

Expanding Multicultural Discourse: Art Museums and Cultural Diversity

by

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Abstract

In an American society that is becoming increasingly more diverse, multicultural education provides an array of models for educational institutions such as museums to meet the diverse needs of their constituencies. Multiculturalism is an undeniable reality for today's art museums with collections and audiences from diverse cultures. To ensure long-term sustainability and relevance, art museums must actively engage with diverse communities, respond to visitor needs, and rethink accepted education and interpretation practices. Acknowledging the important role multiculturalism plays in the United States, this investigation explores how multicultural education theory can inform the cultural diversity policies and practices of general art museums.

Chapter One: Introduction

The contradictory, ambivalent position which museums are in makes them key cultural loci of our times. Through their displays and their day-to-day operations they inevitably raise questions about knowledge and power, about identity and difference, and about permanence and transience. (Macdonald, 1996, p. 2)

Museums are centers for learning and civic engagement as well as stewards of our artistic, historic, scientific, and cultural heritages. Organized as public trusts, museums in the United States are grounded in a tradition of service and hold their collections as a benefit to the public good. Education is a fundamental component of the services museums provide.

“Museums have a vital place in a broad educational system that includes formal institutions such as universities, schools, and professional training institutes and informal agents of socialization such as the family, workplace, and community” (American Association of Museums [AAM], 1992, p. 9). The educational functions of art museums make objects relevant by forging connections between art objects, museum exhibits, and the lives of viewers. Because they collect items of cultural interest, museums are well positioned to disseminate and discuss culture (Hein, 2000, 42). In the multicultural environment of the United States, this means disseminating and discussing a diverse range of cultures and peoples. As such, museum education and practice is inherently multicultural. To be relevant to a diverse public, American art museums *must* utilize multicultural education practices.

Problem Statement

Museums perform their most fruitful public service by providing an educational experience in the broadest sense: by fostering the ability to live productively in a pluralistic society and to contribute to the resolution of the challenges we face as global citizens. (AAM, 1992, p. 6)

The general public of the United States is becoming increasingly more diverse. As a result, it is increasingly important for art museums to address practices that do not meet the varied needs of the public. “At issue is the social and educational responsibility of public institutions in the face of cultural diversity, as opposed to the moral assumption of the museum as *repository*, both of ‘Art’ and of cultural values” (Winter, 1992, p. 53). To ensure long-term sustainability and relevance, art museums must actively engage with communities, respond to visitor needs, and rethink accepted interpretation practices.

That today’s museums must spend at least as much time addressing the needs of their audiences as they do addressing the needs of their collections represents a significant change in museum policy and practice.

The biggest challenge facing museums at the present time is the reconceptualisation of the museum/audience relationship... As museums are increasingly expected to provide socially inclusive environments for life-long learning this need for closeness to audiences is rapidly becoming more pressing. (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p. 1)

The changing museum/audience relationship is indicative of the reality of a multicultural¹ American society and parallels changes being made by other public institutions. In schools, for example, multicultural education has long been a topic of debate and discussion (Banks & McGee Banks, 2004b; Nieto, 2004a). Despite this, discrimination and inequalities persist in American educational institutions, demonstrating a continued need to address cultural diversity in civic and learning centers like art museums. As public entities, it is important that art museums address cultural diversity not only to meet the needs of their particular constituencies, but also to address issues of inequality and discrimination that persist in American society.

¹ For the purpose of this investigation culture is defined as “the values; traditions; social and political relationships; and worldview created, shared, and transformed by a group of people bound together by a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and/or religion” (Nieto, 2004a, p. 436). Therefore, multicultural refers not just to an individual’s ethnic or racial background, but also to the wide range of social norms, values, practices, and people who influence an individual’s life.

However “there are still great strides to be taken before all museums reflect accurately the true diversity of society, and provide services appropriate to the different cultural groups and of relevance to contemporary society” (Simpson, 2001, p. 265). Although many museum scholars and professionals discuss diversity, the success of multicultural practices in art museums vary. Furthermore, these practices often do not reflect theories promoted by multicultural education scholars.

The educational role of the museum is long-standing and well-established as a concept, but its focus, character and aims are the subjects of much professional debate. Part of the reason for this uncertainty about what museum and gallery education might be, and what form museum pedagogy should take, is a lack of knowledge within the museum of the profound changes that have occurred over the past century in educational processes and structures outside museums. (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p. 1)

Hooper-Greenhill (2000) reports that museums are commonly critiqued for not reflecting changes in educational theory and practice seen in the general education field.² Although American art museums appear to recognize that they must embrace diversity and address multiculturalism in their institutions to remain socially relevant, there is still great need for a better understanding of multicultural models that work in museums.³ This research project demonstrates how multicultural education theory can inform general art museums’⁴ efforts to become more inclusive institutions.

² “Given that more than a hundred years of educational research documents the important role of ‘teachers’ in facilitating learning, it is amazing how little research exists on the role that museum staff—volunteers, guides, explainers, demonstrators, and performers—play in facilitating learning from museums” (Falk & Dierking, 2000, p. 106-107).

³ This investigation’s assumption that contemporary American art museums are addressing multiculturalism in their organizational cultures, policies, and practices is strongly supported by current museum literature (American Association of Art Museum Directors, 1992; Barringer & Flynn, 1998; Dubin, 1999; Karp & Lavine, 1991; Phillips & Steiner, 1999; Simpson, 2001; Wallach, 1998). Although not all institutions are capable of addressing multiculturalism directly or to the extent necessary to make substantive change, the amount of writing on the subjects of multiculturalism and cultural diversity in current museum literature demonstrates that practitioners and researchers identify these subjects as critical. Therefore, the purpose of this investigation is not to debate *if* museums are addressing multiculturalism, but to describe *how* they are addressing it.

⁴ General art museums are defined as those art institutions with broad, general missions, collections from around the world, and objects in a range of art media. James Clifford (1992) identifies four key characteristics of “general” art museums: “(1) the search for the ‘best’ art or most ‘authentic’ cultural forms; (2) the interest in exemplary or

Conceptual Framework

As the United States becomes more diverse, it is increasingly important that American citizens are open to and accepting of multiple cultural perspectives. The education reform process called “multicultural education” grew from the need for more equitable access to education and the reduction of discrimination and prejudice in the American educational system. Although idealistic, scholars believe that multicultural education has the potential to make individual citizens, as well as American society as a whole, not only more accepting of “other” cultures but also more successful in the global community (Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001; Banks & Banks, 2004b; Desai, 2000; Dilger, 1994; Nieto, 2004a). “Multiculturalism” as a movement is not only applicable to formal educational systems, but also to informal educational institutions such as art museums.

Many theoretical perspectives influenced the development of multicultural education theory. Two of the more prominent perspectives, which also serve as the theoretical frames for this investigation, are postcolonialism and critical pedagogy. Postcolonialism is used to describe a global shift in the cultural, political, and economic conditions that arise from the experiences of European colonialism in both former colonized and colonizing countries. Its purpose is “not just to describe specific developments or events related to colonialism and its aftermath, but also to signify an *epistemological* shift in the way that these events are described and interpreted” (Tikly, 1999, p. 605). Postcolonialism, like multicultural education, aims to combat oppression, breakdown the majority’s cultural hegemony, and attain equity for all members of society by reforming social systems to represent broader perspectives and raise questions about how knowledge is produced and used by both subordinated people and people in power.

representative objects; (3) the sense of owning a collection that is a treasure for the city, for the national patrimony and for humanity; and (4) the tendency to separate (fine) art from (ethnographic) culture” (p. 123).

Critical pedagogy “is an approach through which students and teachers are encouraged to view what they learn in a critical light, or, in the words of Freire (1970), by learning to read both ‘the word and the world’” (Nieto, 2004b, p. 409). Critical pedagogy, which first appeared in Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), calls for teaching practices that raise learners’ consciousness about oppressive social conditions. The use of critical pedagogy is therefore essential to the successful application of multicultural education theory in both classroom and museum settings. Therefore, critical pedagogy, like postcolonialism, must inform this investigation into the multicultural policies and practices of general art museums.

Research Questions

Main Research Question

How can multicultural education theory inform cultural diversity practices in general art museums?

Sub-Research Questions

- Are art museum practitioners and researchers familiar with current literature and debate in the field of multicultural education?
- Are art museum practitioners and researchers familiar with how the multicultural composition of American society influences art museum policies and practices?
- Are art museum practitioners and researchers familiar with the social, political, and cultural role(s) art museums play in multicultural societies?
- What role does multicultural education theory play in the primary functions (e.g. conservation, exhibition, interpretation, education) of general art museums?
- What models of multicultural education are recommended and used by education researchers and classroom teachers?
- Can these models be used to critique art museum policies and practices related to cultural diversity and inclusion?
- Are there parallels between critiques of an art museum’s ability to address cultural diversity in its institutional policies and practices, and critiques of the American school system’s ability to serve diverse student populations?

- If multiculturalism is inadequately addressed by museum policies and practices, what are some alternative strategies art museums can employ to address cultural diversity and inclusion?

Research Assumptions

A basic assumption this research project makes is that every person is a product of multiple cultural influences. Any individual growing up in the United States, whether living in a rural community or a large city, living on the West Coast or on the East Coast, has grown up among multiple communities and diverse groups of people.

It is not possible for individuals to grow up in a complex modern society without acquiring differing subsets of culture—differing software packages that are tools that can be used in differing kinds of human activity, tools that in part enable and frame the activities in which they are used. (Erickson, 2004, p. 32)

The result of this diversity is often positive. However, marginalized groups also commonly experience discrimination and oppression. This research project assumes that such acts of discrimination and oppression are wrong and that it is the responsibility of public institutions to address these issues both within their institutional policies and practices, as well as in society at large.

Significance of this Study

The questions explored in this investigation will help art museum practitioners consider the relative success they have had in increasing cultural diversity in their institutions and in addressing the issues of power and inequality inherent in American society. Furthermore, the art museum field as a whole will benefit from a better understanding of how multicultural education theory can inform museum policy and practice. Because few studies directly apply multicultural

education models used in classroom-based education to museums, this investigation is a critical step toward better-informed multicultural museum practices.⁵

Delimitations

Rather than looking at how all museums (e.g. historical, scientific, or anthropological) address multicultural issues, this investigation focuses solely on general art museums. Most art museums take a chronological or compartmentalized art historical approach to the interpretation of their collections.⁶ These approaches are largely based on the assumption that “Art” has a universal nature that transcends cultures and the specific contexts in which art objects were created. General art museums typically house collections from around the world. Objects are generally displayed in adjacent galleries, at times confirming cross-cultural connections and at other times compartmentalizing art into narrow, isolated categories. The potential for dialogue across cultures and between artistic traditions in general art museums is profound. This potential was a key rationale for limiting this study to general art museums.

While much of the evidence for this investigation comes from research conducted by scholars in the fields of multicultural education and museum studies, primary data was collected from a sample site, the Seattle Art Museum (SAM). SAM is a general art museum that is attempting to address cultural diversity within its institution and in its audience. Because the purpose of this investigation is not to debate whether art museums are currently addressing multiculturalism but rather to describe *how* they are addressing it, it was important to identify a sample site that is actively participating in discussions about diversity.

⁵ Please note that while many publications about cultural diversity in museums do exist, none explicitly apply models of multicultural education used to critique classroom instruction to museums.

⁶ A chronological approach simply means looking at art objects in the order in which they were created. A compartmentalized art historical approach speaks to those artistic traditions that are pulled out of the chronological approach and addressed as isolated phenomena (Preziosi & Farago, 2004).

Limitations

By limiting the scope of this investigation to general art museums it may be difficult to apply research findings to non-art museums or art museums that focus on a particular culture or artistic tradition. Furthermore, this investigation would benefit from a series of in-depth case studies at general art museums to confirm the value of multicultural education theory in those settings. Although the primary data collected at SAM is essential to validating this investigation, it should not be viewed as a comprehensive overview of the institution's policies and practices regarding multiculturalism and cultural diversity.

Chapter Two: Research Methodology, Design and Data Collection

Research Methodology

It is imperative that art museums address cultural diversity not only to meet the needs of their diverse constituencies, but also to address issues of inequality and discrimination that persist in American society. This investigation uses multicultural education theory as a framework for exploring the ways general art museums address multiculturalism in their institutions. Principal evidence for the project was collected through literature-based research in the fields of multicultural education and museum studies. Information gathered in the literature review process was supplemented with primary data collected at the Seattle Art Museum. In this chapter I discuss the methodology, research design, and data collection techniques used for this investigation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore how multicultural education theory can inform the cultural diversity policies and practices of general art museums. A secondary purpose is to advocate for the change of art museum policies and practices that may be perpetuating social inequalities associated with an increasingly diverse American public.

Methodological Paradigm

The multicultural education movement in the United States was created within the methodological paradigm of critical inquiry. Critical social scientists define their work as “a critical process of inquiry that goes beyond surface illusions to uncover the real structures in the material world in order to help people change conditions and build a better world for

themselves” (Neuman, 2003, p. 81).⁷ The influence of critical inquiry on multicultural education is reflected in one of the movement’s core purposes: reform. Multicultural education aims to reform instruction methods, negative stereotypes, and the dominant pedagogy that fails to provide individuals and groups equal access to social, political, and educational arenas. By employing a critical approach to multicultural education, this investigation not only discusses historical and current art museum practices, but also advocates for the change of museum practices that may be perpetuating social inequalities.

Role of the Researcher

In my experience as both a museum scholar and as a museum enthusiast, I have observed museum practices that I feel perpetuate inequalities in American society. Although I have also witnessed many successful attempts at reaching broader audiences, I feel there is still much more museums can do to become inclusive institutions. Furthermore, I believe that social research should help empower individuals to transcend oppression currently institutionalized in the United States. Therefore the purpose of this investigation is not only to explore how general art museums address multiculturalism, but also to advocate for the change of policies and practices that perpetuate social inequities.

It should also be noted that a key step to becoming a multicultural educator is understanding how your cultural background affects your approaches to teaching and to all other activities in life. It is therefore essential that I, as a researcher in the field of multicultural education, acknowledge my own cultural background. I was born in the late 1970s to two college educated Euro-American parents who relocated from the East Coast of the United States to

⁷ Critical inquiry is further defined in *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* as research that is concerned with empowering humans to transcend constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender (Fay, 1987, as cited in Creswell, 2003, p. 10).

Portland, Oregon. My exposure to diversity was based more on class and gender than on ethnicity and race. Despite this, I was raised in an atmosphere that encouraged interaction with other cultures and I was expected to respect and appreciate all people. These values were confirmed and expanded through my exposure to a wide range of cultures and perspectives in my travels around the United States and abroad to Africa, Europe, and Central America. Although I consider myself an open-minded individual, I know that my membership in the dominant American culture—the Euro-American majority—means that I have not necessarily been exposed to the kinds of social discrimination and inequities experienced by many members of more marginalized cultures in the United States. However, it should be noted that as a woman I have witnessed and experienced the realities of a patriarchal American society that treats men and women differently and unequally. Recognizing that my own cultural background might limit my ability to understand and express the experiences of members of more marginalized groups, I have consciously used works by scholars from a wide range of cultural backgrounds in this investigation. Although membership in a minority group does not necessarily make one an expert in multicultural education, any investigation advocating for the increased visibility of marginalized perspectives must present a variety of voices.

Research Design

Research Approach

The use of a multicultural construct for this investigation necessitated an exploratory research design that would result in presenting “a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting, or relationship” (Neuman, 2003, p. 30). The primary research methods employed were literature review, interview, observation, and document analysis. Thorough literature reviews in the areas of multicultural education and museum studies provided a theoretical

framework for this study and guided data analysis. While information was plentiful in the areas of multicultural education and museum practice, few studies use multicultural education models to address art museum policies and practices. Most studies on multiculturalism in museums focus either on supplemental educational programs such as classes, tours, and lectures or on increasing the diversity of museum staff and audience to ensure long-term organizational sustainability. Few studies evaluate the depth to which multiculturalism has been integrated into organizational policies and practices.

Strategy of Inquiry

The primary focus of this master's research project was on current research in the areas of multicultural education and museum studies. For the area of multicultural education, four publications proved most useful: *Multicultural Education*, 5th edition, edited by J. A. Banks and C. A. McGee Banks (2004), *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education*, 2nd edition, edited by J. A. Banks and C. A. McGee Banks (2004), *Turning on Learning: Five Approaches for Multicultural Teaching Plans for Race, Class, Gender, and Disability* by C. A. Grant & C. E. Sleeter (2003), and *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*, 4th edition by S. Nieto (2004). Resources from the museum studies literature review were much more varied. In addition to the pivotal American Association of Museums (AAM) publication *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimensions of Museums*, I found many useful articles in the *Journal of Museum Education*, *Art Education*, and *Studies in Art Education*. Supplemental literature reviews in the areas of postcolonial theory, art education, cultural representation, and interpretative practice were also helpful. The information gathered through these literature reviews guided primary data collection at the Seattle Art Museum in March 2005.

Although not as thorough as a case study, the observations, interviews, and document analysis conducted at SAM served a similar purpose: to strive towards a more holistic understanding of a cultural system in action (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1990, in Tellis, 1997, p. 5). Scholars in the fields of education and social science generally define case studies in three different ways, emphasizing the research *process*, the *unit of study*, or the *end product* [italics added] (Lancy, 1993; Merriam, 1998; Tellis, 1997). A researcher should be able to precisely define the scope of a case, and should have a finite set of individuals or events to observe and/or question. This investigation used an approach similar to but not as thorough as a case study in identifying SAM as the primary sample site for interviews, document collection, and observation.

Overview of Research Design

Several methods were used to gain access to current research in the fields of multicultural education and museum studies. The ERIC education database proved to be the most useful guide to research in the field of multicultural education. University of Oregon faculty also provided suggestions for appropriate literature. I used the Art Abstracts and ARTBibliographies Modern databases to explore museum studies related research. Data collected through the literature reviews guided the approach to primary data collection at SAM. There, I conducted seven interviews with key staff members and volunteers, I collected pertinent documents for analysis, and I observed gallery spaces.

Anticipated Ethical Issues

Although multiculturalism is a reality of American society, there are still many people who do not appreciate or understand diversity. As such, people approach multicultural education from differing perspectives, seeing its emphasis on cultural differences as having both positive

and negative social affects. It was important that research questions used in this study not force either positive or negative values of multicultural education unnecessarily on research participants. Since many people in the United States are uncomfortable talking about issues related to multiculturalism such as race, colonialism, power, authority, sexuality, and class, research participants were given the option to remain anonymous in the final research document.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data collection and on-going analysis for this exploratory study occurred between January and May 2005. Literature reviews in the areas of multicultural education and museum studies started in January 2005 and continued through the duration of the research project. Interview recruitment at the Seattle Art Museum began in February 2005 and I conducted interviews with four employees, one intern, and two volunteers between March 23, 2005 and April 7, 2005. I used the museum's website to identify staff from the education, curatorial, and community relations departments for interviewing. These staff members helped arrange interviews with museum volunteers. I made initial contact with all interviewees through email. Observations and data collection in the museum's gallery spaces occurred between March 23, 2005 and March 25, 2005.

Data Collection Instruments

The data collection instruments I used for this investigation included a reflexive journal for general note-taking and idea formulation; data collection sheets for recording information from the literature review, gallery observations, and events; document analysis sheets; and

interview forms. I created five different types of interview forms, each of which included questions specific to the interviewee's position within the museum.⁸

- Administrative staff (1)
- Community relations intern (1)
- Curatorial staff (1)
- Education staff (2)
- Volunteers (2)

Strategies for Validating Findings

I established the validity of this investigation through the use of a reflexive journal, a well-developed body of evidence from the areas of multicultural education and museum studies, counsel with informal research advisors, and triangulation of data collection methods and sources. The nature of the primary data collected from the Seattle Art Museum also provides considerable information that other researchers can transfer to their own studies.

⁸ The number of interviews conducted in each category is indicated in parentheses.

Chapter Three: Contextual Literature Review

Museums are community cornerstones. They are cultural symbols and contributors to community enterprise, stewards of collections, and providers of educational experiences. They are treasured places where memories are created and shared. But museums can also transform the way people view the world. (AAM, n.d.)

The International Council of Museums defines a museum as “a non-profitmaking, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment” (AAM, n.d.). To discuss how multicultural education theory can inform museum practice and service to the public, we must first understand the social and historical contexts in which American art museums developed. To that end, this literature review chapter describes the general state of multiculturalism in American society, the history of multicultural education in the United States, and the history of art museums.

Multiculturalism in the United States

The multicultural nature of American society continues to diversify. According to the 2000 census, 19.3% of Americans have disabilities and 17.9% of the population over the age of five speaks a language other than English at home. Approximately 1.2 million Americans live with a same-sex partner and 11% of all unmarried partners are same-sex couples (Alternatives to Marriage Project, n.d.). In 2000 the racial composition of United States was 69.1% white, non-Hispanic; 12.5% Hispanic or Latino; 12.3% black or African American; .9% American Indian or Alaska Native; 3.6% Asian; 1% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; 5.5% another race; and 2.4% two or more races (U.S. Census, 2000a). Projections for the racial composition of the

United States in the year 2050 are 50.1% white, non-Hispanic, 24.4% Hispanic, 14.6% black, 8% Asian, and 5.3% all other races, demonstrating that in approximately 50 years white Americans will no longer be the majority (U.S. Census, 2000b). As these statistics demonstrate, diversity in the United States is not only a concern of the present, but it also will be an important social and political issue in years to come.

Many American citizens speak of the United States as a “melting pot” of cultures, a place where “everyone is welcomed.” However, this idea of the “melting pot,” which implies that all individuals, regardless of race, gender, class, or sexual orientation, have equal opportunity to succeed and that all cultures are equally influential in determining the mainstream culture (macroculture⁹), is misleading. American ideology is dominated by assimilationist ideas that envision a society in which culture, ethnicity, and race are not important identities, where cultural differences “melt” away leaving a homogeneous population (C. Martinez, personal communication, October 18, 2004). Although the United States consists of a shared macroculture, there are also numerous subcultures or microcultures the cultural survival of which is dependent upon differentiation from the dominant culture. While members of these subcultures may participate in the dominant culture, they typically do not have equal power in determining the values, ideas, and symbols that constitute this culture. The mainstream culture tends to be determined by those individuals with the most power and persuasion. In the United States, these individuals have been white men heavily influenced by Western European traditions.

American culture is dominated by the values of equality, individualism, material wealth, freedom, democracy, and meritocracy (Banks, 2004a, p. 9-10). Although not all members of

⁹ Macroculture is a set of values, ideas and symbols “shared to some extent by all the diverse cultural and ethnic groups that make up the nation-state” (Banks, 2004b, p.8).

society act upon these values, they have a profound influence on American political and cultural institutions and determine the level to which these institutions are accessible to all members of society. Furthermore, these values are often used to argue that all individuals in the United States, despite circumstance, have equal opportunities to “pull themselves up by their boot straps” and succeed. However, the ability to succeed in the United States is directly related to access to power and privilege. Even with a level playing field, certain members of society are granted privileges that increase their chances for success while simultaneously decreasing the chances of success for others. Therefore, equality in the United States is often an illusion.

Despite its history of assimilation, recent movements in the United States are helping citizens understand the value of cultural difference.

For decades, the policy in the USA had been to try to assimilate all ethnic groups into the dominant Anglo-American culture, in the concept of the ‘melting pot.’ The idea of the melting pot is now giving way to a new concept, as yet undefined, in which shared culture is enriched by the unique qualities of each of the ethnic groups that constitute American society. (Simpson, 2001, p. 74)

The multicultural education movement, as well as other movements for the rights and equitable treatment of members of diverse social groups, grew from the need to change traditional power structures in the United States. The following section briefly reviews the cultural and historical movements that influenced the development of the multicultural education reform movement in the United States.

Brief History of Multicultural Education in the United States

Living in a pluralistic, multicultural society requires citizens to come into contact with cultures and belief systems that they may or may not understand. It is the responsibility of the social and political systems of pluralistic societies to provide citizens with the skills and abilities to properly address diversity.

For the individual, living in a pluralistic society and contributing to the resolution of multifaceted global questions requires a range of distinctive skills and abilities, including:

- an understanding of and a respect for all peoples
- a spirit of inquiry and an openness to new ideas and approaches
- an ability to address issues and problems through the rigorous application of creative and critical thinking skills
- an ability to become involved in one's surroundings on visual, verbal, and auditory levels
- an understanding of history, science, the natural world, artistic expression, and humankind, along with the conviction that this understanding is essential for a fulfilling and responsible life (American Association of Museums, 1992, p. 10-11)

However, practice has not caught up to current theory. Many American citizens have not received an education that reinforces the importance of appreciating, respecting, and actively seeking to understand diverse cultures. In the United States, the multicultural education reform movement addresses this disparity and seeks to develop cultural appreciation and combat social inequality in the basic education of all students. Multicultural education as a process of achieving equity in education for all people, regardless of race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, or exceptionality¹⁰ has its roots in a diverse range of movements that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century.

The multicultural education reform movement is most commonly associated with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

A major goal of the civil rights movement of the 1960s was to eliminate discrimination in public accommodations, housing, employment, and education. The consequences of the civil rights movement had a significant influence on educational institutions as ethnic groups—first African Americans and then other groups—demanded that the schools and other educational institutions reform their curricula so that they would reflect their experiences, histories, cultures, and perspectives. (Banks, 2004a, p. 6)

¹⁰ Exceptionality refers to “students who have learning or behavioral characteristics that differ substantially from those of most other students and that require special attention in instruction. Students who are intellectually gifted and talented as well as those who have disabilities are considered exceptional” (Banks & Banks, 2004b, p. 450).

The Civil Rights Movement called for the creation of separate courses and programs to reflect stories and histories that had previously been invisible in the curriculum. “During this period there was little demand for the infusion of ethnic content into the core or mainstream curriculum; that demand would not emerge until the 1980s and 1990s. Rather, the demand was primarily for separate courses and programs” (Banks, 2004b, p. 12). Banks (2004a) identifies this period of ethnic studies, where content expanded to include African Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, American Indians, and Asian Americans, as the first phase of multicultural education (p. 12-13).

The second and third phases of multicultural education emerged as educators realized that inserting ethnic content into the curricula was not sufficient to bring about school reform. To make real changes the histories and voices of other groups such as women, people with disabilities, senior citizens, and gays and lesbians also had to be made visible in the curricula and school structures (Banks, 2004a, p. 13). The consequence of these groups’ influences on multicultural education is that a broader conceptualization of multicultural education is now well accepted.

Multicultural education emerged from the diverse courses, programs, and practices that educational institutions devised to respond to the demands, needs, and aspirations of the various groups. Consequently... multicultural education is not in actual practice one identifiable course or educational program. Rather, practicing educators use the term *multicultural education* to describe a wide variety of programs and practices related to educational equity, women, ethnic groups, language minorities, low-income groups, and people with disabilities. (Banks, 2004a, p. 7)

The fourth and current phase of multicultural education is developing theory, research, and practice that connect the interrelated variables of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and exceptionality (Banks, 2004a, p. 13).

Despite over fifty years of political and theoretical development, the multicultural education movement in the United States has not achieved the ideal described by its advocates.

This is in large part due to the continued marginalization of multicultural perspectives in mainstream education curricula. In fact, when alternative perspectives are brought into the classroom, they often lack the depth to effectively combat cultural stereotypes. Multicultural education, if taught comprehensively, can help build more inclusive societies, combat racism and ethnocentrism, and empower citizens to actively participate in creating and influencing the dominant culture of the United States.

The lack of a genuine community of diversity is particularly evident in school curriculums that still do not regularly and systematically include important information and deep study about a wide range of diverse ethnic groups... Multicultural education is integral to improving the academic success of students of color and preparing all youths for democratic citizenship in a pluralistic society (Gay, 2003/2004, p. 30).

Although multicultural education reform calls for education that prepares people to effectively function in a pluralistic society, most students in the United States receive a Eurocentric education that does not adequately prepare them for participating in a multicultural environment.¹¹

Although the ideals of multicultural education often go unrealized in American schools, the models created by multicultural education scholars can benefit museum professionals. This paper discusses the application of multicultural education theory to museum practice more thoroughly in chapter five. Before that discussion can occur, we must explore the unique history of art museums in the United States. Understanding the legacies of this history—both positive and negative—will help us comprehend the potential roles multicultural education can play in art museums.

¹¹ Art is an essential component of many multicultural education programs. “Multicultural art education, by acknowledging and respecting aesthetic pluralism, actively criticizes and dismantles the dominant distinctions of high art (including crafts) and popular culture” (Desai, 2000, p. 123). A vast array of research has been done in the area of multicultural art education, much of which has focused on the use of art in classroom settings as a means of talking about diverse cultures. This paper does not specifically address the role of art in school-based multicultural education, but rather focuses on museum-based multicultural art education.

Brief History of Art Museums

Foundations of Art Museums in Europe and the United States

Although less frequented and less popular than science and historical museums, art museums tend to be considered the museum paradigm. (Hein, 2000, 19)

The idea of the art museum as a center of exhibition and scholarship has its roots in eighteenth-century Europe. It descends from the Renaissance *Kunstammer*, literally “art closet,” a “heterogeneous collection of treasures, curios, and gifts of natural and artificial origin kept for their individual value” (Hein, 2000, 19). *Kunstammern* started as private collections celebrating the taste and refinement of those in power and became public collections intended to transform individuals into citizens by giving them a sense of cultural identity and shared patrimony (Hein, 2000, p. 21). The patronage of select powerful individuals rendered art museums as symbols of wealth and privilege.

The museum was constructed as a sacred grove in the eighteenth century. At that time, wealthy private collectors and later, the ‘imperial’ nations of Europe, began possessing and presenting the exotic and valuable objects of their conquests and in turn, demonstrating their accumulated wealth and extent of their international influence to the curious, awed, and gawking public. (Jeffers, 2003, p. 110)

The taste for collection of “curiosities” in Europe was heightened through exploration and colonialism. As western countries expanded their reach and influence in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, museums became storerooms for appropriated treasures and reflected the perspectives and values of dominant cultures, as well as the material evidence of European colonial achievements (Simpson, 2001, p. 1). The objects collected during colonialism played an important role in the construction of the politics of culture and the creation of national identity for European cultures. “As explorers, traders, missionaries and others voyaged across the world they brought back artifacts, many of which were to be drawn together in museums in such a way as to map out the world” (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p. 18). Through the collection and exhibition

of these artifacts, nineteenth century art museums created a hierarchy of “us” over “them” that is still reflected in institutions today. That today’s art museums continue to struggle with the colonial legacies of cultural dominance and elitism makes the application of multicultural education in these institutions complex and essential.

In the United States, museums developed on a course somewhat different from their European counterparts.

Most of the latter [European museums] began as private collections, reflecting the taste and fortunes of their founders, and only subsequently were seized by or bequeathed to the state for the benefit of the public. The major American museums were founded idealistically, often fostered by philanthropic interests and concern for the betterment of humankind. (Hein, 2000, p. 6)

Nonetheless, these philanthropic interests and concerns did not preclude the primary purpose of enforcing dominant values and cultural hierarchies. One of the first museums in the United States was the Peale Museum in Philadelphia, established in 1786. “Peale’s museum was characteristic of a genre that saw its collections as representing the entire world. Its collections grew to over one hundred thousand specimens, collected and exhibited with two purposes in mind—to entertain and to educate” (Skramstad, 1999, p. 110). In the later part of the nineteenth century major cities in the United States began building large art museums to display their economic and cultural wealth. The missions of these large institutions were typically to educate the public by “improving” their aesthetic skills and tastes. The expansion and growth of these museums was largely dependent on the country’s civic and business leaders, those individuals with the most money and power. As a result, museums began caring more about their collections than their audiences (Skramstad, 1999, 0. 112).

The public-spirited philanthropists of the nineteenth century did aspire to broaden their audience, but not for the sake of advancing diversity. Their paternalistic goal was to uplift and enlighten and thereby to homogenize society whose diversity they abhorred. . . . Their ideal of cultural expansion, like their faith in manifest destiny, was not to proliferate

difference but to melt it, to absorb the great mass of humanity into a single, harmonious, uniformly unblemished whole. (Hein, 2000, 44)

Within this context of creating a homogenized society, art museums were viewed as sites for the cultivation of universal aesthetic pleasures that all members of society could and should learn to appreciate. ‘Art for art’s sake,’ “which has no *raison d’être* apart from itself but exists purely for aesthetic gratification” (Hein, 2000, 22), was the primary focus of the museum experience.

Although the perception that American art museums are quiet places for the contemplation of “universally-accepted” masterpieces prevails today, professional organizations such as the American Association of Museums (AAM)¹² are advocating for museum practices that invite more diverse audiences to museums and change public perceptions of museums as destinations only for the elite.

20th Century American Art Museums: Evolving Definitions of “Education”

The showing of objects has been the museum’s historic mission. Exhibition traditionally put objects ‘on view,’ inviting visitors to inspect and contemplate them, guided by the epistemically privileged museum authority. But what is observed in the museum today is no longer unequivocally an object; objects have been reconstituted as sites of experience, and museums increasingly hold themselves accountable for delivering experiences. (Hein, 2000, p. 5)

The prominent role of education in museum theory and practice is not new. John Cotton Dana, one of the first American museum educators, spoke in the early twentieth century of the museum’s responsibility to educate the general public.

A good museum attracts, entertains, arouses curiosity, leads to questioning and thus promotes learning. It is an educational institution that is set up and kept in motion—that it may help the members of the community to become happier, wiser, and more effective

¹² The American Association of Museums, founded in 1906, is dedicated to promoting excellence within the museum field through advocacy, professional education, information exchange, accreditation, and guidance on current professional standards of performance. AAM currently represents 11,500 individual museum professionals and volunteers, 3,100 institutions, and 1,700 corporate members. The 3,100 institutional members include art, history, science, military and maritime, and youth museums, as well as aquariums, zoos, botanical gardens, arboretums, historic sites, and science and technology centers (AAM, n.d.).

human beings. Much can be done toward a realization of these objectives—with simple things—objects of nature and daily life—as well as with objects of great beauty.... The Museum can help people only if they use it; they will use it only if they know about it and only if attention is given to the interpretation of its possessions in terms they, the people, will understand (Dana, as cited in Alexander, 1979, p. 13)

Dana's idea of a museum that interprets its possessions in terms the general public can comprehend countered the perspectives voiced by many museum practitioners in the early twentieth century. During the early years of art museum development, many institutions believed that their educational purpose was to bring culture and taste to the masses. This belief reserved the authority of deciding what objects were important and should therefore be displayed solely for museum professionals. Objects were believed to speak for themselves and additional interpretive materials were considered unnecessary and even inappropriate. Little attention was given to interests of the general public that did not correspond with the aesthetic values of museum practitioners and members of the elite society who were their benefactors. Although some practitioners retain these views today, most museum theorists reject the idea that the collection and preservation of "masterpieces" is the only objective of today's art museums (Hein, 2000).

With new ideas about the educational purpose of museums, the American Association of Museums (AAM) published two pivotal reports in the late twentieth century. The 1984 report *Museums for a New Century* called for "research into the nature of museum learning, closer relations between museums and schools, study of the instructional potential of exhibitions, a commitment to scholarly research, an emphasis on adult education, and the integration of education into all museum activities" (Zeller, 1989, p. 40). The Task Force on Museum Education, created in 1989 as an outgrowth of the Commission on Museums for a New Century, then produced the report, *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums* (1992). *Excellence and Equity* was adopted as a policy statement by the AAM Board

of Directors in May 1991 (AAM, 1992, p. 3). The major contribution *Excellence and Equity* made to the museum field was broadening the scope of museum education to encompass the functions of the entire museum, not just the work of an isolated education department. The report is based on three key ideas:

- The commitment to education as central to museum's public service must be clearly expressed in every museum's mission and pivotal to every museum's activities.
- Museums must become more inclusive places that welcome diverse audiences, but first they should reflect our society's pluralism in every aspect of their operations and programs.
- Dynamic, forceful leadership from individuals, institutions, and organizations within and outside in the museum community is the key to fulfilling museums' potential for public service in the coming century. (AAM, 1992, p. 3-4)

The call to make education central to the mission and functions of all museums in the United States has had mixed success. As Mayer (1998) states, the crux of the debate is no longer "whether a museum has an educational purpose, but what the director, curator, and museum educator view as education" (p. 16). While most museums now have education departments, the extent to which education is fully integrated into all museum activities varies greatly among museums nationwide. At many sites, education is still perceived only as programming created specifically for school-age visitors.

It is important to caution, however, that while the case for education has been made and strengthened, the term too often continues to connote specific programs for school children rather than an institution-wide commitment to sharing knowledge with the public. (AAM, 1992, p. 11).

Much work needs to be done to further the vision of a museum whose educational practices permeate all of its institutional functions, as outlined in *Excellence and Equity*. Two essential elements of integrating education into all levels of museum operations are learning to create programs that are relevant to a diverse public and admitting that past educational efforts may not be adequately meeting the needs of diverse communities (Simpson, 2001, p. 1).

Diversifying Audiences: American Art Museums in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century

As a number of cultural critics have argued, what major museums exhibit as the history, values, beliefs, and identities of the community are in fact representations of certain powerful groups in society. All major art museums collect objects that represent the ‘best’ art, which is authentic, unique, and is claimed as representative of culture. (Desai, 2000, p. 118-119)

The civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s brought attention to the institutional inequalities persistent in the perceptions and practices of art museums. Like the public school system, art museums were criticized for their Eurocentric approaches and for failing to meet the needs of marginalized communities.

Critics expressed dissatisfaction with the activities of mainstream museums and art galleries, and the ways in which black and other minority cultures were represented and interpreted in exhibitions. These institutions were perceived by many to be unsatisfactory: serving a cultural elite, staffed primarily by whites, reflecting white values, and excluding from the interpretive process the very peoples whose cultures were represented in the collections” (Simpson, 2001, p. 9).

In January 1969, a group of artists, writers, filmmakers, and critics established the Art Workers’ Coalition in New York City. The Coalition urged the Museum of Modern Art to be more culturally relevant to blacks and Puerto Ricans, demanding that the museum extend activities into ghetto communities, form artist committees to create exhibitions, offer free admission at all times, and open a gallery focused on the work of black artists (Simpson, 2001, p. 9-10). Efforts to make visible the art and voices of marginalized groups like those made by the Art Workers’ Coalition have continued to grow as the public role of museums has expanded to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse American public. “By the late 20th century, most museums have accepted the democratic principle that all people—of all classes, ages, races, and ethnic origins—have the right to share the cultural patrimony available to them” (Swank, 1992, p. 93-94).

Today, the museum field is mindful of the need to expand the audience base that has traditionally supported the visual arts and to become relevant to a greater range of individuals.

The situation is no longer one of the public's 'right' to come when museums choose to invite. Museums now have an obligation, under the social contract governing their existence and tax-free status, to collect, preserve, display, and interpret for the benefit of the public" (Swank, 1992, p. 94).

Current efforts in audience development are the result of both an increasingly diverse American society and the need for long-term institutional sustainability. Unlike nineteenth century museums, many of today's art museums highlight and celebrate cultural differences, create programs that target specific groups outside the traditional museum audience, and address the ways that power is acquired and presented in museums. The report *Museums for a New Century*, for example, not only addresses the importance of the educational role of museums, but also advocates "for rededication of the museum that unambiguously embraces diversity and public service. *Public* is here understood pluralistically and democratically, and *service* refers to the museum's educational mission" (Hein, 2000, 106). Within this frame of reference, multicultural museum practice recognizes "the need to make the cultural resources of this nation accessible to people of all cultures, races, ages, and economic backgrounds" (Steuert, Jenness, & Jones-Ruzzi, 1993, p. 10). However, the reality of museum practice is often far from the ideal that calls for equal access to art and culture institutions for all members of society regardless of background. "There are museums and museum projects that have demonstrated that museums can be of relevance to a wider community, though not many museums, perhaps, have overtly attempted to counter social exclusion" (Fleming, 2002, p. 221).

Access to art, like access to quality education, is not equitably distributed in the United States. Physical access to art institutions is related to location (there is less access in rural areas) and affordability (prices of museums nationwide continue to rise). Academic or intellectual access to art is limited by misconceptions that one must study art history or studio art to

understand works displayed in museums. Creative access to art is tainted by ideas of what is “good” or “fine” art and who is able to create masterworks and claim the title of “artist.”

Exclusion happens broadly because personal situations (including financial position, class, race, colour, religion, disability, education, skills, age, sexual orientation, location, lifestyle, health or family circumstances) are of a more diverse nature than, say, fifty years ago, but individuals’ and institutions’ attitudes to, and ways of addressing this diversity have not adapted or grown. (MacKeith & Osborne, 2003, p. 5)

To have physical, academic, and creative access to art is a privilege. Privilege is walking into a museum and seeing works of art that relate to your cultural background displayed in an honorable manner. Furthermore, privilege is knowing that when art from your culture is displayed, the manner in which it is displayed was determined by someone from your culture.

Contrary to at least some of the principles according to which most museums were created, museums have not been democratic, inclusive organizations, but agents of social exclusion.... [N]o one could argue convincingly that museums in the last quarter of the twentieth century were anything other than dominated by middle-class people from comfortable backgrounds. And herein lies one clue as to why museums have been *exclusive* rather than *inclusive* organizations. (Fleming, 2002, p. 213-214)

Addressing equitable access to art in museums is controversial. Pluralistic contemporary societies create complex issues in relation to art museums: “display and interpretation; the classification and values attached to objects; cultural bias in representing other cultures; the lack of representation of cultural diversity in local history collections; demands for self-representation and self-expression” (Simpson, 2001, p. 2). These issues of interpretation, value, and cultural bias in the representation of other cultures are critical in general art museums with diverse collections and programs.

Traditionally, museums have not been positioned to contribute to social inclusion for four reasons: who has run them; what they contain; the way they have been run; and what they have been perceived to be for – to put this last reason another way, for whom they have been run. (Fleming, 2002, p. 213)

By reflecting upon the roles of colonialism, elitism, and cultural domination in the history of American art museums, practitioners and scholars can more effectively address the needs of

diverse communities. The following chapter provides further context for this discussion by outlining models of multicultural education currently used in the education field. An in-depth understanding of these models is needed to fully comprehend how multicultural education theory can inform art museum policies and practices.

Chapter Four: The Dimensions of Multicultural Education

Many misconceptions about multicultural education in the United States persist. Often construed as a program only for people of color,¹³ multicultural education is usually associated with the integration of content about ethnic groups, women, and other cultural groups into school curricula. While content integration is an important component of multicultural education and will be discussed extensively in this chapter, multicultural education should not stop with the introduction of “multicultural” content (Banks, 2004b, Neito 2004a).¹⁴

The teacher may have put a picture of Frederick Douglass on the wall, read a book about his life, presented information on West Africa in a positive light, and taught basic vocabulary in Yoruba or Swahili. Yet hanging a picture of Douglass, the African American abolitionist, on the wall next to a picture of George Washington, the White slave holder, or introducing students to an African language does not make the classroom fully multicultural if invisible aspects of the communicative cultural practices of African American students are still being treated in invidious ways. (Erickson, 2004, p. 53)

Addressing multiculturalism by simply adding cultural-based content to the curriculum does not speak to issues of power and discrimination that may be preventing some students from achieving success.

Over the years, many approaches to multicultural education have been implemented, resulting in a range of definitions that are at times in conflict. Despite the lack of consensus on a single approach to multicultural education, there is a high level of consensus on its general goals.

¹³ People of color is defined as “a term of solidarity referring to Blacks, Native Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Pacific Islanders. This term is preferred to other terms often heard such as MINORITY and NON-WHITE. While people of color are a minority in the United States, they are the vast majority—nine-tenths—of the world’s population; white people are a distinct minority. Use of the term ‘minority,’ therefore, obscures this global reality and, in effect, reinforces racist assumptions. To describe People of Color as ‘non-white’ is to use the white race as the standard against which all other races are described or as a referent in relation to whom all others are positioned. It is doubtful that white people would appreciate being called ‘non-black’ or men would like being called ‘non-women’.” (Steuert, Jenness, & Jones-Ruzzi, 1993, p. 73)

¹⁴ “This misconception of multicultural education is widespread because curriculum reform was the main focus when the movement first emerged in the 1960s and 1970s” (Banks, 2004a, p. 4).

Banks (2004b) identifies reforming “the schools and other educational institutions so that students from diverse racial, ethnic and social-class groups will experience educational equality” as a primary goal on which the majority of specialists in the field of multicultural education agree (p. 3). Multicultural education is the process of achieving equity in education for all people, regardless of race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, or exceptionality.

Unfortunately this well-intentioned goal of educational equality for diverse groups of students has the potential to lead some educators to assume that if there are no students of color in their classrooms, then there is no need for multicultural education.¹⁵

Although meeting the needs of marginalized students is a primary goal of multicultural education, all members of pluralistic societies need multicultural education. “Teaching about the cultural practices of other people without stereotyping or misinterpreting them and teaching about one’s own cultural practices without invidiously characterizing the practices of other people should be the aim of multicultural education” (Erickson, 2004, p. 45). If only people of color or members of other marginalized groups are taught about multiculturalism, dominant stereotypic representations of race, ethnicity, and culture will persist. “To achieve equal opportunity it may be important to explore issues of power and privilege. Sometimes power and privilege are accepted as invisible norms (rights) of the dominant group (e.g. for males), and this marginalizes the opportunity of other groups” (Grant & Sleeter, 2003, p. 200). Issues of power and privilege in American society can be discussed only if all citizens are educated to tolerate other cultures and to respect and affirm cultural differences. As such, some additional goals of

¹⁵ “No one ever stops becoming a multicultural person, and knowledge is never complete. This means that there is no established canon that is frozen in cement” (Nieto, 2004, p. 356). That this canon is constantly changing is illustrated by the multicultural education field’s hesitation to address sexual orientation. The field, which is dedicated to inclusion, has traditionally excluded the issues and perspectives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals. In fact, it is only in the fifth edition of *Multicultural Education* (2004) that a chapter has been dedicated to issues of discrimination in the education system based on sexual orientation. As diversity in the United States continues to increase, so will the issues addressed by multicultural education.

multicultural education are to “provide a more equitable distribution of power, to reduce discrimination and prejudice, and to provide social justice and equitable opportunities” (Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001, p. 8).

The variety of goals identified by scholars in the education field demonstrate how multicultural education “is *about* all people,” and “*for* all people” (Nieto, 2004a, p. 353). The following section explores the dimensions of multicultural education described by Banks (2004b). Grant and Sleeter’s (2003) approaches to multicultural education and Nieto’s (2004a) levels of action in multicultural education are also discussed. Banks, Grant, Sleeter, and Nieto are among the most well respected specialists in the field of multicultural education. While their work is not inclusive of all the research on multicultural education currently under discussion, it is among the most widely used in the education field.

Dimensions of Multicultural Education

Banks (2004b) believes that if multicultural education practice is to be better understood and implemented, it must be done in a manner consistent with theory and “its dimensions must be more clearly described, conceptualized, and researched” (p. 4). Through research conducted since the 1960s, Banks has identified five key dimensions to successful multicultural education practices: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture. These dimensions are meant to guide school reform related to the implementation of multicultural education.

Content Integration

Changing or restructuring the curriculum to include content about ethnic groups, women, and other cultural groups is a widely understood dimension of multicultural education (Banks, 2004b, p. 4). Banks defines content integration as “the extent to which teachers use examples,

data, and information from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations and theories in their subject area or discipline” (2004b, p. 4). Content integration is essential to any model of multicultural education and is particularly important in teaching students from a variety of cultures or groups. Nieto (2004a) refers to education that is not multicultural as monocultural education or “education reflective of only one reality and biased toward the dominant group” (Nieto, 2004a, p. 532). In monocultural education all students, regardless of background, are “*miseducated* to the extent that they receive only a partial and biased education” (Nieto, 2004a, 353). However, biased education is most harmful to those who are invisible in the curriculum. Content integration aims to expand monocultural approaches to education by making visible the voices and stories of those individuals who are absent in standard school curricula.

Not all efforts to integrate diverse content are equal. Both Banks (2004b) and Grant and Sleeter (2003) identify multiple approaches to content integration. Table I outlines those approaches, drawing parallels between the researchers’ categories.

*Table I:
Comparing Banks’ and Grant and Sleeter’s Approaches to Multicultural Education*

Banks’ Approaches to Multicultural Education	Grant and Sleeter’s Approaches to Multicultural Teaching for Race, Class, Gender, & Disability
<i>Contributions</i> : focuses on heroes and heroines, holidays, and discrete cultural elements	<i>Teaching the exceptional and culturally different</i> : changing instructional patterns and classroom procedures to enable all students to succeed
	<i>Human relations</i> : develops respect among individuals of various races, genders, classes, religions, exceptionalities, and sexual orientations through lessons on cultural differences

Continued on next page

Table I: Continued

Banks' Approaches to Multicultural Education	Grant and Sleeter's Approaches to Multicultural Teaching for Race, Class, Gender, & Disability
<i>Additive</i> : teachers append ethnic content, themes, and perspectives to the curriculum without changing its basic structure	<i>Single-group studies</i> : in-depth exploration and understanding of a single culture
<i>Transformation</i> : helps students learn how knowledge is constructed; curriculum changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, and events from various ethnic and cultural perspectives	<i>Multicultural education</i> : calls for reform of classroom and entire school; it is for all students
<i>Social action</i> : students makes decisions on important social issues and take action to help solve them	<i>Teaching that is multicultural and social reconstructionist</i> : reorients entire school experience to address difference and justice based on race, social class, language, disability, sexual orientation, and gender

Approaches such as the *contributions*, *additive*, *human relations*, and *single-group studies* are those most commonly seen in schools. However, many scholars are critical of these approaches because they are not fully integrative and overemphasize visible or explicit culture.

Particular traits of visible culture, often treated in isolation, have been the basis for much of what we teach about cultural diversity in schools. Some educators speak critically of 'piñata curriculum,' 'snowshoe curriculum,' and 'holidays and heroes' in characterizing this approach. By treating cultural practices as sets of static facts, we trivialize them in superficiality and we make it seem as if culture were necessarily unchanging. (Erickson, 2004, p. 46)

Moving from approaches that emphasize particular, isolated cultural traits to the *transformation*, *social action*, *multicultural education*, and *teaching that is multicultural and social*

reconstructionist approaches described by Banks, Grant, and Sleeter requires extensive effort and institutional change. All four of these approaches are designed to help students learn how knowledge is constructed and require changing the structure of the curriculum to help students view ideas and issues from a variety of perspectives. Many teachers do not feel they have the power, let alone the time, to make these kinds of changes.

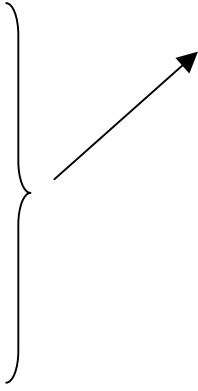
The results of these different approaches to content integration vary. Nieto's model of actions in multicultural education illustrates how more complex approaches to multicultural education have the potential to make more substantive change to students' abilities to learn. Table II compares Banks and Grant and Sleters' approaches to multicultural education to Nieto's five levels of action in multicultural education.

*Table II:
Banks and Grant and Sleeter's Approaches to Multicultural Education with Nieto's Actions in Multicultural Education*

Banks (2004b)	Grant and Sleeter (2003)	Nieto's (2004a) Five Levels of Action in Multicultural Education
		Monocultural education
Contributions	Teaching the exceptional and culturally different	
	Human relations	
Additive	Single-group studies	

Continued on next page

Table II: Continued

Banks (2004b)	Grant and Sleeter (2003)	Nieto's (2004a) Five Levels of Action in Multicultural Education
Transformation	Multicultural education	 <p data-bbox="943 394 1435 705">Affirmation, Solidarity & Critique (based on premise that most powerful learning results when students work and struggle with one another, even if it is sometimes difficult and challenging)</p>
Social action	Teaching that is multicultural and social reconstructionist	

The *transformation, social action, multicultural education, and education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist* approaches demonstrate how multicultural education that focuses solely on content integration will struggle to make substantive change. While the values of tolerance, acceptance and respect are important, truly successful multicultural education programs affirm diversity and encourage students to think critically, embrace challenges, and act socially. Successful multicultural education programs are pervasive. They reach beyond content integration and incorporate the four other dimensions of multicultural education identified by Banks: knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture.

Knowledge Construction

The second dimension of multicultural education identified by Banks (2004b) is knowledge construction. Knowledge reflects the social, cultural, and power positions of members of society (Banks, 2004b, p. 14). The knowledge construction dimension of multicultural education therefore reconceptualizes school curricula by helping students

“understand, investigate, and determine how the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed” (Banks, 2004b, p. 5). For example, students in a social studies course may investigate the latent meanings of concepts like manifest destiny and the New World during a unit on the “discovery” of America and the westward movement. Classroom discussion might focus on what these terms imply about the Native American cultures that populated the land prior to the arrival of Europeans (Banks, 2004a, p. 21). Such a discussion would help students better understand how knowledge is created, consumed, and sometimes abused.

Knowledge is a cultural construction that mirrors a society’s power structures. What an individual knows is unequivocally linked to his or her position in society. David Takas (2002) raises this issue with his students when he asks, “how does your positionality¹⁶ bias your epistemology” or more simply put, “how does who you are and where you stand in relation to others shape what you know about the world” (p. 168)? Takas, like other multicultural educators, believes that achieving equity in education requires students to understand how their position in relation to others affects what they know.

To work toward a just world—a world where all have equal access to opportunity—means, as a start, opening up heart and mind to the perspective of others. We must be able to hear each other and to respect and learn from what we hear. We must understand how we are positioned in relation to others—as dominant/subordinate, marginal/center, empowered/powerless. (Takas, 2002, p. 169)

¹⁶ Positionality is “an idea that emerged out of feminist scholarship stating that variables such as individual’s gender, class, and race are markers of her or his relational position within a social and economic context and influence the knowledge that she or he produces. Consequently, valid knowledge requires an acknowledgement of the knower’s position within a specific context” (Banks & Banks, 2004b, p. 451).

Prejudice Reduction

“Research indicates that children come to school with many negative attitudes toward and misconceptions about different racial and ethnic groups” (Banks, 2004a, p. 21). In fact, “it is impossible to be untouched by racism, sexism, linguicism, heterosexism, ageism, anti-Semitism, classism, and ethnocentrism in a society characterized by all of them” (Nieto, 2004, p. 348). Integration of content related to diverse cultural groups can help students develop positive attitudes about different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. However, the prejudice reduction dimension of multicultural education calls not only for the addition of culturally diverse content, but also for discussion about more complex issues like discrimination and stratification.

Helping students get along, teaching them to feel better about themselves, or ‘sensitizing’ them to one another may be significant goals of multicultural education. But these goals can turn into superficial strategies that only scratch the surface of educational failure if they do not tackle the far more thorny questions of stratification and inequity. (Nieto, 2004a, p. 2)

Although many teachers may be uncomfortable discussing issues of discrimination and prejudice, to be successful and make substantive change, multicultural education must confront these contentious issues. Schools wishing to implement multicultural education practices must pay attention to all areas in which some students may be favored over others including who gets praised in class, who gets ignored, who has access to educational resources, whose voices are reflected in the school’s curricula, and much more.

Equity Pedagogy

An equity pedagogy exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse, racial, cultural, and social-class groups. This includes using a variety of teaching styles that are consistent with the wide range of learning styles within various cultural and ethnic groups (Banks, 2004b, p. 5).

Many theories of learning and knowledge construction have been developed in the field of education. These theories range from talking about learning as being incremental, adding bit by bit to a passive mind, to learning that is active and leads to the restructuring of the mind (Hein & Alexander, 1998, p. 31). Multicultural education theorists tend to support the idea that learning is active. They work to counter the traditional school presentation of didactic, expository education where teachers present information to students through repetition and memorization. Two developmental psychologists, Jean Piaget and Howard Gardner, were instrumental in developing broader understandings of how people learn. Piaget described stages of development that forced educators to reexamine their approaches to teaching based on the developmental stages of their students. Gardner developed the theory of multiple intelligences, arguing that there are at least seven ways people engage in learning: linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal (Hein & Alexander, 1998, p. 38). The equity pedagogy dimension of multicultural education requires teachers to take into account how different developmental stages, multiple intelligences, and diverse cultural backgrounds may affect students' abilities to learn.

However, pedagogy is not just the techniques used by educators to teach. Equally important are the ways in which classrooms construct knowledge and the range of relationships between course materials, teachers, and students (Thompson Tetreault, 2004, p. 174). A critical pedagogy, which is commonly employed by multicultural educators, encourages students to become problem solvers and uses students' present realities as the foundation for instruction. It begins with the experiences and viewpoints of students and is a tool for deconstructing and reconstructing meaning. "The most successful education is that which begins with the learner and, when using a multicultural perspective, students themselves become the foundation for the

curriculum” (Nieto, 2004a, p. 360). Critical pedagogy is essential for any multicultural education approach that advocates for social justice and action.

Empowering School Culture

The final dimension of multicultural education identified by Banks is a school culture and organization that promotes equity. This dimension involves “restructuring the culture and organization of the school so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, language, and social-class groups will experience educational equality and cultural empowerment” (Banks, 2004b, p. 6).

One of the most significant variables an institution must address is the school’s culture and hidden curriculum. A hidden or latent curriculum is one that no teacher teaches but that all students learn.

It is that powerful part of the school culture that communicates to students the school’s attitudes toward a range of issues and problems, including how the school views them as human beings and its attitudes toward males, females, exceptional students, and students from various religious, cultural, racial and ethnic groups. (Banks, 2004a, p. 24).¹⁷

Without attempts to identify and address unwritten negative messages, efforts to integrate multiculturalism into school policies and practices risk insignificance. Although tackling latent messages within an institution is an important first step, change must also occur in multiple other areas for multicultural education reform to be effective:

- School policy and politics
- Learning styles of the school
- Languages and dialects of the school
- Community participation and input
- Counseling program

¹⁷ Nieto (2004s) further defines the hidden curriculum as “subtle and not-so-subtle messages that are not part of the intended curriculum.... These messages may be positive (e.g., the expectation that all students are capable of high quality work) or negative (e.g., that children from some backgrounds are not capable of aspiring to professional jobs), although the term is generally used to refer to negative messages” (Nieto, 2004a, p. 42).

- School staff: attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and actions
- Teaching styles and strategies
- Formalized curriculum and course of study
- Instructional materials, and
- Assessment and testing procedures (Banks, 2004a, p. 24).

Real multicultural education reform is pervasive.

It permeates everything: the school climate, physical environment, curriculum, and relationships between teachers and students and community. It is apparent in every lesson, curriculum guide, unit, bulletin board, and letter that is sent home....

Multicultural education is a philosophy, a way of looking at the world, not simply a program or a class or a teacher (Nieto, 2004a, p. 354).

A pervasive approach to multicultural education goes beyond the integration of diverse content; it investigates diversity at every level of an institution. The following chapter explores how this comprehensive model of multicultural education can be used to inform multicultural policies and practices at general art museums. In addition to references from museum studies literature, the chapter uses data gathered through interviews, observations, and document analysis at the Seattle Art Museum.

Chapter Five: Dimensions of Multicultural Education in Art Museums

The Seattle Art Museum

We talk about art and audience as equal values and not ones that are antithetical to one another, but complimentary values (M. G. Gates, personal correspondence, March 24, 2005)

Founded in 1931, the Seattle Art Museum (SAM) opened to the public in 1933. The original location of the museum was in Volunteer Park just east of downtown Seattle. The museum began with an emphasis on Asian art in large part due to the interests of its founder, Dr. Richard E. Fuller (SAM, 1991, p. 9). From its establishment, SAM was public in orientation. Docent tours, lectures, and a library of slides and books, “helped to animate a small facility with a limited collection” (SAM, 1991, p. 11). The success of these early public programs was demonstrated by the 346, 287 visitors to the museum in its first year of operation. This was particularly impressive because the entire Seattle population in 1933 was around 365,000 (SAM, 1991, p. 11).

Dr. Fuller aspired for the museum to hold a comprehensive collection of art from around the world. Today, the museum’s collection consists of approximately 23,000 objects and is particularly strong in five areas: the arts of Asia, Africa, and Northwest Coast Native America, European and American modern art, and European painting and decorative arts (SAM, n.d.). Over the years, SAM has made significant changes to accommodate this large collection. In 1991, the museum built a second facility in downtown Seattle and the old building in Volunteer Park became the Seattle Asian Art Museum. When the land for the downtown facility was purchased, SAM also bought an adjacent lot with the intention of one day expanding the downtown site. In 2001, SAM partnered with Washington Mutual Bank to begin creating a new

museum that will open in the summer of 2007. In 1999, with help from the Trust for Public Land, SAM also purchased property on Seattle's central waterfront to build the Olympic Sculpture Park. By expanding the downtown facility and constructing the Olympic Sculpture Park, SAM aims to "accommodate our growing and diversifying artistic program as well as create new spaces for our community to enjoy" (SAM, n.d.). The Sculpture Park is scheduled to open in 2006.

As SAM has grown over the years, the museum's collections and mission statements have broadened. The museum's current mission is to "connect art to life," which Museum Director Mimi Gardner Gates interprets as "bringing high quality visual arts to the Northwest and making it accessible to a wide range of people." Gates explains further that SAM provides an opportunity "for people to explore their own identity and the identity of others.... A very important function of SAM...is not only to inspire people to do art, but also to help them understand other people and cultures" (personal correspondence, March 24, 2005). The museum's goal to connect art to the lives of a wide range of people led the institution to apply for and obtain a notable four-year grant from The Wallace Foundation in 1999.

The purpose of the Wallace Foundation grant was to "diversify its [SAM's] audience and foster a deeper and ongoing community involvement in the daily life of the museum" (SAM, 2004, p. 3). To do this, SAM created an initiative called *Deepening the Dialogue: Art and Audience*, which has increased the museum's efforts to engage a wider museum audience by seeking opportunities to diversify SAM, broadening community involvement, and increasing community participation in the museum (SAM, 2004, p. 8).

With the Wallace grant one of the goals was to diversify the museum from top to bottom and bottom to top. Audience, volunteers, staff, board. To really build diversity into the organization. In some areas we've been very successful, and in some we have a ways to go. (M. G. Gates, personal correspondence, March 24, 2005)

Since receiving the Wallace grant, some key changes have occurred throughout the institution. SAM now recognizes that both art and audience are fundamental to the museum's mission. The museum's recent interest in the diversity of its institution and audience make it an ideal site for investigating how multicultural education theory can inform art museum policy and practice. The remainder of this chapter explores each dimension of multicultural education identified by Banks (2004b) within the context of American art museums by using evidence from museum studies literature and primary data collected at SAM.

Content Integration

The drive for pluralism and diversity that marks recent thinking sought at first only to bring more people of different races, genders, ethnic origins, class, generations, physical competencies, and cultural and sexual lifestyles into the museum as visitors and as workers. Gradually, however, the museum world discovered that in order to become physically and psychologically accessible to more kinds of people, museums would need to make deep changes in their content and message. (Hein, 2000, 44)

Art museums, in their role as educational institutions, have received criticisms similar to those aimed at schools for presenting monocultural interpretations of art history and for not effectively representing the arts and cultures of the diverse American public. With an increasing awareness of the need to appeal to diverse audiences, art museums are now looking at the content¹⁸ they present and evaluating the degree to which it is inclusive and representative. Like schools, museums often use a *contributions* or *additive* approach to content integration rather than a *transformation* or *social action* approach. For example, an institution may offer a weeklong lecture series on African American artists during Black History Month, but not include the works of African American artists in their exhibitions of American art. By excluding groups from their collections and exhibitions, art museums can make building relevance with non-

¹⁸ "Content" is defined as the objects, publications, interpretive materials, and marketing materials art museums produce to communicate with their audience.

traditional audiences difficult. To be truly inclusive, art from marginalized cultures must be integrated into educational programming and exhibitions yearlong.¹⁹

We have also learned that scheduling activities by ethnic group and by month—by celebrating Black History Month in February, for example—is only a first step toward full representation of the community in our programs. We now seek to maintain a commitment to ‘equal representation throughout the year, and all our programs and calendars are fully ‘desegregated. (Treadwell, 1992, p. 302)

Furthermore, the assumption that offering a one time exhibition on African art or one weeklong lecture series will attract African Americans and give them reason to frequent the museum later seems naïve. As Deborah Carl, Manager of School and Teacher Programs at SAM, states,

I think that the conversations that are interesting are when people say, okay, lets attract the African American community. Lets do an exhibition of African art. To me that is really bad. African Americans are going to have interests other than African art. Of course they want to see that supported in the institution, but I think the goal should be to reach these audiences always, not just when there is a special exhibition related to them. (personal correspondence, March 23, 2005)

Seeing the art of your culture represented in a museum is a privilege that not all members of American society have equal opportunity to experience. That artists of African descent are often left out of Western art history texts and exhibitions is the subject of a show currently on display at SAM called *Africa in America*.

Seeing one’s own reality through the eyes of artists is an inspiration for many museum visitors. For African-American audiences, however, the absence of art engendered by and about their experiences can be a source of disappointment in American museums. As SAM ends a four-year initiative called *Deepening the Dialogue: Art and Audience*, it was deemed a good time to look back through the collections and assess how well our holdings reflect this concern. (McClusky, n.d.a)

¹⁹ Note: Many institutions rely solely on donations to build their collections. SAM, for example, has no budget for new acquisitions. As such, there are inherent gaps in the museum’s collection that make comprehensive representation of all artistic traditions and cultures difficult. Pamela McClusky illustrates this difficulty: “It’s a dilemma to define collections within an institution that has no funding to really buy what we want to create. We are constantly at the mercy of collectors and this museum has been that way, almost every object in the collection was a gift. So, we wait and create what we can from what others have decided for us and then put them in the kinds of packages that try and illuminate diversity where it is possible given those gifts (personal correspondence, April 12, 2005). SAM attempts to fill gaps in the collection through educational programming and special exhibitions. However, because of the lack of representation in some parts of its permanent collection, the institution is unable to be fully inclusive, despite these educational programs and special exhibitions.

Africa in America displays paintings and sculptures found in SAM's permanent collection that were created by 30 artists of African descent. Most of the artists included in the exhibition are from the United States and the majority of the works displayed were created in the later half of the twentieth century. Although the curator's intent in creating the exhibition was to bring attention to the invisibility of artists from African descent in American museums, the fact that these pieces are separated from other artworks created by non-African artists is problematic.

Unfortunately, the segregation of the artworks of marginalized people is not uncommon in art museums. Even in institutions such as SAM that house diverse collections, the approach to art from non-Western cultures or the art of marginalized groups is generally to give them the "equal but different" treatment. Compartmentalizing works of art into categories like "Primitive Art," "non-Western Art," or "African Art," perpetuates distinctions between "us" and "them," thereby confirming stereotypes of the "other" rather than providing space for open dialogue between "us" and "them." In this way, the practice of compartmentalizing art mirrors colonialism as the museum takes on the role of the colonizer and the art objects or the cultures in which the art objects were created take on the role of the colonized. As Tucker (1992) illustrates, "in the Western European tradition, people of color and their work have been utterly invisible except as colonized objects of study" (p. 10). SAM plans to address this issue in its renovated gallery spaces that will open to the public in 2007. The new permanent collection galleries will focus on building bridges between cultures by relocating collections in the renovated space. In the existing museum the third floor contains the African, Asian, and Northwest Coast collections, whereas the fourth floor displays American, European, and Ancient Art (SAM, 2005). Museum Director Mimi Gardner Gates states that when they originally installed the galleries they did not realize they were placing all the art made by people of color on one floor and the work of white

people on another. The renovation provides SAM an opportunity to reorder its collection and better represent cross-cultural connections.

Now we're doing the third floor as the Pacific Rim. America is part of the Pacific Rim. It will have American painting, Northwest Coast Native American art, Australian aboriginal textiles, and Asian art.... And when you go up a floor you'll be in the midst of an African masquerade. (M. G. Gates, personal correspondence, March 24, 2005)

Even if these new gallery adjacencies promote cross-cultural dialogue, the division along strict ethnic lines does not guarantee that the presentation of art in those separate galleries will promote cultural competence, tolerance, and respect. However, if successfully implemented, this cross-cultural dialogue could help eliminate some of the “otherizing” that occurs as a result of the exhibition styles of general art museums.

Also problematic in art museums is context, or lack thereof. When objects or groups of objects are taken out of their original contexts and placed in an art museum, they create new meanings. This is not necessarily an issue when the context of the object is familiar to the viewer. However, if the context is foreign to the viewer, the application of Western aesthetic values²⁰ commonly used in American art museums can trivialize the object or create misconceptions. Decontextualizing art objects not only has the potential to be problematic in art exhibitions, but also in art making. Museum education programs in which students make art objects that mimic those created in “other” cultures may promote “surface multiculturalism” (Smith, 1994).

There have been many instances of ‘doing African art for the next two weeks,’ or ice cream container totem poles, milk carton kachinas. These not only trivialized images that were important visual expressions of beliefs within their cultures, but inadvertently told students that art was something peculiar from far away. (Smith, 1994, 15-16)

The problem with “surface multiculturalism,” like other *additive* approaches to content integration, is that it identifies and labels the “other,” but does not teach students how to

²⁰ In this case “aesthetics” is referring to the visual or artistic preferences of people from a Western cultural background.

understand or respect that “other.” In order for students or visitors to move from stereotypical conceptions of the art and culture created by diverse peoples, *transformative* approaches to multicultural education that enable people to view concepts and issues from various cultural perspectives need to be encouraged.

Knowledge Construction

According to Banks’ dimensions of multicultural education, knowledge construction relates to the methods teachers use to help students understand, investigate, and determine how knowledge is constructed (2004b, p. 5). This includes both how students’ cultural backgrounds have shaped what they know and how the knowledge presented in educational institutions such as schools and museums is constructed. The construction of knowledge in art museums is not neutral; it “is socially produced and reflective of power relations of the society in which it is situated” (Tucker, 1992, p. 13). In the United States, knowledge and content presented in art museums have long been constructed by the white upper class, which has held almost exclusive authority over decisions regarding what objects are worthy of being housed and displayed in art museum collections (Duncan, 1995). An art museum exhibition is a statement of the position or perspective of the individual by whom it was created.

Any museum or exhibition is.... a theory: a suggested way of seeing the world. And, like any theory, it may offer insight and illumination. At the same time, it contains certain assumptions, speaks to some matters and ignores others, and is intimately bound up with – and capable of affecting – broader social and cultural relations. (Macdonald, 1996, p. 14)

Recognizing that the position often presented through their exhibitions has been exclusive, many art museums are now using exhibitions and educational programs to help visitors understand how and by whom institutional knowledge is constructed.

One method art museums use to discuss knowledge construction is to share the process of meaning making with their audiences. “Rather than the teacher [museum] – the sage on the stage – acting as the sole holder of expertise to make meaning of materials for students [visitors], the teacher [museum] starts from where the students [visitors] are” (Takacs, 2002, p.177). At SAM, this is reflected in two of the education department’s guiding principles: that visitors construct meanings about art through the intersection between what they bring with them and what they encounter in the museum, and that there are many interpretations for a single work of art that can contribute to rich opportunities for learning (D. Carl, personal correspondence, March 23, 2005).²¹ Current museum education theory states that visitors learn more in museums that reflect their own cultural backgrounds and perspectives and allow them to contribute to the interpretation of artworks.

It is the visitor as much as the museum that determines the content and character of the visitor’s museum experience. More specifically, how someone responds to and understands a work of art within an art museum is as much determined by what he or she brings to the work as whatever is contained in the work. (Lankford, 2002, p. 145)

In the past, museum education programs communicated the meaning of artworks through mechanisms like interpretive labels, audio guides, and books. Although these practices are still widely used, institutions are also giving time and space for visitors to make their own interpretations. SAM uses a model for giving guided tours called Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) developed by Philip Yenawine. VTS helps visitors explore art by asking general thinking questions such as “what do you see in this image” (Visual Understanding in Education, 2000).

²¹ However, as Pamela McClusky points out, many professionals at SAM are still hesitant to share authority with audience members. “People really respond to the ability to speak up about what they consider the need to be more diverse. To reflect upon the fact that we don’t all think the same things about the same works of art. It is perplexing that some people’s instinct is just to cover it up and iron out all the wrinkles in history. And then my own instinct is to let the public know these issues are in our midst and that there are different ways to handle them. But that does not make a lot of curators comfortable. Most curators come from an academic system that rewards single authority rather than collaborative authority. If you subscribe to that it is very difficult to turn a corner and then say you are going to recognize someone else’s authority as well” (personal correspondence, April 12, 2005).

VTS questions help make connections between what a visitor already knows and the artwork he or she is viewing.

There was a time when I thought my responsibility as a museum educator was to carefully consider the art on view... and decide what key elements needed to be made clear for visitors to be able to 'enter' the work... I now think it more appropriate to reverse the equation. Now I often seek to grasp what people already know that I can help them use to begin to decode unfamiliar work. I switch the focus from what objects say to what viewers think. (Rice & Yenawine, 2002, p. 290)

Being forthright about where objects in their collections come from and whose voices²² and opinions are represented in exhibitions is an additional method art museums use to discuss knowledge construction.

Whereas in the past, museums have tended to provide a single authoritative voice; today it is becoming more common to present alternative or multiple perspectives. This affords visitors the opportunity to reflect upon alternative views and provides opportunities for self-representation by peoples who are not normally consulted as part of the interpretive process. (Simpson, 2001, p. 264)

Curators have traditionally provided voice in art museum exhibitions. As scholarly experts in their respective fields, the authority of the curator is essential to the museum's function as a collector and exhibitor of important cultural and artistic objects. However, the curator's voice should not be the only authority on a given subject. A comprehensive story of a non-Western culture's art, for example, can only be achieved when the Western curator's voice is balanced with those of the artist or culture in which the artwork was created. "Research into local aesthetics shows not only that the spokespersons for these cultures (those on display in museums) have their own aesthetic preferences and distinguish good from bad art, but that our preferences do not necessarily coincide with theirs" (Petridis, 2001). Museums have an obligation to communicate to visitors the artist's original intent for creating a piece, as well as the curator's interpretation of that piece (Vogel, 1991, p. 191).

²² "Voice" in museum exhibits refers to who is determining what objects are on display, how they are interpreted, and, therefore, what story they are telling.

Pamela McClusky, Curator of African and Oceanic Art at SAM, talks about interpretation as “the curator’s privilege” in an introductory label to the museum’s African art galleries.²³

Deciphering African art relies on conversations and correspondence with scholars and artists from the cultures whose art is represented in the collection. . . . Ultimately, one person has to stand in the middle of this distinguished crowd with many differing approaches and find a key statement among many that can unlock your interest. A few priorities underlie the choices made about the statements offered in these galleries:

- First, what have Africans said about this art or the issues it raises?
- Second, what have researchers who have lived in the field said about the meanings and associations surrounding this art?
- Third, if there is more than one opinion about a work of art, why hide the dialogue of differences?
- Fourth, how does this art relate to contemporary realities?

These questions have resulted in a mixture of voices offering (at times) conflicting interpretations instead of offering only single-minded answers. (McClusky, n.d.b)

By making her curatorial process transparent, McClusky demonstrates how art museums can effectively present multiple voices in exhibitions and discuss how knowledge about the objects on display was collected and constructed. “Visitors can learn as much from an explanation of how an exhibit is assembled or maintained as they can from the exhibit itself” (Affolter, 1992, p. 83). Being transparent about whose voice is given priority in art museum interpretation not only helps visitors understand how institutional knowledge is constructed, but also helps museums address Banks’ (2004b) third dimension of multicultural education: prejudice reduction.

Prejudice Reduction

Multicultural art education can help build more inclusive societies, combat racism and ethnocentrism, and empower citizens to actively participate in creating and influencing the “common culture.” To do this, multicultural art education must contain an element of prejudice

²³ Due to the renovation of SAM, the African galleries are closed until the museum reopens in 2007.

reduction. Prejudice is part all human experience, but there are groups in American society that suffer from discrimination disproportionately. “A fundamental educational role for museums thereby becomes fostering humane values—tolerance, acceptance of difference, understanding—by focusing attention on objects rooted in shared human experience and trying to draw lessons from them” (Gaither, 1992, p. 87). If a primary role of museum education is addressing the human experience, then social inequities must be explored in museums. However, the traditional concept of art museums as sites for the contemplation of beautiful and important artistic masterpieces does not include addressing social concerns through museum exhibition. Despite the hesitation of some members of the museum community, an increasing number of art institutions are exhibiting controversial shows that question the status quo (Simpson, 2001, p. 261) and debating “other thorny issues, such as what constitutes public taste and who has the right to determine it, what kind of knowledge is deemed to be useful... and who has the right to control its production and dissemination” (Ames, 2004, p. 81). *Only Skin Deep*, which was organized by the International Center of Photography and was on display at SAM from March 5-June 13, 2004, is one example of an art museum show that addresses social concerns. *Only Skin Deep* uses contemporary and historical images to explore the role photography plays in shaping American understandings of national identity and race. Specifically, the exhibition demonstrates how photography can both create and break down racial stereotypes, and restrict the definition of what it means to be an American (SAM, 2004, p. 8). The exhibit provided SAM “a unique opportunity to deepen audience involvement and involve visitors in dialogues about art and race” (SAM, 2004, p. 8). SAM took many precautions to ensure that museum staff, volunteers, and audience members were prepared for the tough issues raised in *Only Skin Deep*. The museum held focus groups with diverse populations, brought in specialists to train staff and speak with

visitors, and provided space for visitors to react to difficult images and subject matter (SAM, 2004, p. 8). By presenting a show that addressed issues of concern to many people in the community, SAM was not only able to speak to the prejudice reduction dimension of multicultural education, but was also able to engage a broader audience in its institution.

However, the presentation of “issue shows” is not the only method art museums can use to address the prejudice reduction dimension of multicultural education. Equally important, and perhaps more easily implemented, are shows that present a variety of cultural perspectives.

Contrary to the views of some critics, the social inclusion agenda does not require all museums to tackle issues of poor health or high crime... but rather to consider their own unique circumstances and opportunities to benefit individuals, communities and wider society. (MacKeith & Osborne, 2003, p. 6)

For some institutions offering alternatives to the dominant perspectives traditionally presented in art museums is the most appropriate method of addressing prejudice reduction. Cross-cultural exhibitions that respectfully represent marginalized voices can build audiences’ skill levels in the areas of cultural competency, tolerance, and respect while positively affecting prejudice reduction by honoring diverse cultures and fostering inclusiveness. To effectively present diverse voices and appeal to broad audiences, art museums must employ interpretive and instructional methods that support various learning styles and differing levels of museum literacy.

Equity Pedagogy

As museum professionals, we are all convinced that once a person has experienced the thrill of discovery at a museum, that person will come back again and again. In many instances, however, the design of museum programming has restricted that thrill of discovery to persons who have, *a priori*, a significant level of museum literacy. (Heltne, 1992, p. 90)

The assumption that substantial exposure to high quality art inherently creates aesthetic experiences that cause museum visitors to return again and again is unreliable. “Visitors unaided still wander into art museums curious and exit perplexed” (Lankford, 2002, p. 140). Aesthetic

experiences with artworks are not automatic. They require the viewer to have prior knowledge and skill. As art museums recognized that they could no longer assume that visitors came to the museum with universal ideas and understandings of art, new styles of museum education emerged. “According to the new model, teachers were not expected to impart knowledge to students, filling them as empty vessels; but, more modestly, to expose students to ideas and to stand by on auxiliaries to the process of their assimilation” (Hein, 2000, p. 116). The equity pedagogy dimension of multicultural education calls for instruction methods to start with students’ experiences and build skills by connecting subjects directly to the students’ lives.²⁴ Learning in museums is now understood to be a nonlinear process where visitors actively construct meaning, rather than receive it passively through didactic interpretive methods (Lankford, 2002, p. 144). In *New Forums: Art Museums and Communities*, Walker Art Center Director Kathy Halbreich argues that “to serve multiple audiences and multiple learning styles, museums need to provide a network of links for engaging people. It’s no longer a linear process” (Pitman & Hirzy, 2004, p. 9). This constructivist model of museum education is meant to stimulate curiosity, and elicit new insights, questions, and wonder (Duensing, 1999, p. 90).

SAM’s education department’s guiding principles support a constructivist model of museum education that uses critical pedagogy to meet the needs of a diverse public. “People explore and discover art in ways and in settings that are appropriate to their specific needs. Learning about art and the museum’s collections takes time, effort and repeated interaction” (D. Carl, personal correspondence, March 23, 2004). Cohen and Lotan (2004) describe an equitable classroom as one where teachers and students view all students as capable of learning basic skills

²⁴ “Although objects and information are the foundation on which learning experiences are built, these fortifications alone do not provide a complete educational experience. Unless ideas and objects are related to the visitor’s experiences, feelings, and imaginative skills, the objects and ideas will have little meaning for the museum visitor” (Sternberg, 1989, p. 154-5).

and high-level concepts. In such an equitable classroom, students are active participants in learning, their opinions matter, and classroom instruction gives students equal access to educational resources (p. 737). Substituting museum terminology for the educational components of this equitable classroom provides a progressive example of museum education where museum employees and audience members view all visitors as capable of learning basic skills and high-level concepts, audience members are active participants in learning, audience members' opinions matter, and museum education gives visitors equal access to museum resources. If more diverse museum audiences are granted the authority to determine what art is collected and displayed in art institutions, learning outcomes such as art appreciation and critical thinking might be accessible to a wider range of individuals. The equity pedagogy dimension of multicultural education can inform art museum practice by encouraging institutions to provide visitors with a variety of means to access and construct meaning. Furthermore, sharing interpretive authority might create empowering museum environments that are visitor-centered and attract broad audiences.

Empowering Museum Culture

The empowering school culture dimension of multicultural education requires institutions to change their organizational structures so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, language, and social class groups can experience educational equality and cultural empowerment. Public service and education are “museum-wide endeavors that involve trustee, staff, and volunteer values and attitudes; exhibitions; public and school programs; publications; public relations efforts; research; decisions about the physical environment of the museum; and choices about collecting and preserving” (AAM, 1992, p. 6). Museums cannot become centers of learning

unless they themselves also become learning organizations. For many art museums this requires significant changes to organizational culture.

Everything and anything within a museum can make a difference in its ability to serve the public—the floor plan, lighting, smells, temperature, the juxtaposition of artwork, the availability of seating, and the presence of other people (Lankford, 2002, p. 145). Even museum environments created with the visitor's needs in mind have the potential to produce latent, negative messages. Mesa-Bains (1992) remarks that even when the work of marginalized people is presented in museums, it is often done so in a manner that communicates negative value judgments. “We’ve also been into museums where the sheer placement of our work—near lobbies or bathrooms, in rotundas or small rooms—has indicated the inferior value the institution attaches to the work” (p. 98). No matter how many special exhibitions on diverse artistic traditions a museum produces, latent messages can leave some visitors feeling underrepresented and misunderstood. At SAM, for example, the exhibition *Africa in America* contains modern paintings and sculptures by artists of African descent. Many of the works on display were created during the same time period as the pieces in the museum's *Modern in America* exhibition. However, *Africa in America* was not placed on the fourth floor with *Modern in America*. Instead it was placed on the third floor between the African and Asian galleries. Although the decision to place the exhibition on the third floor was most likely made because of the renovations in the African and Northwest Regional galleries,²⁵ the message to the public is that modern art by people of African descent is something outside of and less valued than the accepted narrative of Western art history.

²⁵ Both the African gallery on the third floor and the Northwest Regional gallery on the fourth floor were closed for renovation during the *Africa in America* exhibition.

Despite the presence of latent messages in some of its exhibitions, SAM strives to be visitor-centered. Visitor-centered institutions take the time to learn what the public wants and needs.²⁶ Adopting visitor-centered values, however, does not mean surveying audience members and implementing only those suggestions that fit within the institution's preconceived notions of its mission. Rather, adopting visitor-centered values requires actually implementing the changes audience members suggest. SAM Director Mimi Gardner Gates hopes that people think of SAM as visitor-centered and states that this is something on which the museum is currently working (personal correspondence, March 24, 2005). Two of the museum's guiding educational principles state that visitor research is crucial to measuring the institution's success and that the visitor experience should be an ongoing part of the museum's work (D. Carl, personal correspondence, March 23, 2005). According to recent surveys, SAM has been able to change the community's perception of the museum as an elitist and unwelcoming institution to "a perception of the museum as welcoming, educational, community-oriented and engaging" (SAM, 2004, p. 3). Correcting the perception that art museums are stifling and intimidating institutions designed solely for people who are knowledgeable about art is an important step to becoming a visitor-centered institution, as these perceptions are barriers to greater participation by community groups (Lankford, 2002; Pitman & Hirzy, 2004).

Because latent messages can exist anywhere within an organization and because becoming a visitor-centered institution requires reevaluating organizational priorities, inclusive art museums must incorporate multiculturalism into every institutional function. As Fleming (2002) states, the real possibility for social inclusion comes when the entire museum decides that inclusion is its primary goal (p. 223). If all museum stakeholders—staff, board members,

²⁶ As Igoe & Roosa (2002) state, listening and responding to community can help museums "transform themselves into places of dialogue, advocates of inclusion, and places of value" (p. 16). This transformation has a profound effect on the museum and the community, leading to increased institutional relevance.

patrons, volunteers, and community members—do not uphold the value of inclusion, museums will struggle to create organizational cultures that truly welcome and empower all people.

Therefore, multicultural museums must recruit staff, board members, and volunteers that reflect community diversity, use a variety of interpretive strategies, present content that includes diverse histories and viewpoints, develop audience members who are critical thinkers, seek out active participation by communities, and work collaboratively with partner organizations. “Until diversity is incorporated into the warp and weft of our institutions, efforts will continue to look like ‘diversity projects,’ add-ons that fail to show a deep appreciation for the whole of the community” (Jolly, 2002, p. 3). As identified by multicultural scholars such as Banks, Nieto, Grant, and Sleeter, additive approaches to multicultural education fail to confront institutionalized discrimination and inequity. Unlike pervasive multicultural education approaches, “surface multiculturalism,” which may get visitors in the door, does not encourage audience members to become repeat visitors.

Chapter Six: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Art museums in the United States are grounded in a tradition of service and hold their collections as a benefit to the public good. They are centers for civic engagement, and education is a fundamental component of the services they provide. As the American public becomes increasingly more diverse, art museums must utilize multicultural education theory and modify practices that do not effectively address diversity. They are now expected to provide inclusive environments that promote life-long learning for all members of society, regardless of background. To ensure long-term sustainability, art museums must actively engage with diverse communities, respond to visitor needs, and rethink accepted interpretation practices. Furthermore, as public entities it is important that art museums address cultural diversity not only to meet the needs of their particular constituencies, but also to expose inequalities and discrimination that persist in American society.

Summary of Procedures and Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore how multicultural education theory can inform the cultural diversity policies and practices of American art museums. A secondary purpose was to advocate for the change of art museum policies and practices that perpetuate social inequities associated with an increasingly diverse American public. Principal evidence for the project was collected through literature-based research in the fields of multicultural education and museum studies, as well as through a series of interviews and observations at the Seattle Art Museum.

The purpose of the contextual literature review chapter was to describe the social and educational context in which today's museums operate. The chapter discussed multiculturalism

in American society, the history of multicultural education in the United States, and general art museum history in order to establish relationships between multicultural education theory and art museum practice.

Banks' (2004b) five dimensions of multicultural education—content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school [museum] culture—were used to discuss the methods art museums use to address cultural diversity. Grant and Sleeter's (2003) approaches to multicultural teaching and Nieto's (2004a) levels of action in multicultural education were used to supplement to Banks' model of content integration. The thorough research conducted by these scholars provides compelling evidence of the parallels between classroom and museum education practices. Although their approaches are widely respected in the education field, the works of these scholars have not been directly applied to art museums. Table III summarizes the relationships between Banks' dimensions of multicultural education and the museum-based issues discussed in this investigation.

*Table III:
Parallels Between Banks' Dimensions of Multicultural Education and Art Museum Practice*

Dimension of Multicultural Education	Definition	Related Art Museum Issue
Content Integration ²⁷	Extent to which teachers use examples, data, and information from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts and theories.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Representation ▪ Privilege ▪ Cross-cultural dialogue ▪ Context

Continued on next page

²⁷ Includes Banks' (2004a) four approaches to content integration: the *contributions, additive, transformation, and social action* approaches, as well as Grant and Sleeter's (2003) five approaches to multicultural teaching for race, class, gender, and disability: *teaching the exceptional and culturally different, human relations, single-group studies, multicultural education, and education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist*.

Table III: continued

Dimension of Multicultural Education	Definition	Related Art Museum Issue
Knowledge Construction	Extent to which teachers help students understand, investigate, and determine how knowledge, cultural assumptions, frames of reference, and perspectives are constructed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Positionality ▪ Meaning-making ▪ Voice
Prejudice Reduction	Use of lessons and activities that help students develop positive attitudes about different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prejudice as a "human experience" ▪ Addressing social issues ▪ Controversy
Equity Pedagogy	Extent to which teachers modify their teaching to facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse, racial, cultural, and social-class groups. Includes using a variety of teaching styles that are consistent with a wide range of learning styles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Critical pedagogy ▪ Constructivism ▪ Multiple learning styles
Empowering school (museum) culture	Process of restructuring the culture and organization of a school so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, language, and social-class groups experience educational equality and cultural empowerment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Integration of multiculturalism into all museum functions ▪ Visitor-centered institutions ▪ Addressing stakeholder needs ▪ Community engagement

As illustrated in Table III, the potential value of using models like Banks (2004b) dimensions of multicultural education in art museums is profound.²⁸ Not only does the model demonstrate the need for multiculturalism to permeate all functions performed by art museums, but it also demonstrates that inclusiveness is an obtainable goal.

Conclusions and Recommendations

At the beginning of this research project, I anticipated finding a wide range of methods being used by art museums to address cultural diversity issues. I also expected to find that if multiculturalism were not fully integrated into every function of museums, it would be difficult for them to become inclusive institutions. Lastly, I anticipated that the field of multicultural education could provide valuable insight into the relative success art museums have attained in addressing diversity. The results of the literature reviews in the areas of multicultural education and museums studies and the primary data collected at the Seattle Art Museum demonstrated that these expectations were valid. Based on the synthesis of data collected in this investigation, the following conclusions can be made about multicultural education practices in American art museums.

1. *Multicultural practices in art museums should not stop with the presentation of art from diverse cultures or occasional educational programs targeted at specific cultural groups.* Addressing multiculturalism by simply adding cultural-based content to exhibitions and education programs does not address the issues of power and discrimination these exhibitions and programs may be perpetuating.

²⁸ Note: There are likely even more museum related issues relevant to the dimensions of multicultural education than those listed in Table III. However, based on the limited scope of this study, the table reflects only those issues that emerged from the museum-related literature used in this study and the interviews with SAM staff and volunteers.

2. *It is impossible for art museums to become instantly multicultural.* Because each museum has a unique collection, resides in a unique community, and has a unique organizational culture, museums must implement approaches to cultural diversity that best meet the needs of their particular setting. Visitor surveys and community forums are two practices proven to provide museums with information on audience needs.
3. *Simply attracting more visitors is not the aim of multicultural education.* Inclusion is only a means to an end. Its purpose is not to generate ticket sales or increase revenues. The aim of inclusion is to help the process of social change (Fleming, 2002, p. 224), to combat inequity, and to empower communities.
4. To make substantive change in institutional diversity, *multicultural practices must be integrated into all levels of museum policies and practices.*

Based on these conclusions and informed by multicultural education theory, I would make the following recommendations for art museum professionals interested in creating more inclusive institutions.²⁹

1. *Integrate content—objects, interpretative materials, educational programs—that make differences and similarities an explicit part of what you present to the public.* Such content should promote cross-cultural dialogue and cultural awareness, not perpetuate stereotypes of the “other.”
2. *Be reflective.* Consider how your institution’s history and biases might affect visitor experiences and the messages communicated to your audience.

²⁹ Many other lessons can be learned from the application of multicultural education theory to art museum practice. I highly recommend that museum professionals interested in addressing diversity and implementing comprehensive multicultural education programs read current literature in the field of multicultural education such as *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*, 5th edition (2004) edited by Banks & McGee Banks and *Affirming Diversity: The Socio Political Context of Multicultural Education*, 4th edition by Nieto.

3. *Share authority.* Help visitors understand how knowledge is constructed within your institution and make it clear that their own perspectives and knowledge are important.
4. *Confront racism and discrimination in museum content.* This can be done explicitly through exhibitions that address social issues, or more subtly through the respectful presentation of multiple voices in gallery spaces and art interpretation.
5. *Use diverse interpretation and exhibition methods.* Multicultural American audiences present a wide range of learning styles and multiple intelligences. Your educational pedagogy should consider this diversity.
6. *Reflect the diversity of your community and your audience.* Hire diverse staff members, seek out diverse representation on the board, and train staff and volunteers to be respectful and tolerant of people from all cultural backgrounds.
7. *Become a visitor-centered institution that works hard to meet the needs of your constituency.* Invest as much time in cultivating relationships with your audience as you do with potential donors.

Multiculturalism is not a trend, it is not a particular audience, and it is not a means of generating future capital. It is a value, a philosophy, and a way of looking at the world (Nieto, 2004a, p. 354). For American art museums to become inclusive institutions, they cannot think of multiculturalism as a “program” they run with inner city kids or a targeted marketing campaign created to bring more African Americans into the museum. For museums to make real progress in establishing relevance in our multicultural society, inclusion must be the driving force behind every decision and every activity they take on.

Implications

The purpose of this investigation was not to create a one-size-fits-all solution to cultural diversity policies and practices in American art museums. Rather, the purpose was to show the complexity of becoming an inclusive institution. Because there is not a single approach to multiculturalism that will work in all art museums, institutions must look closely at why they wish to be more inclusive.

Do you choose to become a more inclusive institution to fulfill your mission, to comply with regulations, to increase visitor attendance, to obtain public support, or to better understand your collection? Will your commitment end with the fulfillment of legal requirements or will you embrace ideas that move you beyond legality toward institution-imposed goals and standards? (Steuert, Jenness, & Jones-Ruzzi, 1993, p. 10)

An institution's reasons for addressing inclusion should inform the plan of action they take.

While each institution will choose to start in a different area of their organization, it is essential that their long term plans aim to implement multicultural practices in every function of the organization. Although the dimensions of multicultural education described by Banks (2004b) are theoretical ideals, they have practical applications that art museums can immediately implement. It is my hope that this paper inspires art museum professionals to broaden their understanding of multicultural education and to think more critically about the practices they currently use to address cultural diversity and social inclusion.

Recommendations for Further Study

Due to the limited scope of this investigation, a thorough case study of the Seattle Art Museum was not conducted. To truly understand how well the museum's cultural diversity practices are working, it would be essential to talk to museum visitors as well as individuals that choose not to visit the museum. The next step toward expanding our understanding of how multiculturalism is being addressed in American art museums is to conduct a comprehensive,

comparative case study. This study, which might focus on institutions that are taking steps to become more inclusive as well as those institutions that choose to remain exclusive, would add important qualitative evidence to the field of multicultural museum practice.

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