

# International Journal of Education & the Arts

Editors

**Tom Barone**

Arizona State University, U.S.A

**Liora Bresler**

University of Illinois at Urbana—Champaign, U.S.A.

<http://ijea.asu.edu>

ISBN 1529-8094

---

Volume 6 Number 14

November 21, 2005

## Drawing on Diversity in the Arts Education Classroom: Educating Our New Teachers

**Kari Veblen**

**Carol Beynon**

University of Western Ontario

**Selma Odom**

York University

Citation: Veblen, K., Beynon, C. & Odom, S. (2005, November 21). Drawing on diversity in the arts education classroom: Educating our new teachers. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 6(14). Retrieved [date] from <http://ijea.asu.edu/v6n14/>.

### **Abstract**

In this article, the authors discuss their attempts to make antiracist multiculturalism a reality in their students' future classrooms. They note that the literature is replete with examples of what not to do in trivializing curriculum, and they attempt here to take theory into praxis/practice by exposing and describing their strategies for engaging their students in antiracist multicultural understandings and activities.

Multiple diverse narratives in the classrooms of Canadian schools provide countless opportunities for arts educators to bring community into the classroom. However, research continues to show that new teachers still come predominantly from the dominant culture and will likely continue dominant traditions unless interventions occur that cause them to reflect on what and how they teach (Beynon, Veblen, & Bradford, in review). Realities of schooling and the crosscurrents of race, gender, and class compel educators to rethink culturally responsive curriculum. In this paper we describe the strategies that each of us used with prospective arts teachers in our university classrooms to educate them about issues of diversity and the necessity for inclusion. The purpose of this paper, then, is to explore means of bringing pedagogical

strategies in antiracist multicultural education to our future teachers, such that these teachers of the future might embrace antiracist multicultural education in his/her own practice.

Over the past 50 years, there has been a growing awareness of the necessity of inclusion in education. Popular understandings of diversity have been reframed over time from initial thinking about immigrant contributions (1900-1940), through the civil rights movement (1960-70s), to more recent interpretations which seek to encompass the voices of disenfranchised groups such as women, gay/lesbian/bisexual persons, people with differing abilities and others (Campbell, 2002). Paradigm shifts within the profession challenge educators to seek new philosophies, policies, and models for teaching.<sup>1</sup> Interpretations of diversity have also changed dramatically over the past 25 years, from the early attitudes of assimilation, to multicultural education (where many *other* cultures, but not the dominant white traditions, are seen as ethnicities so that common culture is still supported), to antiracist multiculturalism where whiteness is seen as an ethnicity itself. In classrooms that feature antiracist education, teachers and students are encouraged to become border crossers and engage in dialogue and critical reflection about what it means to bring a wide variety of cultures into dialogue with each other.

In antiracist multicultural education, teachers seek to help students understand how differences emerge and relate to networks of hierarchies of power, privilege, and domination. McMahon (2003) encourages teachers to deconstruct, dismantle, and reconstruct existing hegemonic formations where teaching and learning occur. She notes “a commitment to antiracist multiculturalism moves away from the ‘stomp, chomp, and dress-up’ strategies adopted by many educators” (p. 267). In other words, developing an antiracist multicultural curriculum is not about celebrations within and additives to the curriculum; it is an integrative process that is woven consciously and inextricable through the entire curriculum.

In particular, music, dance, and related arts offer rich modes to understand the ways-of-life of a culture or group of people. While “a thousand flowers”<sup>2</sup> have been blooming in each of the separate arts areas, each discipline adds a special contribution to the whole of arts education. Research and curricular work in music (Campbell, 2004; Lundquist & Szego, 1998; Volk, 1998), dance (Marich, 1991; Prevots, 1991; Schwarz, 1991) and visual arts (Adejumo, 2002; Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001; Johnson, 2002; Noel, 2003) have generated a body of theory and practice. Educators working with pre-service, teacher preparation, in-field, and graduate levels have explored various approaches to multicultural education (Campbell, 1991; Emmanuel, 2003; Lundquist, 1991; Fraser, 1996; Moss, 2000). And yet, there is much more work to be done.

As we considered existing educational programs that attend to diversity, we realized many approaches were crafted to fit objectives and expectations. The teaching moments were often “packed” into the rest of the curriculum without interacting or challenging any other learning – perhaps accommodated as an extra or a onetime event. Sometimes, the song or dance happened as part of a seasonal celebration, or as one in a series of unrelated things from different places, as McMahon’s view of ‘stomp, chomp and dress up’ describes.

If one were to visualize a “packed” curriculum, it might appear as an enclosed square with discrete and unconnected rows of information. At certain points, a unique and unrelated figure emerges as something different even strange is added into the curriculum. This exotic addition will

---

<sup>1</sup>Ladson-Billings (1995) notes four major trends in teacher education for multicultural education: increased use of autobiography, guided field experiences in diverse settings, examination of “situated” and “culturally specific” pedagogy, and learning from successful teachers in diverse classrooms (Allen & Labbo, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> “Let a thousand flowers bloom,” one of Chairman Mao’s slogans during the Cultural Revolution, exhorted the Chinese people to embrace new ideas from many different sources.

likely stand apart, clearly unrelated to the stacked information. This is often how multiculturalism or diversity is brought to the classroom setting – in disjointed and alienated ways – not intentionally to mark difference and strangeness, but because this is the only knowledge or experience or time that the teacher has at his or her disposal. Frequently, the addition accompanies celebrations or one-time events, seldom reintroduced, repeated or integrated into the curriculum.

Although instructional materials enable the teacher to teach a song or dance more efficiently, such materials provide a small part of cultural knowledge. It is necessary to probe more deeply and critically into the nature of cultural knowledge and to take account of different modes of learning.<sup>3</sup> The meaning and function of a specific work, song or dance cannot be assumed without fuller awareness and immersion in context. Therefore, understanding diversity through the arts invites integration of knowledge. (Barrett, McCoy, & Veblen, 1997).

With this knowledge and background in mind, the authors of this paper sought a more dynamic and fluid model for curriculum development. We are three women of dominant culture who teach at the university level in Ontario, Canada, each with a slightly different take on the arts and education and each working with a slightly different audience clientele. We had initially designed our courses to meet the needs of our students and the basic gaps in music, dance and arts education *vis à vis* antiracist multicultural education. Each of us fashioned curriculum to suit our particular case; however, when we compared our results, we found much common ground among our practices and in the reasoning behind these strategies. The commonalities and complementary nature of our approaches led us to this discussion and to ideas about what we might do if we were to plan an interactive program in the future.

The need for new approaches and new points of departure in our subject areas led us to investigate using heritage and cultural knowledge of class members to teach dance, arts, and music from the world – or from those parts of the world that could be honestly addressed.<sup>4</sup> In each case we created a learning lab. Using the resources at hand (our own personal experiences and the personal experiences of students) we challenged individuals to craft experience and teaching models. Since there was no given text or well trodden curriculum to enact, we tried to think about and understand cultural knowledge in new ways. The following three narratives describe our forays into the unknown.

Our students ranged from novices to mature teachers. The first instance discussed below includes undergraduate music majors considering music education as a career option. The second population consists of graduate students pursuing teaching as a career, and preparing to teach through professional classroom instruction, guided practica in schools, and eventually music teaching. They aspire to be music educators, and are proficient musicians. In addition, many students at this level have experience teaching, as private music instructors or through informal contexts such as summer camps. The third group includes mature, proficient and experienced artists who teach and dance professionally, and are pursuing a master's degree in dance.

### **Kari's Experience: Initial Steps in Pluralism with Music Education Undergraduates**

*Although I prepared a course packet of readings and a tentative schedule of guest speakers well in advance, I must confess that I didn't know what to expect. The class roster revealed 17 names, a gender balance favoring women and a handful of ethnicities beside the dominant Anglo-Canadian. The first priority was to find out who the students were. I hoped that the initial orientation would sharpen the focus of the semester.*

---

<sup>3</sup> The ways in which the song or dance are transmitted are also part of the cultural context.

<sup>4</sup> By *honestly* addressing, we mean that it may not be appropriate or possible to work with every kind of dance, art or music.

The first case study explores a “new” course created for undergraduate music majors who are considering music education as a career option. The course introduced students to issues of music, education, culture, and diversity in the classroom. At the forefront were trends and topics in multicultural music education such as authenticity, appropriation, the educational implications of cultural relativity, music education as an agent of social reproduction and/or transformation, and social relations implicit in various musical instructional practices.

While articulation of issues was important, practical pedagogy offered a necessary and complementary component. Students needed to sing, move and teach – and to acquire the mindset enabling them to find out about different musics and how to work tangibly with them in a respectful way.

Our first exercise was intended to give two soundings over] the vast terrain of “all music in the world.” Students brought in one minute of music they felt was part of their musical home: comfortable, familiar and easy. Popular music and music from childhood were favorites. One student sang a song she composed while driving the tractor on her family farm. Another student from Romania played instrumental music from her native land. A second one-minute selection represented a contrasting “exotic” choice – something unfamiliar, perhaps incomprehensible. The student choices can be seen in Table 1. Students were surprised to notice that one person’s familiar was another’s exotic. This brief moment of surprise allowed individuals to consider how the familiar might become strange AND how the unfamiliar might become recognizable.

**Table 1**  
**Class Assignment Familiar to Exotic**

FAMILIAR	EXOTIC
“You light up my life” (Music box in childhood w/ ballerina)	“Northern Lights” 1 <sup>st</sup> nations
Kataline Koatzh, Hungarian pop	Fanfare Tvo Carlia, Balkan brass group
“I’m going to live forever” musical Fame	Spanish classical style guitar
“Rose, Rose” round sung in car with family	Korosutra, Buddhist text, U of C chamber choir
“Seagulls” song made up while on tractor	“How I used to adore you” Lebanese pop song
ET film theme by John Williams	“7 years in Tibet” film theme by John Williams
Monkey’s medley form the Mini-Pops	Theme from “Power of One” film
Song from group Plum, similar to own song	Calgary band Barrage playing Calypso from Trinid
Romanian instrumental music	Chinese zheng music
“With or without you” Irish pop group U2	Japanese cello, new composition
“Take 5” jazz by Brubeck	“Birds in Forrest” Cantonese song
“Fox & Box” by Dr. Seuss	National anthem of South Africa sung in Zulu
Steven Curtis Chapman, Christian rock	Orchid Ensemble, urhu, zheng & marimba
“Jolly Roving Tar” by Newfoundland group Great Big Sea	Native group from Mexico
Miriam Yeung, Cantonese pop	South African Zulu choral music
“Streets of Laredo” traditional song sung to father	Jew’s harp, Sakha musicians, Eastern Siberia
Jive Kings, swing, from PEI	Korean group playing children’s music

Thus, a personal challenge emerged from this exercise: how to move from the familiar to the unknown, or simply from one piece of music to the other. This personal challenge would shape our dialogue. When class members began with private perceptions and understandings of

music from their own backgrounds, they immediately gained respect for all that music can embody (memories, emotions, imagination as well as musical attributes of melody, rhythm, harmony and expressive elements). As they imagined a route from what was well known to the unknown, possibilities for collaboration occurred spontaneously and naturally.

To advance this journey, each student taught a song from another culture. For this assignment, students needed to consult a recording of the song as sung by people from the culture (in order to come as close as possible to a credible version). They were encouraged to play the recording as part of their teaching. Although the time frame for teaching was short, students needed to convey as much context as possible. The repertoire that students chose was predominantly the simplest of songs such as lullabies, and children's songs. Students found most success when their song incorporated elements such as actions, games, repetition, and call and response. This assignment was difficult because of the problems locating appropriate songs, learning them well enough to teach confidently, and being able to serve up enough of the song's meaning and context to take the students to an emotional or comprehensible level.

Furthermore, even when students found the "right" song, they were frustrated in another way. Although the class consisted of trained musicians, they uniformly selected the simplest tunes to teach. Students were aware that they missed much because there was seemingly no advancement in skill. In particular, students who planned to teach at secondary level noted the lack of finesse and complexity. They wondered how would their future high school students react to these "baby" songs?

The next assignments stressed small group or partnering in designing and teaching mini-lessons based on themes such as finding authenticity in music, for example: African music (generalized or a survey) vs. musics from the many peoples in Africa (exhaustively specific). These smaller assignments focused on music's social nature, with special attention to the ways culture influences music perception, cognition, value, and the way musical practices in turn influence culture and social relations.

Throughout the term, we sang and moved in every class. Presentations burgeoned with maps, instruments, recordings, arts, foods, and other folkways. Scottish dancers, Irish fiddlers, an uilleann piper, a Finish accordion player, an ethnomusicologist, a philosopher, and an elementary music specialist visited. Students shared music from their heritages, which included Romanian, Cantonese, Dutch, and Hungarian songs and dances. The class also took a field trip to learn about and play on the Indonesian Embassy's Javanese gamelan in Toronto.<sup>5</sup>

The culminating project was based on musical genres chosen by the students. The guidelines for this project stated the target music should be in the spirit of creating something for use in the classroom. Adventures in the unknown and investigations of family traditions were both possibilities. I encouraged people to consult each other and to use personal connections generated in class. This interactive aspect brought certain serendipity to their research. The finished product incorporated interviews, observations and resources (text and recorded) into a packet of lessons for a chosen musical area and targeted towards a chosen school population. I structured the time frame and taught basic ethnographic techniques for interviewing and observation. Students recorded their cooperating tradition bearers' singing and playing as part of their work. Anyone who had helped with students projects was welcome to visit during the presentation and was the recipient of a copy of generated materials. However, the projects took

---

<sup>5</sup> Nur Intan Murtadza led this class.

much much more time and work than anyone anticipated. We finished classroom presentations with mighty effort.<sup>6</sup>

### **Carol's experience: The assignment from Hell!**

This segment explores how, during an intermediate-senior pre-service teacher education course in choral music, I draw on diversity and antiracist multiculturalism as a major component of the curriculum.

Traditionally, the students who take this compulsory course are music majors who have already completed an honors baccalaureate degree in music education or performance. These student teachers are representative of the norms of most teacher education students currently engaged in teacher education programs. That is, most are female students who come from a white, middle-class background. While their own experiences with diversity are limited, and more passive than active, the aspiring teachers in this class soon realized that they will likely be teaching in diverse classrooms where the students come from varying socio-economic backgrounds and from very different cultures than their own. For most of these teachers, their own schooling reflected the traditional norms of the dominant class with little or no attention to the concept of arts or music education in relation to others who now make up a significant proportion of pupils in the school system. They came to this classroom as unquestioningly supportive of the dominant culture and, for the most part, they saw themselves as separate from those of another culture. They did not see whiteness as an ethnicity; rather they saw whiteness as the norm and all others different in their understanding of a unified identity. They had little opportunity to consider the privilege of power and domination they assumed by their dominance in society. However, these attitudes and understandings usually occurred because of naïveté and were rarely intentional. While these student teachers have not experienced critical pedagogy, they are aware that they will be teaching in increasingly diverse classrooms and it is incumbent upon them to learn how to do this effectively. As a result, the students are motivated to have as many ideas and activities as they can in their arsenal for teaching and learning.

With these characteristics of my students in mind, I consistently tried to make critical pedagogy, antiracist multicultural education, and diversity a dominant theme of the learning experience in the teacher education classroom. Where possible, examples and sample activities involved alternative cultures to teach whatever general or specific concept was open for investigation. In this way, student teachers had at least some concrete examples to use in future planning. However, it became evident to me that, when observing peer-teaching in the university classroom or visiting the student teachers in their practicum classes, they still relied on the traditional and familiar canon of the western classics for teaching. If they engaged in something more inclusive it again featured the 'stomp, chomp and dress-up' view of multiculturalism. I realized that talking about antiracist multiculturalism and only providing examples was not sufficient to engage and commit prospective teachers to seeking out varied resources to teach a canon that is largely eurocentrically based.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Although I'd planned that everyone had copies of all the lessons and recordings of all music, this wasn't fully realized.

<sup>7</sup> Past investigations of the most recent music education policy documents in Ontario show that the curriculum is largely based on the traditional theoretical views of music education which are derived from western culture. Western concepts of musical structure and history predominate and are reinforced with examples from the traditional, dead white composers. (Beynon, Veblen & Bradford, in review).

As a result, a year-long assignment was developed requiring student teachers to go directly into diverse communities, as gatherers of traditions and songs that could be used in a classroom setting for teaching and learning purposes.

Within the first few weeks of the course, the students were asked to identify a non-western based cultural community whose children would be pupils in public schools.<sup>8</sup> Non-western communities were selected because there were fewer resources in the curriculum and fewer teachers and groups of pupils in the schools representative of other cultures. The exception to this restriction on selecting a community was the French-Canadian community; students could use either francophone or Acadian cultures in which to immerse themselves. Students were also encouraged to engage with a First Nations community if they so chose.

Students were required to identify a community and to meet members of the community using any initial contact they could, such as neighbors, friends or classmates, cross-cultural centers, and so on. This was likely the most difficult part of the assignment; however, all students made contact and were subsequently welcomed into a variety of communities for various cultural events. Some students drew on peers they had met at the university to establish contact, others went out of their way to get to know neighbors in their own home towns or in their apartment buildings at school, and some drew on their own family background. This proved to be one assignment where the few minority student teachers in the class finally had an advantage: they could share their own cultural heritage and become the tradition bearers for their own communities.<sup>9</sup> Because of the cultural and social capital of their community they were in a dominant position in regards to completing the assignment.

In each case, the students chose and wisely. They immersed themselves with growing enthusiasm and ownership in the project and they were involved in just about every culture from Native Canadian to the subcontinent.<sup>10</sup> The students reported that they were welcomed warmly into the diverse communities – into people’s homes and for special events – and they learned with a personalized intensity.

In order to prepare themselves for the oral history they would collect prior to going into the community, students researched the history, culture, socio-cultural, and political aspects of that particular community through books, journals, internet sources. Once in the community, their task was to experience as much of the community as they could through whatever means the tradition bearers could and would share with them. Some students attended festivals, feasts, and/or celebratory functions; others were invited into homes and became part of family celebrations for both everyday and special occasions. In each case, one person from that community voluntarily and freely assumed ownership in the project with the student and ensured that the outcomes of the project were met. Minimum amount of time to be spent in the community or number of visits

---

<sup>8</sup> By non-Western communities, we mean those that are not from the dominant white immigrant groups who came to Ontario as settlers. Therefore European communities, such as British, Irish, Scottish, German, and Italian could not be chosen for this assignment.

<sup>9</sup> In each of the 6 classes where this assignment has been used, there has always been at least one minority student who was able to share his/her own cultural traditions. Not only did these students become the experts for once to their dominant peers, but they became the culture bearers to their own communities, drawing on grandparents and other elders’ knowledge, adding to their own sense of pride.

<sup>10</sup> Countries and ethnicities used in past years include various communities within the Indian culture, Central American countries, South American countries, the Caribbean, former countries of the Soviet Union as well as other Eastern European countries, Africa, middle eastern countries, Asia, religious groups such as Hinduism, Islam, Ba’hai, First Nations groups such as Iroquoian and Ojibway, as well as French Canadian and Acadian folks songs.

were not specified during the initiation of the project. Students were advised to participate and study within the community as frequently and as long as they were invited to do so.

Students were asked to have a tradition bearer of the community teach them a song representative of the community's oral tradition. The song may not have been written down in standard notation. A traditional song was described as standard and well known to that community as "Happy Birthday" might be in traditional white Ontario. Students were asked to learn the song and advised to audiotape the singer – if permission was granted. Once learned, student teachers were to transcribe the song to notation using Finale.<sup>11</sup> Although students were advised they did not necessarily have to use standard notation, in every case standard notation was used.<sup>12</sup> Finally, students were to then arrange the song to be used in a choral setting within their own classroom. Students could choose to arrange the new song for unison, two-part, SSA, TTBB, or SATB choral group with or without accompaniment. Attention to the tradition of the song was to influence the choice of how to arrange the song for singing in the classroom. Once the arrangement was completed, students were to take it back to their community-resource person to assess its accuracy and appropriateness before submission. Once this part of the project was completed, student teachers were asked to develop a unit of lessons around their song.<sup>13</sup> Next, students were given time in class to share with their peers about the community and the song. Often, the tradition bearer from the community came to that class with the student teacher to offer assistance, support, and act as a resource. The presentations often included not only the learning of a song, but dance presentations, food, and speakers. Finally, the songs were rehearsed, performed, and digitally recorded by the class for compilation on a CD-ROM. Additionally, activities were compiled with an accompanying songbook for each of the students in the class, supplying them with a resource to take with them into their future teaching communities. The assignment provided two strategies for the teachers to find curriculum materials to ensure an inclusive curriculum: the first was the resource book and CD-ROM they compiled; the second was the knowledge of the need to assume their own initiative in seeking out materials in various communities.

This ethno-cultural assignment took the entire year to complete. Affectionately called "the assignment from hell" by the students, it is an assignment they repeatedly call back to say was one of the most useful tasks and resources they have ever had. They have described the benefits that have grown out of this activity. Over the years since their graduation, they consistently report back that they now feel free to ask community leaders and tradition bearers for support in teaching certain aspects in their classrooms. When necessary, they feel empowered to seek out help and resources. Also, the few minority students in the class report that they felt a new sense of respect and acceptance with their peers, which has boosted their confidence to also engage in teaching about diversity – their own and others, but they have earned a new sense of respect and appreciation from their own communities – something they had not experienced in their formal schooling until that point.

It would be naïve to suggest that this one activity would fix the lack of diversity amongst teacher candidates themselves. It does, however, allow one to move from a position of dominance in the teacher education classroom to one of diversity – to force the issue among the mainly

---

<sup>11</sup> Finale is the music software currently licensed by the Ontario Ministry of Education for use in schools.

<sup>12</sup> Standard notation was likely used because I encouraged the students to use this opportunity to become acquainted with the Finale software as they would be using it in future years in the schools.

<sup>13</sup> Of course, students were to construct the lesson within the policy guidelines of the Ontario curriculum for that grade level.



dominant culture, novice teachers who represent education of the future. Ideally, the assignment requires them to think about, conceptualize, teach, present, and, hopefully, internalize what diversity in action means in the classroom. At the very least, it brings the communities into the teacher education classroom and hopefully into some of the classrooms of Ontario to at least a small extent.

### **Selma's Experience: Dancer/Teachers Collaborate in a World Dance and Music Course**

In 2003, I taught a graduate-level seminar at York University called World Dance: Global and Local Perspectives. Its purpose was to investigate the vast spectrum of dance, particularly as we can experience it in Canada. The students involved were experienced artists, teachers and dancers pursuing graduate study in dance.

Since the 1970s, Toronto's Harbourfront Centre has supported multicultural dance through programming such as the World Moves performance series and the Rhythms of the World summer festivals. Other community organizations and centers present many performances and opportunities for dance study, and culturally diverse dance companies and independent choreographers are active throughout the Metro Toronto area. The Ontario school curriculum attempts to introduce young people to world dance and music. In this rich context, I envisioned the course as an exploration of ways to understand and represent the diversity of world dance.

The flyer I circulated electronically across our huge urban campus attracted one student each from Education and Environmental Studies, in addition to six students from our MA program in Dance. At the first meeting, I explained my hope to draw on the heritage and cultural knowledge of the class. From the circle of introductions, it was clear the students liked the idea of collaborative, interactive work. I soon discovered that this small group embodied a great range of dance knowledge. My strategy for eliciting this information was a quick written survey:

1. What do you dance?
2. What are your parents' or ancestors' backgrounds?
3. What dance or cultural knowledge can you teach or contribute?
4. What dance and cultures are you most interested in studying?
5. Why did you choose this course?

A day or two later, I compiled their responses and circulated them by e-mail to the class. The question "What do you dance?" drew a long list of dance and movement practices ranging from Aboriginal, Ballet and Capoeira, to Tap, Waltz and Yoga.

Their responses to "What are your parents' or ancestors' backgrounds?" included: British, Chinese, First Nations, German, Iranian, French, Romanian, Spanish and Trinidadian people.

The students had background in martial art and music as well as many types of dance. Four are professional dancers and choreographers, and all had teaching experience. They offered to share, in addition to Ballet, Improvisation, Jazz, Modern and Tap, Capoeira, Chinese folk, Chinese Han, Chinese military, Highland, Iroquoian social dance and song, Persian, Pop Wow and Senegalese dances, as well as Karate, Kendo and Tai Chi.

For the second part of our first meeting, we went into the studio and jumped into an improvisation and exchange on ways of walking. Interestingly enough, though I hadn't yet read the surveys, I had planned a set of activities that addressed one student's response to the question "Why did you choose this course?" She wrote, "to find out how different cultures do basic movements differently."

I asked the students to walk anywhere at any speed in the room. After we had moved in silence for five minutes or so, I asked them, as we continued walking, to attend to how the foot falls and leaves the floor, and how they experience their weight in contact with the ground. I asked

them to notice each other: “how does your individual uses of time and space differ from others?” and “what relationships and patterns unfold while walking?” We commented on differences we observed in stance, gait, demeanor, focus, the feeling of pulse and energy in the steps. We also talked about how this walking—ourselves barefoot in a dance studio improvisation—differed from our daily ways of walking, to catch the bus or take a stroll.

Next, we formed three groups of three. Each person chose a special walk, a way of stepping from a dance or martial art they knew, and taught it to the others. Then in turn each team demonstrated its three ways of walking and taught them to the whole class. Within an hour, our learning included a Kurdish folk dance step with a bobbing torso and head motion, “like a duck”; a Chinese opera walk made up of tiny accelerating steps (to be performed in slippers with pompoms over the toes); and an Iroquois women’s shuffle dance and song.

Thus, from day one, we helped each other with observation and listening skills, developing our sensitivity to nuances and subtle details of movement. The Walking and Special Steps activities involved everyone in leading and following in a friendly, non-threatening way. Everyone was comfortable about volunteering to teach sections of subsequent classes.

High points included learning Six Nations dances and songs from Santee Smith, a West African call and response dance from Eddison Lindsay, and the Chinese Dai minority’s Peacock Dance from Su-Lin Tseng. As we progressed through the term, there was fascinating discussion of decisions about activities: what to do, how to do it, what stories to tell, which cultural contexts to evoke or explain, what to show through mini-performances or video clips.

Meanwhile, our work also involved studying theoretical frameworks and resources for organizing and communicating knowledge of dance. We surveyed examples of earlier as well as current models, discussing written as well as audio-visual sources. We considered alternative ways of organizing the subject: geographical or chronological mapping; cross-cultural studies; and specific studies of function, training practices, genres and so on.

We made heavy use of major reference works, especially the *International Encyclopedia of Dance* and *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*, which present up-to-date research and bibliographies by leading scholars from around the world. We also consulted the array of dance and music resources in our library’s collection of videos and films, such as the series titled *Dancing* and the *JVC/Smithsonian Folkways Video Anthology of Music and Dance*.

For their major assignment, students researched and presented a written report in which they designed their own models for communicating some aspect of world dance. The titles of their projects show how they directed their work toward different educational destinations: a high school course in Persian dance, a unit to introduce Chinese dance in a university course, a community workshop on dance and activism, a plan for participatory world dance evenings for families, a seminar for dancers and teachers on West African dance, a jazz dance website and a world indigenous dance festival for the general public.

The course was a deeply satisfying experience for me and so it was, I think, for the class. The young woman from Iran, who had learned to dance secretly there before coming to Canada as a computer scientist three years ago, told me it “changed her whole idea of dance.” Another commented that she enjoyed doing work “that is actually useful.” One student has presented a paper on her project at the Popular Culture Association conference. The pattern of collaborations continued after the course ended through teaching exchanges, work for the Eco Art and Media Festival at York University and planning for the World Dance Alliance Global Assembly to be held in Toronto in 2006. We are still in touch, fellow travelers on a continuing voyage of discovery.

## Reflection

These three reports outline some of the positive and fruitful elements of our experiments with antiracist multicultural arts curriculum and our attempt to put theory into praxis/practice. Each of us sought to structure experiences that would allow students to reflect on social realities in the arts classroom.

As Sleeter, Torres, and Laughlin (2004) comment:

[Multicultural critical pedagogy] is a complex process of awakening, reflecting, learning from each other, and learning how to learn for oneself... Our aim has been to facilitate students' questioning of their own assumptions, and to engage them in issues that many would rather avoid. (p. 81)

A common thread woven through these accounts stresses empowerment – of ourselves as teachers to delve deep into our own unknown and untried. As we became more comfortable, we could then encourage empowerment of our students. There is neither canon nor one-size-fits-all mold for this kind of teaching. Cultural knowledge is dynamic; each individual teaches from his or her own evolving narrative. Likewise, each set of students can offer a unique configuration of heritages and attributes. Thus, knowing what one knows and being able to find what one needs are essential skills for deep teaching.

As seen in Table 2, our courses explored common themes. Through class exercises (Kari's journey from familiar to exotic, Carol's "assignment from hell" and Selma's walking and special steps), students were persuaded to 1) remind themselves of the value of their own and other cultures, 2) to try out different cultural lenses, and 3) to question hidden beliefs. The process balanced learning to value with learning to question. Our guides in and out of the classroom were people who knew how the song or dance should go because it belonged to them. Relationships with these tradition bearers were an essential part of valuing cultural knowledge. Critical examination of issues through course readings was furthered through participatory and ethnographic research.

Class members taught each other songs and dances, incorporating other arts and cultural context in the mix. This constant balancing and counterbalancing of learning, teaching, modeling, and questioning created energy. Students and instructors were inspired to continue the experiences and interactions after formal class was over. Another common aspect through all three experiences was work in multiple settings: individual assignments, partner work, small-group activities, and whole class collaborations. This variety helped integrate experiences and promote an environment of heightened sensitivity.

**Table 2**  
**Shared Themes in Teaching**

- Trying on different cultural lenses
- Learning to value
- Learning to question
- Ethnographic and Participatory research
- Theoretical balanced with experiential
- Multiple settings: individual, partners, small group, whole class collaborations
- Emphasis on learning in context
- Valuing tradition bearers

In the world of pop culture especially when considering collaborative and experimental teaching ventures, one usually reads/views glowing accounts of how the initiators faced down improbable odds to create new and exciting curriculum, motivate students, and achieve excellent results. Certainly there is an element of that glow in this account. However, if we frame it in the reality of teaching today, there were also a few dark moments and persistent impediments. These difficult areas may be best described through poultry metaphors such as 1) intrinsic motivation or why the hen crosses the road, 2) the Chicken Cannon approach to plurality, and 3) too much stuffing for one turkey.

### **Why the chicken crossed the road.**

The first problem we faced concerns motivation/ impetus. To help our students understand why this is so important, we ask the riddle: “Why did the chicken cross the road half-way?” The answer of course is “to lay it on the line.”<sup>14</sup> We feel that this issue is worth energy, focus, attention to detail, and enough time (the most expensive of commodities in education) to make experiential multicultural and antiracist education a large or critical part of the text of our teaching. We realize that some of our students do not agree. For students of the dominant culture, culture may be invisible, with no risk or engagement. However, persons of visible minority often do not have the luxury of ignoring ethnicity. We believe that the bottom line lies in meeting halfway – in noticing and using what individuals bring to the equation. Future teachers need to address their own and their students’ heritages and realize the significance of including or excluding cultural knowledge.

### **The chicken cannon**

The next area of difficulty was our full-bodied and robust approach to pluralism. Our emphasis was on listening, seeing, and moving *in context* – with understanding of more than the single song, picture, or dance. We wanted our students to experience more of the music, dance, or arts than simply an aesthetic exposure or ‘stomp, chomp, and dress up’.

We describe this method of antiracist multicultural arts education as “the Chicken Cannon approach.” The Royal Canadian Airfarce, a popular Canadian comedy team, has an on-going skit that never fails to satisfy television viewers. Periodically the RCA selects the picture of a politician or other public figure to serve for target practice. They then load the Chicken Cannon with all manner of ammunition (spaghetti, cream pies, dog slobber etc.) and with appropriate pomp, fire upon the target, making a satisfactory mess. We justify this approach feeling that the arts “come” like this (in a batch of contextual bits and pieces). Using this method, our target does receive some substance. However, whether the material is actually of great consequence, merit, or longevity is uncertain. This approach is messy and hard to quantify. How can we know when enough context is enough? When the context is the right context? How to measure significant learning?

Some critics of multiculturalism in arts note additional questions. Stinespring (2001) lists six “symptoms of misapplied postmodernism”: The acceptance of anything done in the name of art as equal in value to anything else proclaimed to be art

1. An inability to distinguish masterworks from any . . . expressions emanating from popular culture
2. Rejection of broad-based standards or judgment about quality

---

<sup>14</sup> A second variation queries: “Why does Ernest Hemmingway’s chicken cross the road?” The complementary answer: “To die. Alone. In the rain.” This variation could be seen as the worst-case scenario for non-inclusive curriculum.

3. Rejection of creativity or originality as personal contributions of individual artists
4. Insistence that all artistic expressions make a statement about socio-economic and/or political matters while implying there is a correct position on these issues
5. The insistence on accepting postmodern theories on the grounds that they support multiculturalism. (pp. 13-17)

Other commentators on pluralistic arts education maintain that the complexities of high art surely deserve more attention than ephemera (Eisner, 1994; Smith, 2002). For example, while supporting the benefits of multiculturalism, Best (2002) notes that he feels constrained if he implies that a fugue might be better than a birthing song.

### **Stuffed turkey**

Our final poultry metaphor represents a third area of difficulty that we experienced in our teaching, referring to a situation that North Americans experience on a regular basis at times of celebration when there is a surfeit of bounty. The centerpiece of many feasts is the turkey, usually stuffed with savory dressing of chestnuts, mushrooms, celery, onions, bread, sage and herbs, then roasted to a brown shellacked perfection. While celebrating nature's bounty, revelers often consume too much rich food and lament later that they feel gorged. Our students expressed some dismay that they felt the same way after these courses – too much material to experience, digest, and then share with others. They did not yet have a sense of having mastered the material, even though they worked with easy, repetitive children's songs, dances and games from that culture rather than any complex forms. Several influential writers (Chalmers, 1996; Jorgensen, 1998) agree that an exhaustive multicultural approach to pedagogy may prove to be overwhelming.

### **Summary**

We have explored strategies and principles each of us used in our university classrooms with prospective arts teachers to educate them about issues of diversity and the necessity for inclusion. We described the "glow" of exciting curriculum as well as the realities we faced. Each of us devised assignments appropriate for our students, only to find common themes as we reflected on these afterwards.

Our approaches stress ways to connect and engaged involvement.<sup>15</sup> Rather than imparting a certain number of procedures to sing a song or dance a dance, we worked to open our students and ourselves to the diversity of possibilities. We found it beneficial to work to understand what we do not know as well as what we do know.

We, as instructors, and our students sought to move from a situation of curriculum "packing" to a fluid mode of exploring possibilities. Rather than trying to pack in everything – to "cover" the world, present representative cultures, or to explore components of music and movement globally, we worked to move from a comfort level of the known to the unknown. We sought to give structure through various exercises, but also to develop, nurture, and protect the new themes that emerged. We tried to accommodate and integrate previous knowledge with new experiences.

Our experiences indicate that once students had opportunity to encounter the unfamiliar and consider ways to make it familiar, they are more equipped to incorporate that process in their

---

<sup>15</sup> By good involvement, we mean that students interacted in as full-bodied and satisfying ways with music, arts and movement in cultural context as possible.

own teaching. The same was true for us as instructors; as we moved from our comfort level to a place of risk. We opened ourselves up to the unknown and to a more fluid mode without the guarantee of “packed” outcomes. As instructors and students sought to understand the pathways, strategies, and principles for respectful collaboration, we were more able to recognize and seize natural opportunities for diverse and rich arts experiences in the classroom.

## References

- Adejumo, C.O. (2002). Considering multicultural art education. *Art Education*, 55(2), 33–39.
- Allen, J., & Labbo, L. (2001). Giving it a second thought: Making culturally engaged teaching culturally. *Language Arts*, 79(1), 40–53.
- Ballengue-Morris, C., & L Stuhr, P. L. (2001). Multicultural art and visual cultural education in a changing world. *Art Education*, 54(4), 6–13.
- Barrett, J. R., McCoy, C. W., & Veblen, K. K. (1997). *Sound ways of knowing: Music in the interdisciplinary curriculum*. New York, NY: Schirmer.
- Beynon, C. A., Veblen, K. K., & Bradford, K. (2005). Culture as curriculum: Controversies in music education. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Best, H. M. (2002). Lemonade or merlot? Authentic multiculturalism and high culture. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 104(1), 3–11.
- Campbell, P.S. (2004). *Teaching music globally*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Campbell, P.S. (2002). Music education in a time of cultural transformation. *Music Educators Journal*, 89(1), 27–33.
- Campbell, P.S. (1991). *Lessons from the world: A cross-cultural guide to music teaching and learning*. New York, NY: Schirmer.
- Chalmers, F. G. (1996). *Celebrating pluralism: Art, education, and cultural diversity*. Los Angeles, CA: The Getty Education Institute for the Arts.
- Eisner, E. (1994). Revisionism in art education: Some comments on the preceding articles. *Studies in Art Education*, 35(3), 188–191.
- Emmanuel, D. T. (2003). An immersion field experience: An undergraduate music education course in intercultural competence. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 13(1), 33–40.
- Fraser, K. (1996). Teaching world dance to the general student body. *Impulse*, 4, 142–161.
- Johnson, L. (2002). Art-centered approach to diversity education in teaching and learning. *Multicultural Education*, 9(4), 18–22.
- Jorgensen, E. R. (1998). Musical multiculturalism revisited. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 32(2), 77–89.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Multicultural teacher education: Research, practice, and policy. In J. Banks & C. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (pp. 747–759). New York, NY: McMillan.
- Lundquist, B. R., C.K. Szego, Nettle, B., Santos, R. & Solbu, E. (Eds.). (1998). *Musics of the world's cultures: A source book for music educators*. Reading, UK: Callaway International Resource Centre for Music Education for the International Society for Music Education (ISME).
- Lundquist, B. R. (1991). Doctoral education of multiethnic-multicultural music teacher educators. *Design For Arts In Education*, 92(5), 21.
- Marich, A. (1991). Multimodels for multicultural dance. *Journal Of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 62(2), 4.
- McMahon, B.J. (2003). Putting the elephant into the refrigerator: Student engagement, critical pedagogy and antiracist education. *McGill Journal of Education*, 38(2), 75–91.
- Moss, S. (2000). Learning from Latina students: Modern dance meets salsa and merengue. *Journal Of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 71(3), 39–42.
- Noel, J. (2003). Creating artwork in response to issues of social justice: A critical multicultural pedagogy. *Multicultural Education*, 10(4), 15–22.
- Prevots, N. (1991). The role of dance in multicultural education. *Journal Of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 62(2), 34–35, 48.

- Schwartz, P. (1991). Multicultural dance education in today's curriculum. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 62(2), 45.
- Sleeter, C., Torres, M. N., & Laughlin, P. (2004). Scaffolding conscientization through inquiry in teacher education. *Teacher Education Quarterly* 31(1), 81–90.
- Smith, R.A. (2002). The new pluralism and discipline-based art education. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 104(1), 11–16.
- Stinespring, J.A. (2001). Preventing art education from becoming "a hand maiden to the social studies." *Arts Education Policy Review*, 102(4), 11–18.
- Volk, T. (1998). *Music, education, and multiculturalism: Foundations and principles*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

### About the Authors

**Kari Veblen** is an Assistant Professor of Music Education at the Don Wright Faculty of Music, University of Western Ontario in Canada. Over the past twenty-seven years she has worked as an elementary music teacher, research associate at the Irish World Music Centre (University of Limerick), and as a curriculum consultant to orchestras, schools and community groups. Dr. Veblen's research interests bridge music, education, ethnomusicology and the arts. She currently serves as board member for the International Society for Music Education and as co-editor for the *International Journal of Community Music*, an open-access, peer-reviewed academic journal that publishes research articles, and practical discussions on all aspects of Community Music. (ISSN: 1550-7327 <http://education.nyu.edu/music/meducation/ijcm/>)  
Email: [kveblen@uwo.ca](mailto:kveblen@uwo.ca)

**Carol Beynon** is currently Chair of Graduate Studies in Education at the Althouse Faculty of Education, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada. She has taught music at elementary, secondary and university levels. Her research interests include music education in Canada, arts education, teacher development and identity and gender issues for males in non-traditional activities (i.e., singing). Dr. Beynon serves as co-artistic director of the Amabile Boys Choirs, London, Canada. These three different choirs feature about 100 boys and young men singing in 3 different choirs. The Amabile Boys Choirs have won national and international competitions, commissioned original works and released recordings.  
Email: [beynon@uwo.ca](mailto:beynon@uwo.ca)

**Selma Odom** is Professor of Dance History and Criticism at Department of Dance, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Her research focuses on dance, music, education and gender in the 19th and 20th centuries. With a background in English literature and theatre history, she has published many articles and reviews over the past 40 years, and her programs on the arts and women's issues have been broadcast on educational television. Professor Odom's most recent publication is *Canadian Dance Visions and Stories*, an anthology of writings on Canadian dance and dance artists past to present, co-authored with York dance professor Mary Jane Warner and published by Dance Collection Danse. Project currently under way include *Musicians Who Move: People and Practice in Dalcroze Eurhythmics*, a book based on extensive fieldwork and historical research; and a website on Joan of Arc in art and performance being developed by a team of York colleagues in dance, music and art history.  
Email: [selmao@yorku.ca](mailto:selmao@yorku.ca)



# International Journal of Education & the Arts

## Editors

**Tom Barone**  
Arizona State University, U.S.A

**Liora Bresler**  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.

**Executive Editor**  
**Gene V Glass**  
Arizona State University, U.S.A.

**Associate Editors**  
**Laurel Campbell**  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.

**Jason Helfer**  
Millikin University, U.S.A.

**Regina Murphy (2002-2004)**  
St. Patrick's College, Dublin City University, Ireland

**Tracie Costantino (2000-2004)**  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.

**Alyson Whyte (2002-2004)**  
Auburn University, U.S.A.

## Editorial Board

<b>Peter F. Abbs</b>	<b>University of Sussex, U.K.</b>
<b>Eunice Boardman</b>	<b>University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.</b>
<b>Norman Denzin</b>	<b>University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.</b>
<b>Kieran Egan</b>	<b>Simon Fraser University, Canada</b>
<b>Elliot Eisner</b>	<b>Stanford University, U.S.A.</b>
<b>Magne Espeland</b>	<b>Stord/Haugesund University College, Norway</b>
<b>Gary McPherson</b>	<b>University of New South Wales, Australia</b>
<b>Robert Stake</b>	<b>University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, U.S.A.</b>
<b>Susan Stinson</b>	<b>University of North Carolina—Greensboro, U.S.A.</b>
<b>Christine Thompson</b>	<b>Pennsylvania State University, U.S.A.</b>
<b>Peter Webster</b>	<b>Northwestern University, U.S.A.</b>