

## Chapter 8

# No Child Left With Crayons: The Imperative of Arts-Based Education and Research With Language “Minority” and Other Minoritized Communities

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Since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, public discourse on “failing schools” as measured by high-stakes standardized tests has disproportionately affected students from minoritized communities (such as language, race, class, dis/ability), emphasizing climates of assessment at the expense of broader, more democratic, and creative visions of education (e.g., Jordan, 2010; Krashen, 2008). As advocates of the arts in education and multicultural–multilingual learning for all, we join a chorus of concern about the ways in which the “crayons” (synecdoche for all the “arts”) have started to disappear from public school learning and/or are solely included as handmaidens to improved academic achievement. Likewise, we are concerned about the ways diversity education has been strictly targeted at those “Other” students who “lack” the cultural capital expected for academic success in schools (O. Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010; Garda, 2011; Howard, 2006; Nurenberg, 2011).

In this review, we examine the literature on arts education with minoritized youth within landscapes of structural inequity, scientific rationalization, and a resurgence of the racialization of non-White communities and curricula in schools. We identify strong practices in arts education that aim to achieve social justice with both minoritized and majoritized populations. By minoritized youth, we refer to any and all who identify in contextually situated, nondominant communities such as race, class, sexual orientation, language, dis/ability, religion, and gender. As we identify such contexts, we are aware that minority/majority status is unstable and contingent. Despite variations and flexibility, we use this term to identify youth who turn to the arts to navigate their status as “outside” the norm in a variety of ways.

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We review scholarship, empiricism, and pedagogy that showcase the possibilities to humanize education through the arts with minoritized youth and their families by engaging in sustained, integrated critical practices in school and community settings. We highlight extraordinary, arts-based pedagogies that challenge current conceptualizations of discrete skills, discipline-based learning, and neutralized curricula. We question the narrow interpretation of standards and the existent empiricism that illuminates the impact of arts education programs as tools for “improving” the academic success of minoritized youth defined by these parameters. In particular, we propose that school-based practitioners learn from research conducted in out-of-school youth participatory and community-based contexts that emphasize linguistic and cultural diversity as essential curricula for all, as realized in part through the arts (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Noguera, Cammarota, & Ginwright, 2006; Pacheco, 2012; Soep & Chávez, 2010).

Projects addressing all forms of minoritization as well as responses to injustice, inequity, and discrimination are beyond the scope of this chapter. As scholars in bilingual, bicultural education, we focus primarily on practices with youth in contexts of linguistic and cultural minoritization, while suggesting how these practices might also provide possibilities for youth in other minoritized contexts. We work to understand how the arts facilitate a “culturally sustaining pedagogy” (Paris, 2012), one that engages the cultural and linguistic dexterity and plurality of young people’s cultural connectedness across seemingly discrete forms of minoritization.

Finally, we review scholarly turns toward arts-based approaches to research in education, documenting arts education in ways that increase public attention toward complexity, feeling, and new ways of seeing that make the ordinary seem strange and that decenter schooling as usual (Barone, 2000; Eisner, 1997). We examine the nuances of arts-based research—the hopeful possibilities as well as tensions and uncertainties regarding authorship, quality, literal utility (e.g., the value of answers vs. more questions or Barone’s [2008] “conspiratorial conversations”), validity, and generalizability (see Eisner, 2008). Just as scientific rationality and a competition-driven economy threaten arts education in schools, so too do they threaten alternative, postmodern empirical approaches that convey qualitative impact. We present some of the finest examples of arts-based research among minoritized communities that point toward scholarship that embraces the arts and showcases their possibilities.

Drawing a relationship across these three contexts—arts education, diversity education, and arts-based research—creates a dynamic possibility for transformative, humanistic school reform for, with, and about minoritized communities. Each area offers a unique and complementary set of practices that can engage academic knowledge, identity development, and social change in locally specific and relevant ways (Pennycook, 2010).

## ARTS EDUCATION “AT RISK” IN CLIMATES OF HIGH-STAKES STANDARDIZED TESTING

Driven by the priorities and evaluation indicators of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001, coined “No Child Left Behind” or NCLB, education reform leaders are currently concerned with the “achievement gap” related to race/ethnicity, gender, language, school location, and other characteristics. These achievement gaps are determined by standardized test results and encourage reformers to use technical, short-term interventions for those groups identified as “at risk” (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011; Trimble, 2005). The arts and minoritized education are positioned currently within a landscape of reform that emphasizes accountability and test score gains for those “at risk,” pushing toward budget cuts to educational programming considered not core.

This reform movement has created a bleak picture for arts education. Woodworth et al. (2007) studied California’s arts programming, finding that 89% of K-12 schools failed to offer a standard course of study with consistent scope and sequence based on California Standards in the four arts disciplines. Arts facilities and materials were lacking in most schools because of inadequate state funding and reliance on outside monies that create unequal access in schools. Current contexts for youth participation in the school-based arts are also bleak. Generally, youth engagement in arts education has dropped since the 1980s. Only 26% of African American youth and 28% of Hispanic youth report participating in the arts in schools, as compared with 58% of White youth (Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011). Limited access to arts in schools tends to have the greatest impact on minoritized youth, who tend to be hypersegregated in schools with more limited budgets, less culturally and linguistically responsive practices, and highly controlled curriculum based on discrete skill development (Gándara, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Martinez-Wenzl, Pérez, & Gándara, 2011).

Partnerships with community organizations and grant funders rarely result in sustainable capacity to provide arts-based instruction (such as the enrichment programs of the federal grant programs for the 21st Century Learning Centers in the early 2000s; see Chappell, 2006). Furthermore, much grant funding requires the demonstration of statistical achievement gains as measured through high-stakes tests, tests that are seldom valid tools of measurement for minoritized populations such as English language learners (Abedi, 2004; MacSwan & Rolstad, 2006) and that often erase structural inequities that place minoritized populations “at risk” in the first place (see critiques from, e.g., Underriner & Woodson, 2011, who studied the effects of drama education on obesity with indigenous youth in Arizona). In this way, granting agencies and arts education advocates often use discursive arguments that further marginalize the populations they hope to support.

Furthermore, there has been scant mainstream reform advocating for root cause analysis of general inequity in schools across different communities, let alone to reframe “achievement gap” discourse in terms of the racialization of intellect and

tracking of students of color, historic segregation policies and current de facto segregation in schools, and the abandonment of urban centers, among others (Anyon, 2005; Oakes, 2005). Currently, some educational theorists suggest reconceptualizing the achievement gap as an opportunity gap (Darden & Cavendish, 2011; DeShano da Silva, Huguley, Kakli, & Rao, 2007; Flores-Gonzalez, 2005). This term shifts the responsibility from individual improvement in test scores to an analysis of the practices in social, political, and economic institutions that deny equitable access to opportunities for minoritized youth resulting in lower achievement (among other effects) at the local level of classrooms. According to Darden and Cavendish (2011), such opportunity gaps include less experienced teachers assigned to high-poverty schools; schools treated as units within a district rather than considering differences within those units and reallocating funds according to need, resulting in decisions to treat students “the same” versus equitably; schools with larger numbers of “disadvantaged students” receiving less of the general education fund; a lack of culturally and linguistically responsive curriculum, instruction, and family partnerships; and higher facility maintenance in poorer neighborhoods without the money available to address those needs.

Yet despite such opportunity gaps in formal schooling, we have found substantially promising practices and products in the arts (as education and research) that address the question: What makes schools just, equitable, and inclusive for all children? Not that these arts-based experiences necessarily *close* the opportunity gap for minoritized communities, but they serve to illuminate visions of better futures, coming from the perspectives of minoritized youth themselves and their allies. Furthermore, these experiences are underscored by a growing criticism that schools reconsider the social outcomes of literacy learning with an expanded multiliteracies approach (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Vasquez, 2008). How can mainstream school reform advocates learn from these exemplars to complicate their visions for arts education and diversity education as a mode of “literacy and justice for all” (Edelsky, 2006) in schools?

### WHY MINORITIZED AND MAJORITIZED YOUTH NEED THE ARTS

In arts education advocacy, there is often a temptation to justify the inclusion of the arts (visual, dramatic, and performance art) in schools based on arguments for increased academic achievement in the tested content areas. In her book, *Why Our Schools Need the Arts*, Davis (2008) responds to seven common “objections” taxpayers and policymakers have against including arts education in public schooling, including constraints on curricular time, finances, challenges to valid assessment of learning, the artistic preparedness of all teachers, and the assumption that the arts remain available in community settings regardless of whether they are available in schools. On the defensive and to safeguard arts programs in schools, many well-intended advocates, past and present, turn to arguments that justify the arts in education in terms of other disciplines: for example, the arts raise CRCT, SAT, and other scores and increase students’ creative problem-solving abilities that transfer to other (*read: more important*) disciplinary knowledge in literacy, math, and science (Baker, 2011; Bauerlin, 2010; Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Deasy, 2002; Fiske, 1999).

Yet these justifications can truncate the dynamic, holistic qualities of arts learning beyond quantifiable skill acquisition. Davis (2008) astutely observes, "You are not asked to transfer something that has sufficient value in itself" (p. 46). She identifies the unique features of learning in and through the arts: tangible products created through imagination and agency, a focus on emotion through expression and empathy, an emphasis on ambiguity through interpretation and respect for multiple points of view, an orientation toward process through inquiry and reflection, and human connections developed through social engagement and responsibility. Research by Harvard's Project Zero complements Davis's observations about art-making, in their work on "studio habits of mind" (Hetland, Veenema, Palmer, Sheridan, & Winner, 2005). When students engage in arts processes, they develop distinct and complementary social practices: developing craft, engaging and persisting, envisioning, expressing, observing, reflecting, stretching and exploring, and understanding art worlds. These findings expand on Ecker's (1963) work that frames art-making as qualitative problem solving, a process with distinct phases of reflective practice. These phases include encountering the big picture of a phenomenon and engaging in preproduction sense-making activities, building tentative relationships through seeing fragments of patterns, identifying emergent themes from these fragments that lead to controlling insights about the phenomenon, using themes to select elements to include in the final art work, and finally, judging the work as complete based on discerning its impact on others, including raising questions about the phenomenon.

Such rationales point to humanizing, integrated purposes for arts education in schools that examine the very heart of learning: Why do people create, question, desire, interact, and make meaning in the world? In letting go of a defensive posture, some arts educators and researchers have refused to translate what the arts "do" in the language of other disciplines and instead celebrate the unique tools that the arts offer "to make and provide meaning through aesthetic symbols" (Davis, 2008, p. 48). The arts and social imagination are intertwined (Greene, 2000), and in shifting the conversation from apology and justification to validation and value, arts education is more likely to serve its transformative, emancipatory, and aesthetic purposes.

During this downturn in arts funding, one significant and popular argument is that "the arts will survive in the community without school support" (Davis, 2008, p. 41). Youth have and will continue to respond to the circumstances of their lives through creative production with or without school support. In these community-based contexts, youth and their adult mentors build multiliteracy communities of practice that negotiate multiple linguistic and cultural differences in their public and private lives (New London Group, 1996; Wenger, 1999). These youth-centered projects regularly negotiate cross-cultural tensions, employ new technologies of communication, and teach through immersive pedagogies that result in explicit skill acquisition expressed in a plurality of texts (New London Group, 1996). Approaches include hip-hop media production (Alim, 2011; E. Wang, 2010), digital storytelling and other digital media texts (Bennett, 2008; Hull & Katz, 2006; Montgomery, 2000), critical literacy analysis and creative writing (Cahnmann-Taylor & Preston,

2008; Fisher, 2007; Haddix, 2011), community history murals (Wallace-DiGarbo & Hill, 2006), devised or applied theatre (Conrad, 2004; Woodson, 2007), and investigative journalism and photography (Gavin, 2003; C. Wang, 2006).

Schools would benefit from drawing on the successes of these out-of-school initiatives, led by artists, researchers, and youth themselves (Walker & Romero, 2012). In this way, the arts can become a tool of minoritized school reform that centers its processes in human dilemmas and agency and that speaks from the perspectives of those communities most affected by policies and cultures of oppression. These arts practices specifically relate to the lives of minoritized youth, use their primary languages and dialects as well as other funds of knowledge, and develop personal and academic knowledge, social critique, and local, direct action (Marshall & Toohey, 2010; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Noguera et al., 2006; Pacheco, 2012; Paris, 2012). Furthermore, the arts in education can assist majoritized student populations in decentering their privileged positionality, in seeing the world from different perspectives including the impact of social dominance and structural inequities on minoritized communities, and their own relationships to those systems of power as majoritized people (Goodman, 2011; Howard, 2006; Souto-Manning, 2011).

### **WHY ALL STUDENTS/SCHOOLS NEED MINORITIZED EDUCATION**

As we question the constructed marginalization of the arts in education, we also wish to deconstruct perspectives on the term *minority* and programs that were developed to serve so-called minority needs. The term *minority* often conflates population size with issues of status and power in society. According to the most recent Census data, minoritized citizens make up 33% of the U.S. population. By 2025, they will constitute 42%, and by 2042, the nation will be a majority-“minority” at 54% (Garda, 2011).

There are many parallels between the marginalized and devalued positioning of the arts in schools and the disenfranchised placement of curriculum and services for minoritized youth (e.g., language services such as bilingual education, American Sign Language interpretation, Black English Vernacular programs, culturally and linguistically enhanced curriculum design for indigenous populations). About the marginalization and omission of the arts, Davis (2008) asks, “When was it decided that academic subjects were by definition non-arts courses? When was it decided that over here are academics and way over there are the arts?” (p. 80). So too might we as advocates of minoritized programming that consider linguistic and cultural differences ask, “When was it decided that programs that are sensitive to differences in race, class, and culture were by definition a remediation or an unnecessary luxury for minority students rather than an opportunity for all?” and “When since civil rights activism did it become acceptable to decide that over *here* are the minoritized youth and way over *there* are those that are not?” Just as the arts can develop problem-solving and perspective taking with both minoritized and majoritized young people, so too can critical diversity education (Cahnmann-Taylor & Souto-Manning, 2010; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2007).

Grinberg and Saavedra (2000) relate the marginalization of bilingual/ESOL education to Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) theories of institutional labeling that translate social distinctions into academic evaluations and classifications. Grinberg and Saavedra argue,

The constitution of the field was immersed in discourses that contradicted the emancipatory intention of bilingual education because of the hierarchical nature implied in the construct of cultural disadvantage. . . . Schools were immersed in the discourse that "real" learning and the development of knowledge, skill, and potential, do not occur until students can begin to function and produce in English. (p. 430)

Bilingual and multicultural educators and scholars have often been defined (by themselves and others) as strictly in service to minoritized communities, acting as "bridges" to the "mainstream" as if the goal were to slip invisibly into an Anglo-centric current while maintaining cultural ties if they complement traditional schooling structures. Such programs include the Language Development Program for African American Students in Los Angeles that integrated Black English Vernacular into language arts and the Kamehameha Early Education Program program that addressed distinctive features of Hawaiian discourse into school learning (Au, 1993; Au & Mason, 1981, 1983). Other programs serve to recover heritage language during after school hours as in the Khmer Emerging Education Program in Fresno, California, using visual ethnographic methods to explore themes of language, community, assimilation, and acculturation.

Yet "minority" programs are often targeted politically and sometimes dismantled, particularly when embedded in the regular structures of schooling and problematizing the norms of current educational discourses and ideologies, such as the Mexican American studies in the Tucson Unified School District in Arizona (Teacher Activist Groups, 2012). Critical education (through problem posing and analysis of social inequities) remains marginalized as a specialty program for a marginalized group while "real learning" takes place in mainstream classes, all too often sterilized of controversial issues that promote dialogue across differences. In this way, diversity education, bilingual education, and critical social inquiry have held fragile, tentative positions in school curricula, often locating the voices of participating young people as reactive when their programs are cut—at protest rallies, walk outs, and school board meetings. This reinforces a kind of plague tent mentality—isolating "those kids" and "their needs" until "they" are ready to be a healthy one of "us" and function on majority culture and language terms (Fettes, 1997; Fishman, 1991).

We are not arguing against the importance and often necessity of programs that focus support to minoritized communities and their specific needs (in terms of language, culture, class experience, citizenship status, dis/ability status, and otherwise). What we are suggesting is that when explaining or rationalizing services that target the varying needs of minoritized youth, we should resist the temptation to package these programs as in-service to the majority, allowing the "mainstream" teacher and classroom to go undisrupted and unchanged. By marginalizing all services that



appear irrelevant to the majoritized group, we undermine opportunities for transformative and emancipatory practices for all. Garda (2011) argues, “Multiracial schools will never be created and sustained unless whites understand and appreciate the advantages of such schools to *their* children” (p. 599, italics added).

In light of our rapidly changing demographics, which will include increasing numbers of minority leaders in business, social services, government, and other leadership, the questions ought to be how to more equitably share the ability to communicate across linguistic, racial, and cultural competences and social experiences to succeed in an ever more diverse world. Fortunately, we believe arts education provides just such a context for rich and expansive understanding of diversity (Paris, 2012). As Davis (2008) articulates,

The arts provide ways for children to create and communicate their own individual cultures, to experience the differences and similarities among the cultures of family or nationality that are imprinted on different forms of art, and to discover the common features of expression that attest to a human connection contained in and beyond difference. (pp. 22–23)

Cahnmann and Varghese (2006) wrote of the need for bilingual education researchers to step out of bilingual education safehouses, collaborate with others, and more widely disseminate findings from language education research. We believe there is much untapped potential for moving both diversity and arts education from the periphery to the center, allowing the next generation of learners to create something new of their own invention that has never before existed. We believe arts education with and for minoritized youth must also be an education that questions and contextualizes “minority status,” where students are encouraged to imagine “what if” and know that what happens next—a paintbrush across paper, a leap across the stage, a handshake with a next door neighbor—will make a difference and may effect real, social change. Thus, arts education has the potential to help children see that one person’s Siamese cat is another person’s Chihuahua (as in Scachner’s [2007] *Skippyjon Jones* books), that perspective is contingent, and that ambiguity and uncertainty are requisite dispositions in a post-multicultural, post-multilingual world.

### RESEARCH, MINORITIZED YOUTH, AND THE ARTS

There are three interrelated themes in arts education with minoritized communities: the arts for academic development, the arts for personal and community identity development, and the arts for social change/justice. Across these themes, projects use aesthetic languages of the arts disciplines—visual art, theatre, music, dance, creative writing, and media arts—as meaning-making tools toward particular educational goals.

Arts for academic development projects work to enhance the achievement of students in traditional core content areas. These studies stress the need for breadth and depth in the arts disciplines as well as increased teacher education and teaching



artist partnerships (Catterall & Waldorf, 1999; Lukes & Zwicky, in press; Meban, 2002). Other studies address how the arts can be integrated with other subject areas to increase competencies in both the arts and the other discipline (such as literacy, language, social studies, and science; Appel, 2006; Brouillette & Burns, 2005; Burnaford, Aprill, & Weiss, 2001; Burnaford, Brown, Doherty, & McLaughlin, 2007; Mishook & Kornhaber, 2006; Sicre, in press). For example, Dabach (2010) demonstrates the strategy of pairing an aesthetic tool or process with a content area skill, in particular using visual imagery to develop writing skills with English language learners. Older studies, such as Burton, Horowitz, and Abeles (1999) and Oreck, Baum, and McCartney (1999), document how discipline-based arts education develop student competencies within the arts disciplines particularly through apprenticeship and technical job experience in the arts. Recently, however, this focus on the arts and academic development has included using the arts to develop 21st-century "knowledge economies," such as qualitative problem-solving skills (Thomson & Sefton-Green, 2010).

Cultural and linguistic responsiveness is important to the discussion of arts education with minoritized youth (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009), and many projects position this responsiveness at the heart of their pedagogical design. Such pedagogy includes developing an interrelationship between formal written literacy practices and art forms, such as connecting graphic, musical, and theatrical narratives to students' lives. Examples include political cartooning about social justice (Rolling, 2008), analyzing concepts of Americanization and America through writing and drama (Kelin, in press) and visual arts (Landay, Meehan, Newman, Wootton, & King, 2001), and collaborative music mapping (Blair, 2007). These approaches tend to conceptualize the cultural capital of schools as central to student success and the use of the arts as a tool or conduit toward developing such knowledge. The cultural capital of home is often brought into school, such as through the use of family funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) as the curricular content of the arts and literacy experience.

Some researchers, however, articulate the limitations of working within the institutional structure of school to realize critical visions for arts-based academic development with minoritized communities. Chappell (2008) reflects on the ways White privilege affected her ability to connect with minoritized communities both in and out of school, as a student herself and as an arts and language teacher. She uses a border metaphor to reflect on the struggles to move across borders and the potential of the arts to facilitate that reflexive pedagogical movement. These borders are often not easy for arts educators to navigate, due to school's hierarchical power structure and rigidly controlled, neutralized curricula, as examined in the work of Meban (2002) and Picower (2011). Meban (2002) observes an explicit disconnect between the technical drawing skills she was expected as a teaching artist to develop and the social function of art that she hoped to engage. Schools often resist or, at the least, are ignorant of the knowledge-plus-position stance (Boyle-Baise & Zevin, 2009) that the arts as a sociocultural practice demand. Meban (2002) expresses concern about the pressure to self-censor her selection of themes and issues that minoritized communities could

benefit from. This concern parallels those of new teachers attempting to navigate social justice teaching in a neoliberal school system of high-stakes testing and mandated curriculum (Picower, 2011). The context of teacher pressure to omit ideology from their curriculum, as it relates in particular to the impacts of social dominance on minoritized communities, often constrains arts education in schools.

Many researchers, however, have documented innovative alternative visions of schooling through the arts with minoritized communities that redefine the cultural capital of schools through community-based approaches. Some teachers have found ways to navigate the school system, aligning social-justice-based pedagogy with standards-based expectations for language and literacy. For example, Saavedra (2011) used the Latin American literary genre of *testimonios* to center her third-grade students' experiences in writing. Through this genre she asked her students to tell their individual stories in relation to group histories of oppression. Dickson (2005, 2007) uses ethnographic interviewing to inspire his Alabama high schoolers' creative writing about intergenerational experiences with racial discrimination and visions of equality. Other teachers have used new media literacies to center their students' lives in the classroom. As part of the San Diego State-Imperial Valley Migrant Education Program Summer Academy, migrant youth created The Comic Book Project (2010), drawing and writing about their experiences being migrant youth and ultimately publishing a collective graphic novel. Schultz (2008) shares the video documentary, Project Citizen 405, created by his fifth-grade classroom to document their efforts to repair their school, repairs promised by the school district years ago. This documentary demonstrates the young people's abilities to draw connections between their personal experiences and the public policies that have minoritized them. These problem-posing inquiry projects are becoming increasingly of interest in teacher education classrooms as pedagogy that links the personal, the institutional, and "real world" applications, oftentimes designed through creative and arts-based processes and products (Bell, 2010; Boyle-Baise & Zevin, 2009; Ponder, Vander Veldt, & Lewis-Ferrell, 2011).

In addition to emerging school-based research in the arts with minoritized youth, ample community-based studies provide a complementary vision to alternative school practices that minoritize particular youth. These studies articulate successful academic development through identity and social change approaches. Similar to the school-based projects mentioned above, research on the arts for personal and community identity explores how the arts open opportunities for minoritized students to voice their experiences, particularly through personal narratives and testimonies of struggle. In community-based settings, these narratives come out of local cultural life, including the self/community as curriculum and the self/community as research study.

For example, Moriarty (2004) studied immigrant participatory arts in the Silicon Valley, California, finding that community cultural arts create social capital built through bonding and bridging: bonding among community members and bridging relationships with other communities. In this way, art is about family, linking art forms to local community themes, and sharing spaces, all of which produce a

“shared civic identification” across wider groups. She suggests that participatory arts become the “ultimate venue for public expression in a democracy” (p. 35), with the potential to harness reciprocal relationships toward diversity as a bonding opportunity for learning across difference without requiring a loss of ethnic identity or language. Cahnmann-Taylor and Preston (2008) described a bilingual–bidialectal poetry writing program in an after-school, multi-age, community library setting. They explored the use of bilingual poetry in a bilingual setting to embrace the multifaceted and overlapping dimensions of the “continua of biliteracy (Hornberger & Skilton-Sylvester, 2000) which include standard and vernacular language, approved and taboo subjects, and an emphasis on the poet’s portfolio as process and product” (Cahnmann-Taylor & Preston, 2008, p. 249).

Much research focuses on individual minoritized youth perspectives in dialectical relationship to their transnational cultural communities. These young people’s counternarratives insist on breaking silences about injustice and oppression against immigrant cultural groups, as well as testifying to the strength of individuals/communities to endure against these circumstances (Aggabao Thelen, 2008; Breunlin, Himelstein, & Nelson, 2008; Glisson, 2008; Pacheco, 2012; Salas, 2008). In his storytelling project with a Hudson River immigrant community, for example, Salas (2008) speaks to the theme of border-crossing, in which participant identities are developed through their telling about physical, psychological, and cultural borders. Such borders are also emphasized in terms of the places that young people traverse in their lives as children of migrant workers, from the fields to the classroom through graffiti art and creative writing (Lewis, in press; Rodríguez-Valls, Kofford, Apodaca, & Samaniego, in press; see Figure 1). Being defined and seen as an undocumented immigrant is another theme that young people explore through problem-based conceptual art and performance in the classroom and on the street (L. Garcia, in press; Harman, Varga-Dobai, Bivins, & Forker, in press; see Figure 2). Other themes include documenting and celebrating the ignored and disappearing histories of indigenous peoples in the United States through oral storytelling and visual art forms (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Kelin, 2005).

Minoritized young people are well aware of how the world sees them, with an emerging sense of how they want to be seen, as well as how they want to see themselves. This struggle to articulate developing critical self and world awareness is at the center of many arts education projects (Adams, in press; Chappell, 2009; Lamont Hill, 2009; Schultz, 2008). Mainstream cultural perceptions, often rooted in stereotypes, misconceptions, and ignorance about minoritized populations, often lead to less effective school curricula and relationships with peers and authority figures. Projects such as the one by Reyes (in press) insist on young people analyzing these circumstances rooted in power and social domination rather than being injured to the everyday circumstances they abhor (violence, death, drugs, an unresponsive school and welfare system, the news media portrayal of Black and Brown people, of people in poverty). Reyes and the young people in Youth Roots, Oakland, undertake this

**FIGURE 1**  
**To Be Migrant, Created by Students From the Summer Academy of the  
Migrant Education Program in the ICOE (Imperial Valley County Office of  
Education)**



*Source.* Photo by Sharon Chappell Image. Artwork used with permission.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Students at the May Day March in Downtown Los Angeles**



*Source.* Photo by Luis Genaro Garcia. Reprinted with permission.

analysis both for individual testimony and social critique by composing, recording, and publicly performing hip-hop songs. They demand, "It is NOT what it is"—that young people can and should be in charge of changing the circumstances of their lives, with creative production at the heart of this process.

This relationship between the individual and community, between the self and the social, cultural, and institutional worlds is also a theme that runs through overall school reform efforts and teacher education (Jeffers, 2005; Marron, 2003; McDermott, 2005; Stevenson & Deasy, 2005; Werner, 2002), as well as teacher professional

development and alternative school design for minoritized young people. Picower (2011) developed a critical inquiry community for first-year teachers interested in teaching social justice without administrative support. Cahnmann-Taylor and Souto-Manning (2010) designed professional development multicultural learning communities with teachers through Boalian theatre for social change pedagogy. They found an essential element for equity-focused professional development involved ensemble rehearsals of pedagogical struggle, expanding the menu of options teachers had at their disposal for performing bilingual advocacy. Mitsumura (in press) uses ethnodrama techniques with preservice teacher candidates to take on the perspectives of English learner young people and their families. Bond and Etwaroo (2005) document the experiences of an undergraduate course titled "Dance, Movement and Pluralism" to explore the relationship between personal and group questions of identity. Damm (2006) documents a project between college students and Native American youth using cultural heritage music, art, and dance. Rabkin and Redmond (2004) highlight arts integration projects at the center of school reforms that respond to localized contexts and funds of knowledge of low-income communities. Each of these studies shares the goal of supporting teachers and students in developing their identities as artists, in building creative communities of practice that explore cultural questions and problems, and produce public art works that address equity concerns for minoritized communities.

### **CLIMATES OF SCIENTIFICALLY BASED RESEARCH: HOW CAN WE EVER KNOW IF THE ARTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

Cahnmann-Taylor (2008) writes, "With the acceptance of post-modern approaches to educational research in the last few decades including feminism, post-structuralism, critical theory, and semiotics, assumptions about what counts as knowledge and the nature of research have dramatically changed" (p. 3). Not only have multiple qualitative research methodologies gained more widespread acceptance but also the tools researchers use to collect data and display findings have been diversified to include artistic as well as traditionally scientific methods. Using arts-based methods to document arts-based educational opportunities has been critical for exploring varied and creative ways to engage in empirical processes and to share questions and findings in more penetrating and widely accessible ways. Rendering the outcomes of arts-based learning through regression analysis of test scores, retention rates, and other quantitative measures of performance fails to illuminate the qualities of experience during arts-based learning.

Researchers of arts-based education often turn to arts-based qualitative inquiry to achieve a variety of empirical goals including social activism (Barone, 2000; Finley & Finley, 1999), critical friends (Weinstein, 2010), making connections between research and lived experience (Garoian, 1999), making meaning through multiple senses and sensibilities (Norris, 2000), provoking thought and questioning long-standing beliefs (Barone, 2001; Finley, 2003), and extending the influence of scholarship to

policymakers and the public (Barone, 2000). Weinstein (2010) explains that studies of the arts must also necessarily call into question the researcher's focus and attention:

An arts education orientation encourages us to look for evidence of student success outside of narrowly defined outcomes and more through what young people actually *do* inside and outside the classroom, and what that *doing* reveals about the development of their abilities to choose, negotiate, and accomplish to their own satisfaction complex, multi-modal activities. (p. 5)

Using the arts as research can help us understand more pointedly the experiences of the young people in classrooms, particularly as researchers use multimodality and new literacy approaches similar to those students are using daily in classroom life (Albers & Harste, 2007; Chappell & Faltis, in press). For example, Romero and Walker (2010) describe how youth media productions provided insights into young people's meaning making, while also raising ethical questions about doing educational ethnography in the new media era, as well as presenting new media findings in traditional scholarly publications. By redefining the purposes and roles of research through arts-based practices, we can "walk the talk"—redefining literacies and their values in K-12 classrooms, as well as envisioning new modes of arts-based research and spaces for public interaction.

Arts-based research emerged from a drive to employ the aesthetic dimensions of an experience in both its inquiry and representational phase, by affecting the public's understanding of a social phenomenon epistemologically (Barone & Eisner, 2012). For Barone and Eisner (2012), arts-based research should be active, disrupting equilibrium and certainty—a strategy that the arts can employ through many aesthetic languages to affect dislocation, "through the obviation and undercutting of a prevailing worldview [which] may also mean a useful sort of emancipation of readers and viewers" (p. 16). This strategy is imperative in problematizing the majority/minority dichotomy in diversity education, in advocating for social justice purposes in arts education, and in building spaces for counternarrative practices in education and research.

To document dichotomies and nuances in classroom practice, Eisner (1998) advocated a theory of educational connoisseurship and criticism, calling for the development of researchers as "educational connoisseurs," those so intimately attuned to the art of learning that they are able to put aside things of little consequence, discern what is important, and capture the intricacies and complexities of educational settings. Erickson and Shultz's (1982) study of counselor and student interactions illustrated an early example of such connoisseurship as they used musical notation in analysis to understand why so few counselor–student relationships were successful across interlocutors' cultural differences. These connoisseurs discovered that distorted rhythms in communication were heavily associated with abbreviated and disconnected communication, linking what was said between counselors and students to how it was said and by whom. Erickson, who has experience in music composition and theory, used his creativity to enhance his ability to hear and make sense of discordance and harmony in everyday talk. Similarly, Foster's (1989) study analyzed the musical qualities



of an African American teacher's classroom discourse to shed light on the qualities of her success in an urban community college classroom. In particular, Foster focused on the teacher's use of Church-influenced discourse patterns such as vowel elongation, cadence manipulation, and repetition. For these researchers music provided useful tools for analysis and interpretation of educational interactions including minoritized youth.

For Cahnmann-Taylor, Souto-Manning, Wooten, and Dice (2009), theatre was useful in decisions about what constituted "data" as well as how to analyze and represent the data. Their research with novice bilingual teachers in the Southeast replaced the traditional "focus group" with theatre activities and collective performances based on Boal's (1979, 1995) theatre of the oppressed techniques. To interpret and represent the emotional qualities of performance data, they responded "artfully," crafting what they refer to as *tran/scripts*, compressed renderings of original transcripts that use techniques from poetry and the dramatic arts to highlight emotional "hot points" and heightened language from the original discourse. They used traditional qualitative data analysis techniques to identify patterns and tran/scripts to revisit the data as researchers and teacher educators.

In anthropology and education scholarship, poetry and memoir have become powerful opportunities for researchers to document ethnographic empiricism. Several scholars have turned inward toward their home disciplines for theoretical and empirical foundations as well as outward to study the craft of creative writing in order to enliven their various ethnographic narratives of minoritized experience—sharing a variety of creative, self-other ethnographic work about the complexities of charity and adolescent Sudanese refugee identity in the Northeastern United States (Kusserow, 2008); a White teacher's reflections on practice with urban, African American youth (Thorne, 2012); or documenting minoritized communities abroad such as the experiences of the few remaining Jews in Tunisia (Stone, 2008) and indigenous medicine in Cameroon (Maynard, 2001). These scholars approach the writing of ethnography as a craft that requires just as much attention to theory and data analysis as to narrative, character, image, metaphor, and dialogue. Narayan (2007) argues that creative nonfiction (personal essay, memoir, "faction" [p. 130]) offers the genre space and craft strategies to embrace both creative and academic voices conveying rich, multi-faceted documentation of experience.

All phases of social science research—from deciding what constitutes data to approaches to analysis and forms of representation—can benefit from the researcher's own artistic sensibilities. We agree with Tsao (2011) that researchers need to focus on forms of representation that are "legible and intelligible to the authors on the front lines of those [social justice] movements" (p. 184). Frequently, arts-based research on arts education is written auto-ethnographically, both by and for those on the front lines—researchers who are intimately involved in arts education with minoritized youth. A distinguishing feature of effective auto-ethnographic forms of arts-based research are the renderings of the details of one's own life/sphere with such a depth of craft that the particulars of one's experience resonate at the universal level of capital



“T” truth (Cahnmann, 2003, p. 33). Auto-ethnography in research at times runs parallel to the *testimonio* genre of school-based literacy connecting to students’ lives and institutional oppressions that we mentioned earlier.

For example, Johnny Saldaña’s (2008) one man show, “Second Chair,” is about one adult’s memories of playing “second” in high school band, but through the particularities of the performance of a gay, Latino youth, the audience can feel the repercussions of the unfair distribution of status and privilege and the anxiety felt by both young people as well as adults in a competitive, heteronormative, White-dominant society. Nilaja Sun’s (2009) one-woman performance of “No Child” portrays a whole cast of characters at a low-income, low-performing school in Bronx—converting herself into various characters including the visiting performance artist-teacher, the many voices of students, revolving teachers, parents, an administrator, a custodian, and even the artist-teacher’s Brooklyn landlord. Although the impetus for this work may have been her own very personal experience as a visiting artist in New York City schools, Sun renders and complicates that epiphanic moment of personal trauma into a work of lyric importance for wide audiences (Orr, 2002). Saldaña’s and Sun’s performances extend the scholar-performer’s own experiences in music and theatre education to illuminate both the ecstatic possibilities and immense challenges of working with minoritized youth through the arts.

Similarly, auto-ethnography is a technique employed in community-based, applied theatre settings with minoritized youth populations, such as Q-Speak (2006 and 2007) in Phoenix, Arizona, in which personal reflection, group dialog, and focused interviews result in a collaboratively devised script with auto-ethnographic testimonies and collective narratives. The Albany Park Theatre Project in Chicago is another community-based group that develops and produces ethnographic stories with youth such as *Feast*, *Remember Me Like This*, *Aquí Estoy*, and *Saffron*. These shows delve into the themes of these youth’s lives, such as multilingualism and multiculturalism, gentrification, immigration, and sexual abuse. What makes one researcher’s story (whether expert or novice, individual or collaborative) into high-quality arts-based research is their humble and technically skillful experiences to render what is personal so that it attains universal truths about the human condition.

Varieties of teacher research and action research also constitute forms of arts-based research where, for example, two Latinas reflect on their growing relationship as teacher and student as well as other emerging senses of self (Grúllon & Marín, 2007); where a White, middle-class educator uses narrative portraits to document her own literacy practices with African American youth living and learning in high-poverty contexts (e.g., Hankins, 2003); or where a White American researcher-administrator auto-ethnographically documents her process to begin the first public bilingual, dual-immersion charter school against many social, emotional, and political challenges, in a 95% minority and high-poverty region of Georgia (Giles, 2010). In visual arts research, Irwin and de Cosson (2004) published *A/r/tography*, a collection of work that explores curriculum as aesthetic text through visual renderings as well as prose interpretations. Faltis (2010) reflects on the ways his oil painting about the effects of

restrictive immigration and language policies on Mexican communities informs his written scholarship and teaching. Researchers using a range of literary, visual, and performing arts through all stages of the empirical process have contributed to a collective portrait of how the arts make a difference in rich and varied ways in the lives of minoritized youth. Although such artistic portraiture (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann-Davis, 1997) often moves audiences' educators and researchers toward empathy and deep feeling, their impact on policy and practice may be limited within the context of larger, scientifically based ideologies about what counts as "valid" and "generalizable" research (Shavelson & Towne, 2002). This limitation should be further analyzed and critiqued while considering the potential of equity-focused arts-based education and research to create productive, humanizing problem-solving communities where positivist and postpositivist social science paradigms have struggled and failed.

### IMPLICATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES

How do these areas of arts education/diversity education and research with majoritized/minoritized communities intersect in visions for pre-K-12 teacher preparation and professional development, the education of teaching artists as arts educators in schools and community organizations, and the influence of funding on these structures? Who is responsible for ensuring access to the arts and engagement with the arts as social change tools for minoritized populations, under what circumstances, through what means, and toward what ends? Davis (2008) identified "expertise" as one of the primary objections to arts education: To be taught well, the arts require specialists. She points to the irony that most teachers of young children are expected to have sufficient knowledge of math, science, reading, writing, and social studies but are exempt from the arts.

Beyond the ability to sing "Happy Birthday," direct an acrostic poetry exercise, or color a portrait of Thomas Jefferson, all teachers require the courage, caring, and professional training to explore the arts as active learners and to explore diversity education as a critical, reflective journey alongside our students. We need to disallow statements such as "I don't sing" and "I don't dance," just as we disallow any K-12 teacher to state "I don't read" and "I don't do math." We need to question the assumption of only needing to consider the experiences of bilingual youth if we have them in our classes or those of kids in poverty if they do not bring a lunch to our school. The studies addressed in this article demonstrate that being creative, critical, and publicly engaged are skills we all share and experiences we all crave. We ask of ourselves as educational researchers and teacher educators: How can we better prepare adults to develop these experiences if we do not also reform university pedagogy in teacher and artist education?

Similarly, we need to prepare generations of educators to consider themselves "emergent bilinguals" (O. Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010) and multicultural world citizens, modeling an openness and ability to learn about one or more of the community languages and cultures around them. Whereas preparation in cultural pluralism occurs

throughout teacher education, we need to better teach the debate about what it means to be “American,” to be a diverse society, to be the same and different at once. This education occurs through teacher-based inquiry projects related to historical and contemporary research on educational quality: *What is good education for a pluralist classroom? For students of specific ethnic, linguistic, gender, and class backgrounds? For developing young citizens of the world?* As teachers and researchers reflect on their own inquiry, about the histories of schooling in the families they teach, about their own qualitative methods, we must also ask questions about empirical quality: *What does good research look like when equity is at the center of its purpose? Who should represent or be represented in the research? Who decides empirical priorities and what counts as valid, vital, and fundable research?*

As to pedagogy, we are not espousing that full artistic competencies or multilingual–multicultural proficiencies are possible for every educator in every school setting, but leaving the arts to “experts only” and isolating multicultural education as exclusively relevant to minority community learning robs teachers and students of significant opportunities for critical, creative, cross-cultural engagement. Scholarship and schooling practices need to build critical, dialogic processes with minoritized *and* majoritized youth. More public display of these processes and their impacts will compel school reformers to see the power of the arts as research, curriculum, and pedagogy for and with minoritized youth. Yet these practices cannot be contained easily into a packaged or scripted curriculum. They are dynamic, emergent methodologies that respond to the local challenges of each community while attending to documented, historical trajectories of oppression that affect all people in the United States and the world. When we commit to a broader application of diversity and arts education with questions of equity, power, and the impact of social dominance at the core, then we must begin again to ask, what and who constitute the “minority”? Such a commitment serves as an invitation into ambiguity and complexity, questioning and challenging dichotomous thinking as far as such dualities (e.g., majority–minority, creative–scientific, academic–arts) undermine aesthetic and equity objectives that lead to more hopeful futures for all.

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