teachers that commuted in to

the desert, migrant farm worker communities from distant upper class cities attempted to celebrate their students' cultural heritage through song, dance and a carnival. These once a year events were often the only explicit signs of many teachers' attempt at an appreciation and understanding of their students' culture.

As a bilingual teacher, I believe that the students' culture has to be central to the curriculum being taught, not a once a year event. I hold a strong belief that the study of one's history is the first step towards understanding how best to make a positive transformation in the community. Mexican and Mexican-American students need to understand the historical oppression that created their current socio-economic situation as well as recognize and appreciate their rich cultural heritage that reflects both ancient indigenous traditions and the "mestizaje", or mixing of diverse ethnic groups and races since colonization. Pride and appreciation of their cultural background will aid students in forming a positive self-identity and increase the communication between generations that suffer from an increasingly wider cultural gap (Nieto, 2000; García 2001).

Even though we were a couple of hours away from the U.S.- Mexican border, there was little evidence of educators taking advantage of the "gold mine" of cultural resources located across the political line. The community took full advantage of a variety of resources on each side of the border, moving freely from

one side to the other, but the educational institutions had yet to discover, value or access this knowledge.

Accessing cultural artistic knowledge

My own knowledge of dance gained in my undergraduate studies at a northern California State University, was not sufficient for me to portray a people's folklore on stage. I looked for sources within my community and found a few local folkloric dancers who didn't have enough knowledge or training for me to gain more than a superficial understanding of Mexican Folkloric Dance. Like most university-educated artists, I was trained in mostly in Modern Dance as well as Ballet and Jazz. My only training in ethnic dance was from hippies teaching West African Dance in Northern California. I didn't yet understand how dance could tell you about a culture's history, diversity, geography and socio-economic system or how these dances were the fabric of cultural knowledge that had been consciously passed down through the generations since pre-Columbian times. I did, however understand that I must learn this art from the people who I wanted to represent.

I drove across the desert over the border to Mexicali and connected with the director of the university folkloric dance program at the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, Prof. José Luis Parra Quintero. Immediately we established a relationship that would last four years until his sudden death. After

a two hour drive across the stark desert to the university dance studio, he would teach me the steps to each dance, the history of the people and region we were representing, and instruct me in how to make appropriate costumes to portray these diverse regions, eras and peoples on stage. Prof. Parra showed me how he researched the dances. He went to rodeos in Mexicali to document a style of dance called "Calabaciado" danced in competitions at the rodeos. He interviewed and videotaped people at these rodeos. I saw how he used ethnographic methods to produce a dance. Going to the source of each regions' different ethnic groups' dances was key to really understanding the movement, meaning and significance of each dance. The professor traveled to the desert city where I lived on the weekends to instruct me with a group of students. He always said that he didn't do this work for money but rather for the opportunity to disseminate authentic folkloric culture to the youth of his people. His work felt just as revolutionary as it was artistic. The professor also spoke critically of what he saw as deformations of Mexican culture in the many groups on the American side of the border that attempted to teach and perform Mexican folkloric dances without knowledge or training in this art form. He wanted to pass on to another generation the rich cultural knowledge that was already institutionalized in the Mexican educational system but void on the American side of the border.

I soon realized that even though I had a background in dance, I had a lot to learn in a short amount of time. I spent a summer in Morelia, Michoacan, Mexico at the Casa de Cultura and another summer in Guadalajara, Jalisco, at the Instituto Cultural Cabañas. I was able to enroll in workshops taught to Mexican dance teachers in the summers. The more I learned, the more I realized how little I knew about the multitude of dances that have various significances for over 50 different ethnic groups in Mexico. You could spend a lifetime studying Mexican dance and never learn everything about all the "danzas" and "bailes" in Mexico.

What impressed me and influenced me the most was how the explicit teaching of culture in the arts was so well institutionalized in the school system and the community. Traditions were kept alive through this institutionalization. I also found that even in Mexico these traditions could be distorted through the spectacularization of these dances on stage. I found many serious folklorists who were upset about certain artists' and choreographers' attempts at making commercialized shows out of dances that represent people's rituals, ceremonies, and social events. They believed the dances in their pure traditional folkloric form were beautiful and didn't need these cultural deformations in order to entertain. The goal of all of the maestros that I studied with was to help preserve these folkloric traditions without distorting them. All of the teachers in these classes

that I attended had years of extensive training and performing. They had also done some form of ethnographic research in a region of Mexico and encouraged the students to go the "pueblos" and indigenous communities to see the authentic representation of the dances they were representing on stage.

A Northern California middle school

After the death of my mentor, Prof. José Luis Parra Quintero, I moved north to cooler climates on the coast of California. I found a wealth of resources right in my backyard. I didn't have to drive across the desert to Mexicali; there was an established folkloric dance group who regularly brought "Maestros" from various regions of Mexico to instruct us on the dances of their region. I also found Chicano muralists, theater groups and even our own guidance technician was in a Mariachi band. I was surprised and shocked when I started teaching dance in a local middle school that the arts teachers in my department had little knowledge of their students' artistic cultural heritage. With so many funds of knowledge in the community, I couldn't understand why the schools' arts program seemed disengaged with the community?

When I interviewed for the dance position at my school, I was asked if I could choreograph American musicals. Of course I answered "yes" in order to secure the job. I watched as the Arts department hired a playwright to come in

and write a play with the students and produce a musical. This was done three years in a row. Each year I would listen to the students' complaints that the play was supposed to be about them and it never was. The playwright was not a member of the community, was not bilingual, and really had no understanding of the culture and worlds where our students live. The last musical that was produced, I sat in the audience and listened to parents talk in Spanish throughout the play because they didn't understand or connect with the lines that their sons and daughter had worked so hard to memorize.

Each year I found an increasingly dismal situation. Students were extremely disengaged with some of their arts classes, which were supposed to be designed to ignite student interests.

Students have three exploratory arts classes; Dance, Music and Visual Art for six or 12 week blocks in seventh and eighth grades. I found that most students were highly interested and motivated in my dance class which main focus had the main focus the history, culture and dance of Mexico, as well as other regions, eras and peoples throughout the world. Each year I would focus our learning on one culture's styles of dance and history. Since 90% of my students are of Mexican or Mexican-American heritage, often the focus of my class was

Mexican regional dances, history and culture. The high motivation that I saw in my Dance class was not evident in the students' Music and Visual Arts' classes.

Pilot research project on multicultural education in the arts

In the fall of 2000, I conducted a pilot research project investigating the state of multicultural education in the arts curriculum at my school. The results were based on an open-ended student survey questionnaire that was given to 30 students. The students responded overwhelmingly that they felt like they didn't learn about any cultures except European and American in their music class. According to the students, they played the recorder and watched American Musical Theater on videos. The responses for the art class were of the same genre as the music class. Students generally felt that the curriculum was focused on European and American artists, values and interpretations. They did mention that minimal time was spent studying Frida Kahlo, a world-renowned Mexican painter. Students overwhelmingly wrote that they weren't learning enough about other cultures, especially their own, in most of their classes.

It is worth mentioning that this middle school has a large population of students whose home language is Spanish, but there is no bilingual program or Spanish language classes. This middle school uses a Structured English Immersion instructional model.

I hypothesized that the students were bored and disengaged with some of their arts classes because there was no connection between the art they are exposed to in their communities and homes and the art they are exposed to at school. I found the arts curriculum rarely included our students' culture, language and world.

Arts funding

The middle school received a demonstration grant in Visual and Performing Arts through the state of California. I had hopes that perhaps with this extra money, an arts program that truly reflects its' community could be built. Instead, I found myself in meetings arguing about why I did not want to create a multiple-choice test in dance solely for the purpose of collecting quantitative data for the grant. Ultimately an arts consultant was hired with the demonstration grant money to help classroom teachers create arts lessons that met the standards in subject matter state frameworks. This focus on arts embedded lessons that meet the content standards of each subject area (i.e. Social Studies, Science...) misses a very important element, which is the validation of our students' communities, cultures and languages.

Conclusion

The city where I work and live is fortunate to have a rich, authentic ethnic arts community. There are Mexican Folkloric Dance groups, Japanese Taiko Drummers, Aztec Dancers, Muralists, and Mariachis. Several of these local groups have collaborated in the schools arts programs.

Schools have the opportunity to affirm that their students' lives and languages are unique and important through art. Legitimacy is given to the students' lives by making the content worthy of study and moving towards a more inclusive community arts program that develops community pride. How can arts teachers who have been primarily trained in European and American art forms help our students learn about their own culture's art forms? Are they open to training and coaching or would this be a threat to the way they've always taught? What do the Arts teachers believe to be the cause of the lack of motivation in their classes? What kinds of problems and successes do they perceive? Is this lack of culturally relevant knowledge even an issue for the students and the community? Do the students really have a hunger for cultural knowledge? Is this important for the parents that their children learn about their folklore and culture? What kinds of results do we see when students are given the opportunity to study an art form representative of their own cultural heritage? Does this help lessen the cultural

generation gaps evident between immigrant teenagers and their elders? These questions are driving this research.

Definition of Terms

Arts: Music, Dance, Visual Art and Drama

Authentic Representation: This entails careful ethnographic and historical investigation so that the folkloric art or tradition resembles authentically the traditions it's trying to imitate.

Bailes: Social dances created by Mestizos in various regions and eras in Mexico.

Cinco de Mayo: A Mexican national holiday also celebrated in Mexican-American communities in the U.S.A. This date commemorates a battle in Puebla, Mexico when townspeople held back advancing invading French troops with few weapons.

Community Artist: An Artist that lives in the community where the middle school is located and has been involved in community events artistically.

Danzas: Indigenous dances usually ritualistic and religious in nature.

Deformation: The changing of a group's artistic traditions or expressions by an outsider. Sometimes, these deformations are so severe that these artistic expressions are completely unrecognizable as their own by the people who practice these traditions.

Folklore or Folkloric: Artistic traditions that have been passed through generations and reflect an ethnic group, period of history, social and/or religious context and socio-economic group.

Indigenous: People native to a particular place: Original inhabitants prior to colonization.

Indio: Spanish for Indian.

Mestizaje/ Mestizo: The blending of three principal ethnic groups due to colonization of the Americas: African, Indigenous and European.

Mixteco: Indigenous group and language in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Monografía: Spanish for written documentation of a folkloric dance.

Structured English Immersion: Instructional program (in wide use since the passing of proposition 227) where English language learners are immersed all day in English with the use of effective teaching strategies to increase English language comprehension.

Limitations

This study will be limited to the needs and concerns specific to the middle school where I teach. The data will include parents, community artists, students and teachers as participants. The research will be conducted over a period of three to four months. The findings may be applicable to this particular middle school but may not apply to all educational institutions. Information given via interviews and questionnaires may be inadvertently influenced by the researcher's position as a dance teacher at the middle school. For example, students may feel embarrassed to freely criticize the dance program. Another limitation of this research is that three of the five arts specialist at the middle school chose not to participate in this research. I believe that this could be due to a difference in priorities and ideology between the researcher and these middle school arts teachers.

Overview of study

As has been previously stated, the purpose of this study was to investigate what would be a model collaborative school arts program, which connects the school and community more effectively utilizing local artists. The second chapter deals with a review and analysis of the supporting literature relevant to this topic. The methods and procedures of the study are presented in Chapter Three and the results of the statistical analysis of the data are presented in Chapter Four. The final chapter of the study is concerned with the summary of findings, discussion, implications, and suggestions for further research.

Chapter Two

Historical and Political Dimensions in Studying Arts from Diverse Cultures

The historical and political dimensions must be considered when reforming the arts curriculum to include a more diverse view of art. Who has traditionally defined what is good art and what is art's purpose? How can multicultural arts education help broaden these definitions? Can the arts help marginalized groups form collective identities and serve as a voice of resistance? The issues of authenticity, deformation and evolution in folk arts will also be examined in this section.

A western-centric point of view

The history of art education in American schools is of great significance to this study because only through this history is it clear how a western centric view of art was established in the American school system. Smith (1996) discusses the history of art education in American schools thoroughly beginning with the early nineteenth century and ending with current ideologies in multicultural education.

According to Smith (1996):

Americans came to identify themselves as a nation of white persons of European origin. While this was hardly just or a complete description of

reality, the dominant culture formed this definition and had the power, perhaps the blindness, to try to make it true in practice. The African Americans, the Native Americans, and the Hispanic Americans were in the territory of the United States, but the voices of their cultures were not listened to by those of power or influence. What the dominant culture regarded as worth heeding came from Northern Europe, from white Americans of Northern European derivation (p.19).

Smith (1996) also explains art's marginalization in American culture by explaining the type of thinking that keeps art in the curricular margins. In the early 1900's, art was not viewed as knowledge of great importance or worth. Art was seen as a leisure activity related to the gratification of taste and feelings (Smith, 1996). Bersson (1986) describes the traditional, formalistic approach to arts education that is still prevalent in many schools:

Education in art, as conceived by university-based thinkers, de-emphasizes the social dimension of art for different reasons. Built largely upon a formalist and art historical view of the Western fine arts tradition, discipline-centered approaches are grounded in a specialized aesthetic perspective and high art cultural tradition that is somewhat at odds with the cultural experiences of the multicultural, multi-class public we art educators serve (p.1).

Validating a community's knowledge and worth through their arts heritage was not even a consideration.

The immergence of multiculturalism in arts education

This research is being driven by the notion that multiculturalism might help develop self-images of marginalized minorities. According to Smith

(1996), multicultural concerns began to take center stage during the 1990's. Smith divides and subdivides multiculturalism into various ideologies. He explains that multiculturalism is not one single thing or uniform set of concepts, but a collection of common goals. Smith advocates that multiculturalism would serve as a means to repair what the dominant culture has wounded. Smith goes on to state that positive classroom presentations about cultures from which minorities descended could make the members of those minorities feel better and might increase their dignity in the eyes of the dominant culture. Smith (1996) writes that "multiculturalists emphasize social improvement or preferred psychological states and the use of art as a vehicle to attain those goals, rather than the development of a full knowledge of what any society would regard as art, bearing in mind it may not mean the same thing in all cultures" (p. 216).

Smith argues a point that I suspect will be a concern to this research. If the study of art is to be seen in psychological or anthropological-sociological terms, many art teachers never went to school to study art in those terms (Smith, 1996). Smith goes on to note that changing art education to include a wider definition of art won't cause many regrets because the western centric view seems more and more a shallow notion.

According to Smith (1996), " a more engaged socially activist art is gaining the center" (p.216). Bersson (1984) asserted, "We want the arts in all their multicultural forms, represented in every neighborhood and among every group and class" (p.43).

There are currently a significant number of arts teachers whose training is minimal in the art forms from the culturally diverse populations that they will be asked to serve. Multicultural art educators face the dilemma of teaching about cultures and their values while avoiding, offending, or disrupting the cultural values of those they teach (Smith, 1996).

According to Bersson (1984), "Our students are affected by the popular, ethnic, folk, and every day art they encounter in their lives. Schools cannot take a formalist approach that fails to acknowledge the importance of such art forms in the education of their students" (p.45).

In order to create an arts curriculum that truly reflects this community, one cannot dismiss the abundance of religious oriented art. Multiculturalists also must come to grips with the religious nature in the arts of many cultures (Smith, 1996). In my experience, students are constantly drawing religious icons i.e. "La Virgen de Guadalupe". In their communities and houses they may see many examples of art tied to religion in the form of

altars, danzas, dramatizations and music. How does a school system that is secular in philosophy include religious art in the effort to include diverse cultures in the curriculum?

Stereotypes, labeling & naming

Multiculturalists must be careful not to place people in different ethnic, racial or cultural categories and define their art accordingly. Smith (1996) argued that all members of a particular group will not share exactly the same values or only the value of one culture. Art must be about a student's experience not a zoo of interesting and exotic cultures. According to Smith (1996), "deeply held beliefs cannot be cut into pieces and served up still living and of equal status" (p.218). This is why I advocate learning about one culture, as deep as one can go in the educational institution's limited time frame, rather than bits of many cultures. It only makes sense to start with the culture that your students identify most with. My colleagues constantly remind me that if I teach too much about one culture, particularly Mexican culture, then I am not broadening my students' worlds. I like to think that by serving up a zoo of cultures, I would be creating more superficial knowledge that could only lead to stereotypes and generalizations. McCannell (1992) explains thoroughly this paradox and contradiction in post-modern

communities, that while being multicultural is seen as desirable by the dominant culture, knowing too much about one marginalized culture is seen as biased or self centered.

This research aims to help reduce stereotypes rather than proliferate them. Students are bombarded with visual stereotypes from early on via television, comic books, school- books...Lippard (1990) writes, "we are taught not to believe our own eyes and we learn to look at our environments, families, and selves through the eyes of the dominant culture, which is usually ignorant of our realities"(p.31). Lippard (1990) discusses the contradictions artists of color may encounter such as people insisting that color makes no difference, "even as artists of color are systematically excluded from galleries or exhibitions"(p.31). Lippard (1990) writes "in a racist society no matter how much you try to avoid it, you will be called on your race, so you might as well stand up and be counted"(p.31). However, the process of understanding and drawing strength from one's past, one's cultural history, beliefs and values goes deeper than simply naming oneself culturally or ethnically (Lippard, 1990).

The complexities of language and art

The complexities of language and art will also be of importance to this

research. I have seen minimal evidence of the students' home language used in their arts classes in my 15 years teaching public school. As was previously mentioned in chapter one, the middle school where I work has a structured English immersion instructional model. This emphasis on English language acquisition influences the arts classes as well. At the middle school musicals were produced in English only. The loss of language, the loss of the original name, inevitably includes the loss of culture and identity itself (Lippard, 1990).

Art as a vehicle for teaching about social injustices

Cahan and Kocur (1996) presented theories and ideas on how contemporary art can be used as a vehicle for teaching about social injustices, and the historical and political dimensions of cultural democracy. Contemporary art is used as the focal point for an anti racist, anti sexist, democratically based curriculum, providing both a theoretical foundation and practical lessons and resources for implementation (Cahan & Kocur, 1996). Autobiographical information is presented about a diverse group of contemporary artists that use art as a way of expressing their individual and collective identities, as well as the many "isms" in society. Bersson (1984) asserted:

A conservative elitist art education based on fear and insufficient respect for all citizens of our multicultural, multi-class society cannot be our way. Our road can only be toward cultural democracy and the toleration, respect, and equality of opportunities it brings (p.43).

What the arts can do for an individual or a community

This research seeks to understand how youth can be affected by an experience performing or exhibiting art in the community. Was the performance or exhibition a positive experience for the individual as well as the family and community? Maxine Greene (1995) discusses eloquently how the arts can be an agent for social change within individuals and in a community. Greene (1995) says that we must make the arts central in school curricula because "encounters with the arts have a unique power to release the imagination" (p.27). According to Greene (1995), the arts can inspire images of possibility for marginalized youth. Green proposed that marginality could be affirmed through arts from different cultures. Mayan creation myths, Balinese puppets, Huichol danzas...can be given honored places on the margin, as individuals are gradually enabled to bring this art alive in their own experience (Greene, 1995).

Creating a more inclusive school arts program that affirms the cultures of the community is the focus of this research. Greene (1995) reasoned that to open

up our experience and our curricula to possibilities of multiple kinds is to extend and deepen what each of us thinks when he or she speaks of a community. Greene pointed out that this does not mean that a particular race or ethnic tradition should replace another, but rather marginalized groups and individuals should be allowed to show others what they see from their perspective and allowed to express what it is to be denied systematically their cultural heritage.

Effects of a postcolonial educational curriculum

This study will question whether or not students have access to knowledge about their history, culture and language in the arts curriculum. Colonization has effectively denied many groups of people access to knowledge about their history, culture, and language. This research seeks to question the existence of and the effects of a colonial system still intact. Freire (1987) spoke about the results we see in ethnic groups worldwide still living under colonial and post colonial systems and its' effects on the school curriculum and thus literacy itself. Education in the language of the colonizer demeans the importance of the language, culture, and way of life of the colonized and elevates the language, culture, and way of life of the colonizer. The alienation we see in minority youth and the school system is real. This alienation is especially rampant amongst adolescents who are struggling to build an individual identity because their group identity is perceived as a deficit by

the school system. Freire (1987) described the curriculum in many American schools:

In this curriculum there is a hidden quality that incites rebelliousness in children and especially adolescents. Their defiance corresponds to the aggressive elements in the curriculum that work against the students and their interests. Students are reacting to a curriculum and other material conditions in schools that negate their histories, cultures and day- to -day experiences." (p. 121).

The curriculum must affirm and validate the students' languages, cultures and lives to avoid this disengagement that is often evident between minority youth and the school system.

Building bridges between the home and school

This study seeks to build bridges between the students' home cultures and the school arts curriculum. Students often experience multiple cultures daily from home to school. When these two cultures are perceived as equal, then transitions and adaptations occur with relative ease. According to García (2001) " one major explanation of the school failure of some minorities is that poor academic performance is caused by cultural and language discontinuities and conflicts because their cultures and languages are different from the culture and language of the school" (p.115). Although language and culture are important, identity also plays an extremely important role. Garcia (2001) contended that many racial and ethnic minorities worldwide from Los Angeles to Nigeria still possess and value a

collective identity. The arts can be a vehicle to reaffirm and preserve that collective identity.

The arts as a voice of resistance

When the collective identity is negated in the school environment and other institutions, then culturally oriented arts can become a voice for resistance.

Patience Elabor-Idemudia (2000) in her essay on the retention of knowledge of folkways as a basis for resistance wrote:

At the school we were forced to give up the knowledge of folkways that we had acquired in our homes and from the community, as these folkways were considered primitive. We were also forced to give up our mother tongue and acquire a foreign language- the language of the colonial master. Our pride in who we were by virtue of our traditions and culture was completely negated" (p.107).

Elabor-Idemudia (2000) argued that folkways or traditional practices have helped formed cultural identities in African peoples," When inculcated in children through socialization, these folkways and traditions become a basis for resistance in later life. For ages, exposure to such knowledge of folkways has given most Africans strength, courage, and a sense of identity" (p.102).

Culturally relevant and responsive curriculum in the arts

This study inquires whether the arts instruction at a middle school is culturally relevant and responsive from the perspectives of the students, teachers, parents, and community artists. The curriculum at many schools is often

mismatched with the students. This curriculum is at odds with the needs of the learners. Nieto (2000) argued that there is a distinct irrelevance towards the lives and lifestyles of many students and families in the content of the curriculum. Building on students' experiences and worlds should be the first step in creating a culturally responsive curriculum. Nieto (2000) explains, "This is not to say that children should only study about themselves and their communities. Curriculum needs to build on rather than neglect the experiences with which students come to school in order to broaden their worlds" (p.96).

Nieto pointed out that the diversity of most schools doesn't allow for culturally specific modifications because most schools have students from a diversity of ethnic, social class, and linguistic backgrounds. In my own experience, 15 years in six different settings in California, an overwhelming majority of my students were of Mexican or Mexican- American heritage. In most classes, over 90% of my students were of Mexican heritage. I've found that designing the curriculum to be culturally compatible to one group does not necessarily alienate or jeopardize students of other backgrounds. On the contrary, other groups seem more than happy to learn about a culture that surrounds them daily, but isn't necessarily a priority in the school curriculum.

Authentic representation & deformation of folkloric dance

Although this study will look at the relevancy of the arts curriculum including music, visual art, and dance, a special focus will be Mexican folkloric dance because that is my area of specialization. When teaching a folkloric dance, authenticity and deformation of the dance styles are always a concern. Delgado (1991) interviewed choreographers and teachers involved in the institutionalization and commercialization of folkloric dance traditions, and observes traditional indigenous "danzas" in various regions of Mexico.

Delgado (1991) explicitly showed through the interviews and observations, the dangers of cultural deformations when taking a dance that is traditionally danced in front of a church, in the street, or on graves and putting it on stage. Delgado demonstrated the impossibility of maintaining authentic representation and recommended that folkloric teachers observe and participate in the traditional festivals where these dances are executed. The institutionalization of the folkloric arts doesn't always preserve them, but can directly cause deformations in these traditions if not implemented carefully and with the proper ethnographic and historical investigations. After reading Delgado's interviews and observations I was left with the feeling that many "danzas" are best left in the communities where they began and not on a stage.

This concept is problematic because in the context of the United States educational system, Mexican folkloric dance has not been systematically institutionalized as it has been in Mexico. In fact, it is a rare luxury to find Mexican Folkloric dance included in a school's performing arts curriculum in California. Delgado (1991) referred to the dominant culture in Mexico as the middle and upper class "mestizo" population that controls political power as well as economic. In the case of a middle school in California the dominant culture is Euro-American, and the Mexican culture, Mestizo and Indigenous, are considered marginalized.

Who defines authenticity & evolution?

The issue of authenticity will be important to this study in order to avoid offending or deforming a culture's artistic traditions. Ettawageshik (1999) considered the debate over the authenticity of "tourist art" for the Odawa communities of Little Traverse Bay, Michigan. Ettawageshik discussed the history of his families' art business operated by his grandfather and father.

Of interest and importance to my study is that Ettawageshik illustrates how his family business, although created as a result of colonization, has actually helped preserve traditional art forms in the Odawa communities. The evolution of these art forms to adapt to cultural and economic exchanges has helped sustain these

traditions. Ettawageshik (1999) stated, " We have been under pressure to assimilate, to relocate, and to discard our culture in exchange for non-Indian ways. But throughout this era we have managed to keep our traditions through stubbornness and adaptation" (p.141).

Ettawageshik (1999) explained that the academic and museum world has centered on the discussion of whether the artwork produced and sold in stores, such as Ettawageshik's family business, is an authentic reflection of the culture of the people who produce it. Ettawageshik argued that this discussion assumes that the only "real" or "authentic" Indians are those "uncorrupted" by European influence, and thus that the only real and authentic Indian art must be similarly uncorrupted. According to Ettawageshik (1999), once assimilation or adaptation occurred, the old ways, the old culture, are considered to be gone. Ettawageshik noted that art is a reflection of culture as well as one of the forms of interaction with other cultures. Ettawageshik (1999) pointed out that both cultures adapt to each other and each remains equally authentic. Ettawageshik asserted that the "tourist art" products that developed from traditional arts and became export and import items in a cross-cultural exchange substantiate the continued existence of both cultures. According to Ettawageshik, this continuation of the economic adaptation is a leading indicator of a strong and sustained cultural existence.

Evolution and adaptation must be considered natural to any art form. As a folklorist and an outsider, one must consider that a lack of knowledge and experience with the groups' art that you are representing will only lead to deformations of their art. Insiders, however, are involved in a process of evolution and adaptation. Outsiders must respect this process rather than criticize it in the name of authenticity.

An International Perspective: How other nations are accommodating their arts programs according to changing ethnic demographics.

Many nations face changing demographics due to imperialism, colonization and immigration. School systems around the world have to rethink and examine their arts curriculum to meet the changing and growing diversity in their student populations. A collection of essays from various art educators around the world addressed these issues of ethnic diversity (Kauppinen & Diket, 1995). The two articles on France and Germany deal with the concept of reforming an arts curriculum to meet the needs of a changing population.

France

Chavanne (1995) presented three aspects of multicultural art education: The plural, interactions, and evolution. Chavanne explained that the plural refers to assuring us of a broad view without a hierarchal ordering of cultures or arts.

Interaction is defined by Chavanne as the exchange, osmosis and fusion of cultural

contacts that have occurred throughout history. Evolution is described by Chavanne as a natural phenomenon in cultures and arts that reflect the past but which are perpetually active and in constant development.

Chavanne makes several points of interest to this study. Recently many countries and cultural minorities have begun to realize a need to save their cultures and defend their cultural identities. Chavanne (1995) proclaimed, "Welcome this rebellion- a necessary revolution" (p.263). Chavanne (1995) spoke in favor of reforming the art curriculum but she warned that often "words become the coffins of actions" (p.163).

Chavanne (1995) pointed out that that "a child's identity is cultural and if his origins or roots are disregarded he will suffer prejudice or feel rejected" (p.164). Chavanne also warned against not making assumptions regarding cultural identity. Havana advocated letting students choose where they belong and allowing them to establish their own sense of identity within a new culture.

Germany

This study will examine the challenges of broadening the perspective of art education to include the cultures of the community it serves. Petrovich-Mwank (1995) spoke of the challenges facing Germany in redefining art education to meet the needs of a diverse population. Art educators are beginning to pay more

attention to multicultural needs. Traditionally, Germans have regarded the aim of art education to be the preservation of German culture and the development of creative expressiveness through art media (Petrovich-Mwanki, 1995). Petrovich-Mwanki (1995) argued that German society must redefine culture because it is and has been racially and ethnically diverse.

Building an arts curriculum that reflects and includes the community it serves are common themes and discussions worldwide. Reforming art curriculum from a homogenous perspective to include multicultural perspectives is a challenge facing many nations. A sharing of research and information on how school systems globally address this challenge will only help the words turn into action.

Successes and Problems in Public School Collaborations with Community Artists

This study examines how we can better utilize our funds of artistic knowledge in the community to create a more inclusive arts curriculum. How can community artists help bridge the gap of knowledge between public school arts teachers and the culture of the community where they teach? Involving community arts organizations in the creation of arts programs in the public schools is an important component to an effective arts program. According to the literature I examined, there are many challenges that must be considered in building these partnerships.

The need to define collaboration

Some of the challenges to creating an arts program that include community artists were outlined by Fineberg (1994) when he discussed the factors that could influence the success or failure of partnerships between community arts organizations and public schools.

According to Fineberg (1994), effective collaborations are not easy to achieve, they often become difficult puzzles for those partnered with unlike organizations. This study pointed out that collaboration is different than simply providing services to a client. Fineberg (1994) claimed that many service programs were misidentified as collaboration when they were simply provider-client relationships. Providers were able to offer excellent services to schools in many forms, lectures, concerts, and performances... Collaborations, on the other hand, created results that were longer lasting. As an example of true collaboration Fineburg cited the successful collaboration between the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, the Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey, and the public schools of Kansas City, Kansas. Professional staff and volunteer Ailey "Ambassadors" planned curriculum approaches with teachers and delivered a sequence of lessons that linked dance with the existing Social Studies curriculum (Fineberg, 1994).

Time, money and a clear definition of goals

Many times collaborations between schools and arts organizations were not possible simply because of the lack of funds. Most sponsors required matching funds or outside money. The reality is that schools' increasingly tight budgets cannot always match funds. Fineberg (1994) explained that most sponsors of collaborations believed that by requiring matching funds they were better able to identify the most serious arts education projects.

Another obstacle cited was a lack of time, because partners must set aside time for planning and reflecting in order for the collaboration to succeed. Fineberg (1994) believed that when partners set aside time for training participants in the skills needed to carry the collaboration to its fullest potential, they are usually recognizing one of the greatest needs in arts education collaborations.

The study concluded that successful collaborations must have agreement on goals. There must be clear definitions of the roles each partner plays and what tasks they must complete. Collaborations without agreement on goals and means to achieve these goals yield meaningful results only through the forces of serendipity (Fineberg, 1994).

Differences between community artists and school arts programs

Davis (1994) discussed other challenges that collaborations between public

schools and community arts centers face by noting their differences. Davis' study was based on numerous interviews with students, arts centers administrators, community artists and public school arts specialists. Davis pointed out that students who traditionally fail in the school environment often find success away from school. Many arts centers are able to reach and educate students who have been turned off by and even turned out of school (Davis, 1994).

According to this Davis, expectations and priorities are often very different between the arts centers and the public schools. Some community arts centers' directors pointed out the high expectation that they have for their students. They also noted that sometimes these are students that face expectations for failure in the school environment. They found that culturally diverse student populations whose heritage may be only celebrated seasonally in school, may find that an arts center honors and recognizes their culture 365 days a year. Davis summed it up when he stated that alternative environments have different expectations and priorities.

Davis went on to explain how some arts centers directors stated that a big difference between the arts centers and the public schools was that they used artists as teachers rather than teachers who do some art. The quality of artwork meant that the artists served as mentors and were able to model their art. One

director of a performing art center said, "I think that working artists are really important in teaching children because they bring another life style; they're open, they're innovative, they're not bound up in a lot of structure or, if it is structure, it's their structure..."(Davis, 1994, p.3).

However, Davis also pointed out that some art center directors noted that there are cases where a good artist doesn't necessarily make a good teacher.

Having a background in education seemed to be especially useful for those instructors who taught young children. Davis declared, "The most wonderful artist in the world can be a terrible teacher and maybe not such a great artist can be a wonderful teacher" (p.4).

According to Davis, students perceived the level of caring to be higher at the arts centers than at the schools. One student stated, "Teachers at school they throw something at you, and go, 'Well, whether you learn it or not we get paid'" (Davis, 1994,p.4). The community arts centers recognized the overload of work that most public schools face daily. The community arts centers also had the benefit of having smaller classes and were able to give more individual attention.

Some schools recognized their community art centers and collaborated in the form of artists-in-residence, performances or extended day programs.

Extended day programs hosted at schools that utilize local artists gave students,

who don't have transportation to an arts center, the opportunity for arts lessons. Community artists wanted to work in the schools in order to reach more kids. Davis emphasized that one of the most effective ways of reaching large numbers of kids is through the schools.

Some arts educators expressed the fear that in-school services provided by community art centers may ultimately justify the elimination of public school arts specialists and classes (Davis, 1994) The director of arts education for one public school system said of such a collaboration, "Art teachers, in the schools, perceive that there is a competition"(Davis, 1994,p.5). Many public school Arts teachers are used to working in isolation. Collaborating with a community artist is not the norm. Davis concluded that having resources in the community that are rich and fully developed provides public education with appropriate partners with which to have collaborative relationships.

Building effective partnerships

Remer (1996) examined through interviews with artists, art educators, and arts administrators, arts partnerships that integrated community arts and cultural resources with schools.

Remer explored how individual arts organizations, agencies, and artists can work more effectively as learning resources to students, teachers, administrators,

parents and other community members. From the public school's point of view, they wanted and needed long-term commitment and dedication from the arts organizations. In an interview with Anthony Alvarado (Remer, 1996), superintendent of a New York school district, Alvarado says,

Since schools will never have all the arts resources they need there are too many arts, too many different aspects to artistic and aesthetic learning, the arts organizations shouldn't worry about helping us to build our own capacity. They have the resources and expertise we will always need (p.36).

It is evident that schools need the expertise that artists can provide.

The interviews of public schools administrators indicated that they recognized the need to build capacity in the arts, but more importantly saw the reality that the arts are not something you can teach someone in a series of workshops. The lack of institutionally based arts expertise is a major flaw in public education and has very serious consequences for the arts education of all our students (interview with Richard Benjamin, Remer, 1996).

Remer urged arts organizations to consider some factors before working in the schools. For instance one must consider the age and background of the students in order to determine appropriate instruction. Remer (1996) argued, "If the dance is ballet in form revealing white tights and tutus, on point, and your teenage kids know hip-hop in baggy clothing, then you will have a problem" (p.144).

The racial or ethnic make-up of the performers or workshop artists is an important consideration. If the artists are all Caucasian and your students are largely African American, Latino or Asian, then the students may think that the artwork does not speak to their concerns since they cannot see themselves reflected on the stage or in the classroom (Remer, 1996). Remer pointed out that without a doubt, the single most important factor of an arts education program is the artistic quality and integrity of its performers, teaching artists, and performances or exhibits. Remer noted that kids know quality and so do teachers and parents.

According to Remer, artists must take the time to get to know the neighborhoods and schools where they are working. Remer emphasized that if arts organizations and artists do not understand a community's culture, and the children they are expected to instruct, then the likelihood that they can choose appropriate subject matter or design sound curriculum is slim.

Studies Integrating Multicultural Arts Experiences with Community Artists in Public Schools

This study asks what are the results when a culturally responsive and multicultural approach to arts education is implemented in a public school arts program? Several studies that attempted to implement multicultural arts programming showed positive results.

Integrating community arts programming into the curriculum

Tunks (1997) described a project in Dallas, Texas whose purpose was to integrate community arts and culture programs into the core curriculum. The Partnership Assessment Project (PAP) was initiated in 1992. This was a four-year study comparing student achievement under two conditions: with prepared curricular incorporation of community arts experiences and the same arts experience without prepared curricular incorporation (Tunks, 1997). The project design included training for teachers in the use of arts in the classroom, advice for integrating curriculum, teaching for transfer, and assessment through the use of portfolios and performance-assessment techniques (Tunks, 1997).

Tunks (1997) reported that in addition to using community arts and culture programs in meaningful ways, teachers in the project tracked students' comprehension of the experiences in relation to their total learning. Tunks concluded that, although the students were focusing on the integration of the art experience in total learning, and participated in the arts experience, this experience did not provide them with adequate training in an art form. Tunks noted that certainly these arts experiences were an improvement over no arts instruction; however, the need for arts specialists in elementary schools remained clear.

Tunks also concluded that retention of arts specialists in the curriculum would require incorporation of available resources in and out of the arts education community. Tunks said that arts educators needed to view their work as integral in the overall instruction of students, and they must work with other teachers to create connections between arts and other subjects.

Tunks pointed out the difficulties inherent in trying to train teachers to be artists. Students need more than a literature lesson that integrates the arts. The importance of having real arts experts collaborating and working at school sites was clearly stated in this case study.

Intergenerational art education

In a largely immigrant community, as is the case at my middle school, art can help bridge the cultural generation gaps, and improve communication between teenagers and adults as was demonstrated by La Porte (1999).

La Porte did an ethnographic study of an intergenerational art education program in Harlem, New York City. La Porte examined intergenerational interactions between seniors and teenagers during their participation in an after-school art program. The research described, analyzed, and interpreted interactions between the young students and older participants during the programs three components: oral history, art making, and social service (La Porte,

2000). The study found that collecting oral histories and making art works increased the exchange of personal history and culture and reduced age-related stereotypes. La Porte concluded that interactions between teenagers and seniors during the intergenerational art program built community through a dialogic process and showed beneficial educational and social implications. La Porte found that the participants were able to develop mutual respect and understanding for one another among different ethnicities, ages, and genders.

Developing cultural pride with folk tales and art

Carger (1998) implemented a project aimed at providing 7th and 8th grade culturally and linguistically diverse students with multicultural arts experiences. Aspiring art and elementary education teachers from a local university used folk tales to connect children's literature to art. They related art projects to children's literature geared to the ethnic backgrounds of various Chicago school communities. When they worked with the Latino population they read folk tales from Robert San Souci's 1993 collection "Cut from the same cloth" which stresses regional folk heroines. They created mosaics to illustrate a tale from the Objibway tribe, and assembled wood scraps into brightly painted animal sculptures in the Mexican Oaxacan style. Many students incorporated culturally respected symbols into their artwork. Carger illustrated how art can be used to promote cultural pride amongst

ethnic minorities. Children who know the history and culture of their people will be more engaged in school and thus achieve academically.

Conclusion

A call for a more culturally relevant and responsive arts curriculum from the literature reviewed is clear. The historical and political dimensions that have excluded the art forms of culturally and linguistically diverse groups peoples from the school arts programming is evident. Utilizing and validating community arts organizations could help bridge the community and the school.

The challenges and obstacles to community collaboration are many whether they are an imagined threat to job security or a difference in philosophy. The idea that home, school and community should be integrated was a commonality in all of these studies and discussions. Missing in this literature was a study or example of an exemplary arts program in a community similar to the community where I teach. In some communities using artists from the university may be using your community. In a largely Mexican, immigrant community what does collaborating with the community mean?

Chapter Three

Research Design

This research was a case study of a middle school's arts curriculum. The research utilized ethnographic methodologies as described by Fetterman (1998), as well as, qualitative design as detailed by Maxwell (1996). I used interviews, observations and open- ended questionnaires to engage the voices of community artists, students, and arts teachers at the middle School in a conversation about how we could build a more culturally responsive curriculum in the arts and why this is necessary. The purpose of the interviews and open -ended questionnaires was to identify themes, barriers or challenges, and what is needed to build an effective arts program that includes and reflects the community. I also went out into the community where the middle school is located and observed examples of art outside of the public school setting in order to give an accurate description of examples of public and community art in the community. These observations were documented with field notes and videotaped.

Setting

The middle school is located in a California central coast agricultural community. Due to labor -intensive canneries and agriculture, this community has depended on a pool of underpaid laborers throughout its colonial and postcolonial

history. Since the 1960's, there has been a large immigration of Mexicans, the large majority coming from Central Mexico. After cannery closings and layoffs in the 1980's, working class laborers found themselves competing for lower paying, labor intensive jobs in the fields. The prosperity of the nearby "Silicon Valley" only worsened the situation for the working poor raising the cost of housing to unattainable levels. The local newspaper has regular editorials that reflect an anti-immigrant, racist tone. There are upper class members of this community whose families have held large tracts of land for sometime. The social class make up of this community is for the most part also an ethnic division: The upper class is mostly European-American and the lower class Mexican. The growing middle class is mostly a diverse mix of Mexican-Americans, White, Portuguese-Americans, Croatians, Japanese-Americans, and Filipinos. Locally, Latinos have emerged politically in the city government, and there exists Latino commerce organizations. Many Latinos have small businesses but many do not own the land or facility where their businesses are located.

The middle school itself was built in 1995 to accommodate the growing population of families and already overcrowded schools. The middle school uses a four-track year round calendar in order to accommodate classes of sixth, seventh and eighth grade students. The four-track calendar makes it a mathematical

nightmare to schedule students in differentiated groupings. For example, if a student is scheduled into an English language development class, he/she remains in this group all day, year to year, unless the student tests fluent in English and then is scheduled into the mainstream heterogeneous groups. Often students remain tracked in these segregated groups throughout their three years at this middle school.

The year before the middle school's opening there was a series of meetings with heated discussions between concerned community members and educational personnel about the nature of the instructional program at the middle school, specifically whether or not to offer bilingual classes. A group of concerned teachers and parents wanted bilingual classes included in the school instructional program. However, a "Structured English Immersion" instructional program was implemented at the school. This was prior to proposition 227, a legal mandate that California voters passed in favor of dismantling bilingual programs throughout the state.

Demographics of the middle school

The middle school has an enrollment of 895 sixth, seventh and eighth graders. Of these 895 students, 766 were identified as "Hispanic or Latino" in the California Basic Educational Data System. The next largest ethnic group was

"White" with a total of 107 students. There are four African American students, 16 Filipinos and two Asians students. From the total school population, 377 students receive a free or reduced lunch. There are 45 certificated staff, 18 male and 27 female. Thirty-five certificated employees are white, seven are Hispanic, one is African-American and two employees had no response.

Research Participants

Students

A large majority, about 90%, of the student participants in this research identified themselves as Mexican or Mexican- American: A majority of whose families are from the Mexican states of Michoacan or Jalisco. The remaining ten percent ethnically identified themselves as Filipino, African- American, Portuguese, White, or Japanese-American. There is a wide range of socio-economic groups amongst the students. Forty percent of the students receive a free or reduced lunch. One hundred and fifty students completed an open-ended questionnaire during their dance class at the middle school. From the 150 questionnaires I eliminated those that seemed invalid due to obvious lack of comprehension. For example, a couple of students wrote, "I don't know" on every question. The questionnaire required a certain amount of cognitive understanding of what was

being asked, so I eliminated those answers that didn't make sense: I eliminated only three questionnaires from the 150 questionnaires given to the students. I chose to further analyze the questionnaires from the students that had nearly completed three years of arts instruction at the middle school: There were 53 questionnaires in all that fulfilled this criteria. From the pool of 53 students who had completed three years of arts instruction at the middle school, I asked for six volunteer candidates to be interviewed at the time and location of their choice. Interested students volunteered to be interviewed. Three students were interviewed during lunch: we ate and talked together. The other three were interviewed after school. No interview lasted more than 40 minutes.

Teachers

All five arts teachers at the middle school were given an open-ended questionnaire that asked their perspectives and personal experiences teaching arts and collaborating with the community in the middle School. This group included three music specialists and two visual art specialists. The ethnic make-up of all five teachers is European-American. Their socio-economic status is upper middle class. Four of the five teachers live in outside communities different culturally, ethnically and socio-economically from the community of the middle school where

they teach. Only two of the five arts specialists chose to participate in this research

Parents

For parent input and perspectives, I interviewed and surveyed ten parents, all who have students in the after-school dance program at my middle school. I chose this group of parents because I already have biweekly communication with them and their children. This facilitated the logistics of scheduling interviews and returning surveys.

Ten sets of parents whose children participate in the after-school Dance program were invited to fill out a questionnaire and to be interviewed with a letter stating the purpose and nature of this research. The parents represented a broad range of ethnic and socio-economic groups. On the survey they were asked to identify themselves racially or ethnically. One set of parents identified as Euro-American married to a Mexican-American, another is Japanese-American married to a Swedish-American, another was Mixteco (indigenous group from Oaxaca, Mexico), and another Mexican-American married to Native American, five identified as Mexican and one as Chicano. The diversity of my students' cultures and socio-economic status were evident in this pool of parent participants. All ten questionnaires passed out were returned. I followed up the questionnaire with

informal interviews of five parents who wrote on the questionnaire that they volunteered to be interviewed.

Artists

I invited five Artists to participate in this research that have an established relationship with the community and are involved in teaching children or youth in some capacity. I specifically contacted artists that were repeatedly mentioned by the students in their questionnaires. These artists include two musicians in a local Mariachi, two folkloric choreographers, and one muralist/danzante. All of these artists were voluntary participants in this research.

Three of these artists are employees of the local school district, but not as arts teachers. Their various jobs include a bus driver, guidance technician and a teacher trainer. The other two artist participants include a mother of five and a full time artist. All of these five artists are highly regarded in the community: none hold an advanced college degree or university degree in their art form.

Data Collection

All formal interviews with the community artists and students were tape-recorded and transcribed. In addition, I also took notes during the interviews. Three of the five parents interviewed requested phone interviews due to their

work schedule. The other two parent interviews were follow-up questions from the questionnaires and were informal and not tape-recorded but notes were taken. Samples of the interview questions and questionnaires are included in appendices A, B, C and D. All of the formal interviews were transcribed and then shown to the participants for additions or omissions before publishing. Follow-up interviews were done informally with notes and were not tape-recorded.

In order to triangulate the research participants' perceptions about community art, observations were made of examples of public and community art within the community. I took notes, photographed and video taped a three- hour tour of local murals with the muralist and a group of parents. I also took notes, and photographed a local altar of great significance to the community. I visited, observed, and took notes at three different folkloric dance classes outside of the school.

Data Analysis

The data was read at least three times. The data was coded according to prevalent themes in each of the interviews and questionnaires. First, themes were identified in each individual participant's data and then themes were identified across each group: students, parents, teachers and artists. Finally, themes were

categorized across the four groups of participants. Repetitions, consistencies and inconsistencies were noted as well as any negative cases.

There were eleven formal interviews coded as primary data: five with community artists and six with students. Five informal interviews and ten questionnaires with parents served as secondary data to this research. Fifty-three student questionnaires, two teacher questionnaires, and field observations also informed this study as secondary data. This research sought to find the opinions and perspectives of students, parents, teachers and community artists.

Interviews of local artists sought background information on their art and philosophy. Their opinions on how the school could better utilize local talent were also requested as part of the interview as well as their perceptions around collaborating with local schools.

Questionnaires and informal interviews with parents sought their perceptions about how their child has benefited or not benefited from participation in a performing arts group and why this is important.

Students' and teachers' perceptions and opinions about their arts classes and art in the community were recorded through the use of an open-ended questionnaire as well as formal interviews. Students consistently noted that they hadn't learned enough about their own culture in their arts classes. Teachers'

perspectives were limited due to the voluntary lack of participation from three of the five arts specialists. Field notes and observations of community art triangulated the students and teachers perceptions about art around the community.

Chapter Four

Overview of the Findings

Several common themes emerged not only within each group but also among the four groups of participants: artists, students, parents and teachers. Each participant's data was analyzed individually and then across their group.

Artists' descriptions of their collaborations with schools brought out interesting issues between artists and public school staff. These issues revolved around representing too much of one culture, specifically, Mexican. The interviews also led to reflection about what paths each artist has taken to obtain their artistic and cultural knowledge.

Both students and parents brought out the complexities of personal and collective identity. Students who identified themselves as Mexican or of Mexican heritage felt they didn't learn about their culture in their arts classes. The parents showed a strong level of support for their children learning about diverse cultures, as well as their own. They gave clearly defined reasons why and qualified and explained what they felt.

Of the five teachers invited to participate in the research only two chose to participate. The lack of participation could be due to their busy schedules, or it

may be a reflection that the research question was not one of importance, interest or priority. There were some very distinct differences between teacher comments and the rest of the participants.

Student Questionnaires

Perceptions of art in the community

Students were able to describe the art in their communities on all 53 questionnaires. Students described an environment rich in art and gave a variety of examples of art and artists in the community including family members.

I see lots of talented people in my community. Where I live there's a musician really good. And I hear lots of Artists around me.

I know my brother he is a really good artist. He is the only one I hear about.

The art I see in my community is folkloric dance groups because my sister is in one of them. They dance Mexican Folk Music. They dance with colorful skirts and roll up their hair or make different sorts of Mexican hairstyles.

The murals around town were a common theme that a lot of students mentioned.

I see a lot of murals around town especially downtown. I've seen lots of native and Mexican people. I like the murals because it shows who lived here before and the people that are in our community now.

Also several students noted the prevalence of Mexican art.

There is Mexican music left and right. The murals around town are amazing. You can really see what the artists express on them.

Like in Main (St.) sometimes there's like festivals. And they bring a lot of music like the "Banda" kind.

I see many artists all over the community, because an artist is not just someone who is famous. They can be a person that likes to draw and they wouldn't be famous. But if you want an example there's a muralist and he teaches the Aztec dance that I'm in.

Two students named local Mariachis. This student talks about the guidance technician who works in the office at the middle school and plays music locally.

José he plays the guitar, violin he is a great musical artist. He plays all around the county. He also plays at school in his office sometimes.

This student mentions one of our school bus drivers who also sings in a Mariachi.

I've seen Eugenio the artist singer sing on my grandma's birthday.

All of the questionnaires painted images of an artistic community.

I hear music. I see murals. I see paintings. I see plays. There are many artists in the community. It is a very fruitful community to be in.

There are many arts I see around the community there are murals at our schools and around town. There are different types of music such as Mexican, Indian and many more. The other day they did a Romeo and Juliet play.

Experiences with community artists

Although the students perceived their community replete with art, only

eight out of the 53 said that they actually had arts lessons from artists in their community.

I've never had art lessons from anyone special artists except from my teacher Ms. Brown. I would like to take lessons from someone professional.

No I have never had art lessons. The only art experience I have had with art is in exploratory art class.

Three students had experienced working on murals with an artist at their elementary school. None had worked with this artist at the middle school.

Yes in grade school I and my class had lessons on Azteca art with the muralist, he also dances Aztec dancing.

Yes, from the muralist, he taught my class in 4th grade. It was so much fun because we learned a variety of songs. So my experience was wonderful.

One student wrote about learning art from a family member.

My uncle sings and my other uncle draws and paints. The one who sings taught me a few songs, but my voice is terrible. My uncle who paints tried to teach me how to draw. I'm still learning. It was fun to know how to do something. I liked it.

Only one student, who happens to be economically better off than most students, had private guitar lessons.

I'm taking guitar lessons from a very talented artist. I'm glad I'm exposed to the arts right now.

The students who had contact with a community artist had positive experiences, but these experiences seem to have only happened in the elementary school years

or after school and not at the middle school.

Descriptions of arts classes at the middle school

Students were very consistent with their descriptions of arts classes. There were few variations of these descriptions. All 53 students mentioned studying musicals, the recorder and composers in their music class.

In music class we learn how to read music. We also learn about different composers. We also watch different musicals. We learn how to play the recorder. I learned how to play "Hot Cross Buns".

All 53 students consistently described their art class as teaching them about drawing, colors and shading. Out of the 53 students surveyed, 22 students also mentioned studying famous European artists such as Picasso and Leonardo Da Vinci.

In art we learn the fundamental skills of drawing and painting. We learn how to use two certain kinds of color for that painting or drawing only.

In Art I learned about Leonardo da Vinci, Vincent Van Gogh, and the Mona Lisa. We learned that all these great artists were sort of crazy except Mona Lisa.

In Art we studied Van Gogh, Picasso and some others. They were all American and European. We also did some work about Mona Lisa and some other people who were painted. I would like to know about why we always study about people that are dead?

All 53 descriptions of the dance class mentioned studying Mexican dances and other cultures. There were many details about exactly what region, culture or dance they had learned.

In dance I learned how to dance different dances and styles. I learned how to dance African and Mexican dances. I have also learned the history of ethnic groups that dance in rituals like indigenous people of Mexico.

In dance; we don't just dance whatever the teacher has planned, we first learn about it: like where it came from and what the dance means to the people who dance it regularly in their home. For example, we did a Mexican dance from Mexicali, Mexico. It was a rodeo dance. It was really fun.

The consistency in all of the students' descriptions of their arts classes makes me think that their answers were accurate from their perspectives. It seems, with the exception of their dance class, the arts are being taught in what Bersson (1996) termed a formalistic and western-centric framework.

Cultural relevancy in the arts classes

Out of the 53 students surveyed 43 did not feel like their curriculum reflected their community. Among the 53 students surveyed, four students did not answer the question and six students felt like the curriculum at the middle school did include diverse cultures.

I don't really think what they have taught us reflects the community. In dance class, they do a little, like Mexican dancing. That helps because there are many Mexicans in this community.

I'm Filipino and Hawaiian and they don't teach anything from my culture.

We mostly focus on early 18th^h century artists from Europe in drawing and paint class.

I have never heard anything about Mexican history in the U.S. or any school I have ever been to except dance class. I think it is nice that someone teaches a

little bit of Mexican history.

A student, who identified herself as "racially white, because I am", had an interesting response.

Yes, I have learned about African-Americans and how they were slaved and Mexicans and their journey over here for more opportunities and the white or British who wanted Freedom from the King of England. No I have not read any Chicano, Mexica, African-American or Filipino authors. We are just now learning about Sam Adams, George Washington and all the Yankees who fought for our freedom in the home of the free and the home of the brave, but not back then of course.

This student feels that she has studied the diverse cultures of the United States, but yet she only knows about slavery and how Mexicans immigrate for economic opportunities. From her last sentence it seems like she has learned that inequality in the U.S.A. is a thing of the past.

Improving the arts classes

Among the 53 students surveyed 50 had a variety of ideas on how to improve their arts program at school and make it better reflect their community. Out of the 53 students surveyed, two students said that they wouldn't change anything and one didn't answer. Out of fifty students that had ideas for changing their arts classes, eighteen students specifically mentioned including more Mexican art in their arts classes, two students wanted to see more Filipino culture, and one student wanted more American art included in the curriculum. The following are

some samples of the various students' responses about improving their arts classes.

Maybe if they had artists from the community come in to teach.

By teaching us things of right here in (community was stated)!

I think we should learn different kinds of art. For example, murales, cooking, different dance cultures. For example Japanese, Chinese, Philipino, and others.

This student has a revolutionary idea even if she doesn't realize it.

Well if our community would take over the school program I think it would be better for us.

There were eighteen students that spoke of the need to learn specifically about Mexican culture and two students that spoke about learning about Filipino culture.

It can better reflect our community by studying art from artist lived or live in this town. I would study and draw Mexican style since we live in a mostly Hispanic community.

I think that in art class they should teach about Mexican artists like what they painted. In Music, they can teach us some traditional music that comes from Mexico.

They could teach us more about Mexican culture and about our ancestors.

We could have more Mexican background instead of European we can also have some more Native American background as well.

The arts program would be better for my community because I am Filipina and I want to at least learn about my cultures great known performers, and dance styles. I want to learn a lot from my people.

One student's thoughts were about making the curriculum reflect American culture.

By teaching us American dance like Swing dancing or square dancing. Or by teaching us how to play American instruments like the flute or trumpet.

The data revealed that 43 out the 53 students surveyed didn't feel like the curriculum included their heritage or reflected their community. Suggestions on how to improve arts classes to make them better reflect the community, specifically mentioned including Mexican and Filipino cultures.

Student Interviews

Six students were interviewed following their questionnaires. They had similar responses to the questionnaires but with more detail.

Perceptions of art in the community

Students again described a community with Mexican "Banda" music in the plaza, Aztec dancing, murals and Mexican Folkloric arts groups.

There's murals of Aztec people. Mexican people dancing and all kinds of religious murals.

They bring folkloric dances when there's a festival.

One Mixteca student did not describe art in this community but instead spoke of the art from her town San Antonio de las Mesas, Oaxaca, Mexico.

We used to make art thingies with my mom. We used to make comal, spoons de barra (clay) and jarritos(cups). We burned them and I burned myself. With my

grandma I used to see her making sombreros and she showed me but I forgot. And us in order to have a little money we have to sell them. That's kind of like our work. We also make different things like little figures.

We dance for like dia de los muertos, no not dia de los muertos, festival. We used to but we still dance. It's just for guys and they dance with a mask and they kill a rooster jalandole (wringing his neck) and they go around midnight and knock on each door and see if and they bring candles and they ask permission whether they could sacarle la suerte (bring them good luck) or something like that. You know kind of like a brujería (whichcraft) type thing but it's kind of like a religion. I think they go and dance around the pueblo with lights.

Her experiences were with artistic traditions that were used as a way to earn income for her community. The danzas she saw were ceremonial and religious and not for show. In order for the school curriculum to build on this student's prior knowledge, the economic and ceremonial purpose of art must not be dismissed. Providing culturally relevant curriculum can only be achieved through the full participation of the student's family and community.

Experiences with community artists

Out of the six students interviewed only two had experiences with community artists.

I was like in an Indian dance group when I was like around 10. My neighbors used to always take me. At Green School they always had the dancing.

Jaime López, he taught us in one class in fourth grade dances, songs and to draw pictures.

Again students' experiences with community artists were during the elementary school years.

Descriptions of arts classes at the middle school

Students' descriptions of their arts classes were consistent with the answers on the questionnaires. When asked what they learned in their three years in Music class students responded:

We played the recorder and the...it's like a xylophone.

We played the recorders and the xylophone and we watched videos.

When the students were asked if they learned any Mexican songs all six answered unanimously "No".

No. It was like "Hot Cross Buns".

Like American.

No, all American songs.

Students' descriptions of their art class were also consistent with the surveys.

We learned that like there's primary colors. And out of those three they make other different colors.

We learned shading and how to mix colors into one. It helped me a lot because when I get older I'm hoping to be an artist.

The descriptions of the dance class again mentioned Mexican and African dances.

I've learned like Mexican dance from Jalisco, Baja California, Nayarit and I think Chiapas. And uh Africa I've learned some Senegalese, West African.

We learned Salsa and this year Mexican and African.

Cultural relevancy of arts classes

All of the six students interviewed felt that their arts class didn't include their culture except for Dance. One student who was interviewed felt that even her dance class did not include her culture. She identified herself as a Mixteca Indian and the Mestizo bailes that she learned in her dance class reflected the "dominant" culture in Mexico not her own.

"Like you know all the dances you taught us they are very different. If you ever taught us an Indian one I'm sure it's not going to be the same."

Even though she had learned an indigenous "danza" in the dance class it still was not a reflection of her culture because it was not Mixteco. She said about her music class:

It's not the same I don't feel like oh I'm learning something about my culture because it's English and very very different from ours.

She also said that in her visual art class they had made baskets but the material and the way that they wove the baskets was nothing like she had

experienced with her grandmother. "Like we made baskets but it's not the thing that we used."

Improving the arts classes

Among the six students interviewed, five mentioned that they would change their arts classes by adding more Mexican culture.

I would add like more Mexican songs and more instruments.

Probably more instruments like the piano, probably I like Mexican music on the piano.

More art with more projects with more culture and other things like Mexican culture because there's not a lot of that.

I'd put more culture into it, more Mexican culture because they don't have a lot of that. In school they don't show you a lot about Mexican culture.

The Mixteco student was fully aware of the impossibility of the school to be able to teach her about her culture.

It's harder because I know she couldn't like teach us old things from my pueblo. She doesn't even know what we were talking about. More stuff like making more baskets and actually working with the "plastelina" (clay) or something like that.

This student felt like even if the school could not match her grandmother's teachings, it would be an improvement if they did similar projects like making baskets and making things out of clay.

Arts teachers

Only two arts teachers responded to the questionnaire. One teaches one class a day of visual art to sixth grade students. The other teaches band and chorus as elective classes at the middle School. Most recently this music teacher resigned from teaching chorus and dismantled the chorus due to what the teacher described as disruptive behavior and unmotivated learners.

Problems teaching an arts lesson

The two teachers who participated in this research mentioned various problems that they encounter while teaching an arts lesson.

Students working on their project instead of paying attention during a mini-lesson. Academic vocabulary specific to the project seems to be a barrier to some. Poor attendance means they rarely finish projects on time or not at all.

Students' attention span is too short to deal with an involved complicated subject.

Both teachers mentioned a lack of attention during their classes. Also the first teacher typically noted a "lack of academic vocabulary".

Students' successes in an arts lesson

The teachers described students as being successful and engaged when they show intrinsic motivation and when they are able to teach what they have learned to someone else.

Students show their level of engagement by coming to the band room off track in order to participate with the on-track students. They also show a high level of engagement by showing up daily before school begins and organizing themselves to play.

This teacher describes the successful and engaged students as those who have access to early morning practice or off-track classes.

The visual art teacher described student success from what the students write on their self-evaluations after the project is finished. The teacher also noted that students are most successful when they have access to a teacher.

Students feel most successful when they can see progress on their project and can get a teacher's help when they need it. On their self-evaluations, students express a high degree of feeling successful and being pleased with both what they've produced and confidence that they could do another on their own at home. Often they teach a parent or find a grandmother that has some experience making a similar project and that becomes an important bond.

Perceptions of art in the community

The visual art teacher made a list of 18 artists in the community that she was aware of and had collaborated with nine of them. All 18 of these artists except for one are members of the dominant culture and 16 of the artists on this list do not live in this community but rather outside affluent communities. Out of the 18 artists named, seven are public school arts teachers.

The music teacher named two local Mariachi musicians and mentioned that he had collaborated once on a performance with them three years ago. These two

Mariachi musicians volunteered to help teach the chorus and try to motivate the students. The students responded positively on the days that the Mariachi singers were able to work with them but unfortunately the teacher still had problems when the Mariachis weren't there and eventually dismantled the chorus.

Strengthening the connection between our school arts program and the community

The music teacher noted a lack of community support.

I'm dumbfounded at the lack of parent support for band/chorus kids. Sometimes only half to three fourths of the parents will stay for a performance. The others drop off and pick up their kids. This needs to be addressed!

The art teacher suggested having a catalogue with the names and numbers of community artists.

Having a roster of people willing to either collaborate with teachers or speak to or work with students might make it easier to "shop" for someone to help enrich the curriculum.

Neither of the teacher participants mentioned anything pertaining to cultural relevancy, home language or community involvement.

Parents

Participation in an after-school performing group

All ten parents agreed that their son/daughter benefited from the after-

school folkloric dance group and spoke positively about performances that they had seen. The parents who answered in Spanish were able to even name dances they had seen and comment positively on them. The following are examples of parents' comments in English.

She learns about heritage and she likes it very much. She dances so beautiful. I love the dress and she is very good at it.

My daughter really enjoys the dance group. I see her learning about a different culture, coordination with her own body and exercise. I have seen the evening performance. It was very entertaining and the kids looked like they had a lot of fun learning the dances and performing them for parents.

These comments were made by Spanish speaking parents and were translated.

I like for her to be active and want to exercise. It also helps her to relax and improve herself every day. She has presented many dances. I like one called "Marieta" a lot because it was from the revolution. I also liked "Las Espuelas de Amozoc". I liked it because of the costume.

He benefits because it helps him to relax and stop thinking about problems and concentrate in dance. I have seen him dance and it was a very beautiful presentation and I enjoyed it a lot.

She has had a lot of presentations in the community and a big one each year at the theater. I feel proud when I see her enjoying herself on stage.

All ten parents noted various benefits including learning about their cultural heritage and feeling a sense of accomplishment after a performance. These results were not surprising considering all of these parents voluntarily have their children

participate in the after school dance program at the school.

Importance of learning about diverse cultures

Out of the ten parents, nine felt that it was important that their son or daughter learn about diverse cultures including their own. One parent who identified herself as "Japanese-American born in Hawaii" felt that it was important to learn about diverse heritages but it was not important that her daughter learn about her own culture in school.

It's not that necessary (that she learns about her cultural heritage) but if she wants to learn about it; her grandparents on both sides can help her.

The parents who answered the questions in Spanish had detailed explanations about why it was important that their son/daughter learn about their own heritage.

I like for him to participate because with every style of dance he learns the culture about the dance that he is interpreting. Of course it is important because with each dance he learns each day he discovers and learns about countries and traditions through dance and the way that you dress and I hope there are always teachers that inspire them to have dreams.

I like that she learns about her own culture first. She has learned a little so now I want her to learn about others cultures too because each culture had important things to learn about it. It's important that she learns about our culture because it is our origin and I always want her to be proud of her culture.

Yes it's important for me. And it's great that there are people who are interested in keeping cultures alive. It's very important because when one goes to a presentation and they present a baile or danza from your own country you feel

proud and happy to know that your children are liking and enjoying their own culture no matter in what country they live.

Five out of the ten parents surveyed who identified themselves as Mexican but wrote and spoke in English said that learning about their cultural heritage was important but did not elaborate about why this was important.

Yes, it is important to be informed or educated in your own ethnic origin.

Yes, because she should feel proud of her background.

With the exception of one parent, all nine parents felt that learning about cultural heritage was important. The parents who grew up in Mexico seemed to have very clear reasons why this is important. Perhaps this is because they have benefited from being exposed to the many artistic cultural expressions in their countries of origin.

Community artists

Challenges to working with public schools, being "Too Mexican"

The interactions between artists and public school staff showed some interesting conflictive perspectives. One artist spoke of a mural he was painting in the local High School.

Everything for me was "It was too Mexican". What happened with the mural in the High School cafeteria? O.K. they were all Latinos except for one. All the imagery that they put in there dealt with cars and tigers and butterflies and

apples and there was one Aztec warrior with a torch and I'm trying to remember what was there in the initial drawings. There was one graduate. The students, to me, did not reflect who they were. But even just the car, the Aztec warrior, the whole thing was too "Mexican". O.K.?

The muralist ended up having to change the drawings for the mural at the High School.

The muralist clearly stated that being "too Mexican" was a problem from the beginning in dealing with public schools. I asked specifically if they didn't want him to put Mexican images in the murals and he said, "Anything that reflected the pre-Colombian culture, specifically Mexico". The artist explained how he has resisted the dominant culture's insistence on defining his imagery.

I remember one of the first comments I got, "These kids don't know anything about that anyways". So I said well it's an opportunity for them to learn. And they said, "Oh no, no, no we're going to do something on endangered species." So I had to do a whole new drawing. But I think actually what happened is I started with pre-Columbian images. I actually started using more rain forest images and behind the leaves I stuck these images. And I would talk with the kids letting them know why I was doing that, or in my slide presentations when I go to high schools or colleges, because that's what I have to resort to get something in there.

I was curious about who exactly was responsible for determining what was "too Mexican" in the murals. I asked if it was administrators as had been my experience with his mural at the middle school. The artist responded, "I think it actually came from staff, librarians. They were not Latinos". If a grown artist, who

has a well -developed sense of positive identity, experiences this type of cultural oppression, he reacts by resisting, by hiding the images behind the leaves of the rain forest. How did students who are developing self- images as members of a marginalized group react? According to the muralist many students simply gave up. However, some wanted to persist with the struggle.

A lot of them pulled back and said, "What's the sense of trying to do something you know?" Others got angry and said, "No, we're going to go ahead with it you know". But they were saying it's too " Hispanic". I didn't think it was Hispanic enough! I didn't think it reflected who we were.

In spite of these stories, the muralist was optimistic that things were getting better. He said twice in the interview that things were getting a little better and small changes were happening.

It's starting to open up now more. I think one of the reasons is because we've got more Latinos in administration, and on the school board, but I think it still has a long ways to go.

A local folkloric choreographer also had stories of not being able to produce art that was "too Mexican" in nature.

When I started teaching dance with the children, which was almost immediately, they said, " In order to get money you need to teach American square dance". I remember teaching "Oh Johnny, Oh Johnny, Oh" because that's the only damm square dance I could remember. I remember thinking this is so bad, but I was so young like you're 22 years old.

However after the first year there were some changes.

But yeah the square dancing was kind of a joke. That was only the first year and then it was kind of dropped because the people saw the quality of what the kids were doing. Then they were kind of proud.

This is a paradox because while being "multicultural" is desired by the dominant culture representing too much of one under-represented group becomes a threat to the careful imbalance. The muralist explained it like this:

When I first started talking to people about mural projects nobody wanted a mural. For whatever reason, whether they identified too much with Mexico, or that it would disrupt the pleasant community atmosphere.

Reconstructing knowledge

If your art represents a culture whose knowledge and art has been oppressed, how do you go about reconstructing that knowledge? When asked how he obtains knowledge about the Aztec "danzas", the danzante spoke of the elders and teachers who had taught his group.

We learned from Florencio Yescas, He was always really clear about what was ceremonial and what was choreographed for presentation because that's how he managed to make a living over here using the danza. So he was real clear this was the ceremonial way. Those are the ways we've tried to learn best and tried to maintain that. He's passed away.

The danzante makes a distinction of what is choreographed in order to make a living from the dominant culture's economy and what is ceremonial and sacred. The danzante prefers to keep the dances sacred but the need to live in a money economy is a reality.

Each artist found their path to knowledge in distinct ways. The Catholic Church played an important role for two local Mariachi musicians and a folkloric dancer. One of the musicians was too poor to attend school in Mexico but knew he wanted to learn music:

The easiest way for me to study was to go to a seminary to study as a priest. But it was out of necessity. I knew that there were the possibilities to study other things among them: Music. But it wasn't Mariachi music. It was classical music and we studied it with teachers and I dedicated myself to religious music. But inside of this I was studying music.

Another Mariachi musician explained how he became involved in music through church.

I was at a mass on Sunday up in San José at our Lady of Guadalupe church. There was one man playing guitar, playing the music for the mass. And I felt so sorry for him. I felt sad for him because he was the only one there playing and singing. I asked my mom in mass, "Mom can we talk and ask him if he'll teach me guitar 'cause I want to come and help him?"

One Mariachi was initially brought to this community by a local Catholic priest to teach at a cultural arts center. Another folkloric dancer received artistic training as a child through this cultural center. This center has since been dissolved, since the priest's departure several years ago.

Out of the five artists interviewed, four had members of their family who taught them first. Their interest for their art was developed with their families.

The Catholic Church offered three of the five interviewed access to training and skills to become accomplished performing artists.

The folkloric choreographer was the only artist who was able to study her art form while studying at the university.

I joined the university dance group and my life changed. I was really excited about it and my life changed. It was a class but then there was a folkloric club at the university and Ramón was the instructor. He was the guest instructor from "Los Lupeños" that the university came up with money to pay him.

The same choreographer knew that she couldn't learn about traditional dances from different ethnic groups and cultures of Mexico without going there and finding out for herself. She also spoke in length about the investigations and research that she is doing in the Huasteca region of Mexico.

We learned from Gabriel and he said to us what you learned from me you need to find out if it's true. To quote him he said, "You can't do anything as an institution until you go in and find out if it's true yourself". So by going into the Huasteca at first we were observers

She goes on to explain that learning the danzas didn't just mean executing movements: The sentiment and emotion of the dance were equally as important as the steps themselves.

I think for me too as a choreographer it's not just watching what the feet are doing and what the hands are doing, but what the eyes are doing and the whole body language and that was the thing that I tried to capture more than anything was the whole feeling.

In order to understand the significance and meaning of the "danzas", it was important to not only observe but also participate in the ceremony.

We got to the community and it was almost vacant because it was so darn early. But all of the sudden it was this whole thing to prepare for the danza.. So that in order for the women to dance they were taking the sticks and carving the flores de los siete sierras it was all out wood. They're cutting them up and dying them. I mean they're preparing for the ceremony, making our collares de flores. I had no idea what they were doing and everybody was busy in the community, so they prepared the ceremony for us as they would do it for anybody and we stood there and the women it was just like tears come to my eyes we had no idea that we were all going to be honored with these gifts, the flowers from the women.

Reconstructing and finding knowledge that you don't normally have access to can be very complicated and difficult whether you have to join a seminary or actually go to ceremonies in a remote region of the world.

Deformation

All of the artists spoke of different ways in which their art was threatened by deformation. I asked the danzante what he thought about the "danzas" being represented on stage.

You know it's a hard controversial thing. I think that's one of the issues. One of the things is that we feel there's a strong need to get it out there, especially with the younger ones. Just to let them know that it exists. That's it's there. It's a part of our culture. This is who we are. And there are things about Mexico that we can feel proud about, because all we hear about Mexico is about sacrifice.

The stage serves as a tool in the "re-education" process. If people have never seen "danza" in it's ceremonial form at least the stage will expose what was

normally hidden from the public. The stage is very limited, though, in really developing a deep understanding for and about the sacred and ceremonial "danzas".

The question of whether these "danzas" should be represented on stage is a complex one. The danzante warned in his interview that the stage may give us a rare opportunity to educate but there are certain drawbacks.

It gives us the opportunity to educate but I think there's a lot of reconsideration about a lot of that. I don't know if you're familiar with the sweat lodge, or the sun dance or Native American church or other indigenous traditional ceremonies, which are not utilized or taken out in public? Those are very, very sacred very special things. I think in looking back over the years even in my own involvement with dance. I kind of feel it needs to be pulled back. It's been out there too much. It's probably done what it's supposed to do.

The folkloric choreographer investigated "danzas" in the Huasteco communities in order to document and represent these "danzas" that are rapidly being lost.

I really believe that what the maestro Gabriel really wanted was a "monografia" because he said this hasn't been written it hasn't been documented and I think because of all the political things that are happening that these dances could become extinct. I don't know if that's the word that you can call it?

The educated "outsiders" document the indigenous dances in order to preserve them. The process of documentation, if not done properly, could also lead to cultural deformations.

The folkloric choreographer spoke of how mandates from city officials aimed at preserving their folklore actually eliminated marginalized groups from participating in the "danza".

The city just mandates that you cannot participate without authentic masks. But you have to think about it then who can afford a mask? Certainly not "indigenas" because those masks are expensive.

When artistic traditions become part of a capitalistic monetary system the quality of the original art can be deformed. The Mariachi spoke of not wanting to work for the local "artists in the schools program" because it forced him to reduce his Mariachi, which normally consists of ten musicians, to three. He said that with three it was no longer Mariachi it was a "trio". The danzante also distinguished between what was choreographed and what was ceremonial. The choreographed "danza" was less desirable and less meaningful. The muralist was constantly changing mural sketches to satisfy demands by the dominant culture. The folkloric choreographer also has had to reduce her choreography from what traditionally was eight or ten couples to four or even two in order to fit into small spaces and please paying clients.

Identity

An important significance for these artists was to help local youth redefine and reaffirm themselves. Representing the art forms of marginalized groups on stage was a form of social activism and seen as a political action.

I think whenever you represent like a marginalized culture through dance and through the arts you're making a political statement that this is important. It's almost like going against the grain of what mainstream America's saying. This is an art form. This is the language that we speak. I think folkloric dances make a statement, especially when you're performing Indigenous dances or of a marginalized population. You're making a statement that goes against the grain and fights for that social justice and equality because it doesn't exist in this culture. The way that racism is institutionalized in the arts and in the schools that every single time we go against that grain and we do something different, we're making a political statement.

The Muralist did not define his work as social activism but as a way of preserving his cultural identity.

In the United States identity is erased in order to blend into that melting pot. So anything that is outside of the norm is discouraged. So for those of us who are raised on this side of the border we learn in a hurry that it's not good to be Mexican or speak Spanish or to even be interested in it.

The pressure to let go of an indigenous identity was observed by the danzante in his interaction with some parents not wanting for their child to become involved with the Aztec dance group.

I'm trying to understand that and I think one of things for some people is that we come to this new country and we want to establish ourselves. We want to let loose of those things that held us back. And in Mexico to identify your indigenous roots was harmful.

There was a need to reconnect youth explicitly with their artistic expressions that have often been denied them as members of a marginalized group.

I think that we really have to explain to our students. So many of them through internalized oppression have let go of their indigenous roots or their cultural traditions. When I go into classrooms and talk about "Día de los Muertos" and ask "How many of you remember going to the campo Santo with your relatives?" And they raise their hand. They do, they remember but they're afraid to even talk about it. It's so paganistic to go to the graves and eat. Now it's like a cool American thing. But a lot of our students have left that part of them behind and are assimilating and quickly losing all of that of who they were and some of them don't even remember. We need to educate our students or reconnect them to who they are and maybe they're not from the Huasteca maybe they're from a certain culture in Michoacan.

The Mariachi musician born in Mexico, but now living in California, felt an urgency and need to learn about Mexican musical traditions. He spoke of when the priest invited him to this community to give music lessons at a cultural center. "We came already playing and singing so a lot of them were very impressed. A lot of them at their age had never seen groups in Spanish."

The Mariachi spoke of the pressure to create art in a more multicultural way "how can we express ourselves in different ways if the only thing we know is our culture and that is what we can do?"

This particular Mariachi was invited to be a volunteer guest artist in the middle school's chorus. The chorus teacher was extremely frustrated with the low motivation and discipline problems in his class. He had already tried to resign but in

a last effort to save the chorus the Mariachi was invited as a guest artist to help motivate the students. I asked him what he thought about that particular situation. How did he perceive the students in that group?

Even though the students in the schools listen to music more in English and watch T.V. more in English; still, they have an identification from their blood, from their parents. When the school doesn't understand what they fundamentally like. When they don't give them pride and value, they are not attracted to it. It's like when they teach you forcing you to learn English in one year. So when they still don't understand this necessity that the children have to express what they really love, then they rebel.

Chapter Five

Summary of findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate what would be a model collaborative school arts program that includes and reflects the community. The data showed that students, parents and community artists all recognized the need to include the cultural artistic expressions from the community in the arts curriculum. These three groups agreed on various points. They felt that being proud of who they are in a society that often negates historical and cultural heritages was of great importance. The teachers had their own differing perspectives.

Students

Students have a hunger for historical and cultural knowledge that is not being satisfied by the current arts curriculum at the middle school. Out of the fifty-nine students surveyed and interviewed, forty-nine expressed that they had not studied the history or culture of their ethnic group at the middle school. Out of the fifty-nine students interviewed and surveyed, twenty-four wanted to see specifically more Mexican culture included in the arts curriculum. The students didn't ask for break dancing, hip-hop or to sing rap. Their answers reflected a

hunger for historical and cultural knowledge that is not being met by the current arts curriculum offered at the middle school examined.

Cultural discontinuities, that is, the lack of congruence between home and school cultures, have been identified as causing numerous problems for students from culturally diverse groups (Nieto, 2000, p.149). Students should perceive that their language, heritage, home cultures and arts are valued in the school curriculum in order to build bridges between their homes and schools. When educational policies sort students according to their deficiencies in the dominant language and/or culture, the very core of the student's identity is devalued.

Cultural incompatibilities are varied and complex (Nieto, 2000. p.149). Out of the fifty-nine students surveyed and interviewed, fifty-eight students described their dance class as teaching them about diverse cultures including their own. A student who is a Mexican national but identifies herself as "Indio" was the negative case and did not feel that her Mexican dance class taught her about her culture. She clearly knew that only her Mixteco relatives could teach her about that. From this student's perspective the Mexican Folkloric dance class represented artistic expressions from the dominant class in Mexico. Even though she had learned an indigenous danza, it was not Mixteco. She did, however, feel that she learned about diverse cultures in her dance class, just not her own. The

complexities and diversity of culture is apparent here. No single solution will bridge the gap between the school and home cultures of all students (Nieto, 2000,p.149). Although teachers may not be experts in all of their students' cultures in anthropological-sociological terms, inviting students and their families to share their knowledge is essential to students feeling validated in the school curriculum.

Teachers

Teachers cited students' short attention span, poor attendance, a lack of academic vocabulary and no parental support as reasons for students not being successful in the arts. Both teachers were unaware of the many ethnic arts groups active in the community. One teacher was able to name eighteen community artists, however, only two were from this community. The other sixteen were members of the dominant culture and were from outside affluent communities.

Often, teachers perceive language minority students as deficient in the English language. A lack of academic, Standard English language should not prevent students from being successful in an arts class or any academic class. Attempts to remedy students' deficiencies often prevent language minority students from fully participating in the middle school art curriculum. English language development programs as well as special education programs, often must group students together and rely on pullout programs to facilitate services. Students are more

likely to be pulled out of an exploratory or elective class to remediate their deficiencies.

I was astounded by one teacher's comment that the parents did not attend the students' concerts, "three-fourths just drop them off and pick them up". This teacher felt very strongly that there was a lack of commitment and support from the parents. The parents, on the other hand, expressed a high degree of pride and engagement in their children's performances. One parent spoke of the pride she feels to see her daughter enjoying her own culture on stage.

I have had just the opposite experience, as a dance teacher who has been in charge of performances. Even when we have performances during the day, many parents attend. I have seen parents without cars take taxis to school to see their children perform. Usually our evening performances have standing room only. The one thing that I do differently from the teacher who noted a lack parental support is I always present something representative of Mexican culture. Perhaps this is where the difference lies. Also, I wonder how commitment and parental support is defined by the dominant culture. The teacher noted that parents just drop off their children at performances and then pick them up. In my opinion, giving their child a ride to a school event is support. Why a parent does not stay and watch a

performance could be for a number of reasons, and not just a lack of interest or commitment as explained by the teacher.

Students were perceived as successful and engaged if they had access to practice before school and were able to attend class during vacation time. Of course not all students have parents that are able to drive them to school early or take them and pick them up during off-track times. Both teachers defined success as having access to the teacher. With thirty-four students in a class, few students really have daily access to their teachers.

When asked how we can strengthen our connections between the school and the community, culture and language was not even an issue for the teachers as it had been for the students, parents and community artists. When curriculum designers ignore the incorporation of the subordinate culture's values in the curriculum, and when they refuse to accept and legitimize the students' language, their actions point to the inflexibility, insensitivity, and rigidity of a curriculum that was designed to benefit those who wrote it (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p.124).

Parents

Parents want their cultural knowledge passed on and welcome the help of educational institutions to facilitate this process. This was especially true for the Mexican immigrant parents who gave detailed reasons why they wanted their

children to be proud of their cultural heritage. First and second-generation Mexican-American parents also felt that it was important for their children to learn about their cultural heritage, but their reasons were more simplistic. Of the ten parents surveyed, the only one who was not of Mexican heritage and the most culturally assimilated, felt that it was not necessary that the schools teach her child about her cultural heritage. It seemed that the parents' level of assimilation determined the level of importance given to cultural knowledge.

All nine parents expressed a desire that their children be proud of and enjoy learning about their origins. All ten parents felt that it was important that their children learn about diverse cultures and races. Out of the ten parents surveyed, nine specified the importance of their children being educated about art that represents their culture.

Artists

While working in schools, three of the five local artists interviewed have been culturally censored by public school staff and persuaded to reflect a more "multicultural" artistic vision where all cultures are depicted equally in harmony. The other two artists noted that perhaps they haven't experienced censorship due to the fact that they have collaborated very little with local schools.

Art that represents an oppressed minority too overtly, questions the imbalance that is so well institutionalized in our post-colonial communities. McCannell (1992) discussed extensively this paradox. "Tactics are employed to preserve the apparent neutrality of White Culture, while marking cultural others as biased or self-interested" (p.131). McCannell (1992) goes on to explain how these tactics "effectively undermine any critical comment or interpretation of social arrangements that originates outside of White Cultural consciousness" (p.132). Being "Multicultural" in a superficial sense helps to weaken the position and power of underlying groups. While there is usually no visible evidence of prejudicial sentiment, self-interest is seen as biased by the dominant White Culture.

Although four of the six artists interviewed are employees of the school district, their artistic knowledge has not been fully utilized by the middle school. One artist said that maybe this was due to ignorance of their artistic value. Another artist explained how things were actually getting a little better but that it was going to take a long time before local artists were an integrated part of the school arts curriculum.

A lack of a university degree or teaching credential should not impede the artistic funds of knowledge in our community from becoming involved in the schools

arts' programs. All of the artists that I interviewed were motivated to teach youth in the community. All artists expressed their desire to affirm their cultural identity through art and disseminate that knowledge to youth in the community.

Implications and Recommendations

There is an urgent need to rethink what the arts teacher's role is in the community. Teachers can lay the groundwork for students to reclaim their histories and voices (Nieto, 2000, p.3). Arts teachers have the means to access and validate the artistic funds of knowledge in the community. The need to validate the students' histories, languages and worlds must be recognized and be made a priority in all aspects of curriculum planning.

Children's cultures and lifestyles are devalued every day in U.S. classrooms (Nieto, 2000, p.148). This is not to suggest that teachers are the villains, but because of their own limited experiences and knowledge, they may know very little about the students they teach (Nieto, 2000). A teacher's best intentions may be ineffective if students' cultural differences are neglected in the curricula (Nieto, 2000, p.147). Encouraging students to use their native languages and cultural knowledge as resources for learning is frequently more important than knowing the students' languages (Nieto, 2000, p.197).

Most arts teachers never went to school to study arts in anthropological-sociological terms (Smith, 1996). Instead, they studied a high art cultural tradition that is at odds with a multi-class, multi-cultural public (Bersson, 1986). Becoming proficient in a culture's artistic styles and expressions is a complex and long process. I have seen many unknowing educators attempt to teach ethnic arts with virtually no training or coaching from authentic resources. This lack of authentic and ongoing training and coaching usually results in the deformation of an ethnic art form, and promotes cultural stereotypes and generalizations.

Acquiring cultural artistic knowledge is an involved process and must be done with caution and respect so as not to offend or change cultural values. People who have cultural artistic knowledge in our community should be treasured as invaluable resources. In a speech to his people, American Indian Movement leader Russell Means stated:

No European can ever teach a Lakota to be a Lakota, a Hopi to be a Hopi. A master's degree in "Indian Studies"...cannot make a person into a human being or provide knowledge into traditional ways. It can only make you a mental European, an outsider (MacCannell, 1992, p. 158)

I advocate using the artistic expertise of the families in the community to help inform our arts teachers and curriculum. There are many knowledgeable resources available and willing to work with students and teachers. In the case of

this middle school, historically there has been tens of thousands of dollars spent each year on community artists who are not members or representative of the community. This money could be better spent on collaborations with community artists rather than outsiders.

From 1996 to 1999 each year up to \$30,000 was spent to produce an annual musical with 40 or 50 students. All of the artists that were contracted to produce these musicals including, drama artists, playwrights, set designers, sound and lights, etc., were not local artists.

Presently the bulk of available arts funds is spent on one-time presentations or performances by professional artists rather than actual lessons with artists. The artists that are contracted are rarely from the community. The Visual and Performing Arts demonstration grant hired a consultant to create content lessons that integrate the arts. The consultant was not familiar with the community or its' cultures and languages. The middle school has the funds to create an arts program that is culturally responsive and utilizes community artists, and this should be a priority for those who are in charge of this money.

When parents are perceived to have skills, strengths, and resources that can aid their children, the results can be phenomenal (Nieto, 2000). Parents can support their children's academic support through their continued use of their

native language and reliance on the families' cultural values (Nieto, 2000).

Recently a powerful example of this was implemented in the middle school. A group of parents was formed that meets once a week to read literature relevant to their lives and write their stories. Although most parents in this group have very little formal education, their experiences and lives have powerful stories and lessons. These parents are making books of their published stories to share with their children and the community. Copies of these books will be catalogued at the school library. A local muralist is collaborating with the parents and their children on a mural at the middle school that has images of their histories. This program can have a profound impact on the parents and students involved in this process.

Recommendations for further studies

I would recommend that these same questions be asked of this middle school. What is true of the arts curriculum could very well be evident across the curriculum. Are the languages and cultures students bring to school respected and validated throughout the curriculum? How do we build a school curriculum that reflects and includes the community it serves? A larger pool of parents and students should be interviewed about their views of the curriculum. The acceptance and validation of the community's religious, artistic expressions should also be investigated. Finally, I would investigate university programs that train arts

teachers to see how they are preparing arts teachers to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse and multilingual student population.

Action research recommendations

The implications of this study should be seriously considered by both the arts department as well as school wide. It will be presented to the administration, the arts department and to the entire staff. This document may create differences between staff members and the researcher, but this risk must be taken in order to create change. Perhaps this knowledge will influence teacher training, creating a more culturally relevant curriculum in the arts, which better utilizes the existing funds of knowledge in the community. Although preference for a formative, instructional approach to the arts is difficult to change, my hope is that youth from community arts groups will infiltrate the school arts programs.

The muralist/danzante put it this way.

"A lot of our people are college students you know and they're starting to be teachers and they're starting to incorporate some of the things they've learned and experienced... So little by little they'll be changes, but it's going to take a long time"

However, it is essential that these community groups continue to exist and provide our youth with a strong sense of self and group identity.

Conclusion

To be effective the school curriculum needs to move beyond "diversity" as a popular fad. It needs to take into account colonization, immigration, inequality, classism, racism and degree of acculturation. Colonization and its effects on specifically Mexican students needs to be taught explicitly so that students understand historically how inequality was created and do not blame themselves or their families. Students of all ethnicities also need to develop a critical understanding of colonization in order to understand the issues surrounding loss of language, culture and traditions. Through an understanding of colonization students will develop a consciousness to help transform their community. We need to affirm language and culture through a critical lens based on equity and social justice (Nieto, 2000). Parents' knowledge and experiences need to be validated in order for them to acquire ownership of their schools. Involving the families of the children we teach is the only way to have a lasting impact and to promote real change. We cannot separate schools from the communities they serve.

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Appendix A

Student Questionnaire

Students:

1. Describe your experiences in your three arts classes at LVMS. What did you study in each class? Did you study music, dance or visual art from cultures other than European or European-American in each class?

Music:

Dance:

Art:

2. If you could change your arts classes how would you change them?

3. Describe the arts and artists that you see and hear in your community.

4. Have you ever had arts lessons from any community artists? Describe your experience.

5. How do you identify yourself (racially or ethnically i.e. Purépecha, Mexican, Filipino, Korean, African-American, Samoan...)?

6. Have you learned about the history of your ethnic group in this country? Please explain what you have learned and where you studied it.

7. Do you feel that your studies in your arts classes have included cultures represented in this community? Please explain why or why not.

Appendix B

Teacher Questionnaire

Teachers:

1. What do you teach? How long have you taught?

2. What are some problems you might have encountered with students while teaching an Arts lesson?

3. Share with me a time when students have been most successful and engaged in your class?

4. If you can, please name any local artists you are aware of. Have you ever collaborated with these artists in your classroom or on a performance?

5. In your opinion what has prevented you from collaborating with artists from the community?

6. What is your opinion about how we can strengthen our connection between our school arts program and the community?

Please return this survey to Gina Rodríguez' box. Thank-you for your input!

Appendix C

Parent Questionnaire

Parents:

1. How long has your son or daughter participated in this Performing Arts group?

2. Why do they participate?

3. In your opinion, how does your son/daughter benefit or not benefit from this dance class?

4. Have you seen your daughter/son perform? If so, please describe the performance.

5. In your opinion, is it important that your son or daughter learns about diverse cultures in this dance group? Why or why not?

6. How do you identify yourself racially, ethnically or culturally (i.e. Mexican, Filipino, American, Mexican-American, Latino...)?

7. In your opinion is it important that your son or daughter learns about the rich arts heritage that represents your cultural background? Why or why not?

Thank-you for participating in this study! If you would be available for me to interview you at your convenience, please write your name and telephone number below!

- Please return this paper to Mrs.Rodríguez as soon as possible!

Appendix D

Community Artist Interview Questions

Artists:

1. Describe yourself and your Art.

2. Where and how do you work with community youth?

3. What role, if any, did a public school arts program play in you becoming an Artist?

4. How would you change public school arts' programs based on your experiences?

5. What experiences, if any, have you had collaborating on a performance or lesson in one of the public schools? In your opinion, what barriers have prevented you from collaborating with public schools?

6. Have you ever been involved in any staff development or training for public school arts teachers? If so, please elaborate.

Follow-up: Have you been involved in the development of curriculum in the school for the arts?

7. In your opinion, how can the school's arts program form a better partnership with local artists?

8. If you teach an ethnic art form, how important is authenticity in interpreting traditional art forms?

9. How does your art encourage social activism?

10. How does your art help youth create positive self-identities?

Appendix E

California State University Monterey Bay Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Building Effective Arts programs that Reflect and Include the Community

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Gina Rodríguez candidate for the degree of Masters of Arts in Education, from the Center for Collaborative Education and Professional Studies at California State University Monterey Bay. The results of this study will be used in a Master's thesis and will be catalogued at the library at the California State University Monterey Bay. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because your input as an artist, parent, arts teacher or student will be the basis for establishing a model school/community partnership in the arts.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this research is to show how school arts programs can be built that better reflect and include the community. With your input, I hope to build a model school arts program that's reflective and inclusive of the community.

- **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things: You will be asked to answer no more than ten questions in an interview or on

a questionnaire. I will need your consent to be tape recorded if conducting an interview.

Interviews will not exceed an hour. All participants will remain anonymous and confidentiality will be respected. Interviews will be conducted at the location and time of your choice. All transcriptions of interviews will be provided to you so that you may omit or add any information before being published in this research.

You will have the opportunity to read the final draft of this study and your input will be valued before publishing.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There are minimal risks in this study. Confidentiality will be respected and all participants will remain anonymous. As a researcher I will use pseudo to ensure anonymity of all participants.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

Educational institutions will benefit from this study as a model for school/community partnerships in the arts. Schools will be able to use the information from this research to improve and build more inclusive community arts programs that develop community pride.

- **NATURE OF RECORD KEEPING**

All tapes will be kept in a locked file and destroyed once the thesis is complete. Transcriptions of the interviews and the questionnaires will also be kept confidential in a locked file. Only the researcher will have access to these research records.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

- **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Dr. Christine Sleeter at California State University Monterey Bay (831) 582-3301.

- **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Committee, Henry Villanueva at California State University Monterey Bay, 100 Campus Center, Bldg 1, Seaside, CA 93966; 831-582-5012.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the procedures described above and that I am over 18 (eighteen) years old. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I freely agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Subject or Legal Representative

Date

I have read the contents of this consent form, asked questions, and received answers. I give permission for my child to participate in this study. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form for my records and future reference.

Parent/Guardian (if applicable)

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

In my judgment the subject is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

Signature of Investigator

Date