

EXPLORING CULTURAL HERITAGE WITH ART

EXPLORING CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE ART OF CUBAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS

By

BETHEL M. DOBBERSTEIN

A CAPSTONE PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS OF THE
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ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS
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Bethel M. Dobberstein

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Chair: Craig Roland

Committee Member: Elizabeth Delacruz

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The following study explores how cultural heritage can reveal itself in the artwork of Cuban-American students. The goal for this research was to create an opportunity to use the making of narrative art by Cuban-American students as a means to explore and communicate their cultural heritage. The research method for obtaining information is qualitative, primarily participant observation and case study. The research was conducted during the teaching of an on-site art class in a culturally diverse area of Miami. The students, Cuban-Americans, interviewed their own families and then created artwork depicting their cultural stories. Whole class student discussions occurred before and after the students created their art. Individual interviews between the students and myself provided additional information. The students' comments, stories and reactions were documented and analyzed. The students' artwork was exhibited at their school, on a blog: www.blendingcolorswithcuba.blogspot.com and in the gallery of a local community art center.

EXPLORING CULTURAL HERITAGE WITH ART

My capstone paper describes my research process, findings and recommendations. First, I discuss the relationship between cultural heritage and the effective teacher. Then, I describe how narrative art can increase cultural awareness among teachers and students. Finally, I share a key finding from this study: narrative art created from family stories is an authentic avenue for exploring cultural heritage. Additionally, I found that location, experiences and family dynamics influence a student's level of cultural knowledge. Recommendations include guidelines for culturally responsive teaching. I conclude this capstone paper with insights regarding the importance of understanding that a student's perception of cultural heritage is oftentimes formed through the stories that he or she hears.

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Recently on a rerun episode titled *The Diner* on the TV show, *I Love Lucy*: (April 26, 1954) Lucy (Lucille Ball), Ricky (Desi Arnaz), Fred (Vance Frawley) and Ethel (Vivian Vance) buy a diner that they name “A Little Bit of Cuba.” The scene opens with background music playing the Mexican song “*La Cu ca ra cha*.” One of the specials on the menu is Ricky’s Hamburgers, which are covered with Mexican hot sauce between two Mexican tortillas. Even though the TV character Ricky and the actor himself, Desi Arnaz are both of Cuban decent, a veridical representation of Cuban food was not portrayed. It would appear that, the writers of “*I Love Lucy*” either, deliberately refrained from using traditional Cuban foods for one reason or another or do to lack of Cuban cultural knowledge they inadvertently used foods traditionally associated with Mexico. While *cultural faux pas* may be acceptable in show business, the classroom however, must embody reality. Out of respect for all cultures teachers owe it to their students to maintain the classroom as a place of *culturally sensitive and informed education*.

Lai (2012) stated that “boundaries between accurate cultural representation and stereotypes are complex” (p. 23). “How can teachers avoid problematic and inaccurate cultural assumptions in the classroom? Art educators argue that arts activities encouraging students to actively explore racial, ethnic, or cultural identities and issues will likely assist meaningful intercultural learning” (Lai, 2011, p. 19). The purpose of this Capstone project is to better understand how narrative art created by Cuban-American students can be used as a means to communicate and share their Cuban cultural heritage. This project found that student-made art documenting family stories is an authentic avenue for these children to learn about and explore Cuban culture and family history. An art show at the students’ school and student artwork posted online provided a means to promote cultural dialogue among students, teachers, and families.

Additionally, this paper describes the characteristics of culturally responsive teachers, guidelines for a culturally responsive curriculum, and suggestions for implementing a similar project into art curriculums in other schools and communities.

Statement of the Problem

According to recent report by the Congressional Research service, immigration is steadily increasing resulting in the U.S. Population is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse (Shrestha & Heisler, 2011). Clearly, Hispanic population is increasing and will likely continue to increase in the US. This creates a real need for US schools to be informed and culturally responsive to the children of Hispanic decent. Rusciolelli (2001) describes the need for researching Hispanic cultures. She states:

Interest in Hispanic cultures of the United States has been increasing, primarily as a result of the fast-growing population... This trend...will undoubtedly alter all areas of society for instance, politics, education, industry, labor and social behavior. (p.125)

Despite the steadily increasing numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse student populations in schools, not all university-based teacher education programs (TEPs) readily embrace multicultural education or culturally responsive teacher education pedagogy (Cambell-Whatley, Kae, Richards, 2006; Gay, 2002). Bennet (2002), a professor who teaches multiculturalism to graduate students who are training to be teachers, daily observes graduate students who “perceive lack of definition, conceptual clarity and purpose in the field other than broad affirmations of diversity” (p. 171). Bennet (2002) believes that many US teachers are ill-prepared and lack an understanding of multiculturalism, therefore limiting their effectiveness. According to Bennet (2002), research that contributes to a teacher’s better understanding of the

role that cultural heritage plays in the formation of the *sui generis* nature of each student, will aid in the overall effectiveness of that teacher. Living in a country that encompasses so many different cultures, a teacher increases her effectiveness when she or he considers, acknowledges and incorporates ideas inspired by the cultural heritage of her or his classroom into the art-making process (Yujie 2008). Although there is research pertaining to Hispanic immigrants, Fulingni & Tseng, (2000) Rusciolelli, (2001), Crosnoe, (2005) there is a lack of sufficient research addressing the Cuban-America student specifically in the art room. As a result, this study seeks to explore the questions: How does cultural heritage reveal itself in the art of selected Cuban-American students? How can art be used to communicate a student's interpretation of his or her culture? And, how can knowledge of a student's cultural heritage contribute to a more effective and culturally responsive teacher?

Significance of the Study

This Capstone project examines how cultural heritage reveals itself in the art of Cuban-American students living in the Miami and Port Orange, Florida area. Through the process of painting, discussion and interviews, cultural stories emerged, generating dialogue amongst the students and between students and the larger local community, and resulting in a deeper appreciation for diverse cultures amongst participants. Not only are the findings from this study helpful in my own art room, the results can also be a resource for teachers across the nation.

According to the Census Bureau's 2000 American Community Survey, Miami has the largest concentration of Cuban immigrants, and for this reason I conducted most of my research there. However, the challenge of understanding the immigrant student is not limited to the Miami area. The Census Bureau states that the United States (U.S.) immigrant population was

38,517,234, or 12.5 percent of the total U. S. population. Children with immigrant parents are now the fastest growing segment of the nation's child population, and by 2010 the children of new immigrants will represent at least a quarter of all children in the U.S. (Delacruz, 2012; Urban Institute, 2006). Based on these numbers it is likely teachers will encounter immigrant students in their classrooms. My hopes are that teachers from all fields will be inspired by the stories depicted in the art work of the students who participated in my study, and therefore will be motivated to plan purposeful, culturally sensitive curricula that encourages students to explore their own cultural heritage as well as learn about their classmate's culture. Regarding culturally responsive pedagogy, Jackson (2012) informed such a view:

A culturally responsive teacher cultivates in students a better understanding of how their personal experiences and social practices are in part, one of many in our global communities. Consequentially, culturally responsive pedagogy can lead to the development of critical questions, cultural literacy, and a pluralistic view of art that make classrooms more inclusive of all students (Jackson, 2012, pp.11).

Purpose of Study

The purpose for this study was to engage selected Cuban-American students in the making of narrative art as a means to better understand their cultural and family histories. The narrative art was then shared in an exhibition with teachers, classmates, and family as a means to showcase cultural aspects of these children's lives. Art shows at students' school, and online student art exhibits such as the one I created for this study also have the capacity to promote cultural dialog. Through this research project, I hope to inspire teachers to create cultural responsive curricula that avoid perpetuating cultural misconceptions and cultural stereotypes. My

goals reflects that of Carpenter (1990), who wrote,

At the very least, an inclusive curriculum seeks to promote an attitude of acceptance of differences, though ultimately curricular diversification should help the students accept, respect, appreciate, and work productively with differences: in other words, a reformed curriculum would prepare students to live in a culturally complex society. (p.125)

Research Questions

The following questions were developed as a springboard for my exploration of Cuban culture. The first question, “How does cultural heritage reveal itself in the artwork of selected Cuban-American students?” addresses how one can learn about culture from Cuban-American students and the artwork they create. The second question, “How can art be used to communicate a student’s interpretation of his or her culture?” investigates how discussing the cultural elements depicted in student art can increase cultural awareness among teachers, classmates, friends and family. The final question, “How can knowledge of a student’s cultural heritage contribute to a more effective and culturally responsive teacher?” builds on the findings from the previous questions, by using acquired cultural knowledge as a means to contribute to a teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom. The above research questions serve as a guide for my research process.

Assumptions

I assumed that students were interested in their cultural histories, and that it is of value to engage students in such inquiry. During my research I discovered that demographics and family

dynamics influence what a child may know about their cultural heritage. Therefore I also assumed that cultural knowledge as well as desire to share such knowledge will vary from student to student. For example, I assumed that my student participants would want to and be able to share cultural knowledge with their teachers and classmates. I also assumed that just because a student is of a particular ethnicity he or she might not be aware of the traditions and customs typically associated with his or her cultural heritage. For that matter, even if a student knows about his or her culture, one cannot assume that he or she will even desire to share his or her cultural heritage. Finally, I assumed that a student from of a particular ethnicity may not always create art that is similar or representative of the artwork that is historically associated with that culture.

The project in this study encouraged students to investigate their own cultural heritage by gathering family stories told to them from relatives. This eliminated the need to rely on prior knowledge. Also, students in this particular study were volunteers for the project eliminating the potential for the students to feel pressured to share more than they felt comfortable doing. In addition, I believe that in a migratory world, a student may encompass more than one culture. And finally, it was important to understand that a student may or may not embrace his or her culture. This may be in fact due to the development of a hybridity of culture. According to Thompson, (2009) today's children have created a unique culture that has merged past traditions with present day experiences. Considering that the students for this study were volunteers, I assumed that they would want to participate, however, it is important to remember that a student may feel differently further into the study. Delacruz (2012) discovered that:

Children living in a blended or foster families or with single parents, or adopted children

or recent immigrants, or second generation children whose families are not intact, assignments that center around cultural heritage can be confusing, invasive, humiliating, dangerous or nearly impossible to complete. (p.235)

Definition of Terms

Cultural Responsive Teaching is a teaching strategy that is informed by the cultural knowledge, prior experience, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students (Gay, 2010, p. 31).

Cultural History is comprised of those particular customs, beliefs, events, people, values that have been learned within one's primary social group, and which the individual then commemorates (Delacruz, 2012, p. 5).

Cultural Heritage is the legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations. (Tolken, 2003)

Cultural Practices consist of belief systems, values, roles of people, language and art. (McFee & Degge, 1977, p. 281) Cultural practices and histories are dynamic, fluid and complicated facets of intersubjective, shifting, and competing beliefs, practice and social arrangements (Delacruz, 2012, p. 5).

Narrative Art - Although there are various definitions of narrative art, the use of the term in this paper will adhere to the following definition: narrative art is art that represents elements of a

story.

Limitations of the Study

Related areas of interest that are of value but not included in this paper are as follows:

The students collected family stories describing his or her cultural history. There is a possibility that the student's artwork depicting the stories may also include their present day culture that is influenced by daily experience. The focus of this paper is on the culture of the Cuban-American student, however the findings can be applied to other cultures. Teaching to meet the needs of new or non-English speaking students is also not addressed.

Literature Review

The literature included in this review is from various fields of study concerned with culture and education, and provides foundational information pertaining to the research question: How does cultural heritage reveal itself in the artwork of Cuban-American students? The review is divided into three segments. The first segment consists of articles that contribute to a better understanding of the immigration experience and the Cuban-American. The second segment examines the process and methods researchers have utilized as a means to understand culture in the art room. Finally, the last segment reviews studies that articulate and analyze multicultural art education along with classroom recommendations for art teachers of immigrant students. Together, professionals from the fields of sociology, anthropology, geography and art education share a common interest in diverse cultures. Each profession offers an expertise as a means to further understanding and respect for the multicultural American student.

The Immigrant

According to Behrman & Shield (2004), the definition of an immigrant is a person who leaves one country to settle permanently in another. The definition of an immigrant is different from the definition of a *child of an immigrant*. A child of an immigrant is defined as a child who is born in the U.S., however, their parents were born in a foreign country (Behrman & Shields, 2004). The authors in this section of my literature review examine issues pertaining to immigrants in general, immigrants in schools, children of immigrants and Cuban-American immigrants living in the Miami area.

Zhou (1997) pulled together existing studies that bear directly or indirectly on children's immigrant experiences and adaptational outcomes. By compiling the work of various experts, Zhou (1997) emphasizes multiple aspects and insights relating to the nature of immigrant children. For example, what role does being the child of an immigrant play in the student's emotional wellbeing? For example, the child of an immigrant may feel a loss of identity or awkwardness derived from feeling *different*. Stiefel and Schwartz (2004), on the other hand, look at the economic wellbeing of immigrant students. They analyzed the distribution of educational resources among immigrant students and found that access to a variety of resources, such as financial and emotional, play a vital role in the success and overall wellbeing of the student. Neither Zhou's (1997) or Stiefel & Schwartz's (2004) work dealt directly with the Cuban-American student. According to Heike (2005), the Cuban-American's circumstances are unlike the circumstances of immigrant children from other countries/cultures. Cuban-American students have strong support stemming from family, friends and other Cuban-American immigrants. Heike (2005) examines resources that are available to Cuban immigrants and scrutinizes how

changes in ethnic solidarity affect Cuban immigrants. Heike (2005) describes *ethnic solidarity* as the initial help that previous immigrants offer to newcomers along with the community that is formed from shared cultural heritage. Heike's (2005) research also investigated the effects of relocating and maintaining tradition, customs and language in a new country and how unique circumstances affect the assimilation process. As a result, Heike (2005) discovered that the Cuban immigrant in the Miami area, did not see the need to assimilate to the ideas and traditions found within the United States. The Cuban's goal was to remain in Miami only until the political conflict in Cuba subsided. Heike (2005) describes the re-creation of Havana within Miami, not surprisingly named, Little Havana. Heike's study provides valuable information pertaining to the ethnic solidarity found in Little Havana yet it fails to examine the implications of an ethnic solidarity in relationship to the Cuban students' school experience. One cannot help but wonder whether or not Cuban-American students have assimilated within the school system despite the fact that they might live in an environment with a significant level of ethnic solidarity? Nor does Heike's (2005) research address Cuban immigrants who live in other parts of the U.S. and how their experience may differ from that of the Cuban-American living in Miami.

Skop, McHugh and Miyares (1997) also analyzed the assimilation of Cuban immigrants in the U.S. They compared the immigrants who arrived in the late 1950s and 1960s with those who arrived in the U.S. during the 1980s. They discovered that the two sets of immigrants had different ideas and beliefs. According to Skop et al. (1997), the Cuban immigrants who arrived in the 1950s and 1960s felt a strong bond to all Cuban immigrants at that time, whether they knew them or not. The Cuban immigrants from the 1950s and 1960s noticed a change in the Cuban immigrants who arrived in the 1980s, and therefore failed to bond with the newer immigrants.

Skop et al. (1997) felt that the cause of this change could possibly be a result of the younger immigrants living most of their lives in a totalitarian and socialist society. Having this knowledge of the potential differences and characteristics of the two groups of Cuban immigrants proved useful as I conducted my research in Miami, home to many generations of Cuban immigrants.

Heike (2005) conducted research on Cuban immigrants eight years after Skop, et al. (1997) conducted theirs. One would think that Heike (2005) might have identified a decline in ethnic solidarity in Miami. However, Heike (2005) felt that ethnic solidarity was still prevalent at the time of her research. Quite possibly, considering that the population of Cuban immigrants in Miami is over 700,000, the authors could have completed their research in different locations that consist of unique situations or demographics. Skop's et al. (1997) and Heike's (2005) research provide a valuable foundation for understanding the various aspects of Cuban immigrants' experience, however, they did not apply their findings to the school experience of Cuban American children as described in this study.

Toelken's (2003) research examines the cultural heritage of the immigrant student. Toelken (2003) describes cultural heritage as the legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations. The research is highly academic and scholarly in nature, however, Toelken (2003) demonstrates sensitivity as he provides a deeper understanding of cultural heritage and its residual effect within the student's world. In a different vein, Behrman and Shields (2004) looked at the school and home life of children of immigrants. Their research aids in better understanding a child whose parents or grandparents are immigrants. The researchers found that immigrants generally have lower grades and a higher rate of

economic difficulties. Studies of immigrant children reveal that these children face culture shock, ethnic identity confusion, and acculturation difficulties as well as loneliness, isolation from peers and struggle for acceptance, integration and a sense of belonging (James, 1997; Kirova, 2001; Le, 2009; Delacruz 2012). Behrman and Shield (2004) identify some of the struggles the students could possibly face in most U.S. school systems. Many of the struggles that immigrant students encounter are a result of teachers and peers failing to understand the immigrant's cultural heritage (Toelken, 2003). However, according to Heike (2005), children of Cuban immigrants typically do well in school and are financially secure. This phenomenon is quite possibly due to the strong support system and high regard for education that Heike (2005) discovered while conducting her research on the Cuban immigrant's apparent ethnic solidarity in Miami.

Creating Art with Immigrants

Diverse cultures are present in almost every art room within the United States. The sources reviewed in this section all relate to the art-making process as a means to understand multicultural students and their cultural heritage. The sources also demonstrate various methods for conducting research pertaining to immigrants with the use of art.

Delacruz (2012) believes: All children need thoughtfully and compassionately developed assignments that acknowledge the varied family and cultural experiences of children, that is, for teachers to teach about cultural diversity with cultural experiences of children, that is, for teachers to teach about cultural diversity with current knowledge about many U.S. family, cultural, ethnic, and racial configurations that ground the lives of the children that now populate our classrooms. (p. 236)

In order to increase my current cultural knowledge of Cuban-Americans I conducted an ethnographic investigation of the area where I would be carrying out my research. Understanding the demographics of an area provides only a limited amount of cultural knowledge. A teacher must also strive to understand the feelings of his or her students and the events and experiences that influenced those feelings. Ballbe ter Maat (1997) demonstrates how art therapy can be used to better understand and help immigrant students express their feelings. He suggests using questions, discussion and peer collaboration as methods to elicit memories and reflection prior to the art-making process. The “pre” art-making activities help the students to feel comfortable enough to draw pictures representing their true feelings. Ballbe ter Maat’s students operated under the one basic existential assumption: “We are human beings from one universal culture, worthy of respect. By expressing experiences and feelings orally and through art making and writing...[they] progressed toward greater self-awareness and reconciliation” (p. 14). Creating art with immigrant students can be a form of therapy. This article introduced specific methods for evoking ideas and images from children through the process of art.

Brunick (1999), in her article “Listen to My Picture,” describes the importance of understanding the background of children of immigrants. Without knowledge of each child’s situation, it can be difficult to understand the significance of the images the or she creates. Having a large number of diverse students can make individual research into their backgrounds difficult. However, if a large number of students share a common cultural heritage, the task of understanding student culture becomes feasible. Brunick (1999) chose to analyze the historical context surrounding the immigrant student in order to achieve an accurate interpretation of a student’s work. Brunick (1999) felt that it was important to distinguish between honest, actual

experiences and too much influence from television when interpreting the meaning of a student's artwork. Brunick's (1999) solution was to engage the student in dialogue by asking, for instance, "What is your picture about?" Instigating dialog with the student provides clarification is a strategy that Ballbe ter Maat (1997) also implemented.

Delacruz (2012) suggests that interpreting each others' art could invite discussion about how one's identity is constructed and situated within multi-layered contexts, how cultural sites and practices are valued, how these constructs and values change under varying circumstances, or, how we treat one another in societies, communities, schools and classrooms based on assumptions about race, ethnicity, social status or family background (p. 237).

For this reason, my project included group discussions that resulted in the students as well as myself gaining a better understanding of the artwork created during the research process. While neither Ballbe ter Maat (1997) or Brunick (1999) worked directly with Cuban-American students or second and third generation immigrants both of the articles provided useful strategies for conducting cultural research through the process of art making. When a teacher seeks to generate cultural awareness through art, dialog is an essential component in a multicultural classroom.

Multicultural Art Education

The first segment of this literature review examined information from scholars and educators who conducted research involving immigrants and Cuban-American students. The second segment explored methods for art making with immigrant students as well as how to interpret the work of students. In this final segment, I examine selected scholarship of art

education professionals who have all conducted research in *multicultural education*. Using these sources, I analyze the term multiculturalism and its relationship to the immigrant student. The collective information collected here provides approaches, ideas, and methods pertaining to art making with diverse cultures.

The term multicultural art education includes a variety of multifaceted definitions. The word multicultural literally means “many cultures.” The term multicultural education can have more than one application. For example, Delacruz (1996) describes a common application;

Sometimes entire multicultural art programs are comprised of a smorgasbord of studio activities, one per culture, based on a selection of cultures from around the world. This relegates the artistic and symbolic cultural consumables, revealed in a superficial manner to students as anthropological specimens and aesthetic curiosities. Such practices trivialize art at best, they perpetuate cultural stereotyping and racism at worst (pp. 91).

For this reason my research activities will center around the students’ interpretation of their culture and the stories they gather from family members. Particularly relevant to my research is a subcategory within multicultural educational research referred to as single group studies. Within this subcategory of multicultural education, the focus is on the contribution and perspectives of one particular cultural group (Stuhr, 1994). Single group studies can apply to an art class learning about a single group or it can apply to the study of art within a single, specific culture. One of the recommendations suggested by Hart (1991) is to leave our “Western ideas” behind when looking at the artwork of multicultural students. Leaving behind Western ideas does not mean that the notion of excellence is also forgotten. What multicultural art education teaches is that there is no one single universal aesthetic or artistic definition of excellence beyond the

recognition that all cultures define their ideals according to their own stringent criteria (Hart, 1991). “Multicultural art education seeks to broaden, not narrow, the art curriculum to include more diverse aesthetics and artistic traditions and conventions” (Delacruz, 1995, p. 58).

We need to be aware of our own worldview so that we can be appropriately attentive to challenging it when we seek to understand those who have different experiences. For example, according to Delacruz (2012) found that studies of immigrant children reveal that these children face culture shock, ethnic identity confusion, and acculturation difficulties (p. 235). Hart’s (1991) research analyzes the task of assessing the artwork of immigrant students. Hart (1991) compared the standard Western aesthetics with that of non-Western traditional art. Hart (1991) concluded that the art created by immigrants closely resembles folk art, observing that the school-based assessment processes associated with considering students’ folk art oriented productions do not incorporate culturally responsive strategies or even understandings of folk art. Although some of the observations shared thus far may be true for many first generation immigrants, the Miami Cuban-American students in my study are second generation, and are receiving art education at their school. Also noteworthy, on a recent research trip to Cuba, I observed structured art education in all of the schools we visited. The quality of work failed to reflect that of folk art as Hart (1991) observed, but rather it did reflect European movements such as Cubism and Impressionism. In my opinion, the origin of the immigrant as well as whether or not he or she is first or second generation may possibly influence the student’s artwork.

Sabol (2000) compares looking at multicultural art to seeing through a looking glass. He describes various methods of interpreting culture, examines how ideas are communicated within a culture and suggests that one can describe culture by describing its characteristics. Each of the

characteristics is interrelated with others to form a dynamic web that defines culture. Sabol identifies another essential characteristic of culture as communication. For Sabol, communication can be accomplished through a variety of means including visual, auditory, verbal, and so on:

Signs and symbols systems are graphic or visual methods of communications used within cultures. Members of a culture understand meaning associated with these signs and symbols and are able to translate and conduct meaning through them. (Sabol, 2000, p. 14)

The art created by the participating students did reveal the use of signs and symbols.

Furthermore, according to Sabol,

An essential defining characteristic of culture is history. Cultures create record. The historical record of the culture that is composed of events that have contributed to development of the culture over time. This record focuses on events that occurred within a culture. For example: references to leaders, social, political economic and philosophical or other forces that are important in the culture's history. (Sabol, 2000, p. 14)

Political unrest, social upheaval, and economic loss are major forces that have pushed and pulled the Cuban immigrant in numerous directions. While in Miami, I observed political signage, not of US politics but rather that of Cuba. Our waitress discussed her feelings about Fidel and Raul Castro, past and present president of Cuba respectfully. Even though Sabol (2000) does not directly refer to immigrants or to Cuba, his insight provides me with a better understanding of the role that historical events play in the formations of cultural heritage. Sabol (2000) describes the importance of a historical record. This record provides a sense of perspective for understanding how culture came into being and why certain values and beliefs or

customs and tradition exist. Sabol (2000) did not know it at the time, however, twelve years after the publication of this article, he would lead a group of twenty-five delegates, myself included, to Cuba where together, we researched art education and culture.

Like Sabol (2000), Stuhr, Petrovich-Mwaniki and Wasson (1990) advance the understanding of multiculturalism. They accomplish this by proposing six position statements supported by sociological and anthropological literature for considerations by art teachers. Position one, three and four directly correlate with my existing research. The positions are:

Position 1. We advocate a socio-anthropological basis for studying the aesthetic production and experience of cultures, which means focusing on knowledge of the makers of art, as well as the sociocultural context in which art is produced.

Position 3. We support a student or community-centered educational process in which the teacher must access and utilize the students' sociocultural values and beliefs and those of the cultures of the community, when planning art curricula.

Position 4. We support anthropologically based methods for identifying these socio-cultural groups and their accompanying values and practices which influence aesthetic production. (Petrovich-Mwaniki, Stuhr and Wasson, 1990, pp. 243)

These positions imply that the community or communities in which students participate in outside of school become an important component for consideration in the classroom. Ethnic heritage, religious affiliation, as well as the dominant cultural ideology shape a student's values and beliefs (Petrovich-Mwaniki et al. 1990). Therefore, Petrovich-Mwaniki et al. suggest that cross-cultural and ethnic studies of art and art education provide us with a deeper understanding

of the values and beliefs that affect a society's aesthetic production and its significance in its sociocultural context.

Delacruz (1996) expressed a concern for the underlying framework that perpetuates patterns of social injustice pervading much of the literature on multicultural education. She noticed that recommendations made by art educators centered on the development of programs that encourage a student to analyze their own cultural assumptions rather than political forces that sometimes work against art (p.87).

Similarly to other art educators who have researched culture, Andrus (2001) suggests that a culturally competent teacher exhibits the attitudes, behaviors and skillful use of culturally appropriate materials in ways that support the personal, social and academic growth of all students. Effective teachers are not only familiar with their students' backgrounds, but also strive to understand their students' particular behaviors, such as the Hispanic tradition of greeting one another with a kiss on the cheek (Andrus, 2001).

The influx of multicultural articles published between 1980 through 2001 was quite possibly the result of the popularity of Discipline Based Art Education, which emphasized art history and understanding cultural context as an essential component to art education. Even though the majority of the articles reviewed here is at least ten years old, the sources still offer relevant information for today's art room as teachers welcome a variety of cultures. Many of the articles stress the importance of understanding the student background as to aid in the creation of curricula that are relevant to the student. This sentiment is echoed in a more recent pedagogy, *Visual Culture Art Education (VCAE)*, which embraces a culture-centered and child-centered

approach to instruction. The literature in this review, when acted upon, can assist teachers in discovering whom their students really are and where they have come from.

By including literature from professionals in fields of sociology, anthropology, geography and art education, I have attempted to present a more complete approach to understanding how the culture of the Cuban immigrant may be apparent in their artwork. This knowledge will serve as a strong foundation for my research. By utilizing information discovered in previous research, I could enter the art room with a useful but limited understanding of diverse cultures. I was unable to find any research that specifically addresses the process of making art with children of Cuban immigrants. With my research, I hope to offer insight into how narrative art created by Cuban-American students can be used as a means to communicate cultural heritage and contribute to the literature in this way.

Methods

Discovering how art can be used to explore the cultural heritage of Cuban-Americans requires perceptive observation, conscientious interviews and the ability to describe in great detail the multiple aspects associated with understanding a culture. Therefore the research method for obtaining information in this study is qualitative in nature. In addition to the qualitative method of research conducted within the classroom, I conducted an ethnographic inquiry in Cuba and within the Cuban-American community of Little Havana, Florida, so that I would better understand the students that I would be working with in the multicultural school research site.

Many teachers are ill prepared to teach in a multicultural setting. This project allows for teachers to gain a better understanding of their multicultural students therefore increasing the

teacher's effectiveness.

Subjects

Although the students participating in the art class were of diverse cultures, the particular subjects used for this study were two Cuban-American girls. Their age ranged from 10 – 11 years old. One student lives with her parents in Miami Florida. Miami is home to over 700,000 Cuban Americans. The art class included participants from additional diverse cultures. Two students were from Columbia, two students from Venezuela, one student who is Puerto Rican and Italian and two students who are of German descent. Another participating Cuban student lives in Port Orange, Florida. Port Orange is 98% white. This Cuban student lives with her mother and stepfather who are Cuban.

Research Site

The research site was located at a private school in Miami, Florida. The school's enrollment contains a high percentage of Hispanic students. Children from European descent are in a minority. The school is located in a middle- to upper-class area of Miami. According to the Principal of the school, a large percentage of Cuban-Americans reside there. Cost of tuition is over \$10,000 per student. All of the students speak English. The art class took place in the school's art room. Non-Cuban students were also allowed to participate and share their ancestral stories. One Cuban-American student completed an additional narrative painting at home as well as documented her cultural life with a disposable camera that had been provided for her.

The two students from the Port Orange area completed their projects at home. Port Orange, Florida is 98% white, therefore these students would be considered a minority in the area.

After a brief discussion with students they took supplies home to complete their projects there. They returned the projects with written descriptions of their work. One student also took home a camera to document her culture.

The completed narrative artwork created at the Miami school was displayed in Miami (Figure 12) and on a blog. www.blendingcolorswithcuba.blogspot.com (Figure 1) The artwork created in Port Orange was also displayed on a blog and at a community art center. In addition to the artwork, the cultural photos were part of the display online and at the community art center.

Figure 1. Image of Blog

Blending Colors in Cuba

11/24/12 1

Blending Colors in Cuba

Researching Art Education, Curriculum, Creativity and Culture in Cuba

1,875

Monday, November 19, 2012

Family stories in Art.

Art reflecting cultural heritage.



The Journey To Cuba

My father came to America on a four foot raft. He came with one of his five brothers. They were surrounded by sharks with very little food and water. They were sunburned from head to toe. "I wanted to live the American dream" is what my father quoted. The front part of my father's raft sunk after three days. They were saved by a fishing boat off the coast of Miami Beach where I was born. The waves were rough on the journey. The days were hot and the nights were cold but they made it through. It's every Cuban's dream to come to America.



The Food in Cuba

The food in Cuba is different, but really good. One of the foods I painted is chicken, rice and potatoes with my family's homemade sauce that brings out the flavor. The flavors in Cuban food taste native to the Cuban culture. The only time we eat American food is on holidays such as Christmas, Easter and Halloween. Other Cuban foods are black beans, yucca and fried bananas. We eat lots of meat and rice.

Welcome to Blending Colors in Cuba

Whether you are an art teacher, student or one who loves to learn about art and culture, use this blog to share your thoughts and ideas with others.

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Data Collection and Procedure

The research method used for this study is qualitative therefore the majority of my data was gathered through: observation, large group discussion, and one-on-one interviews. All observed activities, reactions, conversations, written reflections and notations regarding artwork were documented in a journal. In addition to the qualitative research that took place inside of the classroom, a secondary form of research took place months earlier outside of the classroom in Cuba as well as recently on the streets of Little Havana, Miami. This particular research is described as ethnographic inquiry, the study of culture depending fundamentally on firsthand, extended personal involvement in the lives of people and community being studied. Davenport (2002) states that art educators have been developing culturally responsive pedagogy from an anthropological/ethnographic perspective. Lai (2012) suggests that this provides a holistic and complex approach to understanding artistic practice and culture as they exist in the real world. While in Cuba I observed an authentic representation of the culture by experiencing the food, art world and social constructs. While in Miami, I spent three days immersed in the Cuban-American culture also observing similar authentic representation of a Cuban culture that has merged with an American culture. Both ethnographic inquiries provided me with additional insight. Information pertaining to the ethnographic inquiry was documented in a journal and shared on a blog.

The Miami art class took three days to complete. Two students completed additional artwork and photography at home resulting in a total of three weeks of data collection.

Class Procedure

To begin, I asked students to describe what they understand cultural heritage to mean. I then asked the students to provide examples. Some of the answers that the students used to describe "culture heritage" were: my family traditions, our customs, what we eat, how grandma dresses, how we decorate our home, and what we think. Next we discussed how art can reflect elements of culture heritage. I showed the students examples of paintings that depict the cultural heritage of the artist. Then, I asked students to draw what they knew about their own culture heritage. After the students completed their drawings, the students then wrote a reflection that identified and described the stories they represented in their artwork. I collected and photographed their art-work and reflections. The students then interviewed family members, wrote their family stories, and then created artwork depicting their cultural stories that they were told. After the artwork was completed, post-group discussions allowed for additional cultural dialog. In this discussion the students talk about what they created and how it reflects their culture. Classmates had the opportunity to ask additional questions. The students artwork was displayed in an art exhibit at the students school and online. Finally, I wrote down comments spoken at the art exhibits. I also documented individual interviews between myself and the students. I formulated my interview and discussion questions based on the advice offered by Merriam (1998), who suggested asking good, purposeful questions, conducting interviews to find out what I cannot directly observe (e.g., feelings, thoughts, and memories) and to use open-ended questions that promote flexible exploratory. I did not lead the interview in one direction or another; I allowed the students' comments to guide the direction of the discussion. The interview consisted of questions derived from the students' artwork. The questions encouraged the student

to further expand on the meaning of their artwork as well as additional stories or feelings that may have been generated through the process of the art making.

The design of this study was modeled after Brunick's (1999) case study that focused on eight immigrant students who participated in an art class for a period of 6 weeks. Brunick (1999) encouraged the immigrant students to draw their memories and feelings. The students expressed a variety of emotions in their art. Brunick's (1999) study enlightened me to the fact that some of the students in my study may have painful stories that they do not wish to share visually.

Two Cuban-American students took cameras home to further document their culture. The photos were included with their artwork in the online art show and at the community art center along with a printed copy of their family story.

Data Analysis Procedures

I immersed myself in the situation intentionally attempting to leave behind any preconceived ideas, yet acknowledging the fact that every human carries unique perspectives and biases. Although for purpose of data analysis I developed a working definition of cultural heritage and cultural history that could be systematically applied to the observational process. My analysis of the data I collected included reviewing all documented observational notes, interviews, student reflections as well as their art work noting representation of their cultural heritage or history based on the working definitions.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations within this study. Because the method of research is qualitative, the data gathered through observation, discussion, interviews and artwork was

viewed, recorded and analyzed from my own perspective and was subject to personal biases and idiosyncrasies. In addition, the findings from the research reflect my individual judgment and interpretation. However, as I conducted my research, I kept the words of Merriam (1998) in mind, “What strategies have you built into your study to ensure that your study is trustworthy, that is valid and reliable?” (p. 270). My strategies included asking the students to pick the subject matter for their art, having the students write interpretations of their art work in their own words, allowing discussions and for interviews to be student led with me serving only a guide to deepen the discussions. As a researcher, I have limitations. I am not Cuban nor am I an immigrant.

This study is limited to a small group of diverse students. It offers only a glimpse into the lives of three Cuban-American students through their artwork, photography, written text and observation. It does not reflect a broad definition of culture, or predictable outcomes. Every child is unique with unique experiences. Location and family dynamics, among other extenuating circumstances influence each child’s experience. Therefore, there is no way to predict how immigrant students will respond to being asked to share their stories. The study consisted of one art project that promoted story telling. Other art processes may produce different results.

Conducting research with immigrant students yields additional limitations. I have a limited amount of time to work with the students reducing the ability to really get to know them. In addition, basing my research on this one experience could result in an oversimplification of a student’s response to the creation of a cultural project.

Findings

Exploring how cultural heritage is conveyed or can be viewed in the artwork of Cuban-

American students resulted in three particular findings. The first finding is that making narrative art about one's own family background provides an authentic avenue for exploring one's own culture. The second finding is that students, classmates and families exploring cultural heritage together can result in the creation of meaningful art and a memorable intergenerational learning experience. The third finding is that public art exhibits depicting purposeful cultural art can promote community dialog that generates cultural awareness that can contribute to the overall culturally responsive effectiveness of a teacher.

Family Stories

I found that narrative art created from family stories is a meaningful avenue for exploring cultural heritage. By encouraging students to create art inspired by actual events, the students gain a better understanding of their family's history. The artwork created, represented various aspects of culture including: traditional food, religious customs, home life, a political event, and stories depicting their ancestors arriving in the United States. Each student wrote in his or her own words the story portrayed in his or her art work and also verbally presented his or her art work to the class. Although elements of present day culture could be observed in the cartoon style of the *eyes* of the people in one student's artwork (Figure 3) the stories accompanying the artwork described elements of the student's cultural history.

Meaningful Art

Students and family exploring cultural heritage together resulted in the creation of meaningful art and a memorable learning experience. According to the students, the interview process was fun. Some of the grandparents remarked that they did not think their grandchildren

would be interested in old family stories. They were pleasantly surprised that their descendants actually are interested in hearing the family's history. The students admitted that they really enjoyed hearing the stories told to them by their relatives and they want to learn more. The relatives expressed great joy in viewing art that they described as meaningful.

Art that Communicates

Displaying artwork that depicts representation of a student's culture can promote meaningful dialog and discussion. The dialog during class encouraged students to develop respect and acceptance of a worldview other than their own. In addition to the students actively discussed their artwork throughout the duration of the art classes and continued the discussion at the art show. The artwork was displayed at the student's school, online and at a community art center. Students were able to invite family and friends to look and talk about their work. By posting the artwork online via a blog, students can share their work and stories with friends and families across the nation. The art exhibits and group discussion provided opportunity for cross-cultural exchange and intercultural learning.

Summary of Findings

The three research questions proposed in the beginning of this paper have inspired exploration resulting in three significant findings. The first question, "how does cultural heritage reveal itself in the artwork of Cuban-American students?" I found that narrative art created from family stories is an authentic avenue for exploring cultural heritage. The stories were inspired from primary sources reducing the probability for stereotypical responses.

The second research question, “How can narrative art be used to communicate a student’s interpretation of their cultural heritage?” The dialog during the art making, large group discussions and at the art exhibits contributed to a better understanding of specific student’s cultural heritage. By having students discuss their culture and create their art together, the students learn about the lives and history of people different from themselves to better understand that personal views are not universal. The findings gathered from the first two questions will contribute to the overall effectiveness of a teacher as she or he plans a culturally responsive curricula.

The third question, “How can knowledge of a student’s cultural heritage contribute to a more effective and culturally responsive teacher?” (See appendix A for examples on how to become more culturally responsive.) While listening to the children discuss their family stories, share family traditions and beliefs as well a customs that are practiced in their household, I gained knowledge and developed a deeper understanding of the children themselves and potentially increasing my effectiveness in a multicultural classroom.

Discussion

My goals for this capstone project were to create an art lesson project that would inspire Cuban-American students to create artwork that could reflect and communicate their culture heritage as well as to present a project that teachers could use in their classrooms as a means to better understand the cultural background of their students as well as increase the cultural knowledge among students. Scholarly literature supports the need to present sensitive, informed, and culturally thoughtful representations of culture within school curricula. Sensitive and

informed representations of a culture have the capacity to promote greater respect and cultural awareness among students. The literature also suggests that teachers who understand their students' backgrounds are better equipped to create relevant and meaningful curricula (see Appendix B for suggestions on creating culturally-responsive curricula). By using case study oriented inquiry I was able to explore the cultural heritage of selected Cuban-Americans students through their creation of narrative art reflecting their family stories. Not only did I gain a deeper appreciation for the Cuban-American culture, but it was clear to me that the art shows resulted in classmates, teachers and family participating in meaningful cultural dialog among themselves. In the following section, I will discuss my interpretations of the findings, along with visual documentation that supports each finding.

Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

Culturally Responsive Art Making

The work produced by the students in this study are based on stories shared by family members, and may be seen as reflecting aspects of Cuban-American culture. Below are the paintings and stories created by the Cuban-American students in this study. The paintings reflect a combination of prior cultural knowledge and stories obtained by interviewing family members. The photos represent the student's present day culture.

A ten-year-old Cuban-American student painted the next two paintings (Figure 2 and Figure 3) and wrote the following two stories.

Figure 2. Fruit Stand in Havana, Cuba.



There is not a lot of food. People eat lots of bread and drink lots of coffee The ocean is beautiful. Cuban food [includes] tostadas, croquettes, la carreta. There are working cars but they are not new. I have lots of cousins, aunts and uncles in Cuba. They have no telephone.

–Ten-Year-Old Cuban-American Student

Figure 3. What I have been told about Cuba

Note. The subject matter is Cuban, however American culture can be observed in the shape of the eyes which closely resemble American cartoons.

The same student continues her story below.

My grandma came over from Cuba a long time ago. My Grandpa had to stay behind in Cuba for a long time. Grandma left late at night, got on an airplane and flew to the United States. She paid money to fly. She brought my mother over hidden in a sack. My mom was 6 years old. I would someday like to visit Cuba.

–Ten-Year-Old Cuban-American Student

In order to better understand the home life of the Cuban-American students who participated in the study, I asked them to take home a disposable camera. The students were instructed to take photos of what they considered to be an important representation of their culture. Some of the photos taken included, clothes, food, family and the home where they live (Figures 4, 5 and 6).

Figure 4. Photos of Clothes



Note. Photos reflect student's Cuban-American culture in Miami. Photo taken with the camera that I sent home with student.

Figure 5. Cuban Food Found in Miami



Note. Photo taken with the camera that I sent home with student.

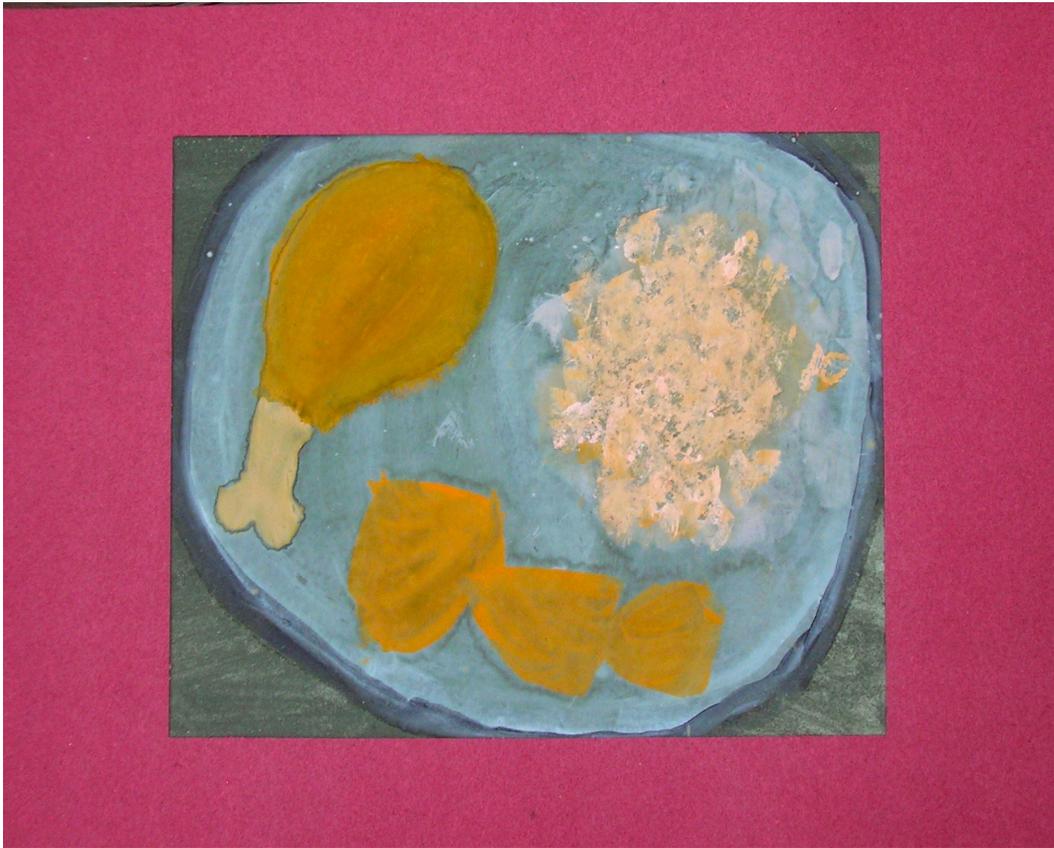
Figure 6. Spanish Label on Cuban Food Found Miami



Note. Photo taken with the camera that I sent home with students.

Additional examples of how narrative art can provide various aspects of a culture as well as meaningful art can be seen in the next three paintings and stories submitted by an eleven-year-old Cuban-American student (Figure 6, 7 and 8).

Figure 7. The Food in Cuba



The Food in Cuba

The food in Cuba is different, but really good. One of the foods I painted is chicken, rice and potatoes with my family's homemade sauce that brings out the flavor. The flavors in Cuban food taste native to the Cuban culture. The only time we eat American food is on holidays such as Christmas, Easter and Halloween. Other Cuban foods are black beans, yucca and fried bananas. We eat lots of meat and rice.

-Eleven-Year-Old Cuban-American Student

Figure 8. The Cuban Life**The Cuban Life**

In the painting of the houses you can see that many of them are cracked and run down.

You are not allowed to own a house or car in Cuba, only if Castro (the President of Cuba) gave you one. The beaches there are amazing though! I have been to Cuba about two times and we went to the beach a lot. It's very hot in Cuba. I got sunburned a lot there.

The Cubans do not have many rights at all. My father had to live in a three-bedroom apartment. If Castro didn't give you a house you move in with family.

-Eleven-Year-Old Cuban-American Student

Figure 9. The Journey from Cuba

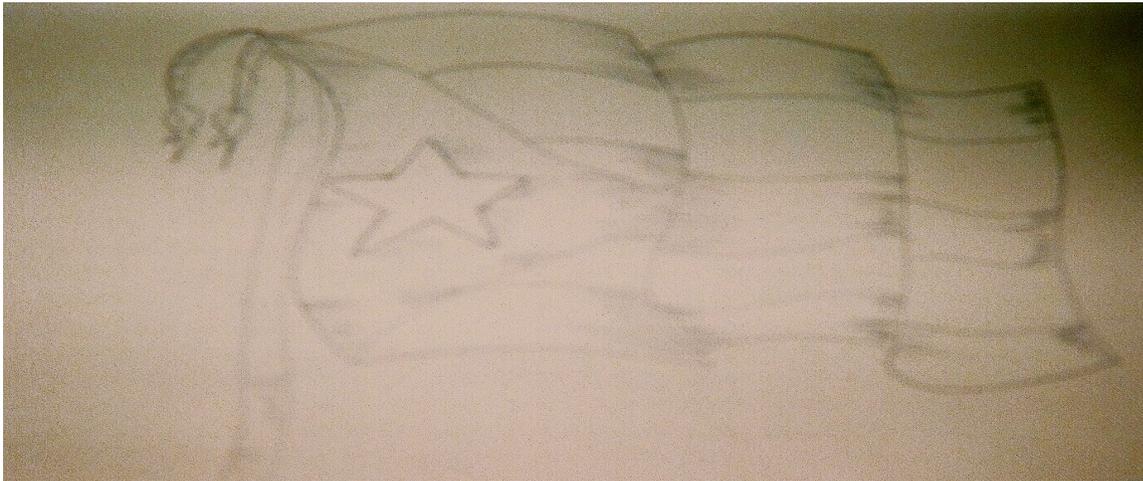
The Journey From Cuba

My father came to America on a four-foot raft. He came with one of his five brothers. They were surrounded by sharks with very little food and water. They were sunburned from head to toe. "I wanted to live the American dream" is what my father quoted. The front part of my father's raft sunk after three days. They were saved by a fishing boat off the coast of Miami Beach where I was born. The waves were rough on the journey. The days were hot and the nights were cold but they made it through. It's every Cuban's dream to come to America.

-Eleven-Year-Old Cuban-American Student.

The same student took the following photographs that document her family life as a Cuban-American. The experience of exploring cultural heritage resulted in meaningful art and a memorable experience for both, father and daughter (Figure 9 and 10).

Figure 10. Artwork created by Cuban Parent



Note. This artwork was created by a parent who also wanted to share the art experience with his daughter. He is the “father” describe in the story, *My Journey from Cuba.*” Photo taken with the camera that I sent home with student.

Figure 11. Cuban-America Father and Daughter



Note. Father and daughter created art work together. The photo was taken with the camera that I sent home with student.

Students expressed a personal connection to their narrative art, most likely-due to the fact that the student's work was derived not only from a familiar, trusted source but also because his or her artwork portrayed the student's own family's history. Considering that the cultural information was gathered through a student interviewing his or her relatives, the details provided a unique perspective of culture that is not available in a textbook. The students during their family interview asked questions that they wanted to know the answers to, therefore increasing the relevancy and significance of information for the student.

The students who took cameras home, took pictures of what was important to them and what they felt their culture represented therefore eliminating a bias that arrives from a researcher's perspective of a particular culture. All of the above contributed to the creation of meaningful narrative art that the students can share with future generations.

Art Communicates

Students creating narrative art with other students resulted in meaningful art that communicated elements of their cultural heritage. While observing the students during the art-making process I noted some students randomly walking around the room looking and inquiring about each other's work. Students actively engaged in a dialog consisting of questions and answers pertaining to each others' culture. At times, a student would pause from making her art in order to enthusiastically share interesting facts and funny stories causing others to laugh out loud. Students exhibited excitement and pride as they jockeyed to be the first to share their pictures at the end of class.

In addition to the cultural dialog observed in class, the art shows provided another avenue for the promotion of community dialog. The art exhibit at the students' school in Miami (Figure 11) provided opportunities for teachers, classmates and families to ask questions about the work and get answers from the students themselves.

Figure 12. Art Exhibit at School



An online art show in the form of a blog titled *Blending Colors With Cuba* <http://www.blendingcolorswithcuba.blogspot.com> (Figure 1) also provided a place for viewers to make comments or ask questions. In fact, a college instructor is presently utilizing the blog as a springboard for discussion in her humanities class. The community art center where the work will also be on display will provide the opportunity for a variety of people to look, listen and learn about the Cuban culture.

Prior to my case study, in order for me to increase my effectiveness in the classroom I chose to participate in an ethnographic inquiry of Cuba and Little Havana. By witnessing first hand the country that so many Cuban immigrants fled and talking with an older generation Cuban-Americans I was able to better appreciate the Cuban's expressed desire to share family stories with a younger generation. In Cuba and Miami I was also able to observe political, social and economical influences that often affect the experiences of immigrants. By taking the time to delve deeper into the background of my participating students, I was able to note similarities as well as changes that have occurred within the Cuban culture.

Similarities in Cuban Style Art

I observed a similar use of color, subject matter and style of artwork among artists in Cuba and Little Havana -Miami area. (Figure 12 and 13) The Cuban-American students in my study also appeared to gravitate towards the bright colors and flat shapes (see Figure 11).

Figure 13. Artwork I Observed in Cuba



Note. Much of the artwork I observed in Cuba depicted images of birds, roosters, nude women, painted with bright colors.

Figure 14. Artwork I Observed in Little Havana, Florida



Note. In many of the Cuban restaurants in Little Havana, I also noticed similar roosters, birds and nude women painted with bright colors.

Differences in Location

While in Cuba, I had the opportunity to visit a school. The teacher informed us that the students were painting pictures of their feelings pertaining to the embargo that the US has placed on Cuba. What the students were actually doing was copying pictures that were provided for them. It was apparent that the children were being told what to paint. Note the picture of Uncle Sam, who is holding the chains of a Cuban as if he is a prisoner. (Figure 4) The art, created by

the Cuban students, was most likely created as a means to communicate a political message directed towards myself and the other US delegates who were invited to observe.

Figure 15. Children Creating Art in Cuba



Note. Children creating art in Cuba depicting stories told to them about the U.S. and the embargo placed on Cuba.

In Miami, the Cuban-American students created art inspired by information they discovered by interviewing family members. The stories they painted included family experiences and lifestyle. Many of the ideas and images communicated elements of their cultural heritage.

Figure 16. Cuban Students in the U.S. Creating Art

Note. Cuban students in the U.S. creating art that depicts stories told to them about Cuba.

Whether in Cuba or Miami, a child's perception of his or her culture can be influenced by the stories he or she hears as well as family dynamics and political beliefs. The two Cuban-American girls who participated in this study live in households that reinforce traditional Cuban customs through food choice and language. One child lives in the heavily Cuban populated area of Miami and the other child lives as a minority in a location consisting of 98% white. Interestingly, each child had extensive prior knowledge of their cultural heritage, which leads me to believe that family dynamics play a role in the level of cultural knowledge that each child possesses.

Although, I was only in the classroom for three days, the information gathered was instrumental in my understanding of the Cuban culture. If I was a full-time teacher at the students' school, the information gathered through this project would have greatly assisted in my planning of future art activities. It is in my opinion that teachers who practice culturally responsive teaching strategies better understand their students therefore increasing their effectiveness in the classroom

Significance, Implications, and Recommendations

These findings are not limited to the Cuban-American student but can also be applied to additional cultures. A group of eight culturally diverse students also participated in the art class. These students' art work offered elements of their cultures that promoted further discussion as well as provided opportunity to compare and contrast cultures. Below is a picture of artwork created by a child who is an immigrant from Columbia (Figure 17).

Figure 17. Old and Boney Cows on my Grandfather's Farm in Columbia



The project presented in this paper does not need to be limited to the art room. Exploring each other's cultures is an advantageous activity that can be integrated into social studies, history, geography, Spanish or even a music curriculum as students share cultural music or music that is a mixture of the student's cultural heritage and present day culture. Creating a Google Earth map that "flies" to different countries would be an interesting project that would connect all of the students' countries to each other as well as provide a lesson on mapping and geography. The activities included in this capstone project are suitable for the elementary level, but can also be adapted for high school students. Not only will teachers benefit from this study; school counselors, therapists, and social workers can use aspects of this project in order to help them understand immigrant students or students from diverse cultures under their supervision or care. I would therefore recommend that teachers and professionals in related fields take the opportunity to get to know their diverse students. A child's unique perspective reflected in his or her art can be a springboard for understanding the child's culture or origin. Through student dialog, group discussions and interviews I gained a clearer understanding of whom the children are and where they came from.

An added benefit to this project was the intergenerational experience that involved the bonding between the student and his or her family members as they shared the story telling experience. The grandparents and parents expressed surprise at the level of interest their grandchild or child had in the stories they told. The grandparents and parents had assumed that the younger generation would not be interested in hearing the family stories. The students said that they really liked hearing the stories told to them by relatives. There are many stories yet to be told. This project highlighted stories that would have otherwise remained in the memories of a

previous generations. The art project demonstrated not only how narrative art is an authentic avenue for exploring culture but also the project served as a gateway for connecting generations.

As a followup activity I would recommend that art teachers introduce an activity that involves the creation of images that reflect the student's present day culture. These images could then be shared with family and friends further opening the intergenerational gate through which dialog can freely flow.

Conclusion

The heart and soul of this Capstone project was centered around the children and their family stories. Shortly into the study it became apparent that I needed to be the student and to let the students under my charge become the teachers. Often times we underestimate the value of what can be learned from a child. Every student has unique experiences that shape who they are today and who they will become in the future. When we seek to learn from our students we better understand who they are and the world where they live. When a child grasps that his or her teacher is genuinely interested in learning about his or her world, a connection forms. I felt this connection, as I listened to and asked questions about the student's paintings and home life. The sharing of family stories is an intimate experience. I came into their world as a stranger. I was humbled and honored by the fact that these students, within hours, readily shared their lives with me. Although I was only with the students for three days, many gave me hugs when I left and said they could not wait for my return. It felt like we had a special bond.

I encourage educators to approach cultural exploration with an open mind and a willingness to learn from their students in hopes that one does not make the same type of *cultural*

faux pas that the writers made in *I Love Lucy*. Out of respect for all cultures teachers owe it to their students to maintain the classroom as a place of *culturally sensitive and informed education*.

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Appendix A**What are the Characteristics of Culturally Responsive Teachers?**

According to an article written by Villegas and Lucas (2002) encourage teacher educators to critically examine their programs and systematically interweave six salient characteristics throughout the coursework, learning experiences, and fieldwork of prospective teachers to better prepare culturally responsive teachers to work successfully in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. Below is a brief description of the six characteristics.

- *Social Consciousness* means understanding that one's way of thinking, behaving, and being is influenced by race, ethnicity, social class, and language. Therefore, prospective teachers must critically examine their own sociocultural identities and the inequalities between schools and society that support institutionalized discrimination to maintain a privileged society based on social class and skin color. Teacher candidates must inspect and confront any negative attitudes they might have toward cultural groups.
- *An affirming attitude toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds* significantly impacts their learning, belief in self, and overall academic performance. By respecting cultural differences and adding education related to the culture of the students, programs become inclusive.
- *Commitment and skills to act as agents of change* enable the prospective teacher to confront barriers/obstacles to change, and develop skills for collaboration and dealing with

chaos. As agents of change, teachers assist schools in becoming more equitable over time.

- *Constructivist views of learning contend* that all students are capable of learning, and teachers must provide scaffolds between what students already know through their experiences and what they need to learn. Constructivist teaching promotes critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and the recognition of multiple perspectives.
- *Learning about students* past experiences, home and community culture, and world both in and outside of school helps build relationships and increase the prospective teachers' use of these experiences in the context of teaching and learning.
- *Culturally responsive teaching strategies* support the constructivist view of knowledge, teaching, and learning. As teachers assist students to construct knowledge, build on their personal and cultural strengths, and examine the curriculum from multiple perspectives, an inclusive classroom environment is created.

Appendix B

Guidelines for a culturally responsive curriculum (Schmitz 1999).

1. Define Learning Goals

What do students in your field need to know about:

- The history of diverse groups: their writings, theories, and patterns of participation.
- The social dynamics of identity formation and change.
- Structures of power and privilege in society, prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping.
- Patterns of communication and interaction within and among different cultural groups.
- Theories of personal, institutional, and societal change.

2. Question Traditional Concepts

Have traditional ways of organizing content in this course obscured, distorted, or excluded certain ideas or groups?

What new research is available that addresses past distortions and exclusions?

How will the course change if I include this new research?

How might a change in this syllabus affect its relationship to the rest of the curriculum?

3. Understand Student Diversity

What kinds of diverse perspectives and experiences will students bring to the class?

How can I assess students' prior knowledge of race, class, gender, etc.?

How can I incorporate diverse voices without relying on students to speak for different groups?

How will my own characteristics and background affect the learning environment?

Will some students see me as a role model more readily than others?

How can I teach to all students?

4. Select Materials and Activities

If the course topics remain the same, what new research, examples, and writings can illustrate these topics?

Is there a new thematic approach to this material that will help to put cultural diversity in the foreground?

How do I integrate new material so that it is not simply an "add-on"?

What teaching strategies will facilitate student learning of this new material?

5. Evaluate Effectiveness

What are my strengths and limitations relative to the new content and teaching techniques?

How will I assess student learning?

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Author Biography

Although Bethel Dobberstein spent her childhood living in a small Wisconsin town, much of her daily inspiration derives from her teen years living on the vibrant island of Antigua. Ms. Dobberstein's life, art and research reflect the bright and bold colors prevalent in the Antigua's Caribbean culture. After attending boarding school, Ms. Dobberstein returned to the midwest where she completed her bachelors degree in Art Education with a minor in Spanish at the University of Wisconsin -Oshkosh. While living in Wisconsin, Kansas and Florida, Ms. Dobberstein taught and continues to teach art out of her home, at a community art center called ArtHaus and at the Museum of Arts and Science -Daytona Beach. Grants enable Ms. Dobberstein to teach art to low-income children and students with exceptional needs, a program referred to as: "Art as a Healing Tool." Ms. Dobberstein is an active member of a public art program that displays the artwork of students in the windows of vacant buildings in downtown Daytona Beach. In 2011, Ms. Dobberstein traveled with NAEA (National Art Education Association) to Cuba, as a US delegate, to research art education. Her research in Cuba inspired Ms. Dobberstein to continue researching the art work created by Cuban-American students living in Florida. Ms. Dobberstein received her Master's degree from the University of Florida in 2012. Currently, Ms. Dobberstein resides in Port Orange, Florida with her husband and four children.