

Revisiting Social Theory in Art Education:

Where have **We Been?**
Where are **We Today?**
Where are **We Going?**
Where **We Go?**
could

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The title's spin-off from Gauguin's self-reflective statement: *D'où venons-nous? Que sommes-nous? Où allons-nous?* painted towards the closing of the 19th century when colonialist expansion and Imperialism were at their heights, seems to be an appropriate allusion as this year's 21st Social Caucus journal inaugurates the beginning of a new millenium. The irony of the title should be apparent, as should the fortuitousness of the volume's number. The epic proportions of the question (and the painting) compressed into the bit size of an editorial seems laughable. Yet the questions are worth deliberating in the context of the essays that have been published under the journal's theme, a call for "Social Action with Students and Youth."

So, Where have We been? Since its inception in the 1980s, the Social Caucus has always stood firmly for a progressive emancipatory

art education which attempted to explore social issues through a visual art education that strived toward a more democratic and just society. JSTAE was the first to raise art curricular issues as they related to multiculturalism, feminism, gay and lesbian issues, and AIDS. Since then, many special interest groups affiliated with the NAEA have formed around these very issues furthering the debates and gaining membership. In the late 80s and early 90s Social Caucus members were quick to sort out the more conservative sides of postmodernism (DBAE, for instance), and raise issues concerning popular culture. The debate between high/low arts had begun. The initial grounding drew primarily on social theory as developed by "critical social theory," which appeared as a euphemism for the more inflammatory label of 'neo-Marxism' of the Frankfurt School. For the Social Caucus 'critical social theory' seemed innocuous enough to act as a polysemic signifier that could range from the most left meaning of the term, i.e., a critique of multinational capitalism and its incumbent institutions of art and design which supports it, to its most neo-liberal conservative counterpart—a cultural pluralism where anything 'social' done with children and youth could claim to be 'progressive' simply because the bounds of art as a 'discipline' had been transgressed. This devaluation of the progressive meaning of the 'social' to simply include a recognition of a cultural or environmental (contextualist) dimension of visual art continues today in the arcane debates staged between Elliot Eisner (1998), a discipline based art educator, and James Caterall, a representative of those art educators who have finally discovered 'cultural studies,' a phenomenon in the Academy which is now more than a decade old.

From the standpoint of the Social Caucus tradition such developments are conservative in their approach to art education, neither transformatory nor emancipatory but in good historicist fashion continue to spawn art historical research where the formalist focus on cultural artifacts has been supplemented by a contextualism, i.e., the

recognition of the social realities outside the discipline of art. What we have here is the pretense of poststructuralist theories to elaborate the nexus of the classroom, the teaching profession, and the discipline of art to such political areas such as gender, race, class, and even the nation, so that postmodern critics *seem* to carry on a significant political activism simply by relating concerns that were once enclosed within the discipline of art to a broader cultural sphere, a sphere that is then related to the larger concerns of the state and its economy (see Arac, 1986). This New Historicism, which blossoms in many art education curriculae, including DBAE's multicultural and art historical component, *parades easily as a form of social activism*. Teachers who are DBAE enthusiasts, for instance, often refer to the historical past to indicate how artists have commented and critiqued social issues. Art 'texts' are studied for their historical context. But how does such historical contextualization improve the lives of people who are alive today (or are about to be born)? By reducing art to social history has enabled a backlash of critique by art educators still fixated on purist ideas of aesthetic experience and an art for art sake attitude (e.g., most recently reinstated by Anna Kindler, 2000) which the postmodern 'surface' aesthetic has exploited so successfully in the name of neo-liberalist ideals of individuality.

To give one example of what might be identified as this "fantasy of radical activism" by a DBAE practitioner, I refer to Milbrandt's (1998) article which appeared in Ann Stanchewicz's (1998) attempt to give postmodernism art education the spin of a decentered pluralism. It is here that the 'critically' social becomes a conservative affair as it becomes reduced to forms of contextualization. Milbrandt's grade 5 class, tackled the same sublime issues, precisely what François Lyotard defined as the aesthetic of the postmodern condition. But, surprising, these issues (crime, drugs, homelessness, violence, sexual abuse, teen pregnancy, endangered species, pollution) were couched within the

conservative agenda of DBAE that stresses the importance of the fine arts tradition, historical and critical analysis and production. Milbrandt had her grade 5 class examine social and ecological issues by studying two representative artists using the structure of DBAE: Wodiczko's homeless project and Bergman & Merrill installation concerning pollution found along Santa Barbara's beaches. DBAE, in its postmodern form, has evolved into a curriculum which is, says Milbrandt, "based on socially responsible intellectual inquiry" (p. 49.), and is exemplary of an "authentic instruction" providing the template for her study. The result of the visit to the gallery was a "puzzle mural" where each student of her class identified with a social issue and contributed his or her poster as a piece in the puzzle's mural. Some puzzle pieces were left blank so that other school children might contribute to the mural, as they did. Milbrandt interprets the creation of the mural as "symbolic of solving the complex problems facing our world" (p. 52).

A number of ironic contradictions need to be pointed out in this well-intentioned project. It seems ironic that an "authentic instructional" model that is intended to affect students outside the school begins at the gallery where the two projects exhibited did indeed meet the criteria of Newman and Wehlag's Deweyian proposal. Both Wodiczko and Bergman & Merrill entered the 'environment' to do research for their projects. The gallery, of course, provides a safe environment for the elementary students. They are seeing the sublimated result of what are two horrific social problems. The question remains whether the affect of these two artworks indeed did "transfer" beyond the classroom; or, whether the art puzzle piece remains just that — a "puzzle" as to why these social ills persist. It seems ironic that the political intent of Wodiczko and Berhaman & Nancy is dissipated by a 'surface aesthetic' (the mural) where, to be sure, the concern for the homeless and the environment is expressed as a personal statement but remains at a "symbolic" level. Cynically read, this can be interpreted analogously

to giving money to a charity and consequently being relieved of the guilt for not actively engaging in the charity's cause.

The Deweyian allusion to "authentic instruction" as it has been defined would have meant the necessary engagement of the 'world' by the children in some sort of social action project that confronts them with the material conditions that sustain the site specific 'homelessness' and 'pollution' in the Georgia school district. Perhaps there were guest lectures to the class by local environmentalists and social workers? However, the puzzle mural is a quite different project than, say, the social action project art educators working in Utrecht, Holland initiated where plastic bags of car exhaust were sent as public mail to the city hall by junior high students in protest to the rising index of car pollution in their city. The difference is the question of engagement with the political structures that could actually make a difference to the sublime social problems studied. The difference is between a radical or a liberal social agenda. (Wodiczko, in this respect, is far more successful and radical than Berman & Merrill's installation piece which leaves the issue of pollution as a question.) This further step of social engagement, however, is rarely undertaken in public schools. In most cases, radically sounding social projects retain their 'charitable' intentions. Dewey's own Chicago school proved too radical in its approach since his curriculum demanded an engagement with the world *beyond the classroom's* four walls. It was closed down.

The transformative and emancipatory potential of social activism has been further eroded by the cultural studies influence of 'subject positions' and issues of 'representation.' The critical reception of visual art works by students (i.e., art education's borrowing of reader-response theories) and the analysis of artistic representation is touted as social activism on the grounds that this is a way to correct (mis)representations of represented subjects (workers, women African-Americans, and other

minorities) by the dominant culture. This is mostly achieved by having groups or individuals represent themselves instead of the (mis)representations given to them by others. Here representation has become a euphemism for ideology which again enables a pseudo-political atmosphere to emerge. This turn towards (mis)representation calls back to issues of a more limited notion of ideology as 'false consciousness.' It claims that an undistorted picture of reality is possible for there is a perceived discrepancy between 'reality' and an awareness of that 'reality.' The focus by art educators operating on this level of the social has been to highlight issues of cognition and epistemology, templates for 'describing' reality and not attempting to change it.

In the 80s the Social Caucus referred to the curriculum theory of the "reconceptualists" (phenomenology and hermeneutics) and the more social-economic critics of education like Michael Apple, Chet Bowers, and of course Paulo Freire. While French theorists like Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Baudrillard and Deleuze did occasionally show up within the journal's pages, on the whole there was very little understanding by the membership of their critique of the enlightenment tradition. This situation has slightly improved since. The critical sociology of the Frankfurt school, however, was incorporated into the Social Caucus by the many book publications of Henry Giroux, somewhat by Ira Schor, and later by Peter McLaren. They seemed to be the self-delegated curricular critical theorists who actively solicited Freire to promote their perspective. Along with Stanley Aronowitz, Freire's name prefaced many of the early books. When postmodernism finally made its way into educational theorizing in the early 90s, virtually all the critical theorists eventually began to incorporate aspects of feminism, multiculturalism, diasporic studies, gay and lesbian, ecology, issues of globalization, and last but not least—media (television and films) as the forms of popular visual culture into their work. The result has been to lump such curricular orientations as "social

reconstructionists" where, it appears, anything social—both conservative (as described above) and radical—swim together. This emerged social pluralism has decentered critical action into both conservative and radical sensibilities, and has enabled the restatement of a cry for a renewed aestheticism and formalism especially in design education where the pressures of the techno-industry has succeeded in penetrating art schools to be more involved in computer graphics to produce web-pages, explore digitalized special effects and computer game software.

So, Where are We Today? The question of identity formation has emerged as a central issue for academic debate, not only because of sex/gender considerations that have been front and center in feminist and gay & lesbian studies since the mid-80s, but also because identity formation remains as the bridge between extreme views of radical subjectivity that defines both the neo-liberalist landscape and the social formations of good citizenship, diasporic formations, pluriculturalism, hybridity, and so on. The relationship between viewer/subject and text/artwork continues to be a point of tension which has been most recently dominated by poststructuralist theories of 'subject positions.'

The essays that the reader finds in this journal cannot escape these issues surrounding what are conservative and more radical approaches to social action with children and youth; each author attempts to put forward an approach that they claim as being socially activist. Alden's essay, "Multicultural Art Education: Deconstructing Images of Social Reproduction" finds an immediate alliance with Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction. Bourdieu (and his co-writer Passeron) are no strangers to critical theorists of education in the 70s. Bourdieu's sociological research into the reproduction of cultural capital through the curriculum provided ample support for social reproduction theorists of such educators as Bowles & Gintis (1976), Jean Anyon (1979)

and Linda McNeil (1986). Alden points to the difficulties that any teacher, especially coming from the dominant Euro-white status, has when it comes to understanding African American students. Despite the inclusion of African Art and African American artists, identificatory issues surrounding the reception of these works of art among African American students themselves are poorly understood since there is a resistance to this heritage. Alden's essay raises questions of representation. Who is defining whom? Is the dominant representation of the African American being reproduced in the classroom? Is it because African art is considered 'primitive' and/or 'traditional' rather than elevated to the status of elite art which is the problem? Bourdieu claims that there is a dominant representation of 'otherness' that is socially structured. The historical image of Africans in the minds of their oppressors as being primitive, savage, uncivilized, unintelligent, and unevolved is precisely why many African Americans feel it necessary to distance themselves from this heritage. So the question becomes, how might a sense of pride in this heritage be fostered? More at issue: if African American students desire to affirm a positive image of themselves, just who are the representatives that they should turn to? A sports figure like Michael Jordan, for example? An exemplar of competitive drive steeped in corporate America? Or Oprah Winfrey, another entrepreneur who promotes Black pride? Or, a Jesse Jackson, recently disgraced by an 'illegitimate' child, but, nevertheless, a powerful spiritual and social leader and negotiator? Does social art educational praxis require then, a rethinking of African art so that it's potential for a source of pride can be recuperated? Or, does the current popular culture of African American sports heroes, Black talk show hosts, and 'Gangsta Rap' already constitute African American youth identity as a formation that is directly connected to white corporate hegemony in sport and the music and entertainment industry? Alden recognizes the problematic questions concerning identity but offers no immediate prescriptions.

Cosier's essay, "On Oysters and Other Life Lessons: Art Teacher's Perceptions of Social Class and Schooling," faces a similar fundamental issue of identity. Starting with a personal reflection of childhood memories of family and schooling, Cosier sees the pedagogical relationship between student-teacher as being fundamental for any possible consideration of social action in art education. She latches onto social class as being a defining variable in this relationship of schooling, which recalls the early writings of critical educators in the beginning of the 80s such as Michael Apple (1979, 1982), Jean Anyon (1979), Peter McLaren (1980) and Henry Giroux (1981). Social class as a defining feature of identity has lost its once privileged status in critical sociology, especially given that the once defined working class as the designated revolutionary proletariat have negotiated with big business as large powerful unions who, on the whole, co-operate with the corporate sector to increase their wages and working conditions, so long as the profit margins are met. Marcuse once hoped that the 68' student revolution would take over the revolutionary role to initiate social change. He was wrong. A decade later, Laclau & Mouffe in their socialist manifesto in the early 80s (*Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*) hoped that critical pockets of social activism (feminists, ecologists, NGO's, animal rights activists) would ban together on a common front to initiate change. They were wrong. Social class, by definition has been more and more difficult to ascertain as the gap between the truly wealthy and the middle class widens, compressing and leveling the professional stratum with two-income earners who are involved in the growing service industries. In the North American context and in Europe, the information age of computer technology has changed the social landscape. Lifestyle choices rather than socioeconomic indicators have produced these new cultural intermediaries. Should they still be identified as a 'petit-bourgeoisie?' Cosier interviewed two teachers to explore the possibility of her thesis finding that contradictions emerged between social class and social stratification (cliques) amongst students

which may well be based on characteristics other than class, such as popularity, grades, cultural interests, tastes and so on. The suggestion is made, however, that the art-studio class acts as a place where a 'leveling' of classes occurs. An ethics of care in the art classroom, as developed by Nel Noddings in the early 90s, provides the possibility of greater democracy and quality because success can be achieved and recognition given for tangible skills, self-directed commitment to art which raises self-esteem and self-expressive dialogue. Social action seems to be interpreted here as a leveling process that creates a democratic caring studio-art classroom, where equality amongst students is strived for. Such a conclusion obviously raises many issues which Cosier acknowledges. There is a danger of falling into a liberal humanism where community is ill-defined. Caring classrooms are often not enough to insure this feminist ideal of democracy can be achieved which Noddings (1996) in a later essay admits herself. What other factors in the complexity of identification are at work besides social class? How do we know when someone perceives him/herself as "working class," accepts the label of being called "white trash," or "middle class"? What are the signifiers of identity which student's define themselves?

In Desai's essay, "Working with People to make Art: Oral history, Artistic Practice, and Art education," the question of identity is directly addressed through the practice of oral history. Oral history, as the embodiment of the social, is perceived as social action through the artistic practice of four contemporary women artists. Memory, as recall, raises the issues of representation as well. Are representations and (mis)representations (by official history) another replay of Alden's concern with dominant culture's (mis)representation of African American? Is oral history wedded to the New Historicism? Or, do these artists indeed investigate the transformative possibilities of exposing hidden ideologies and suppressed voices—such as women, for

instance? Is the artist here being socially responsible for the mediating role s/he finds herself in: as someone taking the statement of the Other's representation and then manipulating it into a personal statement of their own? As is well known amongst anthropological circles, since the 1984 Santa Fe conference in New Mexico (Clifford & Marcus, 1986), this has become a major issue for anthropological field work. Is telling your story empowering enough to be claimed as social action? Surely not all stories are performatively critical. Desai recognizes these controversies that surround the tradition of oral history. She makes a case for the political and ethical concerns of social action where the artist as a *collaborative* interpreter of the community's issues should serve those that are affected by the research process. Such a position, however, doesn't escape the legalities of representation: where is the line to be drawn between the artist as conduit working for the 'client,' and the artist's own involvement and value stance that eventually manifests itself in the artistic product? Can't social action using oral history be a rather conservative endeavor? Defending a conservative stance, for example, as exhibited by many small town wall murals that fictionalize a town's dramatized past so that tourists are attracted to it? In other words, how do we identify transformative social action that uses oral history given that the testimonies of the community require the autobiographical weaving together of myth, legend, desire, wishes as articulated by historical memories? Desai addresses such concerns with balance, identifying artworks based on the cultural identities of Asian-Americans, Japanese-Americans living in Little Tokyo, domestic violence of husbands (live-ins, partners) and the hardship of being a cotton picker in the south's Cotton Belt during the 1930's and 1940's as exemplars of changes in perception of the existing social reality. Clearly, only if such oral history makes a transformative change in the lives of the students in the classroom, and affects their identities 'critically' can it be said that social action has taken place. From a critical social perspective, the difficulty is to recognize when this has taken place for more just ends.

This question becomes rather perplexing but no less interesting when the question of transformative identity is addressed to "Naughty Pictures: Their Significance to Initial Sexual Identity Formation," as researched by Paul Duncum and Deborah Smith-Shank. A very select population of forty art educators were solicited for their examination of sexual identity as shaped through their first (recalled) encounters with "naughty pictures." The designation of the term identifies a moment of 'transgression', for what constitutes 'naughty' is crisscrossed by issues of what is forbidden, concealed, and ultimately sexual. The strength of Duncum & Smith-Shank's piece is that there is a recognition of the importance of the context of reception and consumption of the 'text' (art work) when it comes to identity formation. Its great failure is not to push this insight very far. There is an attempt to treat sexual identity as a social construct by referrals, now and again, to Foucault. Yet, throughout their essay there are stronger hints of the recognition of repression, fear, shame and guilt that comes with the internalization of the superego (as represented for instance by "an imaginary critical viewer," a parent, a grandfather or older brother). These are Freudian constructs which are incompatible with Foucault's rejection of the repression hypothesis. In their essay there is a marked problem between sexual and gendered identity. The first, if you are a Freudian, remains inexplicable; each culture requires a fantasy myth to 'explain' it. In the West this has been 'positive' (hetero) and 'negative' (homo) Oedipalization; the mapping of the body through the 'mirror stage' of fantasy formation in terms of two incompatible dimensions of masculinity and femininity. Gender, on the other hand, is a social construct, forcing all sorts of normative dichotomizations (male/female), as well as paradoxical possibilities of performative cross-dressing (eg., drag, tomboyism, the female Zorro that the essay refers to) which are mapped onto the pre-existing sexuality positive and/or negative Oedipal positions such as the trans-sexuality of male femaling and female mailing. The consequences of this differentiation between

sex/gender places social action beyond the hetero dominance that pervades this paper. Sexual emancipation as social art action has been argued by caucus members such as Ed Check (1997).

When we approach Emme's collection of *Postcards With an Edge*, through a fortuitous accident when the advertisement for the project came out as two versions—one more tamer than the other in its call for examples of social action with students and youth—we can (again) readily identify the difficulties that surround the interpretation of what is considered "social." Emme's recognition of this problem is playfully signaled, not only by the title, "Another Acid Test," but also by his reference to Derrida's notion of *différance*, calling him the Merry Prankster of postmodernism. The result is another prime example of how conservative and radical social projects can swim together under the guise of the same signifier. So much so that Emme asks of the postcard collection before him a series of ironical questions, ending with: "Is the theme social issues[t]he last twitches of a left wing organization that has lost its vision?" Hopefully not.

It is perhaps here that turning to Travis's essay, "Swimming Up-Stream in the Jean-Pool" Developing a Pedagogy Towards Critical Citizenship in Visual Culture," we find a synthesis of the state of where we are today. Tavis brings together and reiterates the Social Caucus's call for art educators to recognize the importance of media and popular culture in postmodernity, and points out the limitations of DBAE for such a project. He raises the issues surrounding identity formation, and following Giroux's persistent writings, calls for the need of a transformative critical citizenship in visual culture. Tavis describes his attempt to initiate such praxis, recognizing the full importance of the visual vernacular culture that interpenetrates student lives. Perhaps the genius of Tavis has been to explore the possibility of a critical citizenship by turning the media in on itself, utilizing a hypertextual

computer application software, *Storyspace* and *Quicktime* to do this. Technology becomes a tool, like any other artistic tool, that mediates subject and object for critical expression. Through the venue of a university course entitled, "Visual Arts in the Elementary School," Tavis describes the conscientization of a student named Chris as he explored the issue of racism, especially African-American subjectivity in advertising utilizing the above computer software. It is obvious that a transformation had taken place in his perception of media representation.

Other attempts at active critical citizenship involving social action with students and youth are provided by the last two essays in this collection. In the first essay by Carole Woodlock and Mary Wyrick entitled, "Art, Action Research, and Activism at Artpark," the authors describe a social action research project where an installation was created by graduate students of Buffalo State College specifically to address environmental issues at Artpark, in Lewiston, New York. (More specifically, Artpark's site is high on the edge of the Niagara Gorge.) The ecological focus raises yet another critical social issue the Social Caucus has concerned itself over the years (e.g., Hicks (1999), jagodzinski (1987), Gayle Weitz, Doug Blandy). It is heartening to read the efforts of art educators who recognize the importance of an ecological consciousness. The conflicts in the region, the accumulating pollution in the Niagara River, and the toxic wastes buried beneath the soil have become issues in conservation, reclamation, community and power which many artists have already addressed in the Artpark site. Woodlock and Wyrick describe the process their graduate seminar class went through to conscientize themselves concerning these ecological concerns by researching the history of the region so that site specific art installations could be initiated. To prepare themselves, students collected and interpreted resources from web sites, exhibition catalogues, reviews in visual art publications, archives, art criticism,

and personal visual documentation. While this form of social research is different from an 'oral history' approach, an understanding of how this site/sight/cite 'speaks' to each student-artist is certainly sought. The resultant interpretations and installations drew on the mythologies of the restorative power of water and quoted previous artists who had made statements concerning tourism and toxicity of the dump sites in the area. Photography seemed to be the medium of choice. A series of photographs were floated on the *O Nega Nus* pond commenting on the culture of tourism. In another installation, a sculptural collage commenting on the emptiness of the park was pasted with water-soluble glue on a large stone that presented a resting spot along the gorge trail. Unlike the fantasy of Milbrandt's radicalism described above, these students left their critical environmental statement on site, yet purposefully incorporated temporality as a design element so that the eventual decay and disappearance of the installation would remain ecologically sound. Woodlock and Wyrick represent the very best of social activism that attempts a critical environmental awareness for students.

In the last essay, "Blackwell Summer Arts Program: An Experience in Community ReVitalization," Marjorie Manifold describes a social action project which involved the revitalization of Richmond, Virginia's historic Blackwell district as initiated by Bleick, the chair of Virginia Commonwealth University's Art Education Department. In the tradition that had its start in London, England (see Adams and Ward, 1982), Manifold explains her involvement in the second phase of the larger project, the redesigning of the Blackwell park as developed by two competent VCU students, Francis and Koshock. She describes the ups and downs of what it takes to have youth involved in the designing and decision making when it comes to their involvement with the many agencies, vested interests, instructional professionals, and required instructional materials to make their imagined designs a social reality.

The strength of Manifold's essay is to give the reader the sense of how difficult and messy such a process is. Social action is stripped of any easy idealizations, for Manifold raises nervous questions in her concluding caveat. Blackwell youth had managed to coalesce into a working community and produced a topographical model of their intended design for the public. City officials and the representatives of the project-sponsoring organizations praised their efforts; but, asks Manifold: was this all an empty gesture? To what extent has this exercise been yet another "fantasy of radicalism" as described earlier? Manifold raises the question as to who will ultimately benefit from the design and contributions of the participating children? Was this community revitalization a disguise for gentrification? With this caveat in mind, one wonders to what extent Manifold (1999) is now willing to reconsider her previous advocacy of community-based DBAE curricula? Was Blackwell park a turning point for her and her co-organizers, or the realization of another humanist enterprise?

So Where Are we Going given the state of social theory today? Many articles in this journal (Alden, Cosier, Tavis) clearly draw on social critical educational tradition (Giroux, McLaren, Bourdieu, Freire), incorporating voice (Desai) and social action by artists (Woodlock & Wyrick) who attempt to affect transformative change, striving for an undefinable ideal of what it makes to constitute an equitable and just society. Were such a definition already be preordained we would find ourselves in the throws of totalitarianism. We would claim to have arrived. Our task is to keep the definition open, to believe that there is always a better future which can live up to the emancipatory values of equality and social justice. The strength of Duncum & Smith-Shank's essay was to show a need, a recognition, and a concern for the reception and consumption of the 'text' (art work). It is this k(not) in subjectivity where affect and transformation take place. Without a more thorough understanding of this encounter as educators, not much happens. There

is no transference, no conscientization. Cosier has it right when she claims that the pedagogical relationship between student and teacher is where it happens. As Social Caucus members, we have been good at raising issues concerning the 'text' (artwork), or the process of production of the 'text,' and even the 'lived culture' of the 'text' —the meanings, values, identities, enjoyments of the art community. But we haven't been able to tackle the 'k(nots)' of subjectivity, issues of resistance, fantasy, desire, drives. The essays all beg the question of social identity, but fail to incorporate an adequate theory of subjectivity; a theory that can go beyond poststructuralist subject positions and the sociological categorizations by the leading exponents of critical pedagogy such as Giroux and McLaren. At this point it might be better to ask: "where *could* we be going?" What follows, therefore, should be taken as an editor's indulgence, and perhaps prerogative? It falls outside the scope of the essays and it asserts an opinion that may not be reflective of the caucus membership as a whole.

Where could we be going? Tavis has it right when he points to the role of reflexivity in the pedagogical process. Reflexivity and self-awareness as a pedagogical issue has, in the past decade, made its way into the theoretical debates in general education. The notion of the "reflective practioner" has been championed by Henderson (1992) and the work of Donald Schön (1983, 1991). It can even be traced back to the earlier work of James B Macdonald. But such a view of subjectivity easily lends itself to liberalist appropriations, or a liberal humanism that collapses subjectivity into vague notions of community. The model of subjectivity rests on a unified cognitive subject. Questions of contradiction and resistance cannot be easily answered. Post-structuralist, social-constructivist theories of the fragmented subject, as developed by Foucault for instance, and furthered by a host of literary theorists, on the other hand, decentralize the subject to account for the subject as a self-contradictory multiplicity of intentions, i.e., a

conglomeration of subject positions shaped by discourses. This position leads to the plurality of interpretations that claims discursive context to be the defining factor of subjectivity. The problem is that such an understanding of subjectivity offers no grounding outside contingent discourses. It is one of the key reasons why I raised the issue between sex and gender in the Duncum/Smith-Shank contribution. Gender is formed discursively; sex, however, isn't. Besides the problematic allusion to the pathological etiology of 'truly' fragmented multiple personality disorder subjects, a decentered understanding of the subject cannot explain how a subject can escape this seemingly chaos of absolute relativism and chose one 'contingent' discourse over another. Nor can it explain how subjects resist any of the contingent discourses into which they are interpellated. And why is it that a postmodernist subject is still able to manifest a more or less consistent stable style? Something within our own inner organization prompts the self to identify with certain social forms and to reject others. The self is not a random and constantly changing collection of texts shaped by historical forces as poststructuralists claim. Nor is it an infinitely changing collection of voices, but a relatively stable organism. Identity is not a function of one's subject position but of one's subjective position. When transformative change of the self happens, this is an experience that lies well outside the poststructuralist model.

The humanist reflective model and, more recently, the poststructuralist model of subjectivity have been adopted by social critical theory with, I would argue, a stalemate in furthering a transformative emancipatory pedagogy. The humanist reflective view was best expressed by Paulo Freire (as exposed by Weiler, 1996) and the early works of Giroux. Then, as postmodernism gained momentum, many critical theorists (again, like Giroux and McLaren) began to incorporate discourse analysis, viewing the subject as a constructed self. The k(not) of subjectivity where transference takes place, where

transformation is potentially possible, remained a black box. No wonder Giroux came under strong attack for his so-called lack of understanding classroom life (see, Ellsworth, 1989) or falling into an authoritarian pedagogical position (Gore, 1993). Even in their more recent explorations of media education by critical theorists like Giroux's *Disturbing Pleasures* (1994) or Giroux and Shannon's *Education and Cultural Studies* (1997), there is a profound failure to confront why it is that anyone (especially students) who begins to comprehend how representation is being marshaled for ideological ends do not necessarily resist consumerism, become engaged in social action, change their lifestyle and begin to act with a changed ethic. Contradictions persist.

Since about 1990¹ I have personally shifted ground from what I take to be a dead end in furthering emancipatory pedagogy because of this reduced understanding of subjectivity, and have turned towards an understanding of subjectivity as initially developed by the psychoanalytic ontology of Lacan and now furthered by the current generation of followers who continue to refine and expand on Lacan's semiological interpretations of Freud. There are hints in a number of the essays which provide for this renewed possibility. In passing, Tavis refers to the brilliant visual and literary critic, W.J.T. Mitchell who recognizes that the social construction of visual experience depends on the political discourses of identity formation that are based on sexuality, otherness, fantasy and the unconscious. Duncum and Smith-Shank inadvertently and almost in contradictory fashion bring out aspects of the superego, memory, transgression and repression. Yet, Freud never appears once in their essay, but his ghost haunts it. As does he haunt many of the other essays as well. His footsteps can be heard in the oral history tradition which is filled with trauma and testimony, and the attempts to relieve this suffering through some form of productive articulation. Memory is no less than a pre-conscious

imaginary recall which harbors within it the unexplainable—the Lacanian Real. Fantasy and desire haunt all the postcards sent to Emme. An articulation of the racial, ethnic, sexual self as defined through 'otherness' by the abjected objects the self dispels and rejects, is indispensable for feminist, Marxist, postcolonialist, and queer pedagogies for it also enables a confrontation of the downside to these pedagogies. If one is not a member of one of these subaltern groups such a pedagogy can be restrictive and seen like just another form of authoritarian or establishment education. Phobias and fetishes (like adopting the orthodoxy of moralism) serve to guard against any transformative potentialities of the self. In brief, intrapsychic conflict and ownership of one's fantasy formations should be understood for their ethical and socio-political consequences. From a Lacanian standpoint, the unconscious, preconscious and conscious form the very k(not) of subjectivity.

This is not the place to now begin to further explicate the Lacanian subject. Nor, unfortunately, how it is that intrapsychic conflicts of students should be the k(not) that we, as educators, try to untangle and work with. But this is the place to state that a psychoanalytic understanding of subjectivity can further the emancipatory goals of critical pedagogy for liberation and social justice by having students, not become like their teacher—to have the same desire—but to enable then to intervene in their own subjectivities, to become aware of their present identity components and repressed qualities that could become new aspects of themselves. Social action in these terms is not to further students to meet a teacher's ideals, values or enjoyments. That turns into an authoritarian endeavor; nor should social action replicate a teacher's knowledge and belief system. This merely reproduces the established dominant pedagogy. Perhaps the most dangerous position of all, because its guise seems to be so obviously social, is to have students identify with a teacher's lack or desire for a particular identity

that s/he is deprived of. Such resistance or protest pedagogy rehearses once again the teacher's desire, and not the student's own. It produces a politically correct classroom where students are silenced.

Social action as critical pedagogy should provide opportunities and resources for students to change and develop according to their own identity needs and desires. It is not a question of having students conform to some image of political liberation (that itself should remain undefined), but to gain an understanding of their own involvement in the world in the way a future might be made. Ultimately, I believe that we cannot tell our students what ethics and politics they should or ought to embrace, rather to tap the ethics and politics that they already embrace in order to take them to a different place, a place that makes them more attentive to their own intrapsychic struggles that shape their social world. Of course, as critical pedagogy this place doesn't rest on some arbitrary plurality of positions. It searches for a place where a sense of voice, place, and identity as the sight/cite/site of social justice, equity, and compassion are never lost.

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Notes

¹This attempt to include a psychoanalytic understanding of art and media is developed in my *Anamorphic Eye/I: Autobiographical Cross-Dressing and Re-Dressing* (1996) which marks and documents this theoretical shift.

MULTICULTURAL ART EDUCATION'S ILLUSION OF EQUITY

DONNA ALDEN

Exploring The Pedagogy of African Images and Social Reproduction

Exclusionary practices along with inaccurate and incomplete information have historically been used in the classroom by the dominant White culture as a means to disempower minority youth and widen the chasm between opposite ends of the power structure. Although reproducing the existing power structure may not be a conscious motive of art teachers in the 21st century, many of their actions replicate conditions necessary for domination by the Euro-White culture. Admirably, art educators have a history of being on the cutting edge of innovative ideas and inclusionary practices. The movement to include art from many cultures in art curriculums is an exemplary curricular milestone benefiting minority students. However, it is within the realm of multiculturalism that theory and practice slowly drift apart, often resulting in art teachers teaching students whose cultural heritages are very unlike their own. This can present an awkward position for art teachers who possess good intentions to include minority art but are deficient in the understanding, training or direction which would most benefit their students.