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Art Teaching and American Society: An Exploration of How Art Makes Us Think and Why America Needs It Right Now

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**ART TEACHING AND AMERICAN SOCIETY: AN EXPLORATION OF HOW ART MAKES US
THINK AND WHY AMERICA NEEDS IT RIGHT NOW**

A Thesis Submitted

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Designation

University Honors

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Preface-

The motivation for this thesis comes from my own experience as a learner, an artist, and as a teacher. When I was young, I was always fascinated with the idea of the unknown. Each new piece of knowledge I acquired was a part of the greater puzzle I had yet to understand. As I got older, I understood the value of new perspectives and how each person creates a personal relationship with the world around them. I saw how teaching was the art of bringing a person into and through a new realm of knowledge and thought. Each new realm was quite literally life-altering. Every step into the unknown brings forth countless possibilities and a more well-rounded vision of the self. This self-conceptualization is how an individual understands themselves concerning the context in which they exist.

In artmaking, I found new modes of engaging with the world. One that embraced a curious learner like me with many ideas and a drive to pursue the questions that drove me. Art has allowed me to engage with my questions and stretch my knowledge as no other subject has. Creating has always been my method of learning, the journey of building something new out of the old. To me, art is just a different form of thinking and understanding that relies on experience and personal interpretation. Being an artist has taught me that there is value to be found in many places. Especially in the unquestioned, overlooked, and standardized corners of the collective human experience.

In art classrooms, I have felt this very magical thing happening both as a teacher and student. I watched how students brought their intangible ideas to life and created the visions they had dreamt of. A partnership between teacher and student results in the creation of something entirely new. I wondered why art could operate so differently in the classroom and questioned why other subject areas did not have the same magical exploration.

From these questions came others, like why does being in school seem so limiting for many students? What exactly is happening in art spaces on a cognitive level? What would

education look like if we cultivated creative exploration for our students? How could that change American society?

This thesis is my way of creating a new vision for American public education, following my questions and searching for the unknown paths we could take. Utilizing my unique perspective as both an artist and an educator to explore all that art has to teach us and what we could learn from a new perspective.

Introduction

American education requires reform, with deteriorating material conditions and increased political tensions. In the discussion of reform, it is important to address the reason for public schools, the motivation behind education. Previous motivations of global competition and market demands have directly led to the worsening of education. Creating school cultures that cause students to be unmotivated, and teachers to be overworked. The American public education system should be motivated by imaginative multiplicity to repair the current situation of schooling and prepare students to meet the needs of a changing world.

This project's purpose is to articulate an alternative mindset and set of priorities for education based on practices in art or art education. This would encourage students to understand themselves as critical social agents able to imagine and participate in transforming their worlds.

I will first examine the negative norms of school cultures that inform the lived experiences of teachers and students. Specifically, the lack of interest from students, the influence of standardized testing, and the position of teachers. Sourcing these norms to specific legislation choices and greater motivations for education. I will use a theoretical framework to outline a new driving force for public education. Based on the practices of art education, I will

suggest the principles of curiosity, questioning, and reflection, to remake school cultures for the better. Lastly, I will examine the practical implications of the suggested shift in motivations.

Approach-

The design of this project has three main areas of discussion; previous drives of reform and implications, a theoretical alternative drive, and the possible implications and practice of suggested reform. The structure of this thesis reflects the dispositions I hope to see within the public education system, following curiosities, addressing what is not known, asking 'what if' questions, and connecting to personal worldviews. While this differs from traditional organization styles of research, it follows the journey I have taken to imagine a new approach.

Establishing Language-

Throughout this thesis, I will explore the concepts of creativity, curiosity, and critical thinking. While these terms differ slightly in meaning and application based on the researchers using them, the essence of these ideas is the same. *Imaginative multiplicity* is the term I will use in this research and can be described as the drive and ability to embrace new directions and multiple understandings all at once. It is a method of navigation between and through the known and unknown. Each person has an individual experience with imaginative multiplicity as it refers to the expansion into previously unknown territories. Imaginative multiplicity can only occur with connection to others, as that is how one is exposed to experiences other than their own. On a large scale, imaginative multiplicity is the navigation of the complex nature of the human collective. How we grapple with the differences between us, how we search for dissimilarity in perspective, and how we work to accept dissonance from norms.

Part I

Present in Context

In preparation for this thesis I asked my coworkers at the local restaurant this question; what do you think our education system does? They responded with things like “It was a waste of time, didn’t teach me anything that I use.” and, “It felt like they were pushing ideas onto me, putting people in a box.” As an aspiring educator, these comments saddened me, but I couldn’t help but agree. I had come to realize that these sentiments were the result of negative aspects of school culture. School culture is the generalized norms of educating, from specific classrooms to our entire public education system. Students are disinterested in content and unmotivated to participate, even when interest is present. Students feel that they are not ‘really learning’ just memorizing information and inundated with test-taking preparation. Teachers work with little to no resources, external support, or livable wages. A shared feeling of exhaustion, struggle, and frustration, animates many school spaces for both students and teachers. With issues as pervasive as these, it begs the question- how did this happen?

Disinterested and Unmotivated-

Any teacher will tell you the top priority of a classroom is getting students engaged in learning. Engagement through student interest and a willingness to participate is difficult to bring about in modern-day school spaces. Educator Eva-Maria Swidler writes “Not surprisingly, today’s children, subjected to planned curricula as early as nursery school and crushed by report cards with grades as tender kindergarteners, are reported to be losing interest in school as early as first grade.” (Swidler 115). Students are often not interested in the selective means of engagement and content areas. With a primary focus on STEM subjects, other subjects such as Art, History, English, Music, and more, are given less time and opportunity (Jennings and

Rentner 110-111). A confounding factor to disinterest in schools is less motivation and low self-efficacy. If a student does not believe that they can learn and achieve, they will cease to have an interest in trying (Swidler 116). Many students enter K-12 schooling without the proper background and support, with little to no guarantee from states to provide adequate preschool education for all (Jennings 11). After students enter school, there is not nearly enough funding to catch up to advancing peers, a trend not found in other countries. In contrast to the United States, most nations distribute funding equally to all students or allocate even more for those who are disadvantaged (Jennings 12). A STEM focus, low self-efficacy, and lacking support create barriers to learning and engagement. Instead of learning in a diverse educational landscape that calls for student interest. Students learn in school spaces that are restrictive with impossible challenges.

While STEM emphasis first comes from Industrialization, the sweeping federal movement comes from the 1980s and Ronald Reagan. During this time, school enrollment had endured a significant increase, and districts consolidated, becoming larger in size and more uniform in approach. As most teachers would readily admit, larger class sizes only make teaching more difficult. It is therefore not surprising that following larger enrollment numbers, the *A Nation at Risk* report of 1983 showed sinking test scores in the United States compared to other nations. In conjunction with Cold War anxieties, an educational shift began towards uniform teaching across states, and most notably, increased regular testing of STEM subjects (Thattai). Over time, the testing of such subjects became larger in number and more severe in consequence.

Learning for Tests-

In recent years, test-taking has become even more prevalent in the classroom taking a toll on educational spaces. The learning environment of classrooms is filled with points, scoring,

grades, and GPAs. Students are not just expected to engage in learning, but to recite information on cue, turn in assignments on time, and face deductions as punishment. The classroom becomes a place of quantitative data, ranking students by their ability to perform the labor of a student. Assessment can be used to determine the quality of instruction and provide the teacher with important insight into student cognition. School administrators, State departments, and the U.S. Department of Education can also analyze student data to make informed decisions on the educational system as a whole. While testing serves these purposes, the implementation of high-stakes testing has taken on a punitive form, involving practices of surveillance, labeling, and punishment.

From Bill Clinton to George W. Bush, assessments were used to distribute grants and decide funding allocation. Most notably Bush's No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Barack Obama's later editions of NCLB ideas; Race to the Top (RTT), and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). All of these were put in place to further standardize teaching methods nationwide, with the data tracking and accountability found in standardized assessments ("Race to the Top" and "Every Student Succeeds Act"). While RTT allocated money to states, it failed to address the gaps between disadvantaged schools and their high-achieving counterparts.

The amount of testing students endure has increased significantly as a result of these actions. Before 2006, only 19 states required annual testing for reading and mathematics tests in grades 3rd-8th and once in high school. After 2006, all states had such testing that also included other subjects like science (Jennings and Rentner 111). It is not clear if standardized assessments are truly adding benefit to students' learning, even with increasing scores.

With the high stakes of standardized testing, teaching to the test has become a norm within school cultures, especially in impoverished communities. School administration pushes teachers to ensure that all students will be able to perform well on exams. The added pressure on curriculum development and classroom policies alters collective understandings of knowledge and assaults the very possibilities for imaginative multiplicity. With the measurement

for school and student achievement being done through testing, that means that all learning must be testable. Teachers have to teach so that students will perform well, meaning they must teach the correct answers to standardized assessments. Standardized testing does not leave room for multiple understandings or subjective interpretations. The result of this type of education is that students learn one realm of education and are closed off from all others. Students are not allowed to follow their drive to understand multiple perspectives under this system, enclosing imaginative multiplicity. High-stakes testing makes it so that all students must learn and accept the facts taught to them, with deviation being punished and conformity rewarded.

Position of Teaching-

Teachers are central to the educational landscape, professionals who act as intermediaries between governing laws, administrators, parents, and students. Educators are responsible for all that happens within learning environments. The contextual factors of teaching have changed over the years, with teacher shortages happening all over the country. After the implementation of NCLB, over half of all states reported that they lacked the staff to fulfill the requirements of the law (Jennings and Rentner 113). RTT also affected the number of educators, with teachers whose students scored in the lowest percentile at risk of losing employment. Many teachers are choosing to leave the profession citing large class sizes, overbearing standardized testing, and the lack of sufficient pay and benefits. In comparison to other fields, teachers only make about 60% of what other workers with the same amount of education are earning. Other countries pay teachers at a rate equal to other fields (Jennings 11). For example, I know one teacher that works three other jobs on top of teaching full-time. Just this past year they were considering leaving the profession for good saying “My friend

offered me a job in a corporate HR position. I would get paid double my current salary and make more than I ever could as a teacher.”

Considering the dire working conditions of modern-day teachers, it is no surprise that the role of teaching has also been affected. Teachers are put in a position where they must reach the expectations of education policy, with the quality of their teaching measured through test scores. The culture of schools suffers under this weight, placing teachers as the transmitters of knowledge, keeping student interaction at bay, for they must memorize the content to perform well. They are not permitted to be the drivers of their own learning and personal development, which Ivan Illich describes as “disabling,” saying that teachers, while seeking to aid learning, make it so that learning cannot be done without them (Swidler 116). This is a result of an accumulation of legislation not designed to fit within teachers' working conditions. The creation of this legislation fails to consider the actual real-world situations of students, teachers, and the communities in which they live.

Part II

Motivations and Theory

Past Motivating factors-

As an incoming teacher, it feels as though education is on the brink, and I am nervous about heading into my teaching career. The more I learn about the past choices made for public education in the United States, the more questions I have regarding why government officials would have created such a system. I kept thinking about the end goal of educating, and what the purpose of the public education system could be.

All of the laws I have previously described come from certain ideas of what the public education system should accomplish for the American people. Reagan-era policies, NCLB, and

later editions of RTT and ESSA were said to help the United States compete with other nations, meet marketplace demands, and hold schools accountable for their performance. Are these reforms the best for our country and the individual lives of our students? From the current state of public education, it is clear that the historical motivating factors are not suited for us to face the most pressing issues of the day. With the unprecedented events of climate change, a global pandemic, and the fight for equality, our society needs new types of thinkers to tackle these divisive issues. Students with the ability to seek out what they do not know, understand others, and work outside of established norms. Imaginative multiplicity is needed to enact social change and find answers that are currently unknown.

The Theory of Ignorance-

This thesis deals with various ways of educating and approaches to knowledge, the movements of which can be hard to describe. *Social Theory of Ignorance* as written by Michael Smithson in the Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior gives structure to abstract educational concepts. This is the theory of the construction of Ignorance, claiming that what is not taught is part of the construction of knowledge and worldview. Specific elements of this theory will be addressed later on, but not the entire theoretical framework. This project's scope is not centered on this theory, but it is mobilized to describe more abstract concepts related to the behaviors around knowledge.

The theory of ignorance can be described as the in-depth analysis of ignorance and how it is constructed, regulated, and upheld within society. The most basic assumption of ignorance is that it is merely the absence of knowledge, which is true in some cases. However, ignorance can occur as the pressure to not process information in certain ways, labeling those methods as illegitimate or irrelevant. Ignorance is constructed when ideas and topics are purposefully withheld or avoided. Ignorance can also be constructed as realms of knowledge that are

withheld from certain social groups. Smithson offers this example: “Taboo topics are literally not for people to know, and the fact that a taboo is an enforced kind of irrelevance... taboo as a way of maintaining purity and the notion of relevance by observing that social intercourse requires the screening out of irrelevant organic processes” (115-156). This essentially means that we are socially required to only speak on decidedly relevant topics and ways of thought. Overall, the main characterization of the theory of ignorance is how attention -is or is not- directed toward what one does not know.

Smithson identifies several different kinds of ignorance. For this thesis, we will focus on two: meta-ignorance and conscious ignorance. *Meta-ignorance* is *not* being aware of what you don't know, while *conscious ignorance* is being aware of what you don't know. Meta-ignorance is reinforced by the unknowing individual and is maintained socially. Non Ignorant individuals choose not to enlighten the ignorant individual and do not allow them to seek out what they are missing. On the other hand, conscious ignorance is very useful, it is part of the process of discovery and forms a well-rounded worldview (156).

Smithson says that children first learn ignorance when “they find out that there is grownup business, boys find out that there is women's business, and girls learn that there are places which belong to a man's world”. These barriers teach children to stop asking questions about certain topics because the information they seek is not allowed to them (152). An example of this is when a young child sees a person who has a disability in the grocery store asking loudly “Mommy what's wrong with them?” The child is then shushed and told not to ask such questions. In this instance, the child's ignorance of differently-abled people is maintained. While ignorance is constructed in many areas of life, public education has the opportunity to deconstruct it. But when students are treated like the child in the example, barred from questioning and kept from certain worldviews. Their ignorance is maintained and reinforced.

Ignorance in Education-

The current education system promotes meta-ignorance by creating shame and hierarchy. Punishing students for not learning the 'correct' information in the 'correct way'. Students are graded on their test performance and the scores they receive follow them in GPAs and class rank. Smithson comments on this practice "Oddly, a norm which promotes the appearance of knowledge and condemns apparent ignorance is likely to generate meta-ignorance simply by encouraging people not to consciously attend to their own sense of ignorance." (Smithson 163). Students are shamed when they are ignorant of what is taught in schools, which keeps students from exploring their ignorance. When school policies promote conformity to standardized tests, students are effectively kept ignorant of all other realms of knowledge. Students leave schooling having learned that success comes from conformity, and deviation brings shame.

In the United States, students are pressed to stay 'on-topic' and to only focus on the information being tested. Through this, students are cut off from all circles of knowledge that are not a part of the curriculum. What is 'relevant' to the curriculum is decided by teachers, administrators, government officials, and corporate-sponsored legislation. An example of this enclosure is the teaching of history through primarily Westernized lenses. This results in teaching Pablo Picasso as a groundbreaking artist, while not mentioning that he took much of his inspiration from the design of African masks. Learning is limited to tested and state-decided information, leaving students ignorant of anything else.

The Proposition to Shift Motivations-

The dominant motivations for public education are market demands and competition with other nations. These motivations have created a culture of meta-ignorance. Teaching students

to reproduce predetermined sets of knowledge in the most efficient manner possible. Currently, the need for creative approaches to societal problems is evident.

I am proposing a shift for the American public education system, moving to a model that better serves the needs of individuals and the changing world. Shifting the education system to one that motivated to cultivate conscious ignorance and imaginative multiplicity. Conscious ignorance is the precursor to discoveries, with attention to the unknown needing to occur before undiscovered knowledge and perspectives can be sought after (Smithson 153, 155). This skill can be valuable when approaching never before seen challenges and promoting self-sufficient methods for personal change. Instead of pressuring students to conform, what would happen if we allowed them to discover and bring about change?

Part III

Towards a New Horizon

The basis for a new educational approach comes originally from the qualities of arts education, a subject area that champions the new and undiscovered. The proposed shift looks to address the previously identified aspects of school culture utilizing imaginative multiplicity. The guiding principles of this shift are curiosity, questioning, and reflection.

In Defense of Shift-

Some may claim that the qualities I am about to discuss are already present within our current system, citing that students are already prompted to ask questions, be curious, and reflect. This is partly true; every single day in schools students raise their hands with questions, fill out exit tickets as reflections and write essays on areas of interest. These instances are superficial applications limited to predetermined topics and only allowed at certain times. I would

describe this as the co-opting of curiosities. These instances are regulated, harvested, and harnessed on someone else's terms. Students are asked to keep questions to the end of a presentation, holding off the student's natural exploration of the content. Moments of reflection are only offered within the context of what is already a part of the curriculum rather than building from the student's current overall worldview. Essays are written to explore topics within the strict restraints of an argumentative or analytical style. In none of these examples can a student explore the content for their reasons and in their way. This is particularly true for students of color, low-income students, and those with students with disabilities. As their needs and prior conceptions are not adequately addressed in current school norms. Students are forced to approach knowledge using methods that may not support their cognitive needs.

Inspiration of Methods-

In one of my foundational art education courses, we learned not to show examples right away when students are in the process of brainstorming conceptual art projects. We were taught to instead let students cultivate their ideas first and then provide examples as ways to convey their ideas. This is an example of how art teachers have been able to teach abstract ideas and break them down for assessment purposes, while still affording differences in perspective and approach.

Art education has a long history of retaining its flexible nature throughout changes in school culture. From the birth of public education in the United States arts were included to support industrialization efforts. Horace Mann argued that drawing skills would improve handwriting and overall industrial craftsmanship. After being included as a subject in public schools, art educators shifted to discipline-based art education (DBAE). Disciplines, an alternative to school subjects, more closely resemble professional fields of inquiry, strengthening the connection between classroom activities and real-world uses (Efland).

Throughout art education history, we can see time and time again how the arts have situated themselves to promote imaginative multiplicity while still adhering to federal guidelines. Arts researchers called this a “hidden curriculum” of cognitive skills taught alongside government-mandated standards (Hetland 4). These habits are how art education provides students with skills, unlike any other subject area.

Guiding Principles of Change-

In the introduction of this thesis, I suggested the term imaginative multiplicity, the all-encompassing term for the individual drive and ability to embrace new directions and multiple understandings all at once. This idea is the primary objective of the proposed foundational shift and the bases for methodological choices. Imaginative multiplicity is used to direct students to become consciously ignorant so they are aware of what they do not yet know and have the ability to change the situation of unknowing. In the following section, I will address the negative aspects of school culture through three guiding principles: curiosity, questioning, and reflection.

Curiosity-

Curiosity is often looked at as the whimsical notion of young children investigating the world around them. Searching through dirt to find rocks and insects, or asking an infinite amount of ‘why’ questions. In reality, curiosity is the conduit to knowledge. In Eva-Maria Swidler’s *The Politics of Curiosity*, she defines curiosity as “a self-initiated urge that is, by definition, satisfied by an individual’s observations and own actions and deemed satisfied by a person’s own judgment, like an itch needing to be scratched” (111). By this definition, curiosity stands in direct opposition to disinterest and unmotivated norms of school culture. Curiosity is

the primary principle of imaginative multiplicity, the fire that fuels the search for new and multiple ways of knowing.

Regarding education, curiosity is not just the action of learning but the foundation *through* which learning occurs. Swidler later frames curiosity as a filter for attention that directs experiences (113). Neuroscience also supports this with background knowledge housed in schemas and neural connections. All new information must be intaken through the nervous system and added to existing neural pathways. Attention, and therefore curiosity, must be present for any type of connection to occur (Hammond 48-49). A student cannot process what they are not even aware of in the first place, and if they do not have a scaffold to build upon, then there is nothing to connect to. The theory of ignorance even states that “ Conscious attention to what one does not know must occur before learning or invention can take place, despite the apparent attempts on the part of Western educational systems to discourage exactly that.” (153). All of these frameworks point to curiosity as the first step of any learning process, whether that be learning conscious ignorance or neural development.

Curiosity's Death-

The tensions created by high-stakes testing, teacher shortages, and strict school accountability measures, all contribute to the death of curiosity. These practices result in curbing curious students to keep on track with the required material (Swidler 115). With the death of curiosity- subjectivity and conscious ignorance die as well. Curiosity requires the acceptance of not knowing and ambiguity before then reaching to wonder about them. As we already know, school cultures shame not knowing within the hierarchy of performance ranking. If the curiosity of a student depletes, Swidler warns that they will not have the desire to learn about the world and be without the drive to create change in it (114). Curiosity requires the ability to take curious actions such as questioning and reflection.

Questioning-

We have already established that questioning is an actioning method of curiosity, but it can also clarify or challenge an accepted reality. When students seek to clarify and further describe an idea, they maintain the motivation to continue learning. It can also make learning more authentic by leading learners to fully question and challenge content from their position. Rather than acceptance of information without first moving to question what they do not understand. In the show *Abbott Elementary* there is an episode where a new teacher learns the importance of engaging with student questions, even when they seem irrelevant. When asking the students a math problem about the number of chickens a farmer has, a student asks if one of the chickens is pregnant. At first, the new teacher dismisses the inquiry. Later on in the episode, his seasoned colleagues tell him that questions are vital to learning. Telling him that the student sees their question as relevant to the math problem, and needs an answer to move on. In this example, the student's learning was limited because their teacher did not leave room for student exploration. The student was kept from creating a wider understanding of the content based on 'relevance'. When students have their questions validated, they are prompted to continue asking questions and bringing in new perspectives. This has a wider social effect of calling into question norms that are often left unchallenged (Smithson 162). As far as the theory of ignorance is concerned, questions signify wading into the unknown far enough to voice ignorance. Questions are how imaginative multiplicity can first move away from old frameworks, and how we can reach cohesion between perspectives.

Quelling Questions-

In the structuring of ignorance, questions pose a threat to the decidedly relevant realms of information. Questions can destabilize established norms by bringing their legitimacy up for debate. Positioning questions at the gatekeeper of internal acceptance. When this action is hindered by disallowing questions to be asked at all, acceptance is imposed under force or false pretense. The theory of ignorance asks how knowledge-seeking behaviors are regulated and what stands in opposition to a question's full potential (Smithson 161). When the response to a question is limited to two opposing perspectives, a black-and-white way of thinking, it eliminates any real nuance or imaginative multiplicity (164). This format is frequently seen on standardized assessments and limits the interpretation of content to government-regulated and corporate-sponsored perspectives. Testing also discredits the power of questioning by requiring teachers and students to hold to one specific answer as the objective 'right' one. Swidler again warns against the unquestioned societal narratives as they frame and shape patterns of thought (Swidler 113). Without room to question norms and the ability to authentically answer given questions, learners either accept content at face value or lose motivation to pursue knowledge altogether.

Reflection-

The principle of reflection helps to regulate and ground imaginative multiplicity, while still allowing for flexibility and subjectivity. It is the process of directing one's curiosity through metacognitive questioning and in-progress critique. Reflection helps to guide curiosity to its end goal of expanding understanding. Reflection through directed questions can help learners self-assess the gaps in exploration and provide a moment of productive pause. It can inform the learner of the current position of their quest and help direct them toward scaffolded information. It can distinguish between elements, or combine separate ideas into one overall theme (Hetland 27). The timing of reflection can vary depending on the individual needs of a

student's cognitive process. The timing can also clue students in on the need for assistance and reevaluation methods of knowledge attainment. Reflection can assist in the authentication of learning and is a more effective method for quality assessment. During reflection, a student gets to self-assess the relevance of ideas, look for gaps in understanding and see all they have achieved. In imaginative multiplicity, reflection is the principle that balances all other aspects of education. It is the method for understanding positions in the overall context of the spectrum of knowledge.

Reflection and Critique-

Reflection does not have to be limited to just an individual and their work, for much value can be taken from collective reflection via critique. Critique as a communal praxis can enlighten students of unknown connections, cultivating conscious ignorance. It puts various abstracted elements into language, helping students explain what they see, think, and feel (Hetland 27). Each student is valued for their perspective and it helps to move past just the dominant bounds of knowledge. Teachers can guide students in imaginative multiplicity through group critique. Students can work to understand how others view their ideas and gain momentum to take an idea to the next level. Critique brings the students and teacher together as a supportive community in which everyone is celebrated for their conscious ignorance.

Part IV

Theory into Practice

Embracing the priorities and practices above could radically change schools for the better. However, some of these are already in practice in art education. We can look to art researchers Lois Hetland, Jillian Hogan, Diane Jaquith, Kimberly Sheridan, Shirley Veenema,

and Ellen Winner, and their Studio Habits of Mind as outlined in *Studio Thinking 2*. The studio habits of mind are how art teachers have been observed fostering imaginative multiplicity. The arts have prioritized habits of mind before content to improve learning in the long run. The eight habits are: *Develop Craft, Engage and Persist, Understand Art Worlds, Stretch and Explore, Envision, Reflect, Express, and Observe*. These habits are in conjunction with the National Standards for Art Education and thus work within the current framework of education. Making them practical methods for all teachers to utilize in their classrooms. In *Studio Thinking 2* the researchers outline in-classroom methods of implementing the Studio Habits of Mind.

Teachers as Guides-

Teachers can shift their role from the previously strenuous and counterproductive norms, into the guides of student progress. Educators can leave room for students to individually develop ideas and place scaffolding along the way. Through modeling and demonstration, teachers can provide students with previously unknown methods of learning, and students can decide which best serves their cognitive needs. By changing the role of teachers to guides and changing the culture of education, the material conditions change as well- with less pressure to teach to the test and then a more egalitarian distribution of resources. ■

Conclusion-

Implications of Application-

The implications of imaginative multiplicity and its aforementioned principles cannot be known at this time, as this thesis deals only with the theoretical shift of school cultures through differing motivations for reform. So this research is limited to current contexts and hypothesized

implications of application. Based on this research, however, it can be theorized that the effects of this shift would yield positive results for individuals and overall American society. By moving from meta-ignorance to conscious ignorance, graduates of public education will have the ability to move through unknown realms and cultivate the skills to become knowledgeable. An imaginative multiplicity-based approach would encourage individuals to seek out new ways of knowing and reward them for understanding those who differ from them. Fostering intrinsic motivations to becoming lifelong learners. Students of this system would be prepared to assess personal goals and take action to achieve them. Future research from this thesis would articulate specific classroom practices, analyze the cognitive implications of art teaching, and further articulate imaginative multiplicity in education.

Closing Thoughts-

The current public education system in the United States suffers from practices and legislation created to meet market demands and global competition. From this perspective, schools have been flooded with standardized testing, STEM emphasis, and poor teacher working conditions. The current system promotes meta-ignorance and encloses student learning to dominant ideas. Students are punished for deviation from the dominant norms, keeping them from being curious, asking questions, and freely reflecting.

Education cannot remain the way it currently stands because we cannot continue to perpetuate the inequities and limitations that have occurred. To repair existing issues in education, we need to consider utilizing imaginative multiplicity through curiosity, questioning, and reflection, from art-based teaching to create a better version of the American public education system.

For American society, this proposed educational model would accomplish more than thinkers able to regurgitate information. Instead, it would provide our nation with minds geared

to seek out the betterment of societal conditions. Imaginative multiplicity could help to mend political divisiveness and lead to discoveries that could, simply put, change the world.

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