

# Foreword



I have fond memories of learning on Appian Way in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with Marit Dewhurst. Marit and I met in 2002 while she was pursuing a master's degree in art education, and I was pursuing a doctorate. We were young, hopeful, student activists at the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE), working for educational justice while completing our degrees. Marit quickly became one of my sisters in justice work at HGSE, and I continue to be inspired by her scholarship and praxis, and its implications for transforming art education, teacher education broadly, educational research that centers educator and youth voices, and social justice work in multiple learning contexts.

We are living in a moment when activism is akin to breathing for people of various marginalized communities. For teachers in various types of educational spaces working to advance cross-cultural understanding, this activism mirrors sustained, critical self-reflection about how their identity markers (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, etc.) interact to shape the enactment of their power and privilege in learning contexts. This type of social justice work is not simply a fad but a way to sustain teachers' and students' life ways and humanity. It is soul work. We see this evidenced in recent movements such as Black Lives Matter (#BLM), Dakota Access Pipeline protests (#NODAPL), Sanctuary Campus/Sanctuary City, support for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), protests against violence toward black girls and women (#SAYHERNAME), sexual assault protests (#METOO), and protests in support of gun control (#GUNCONTROLNOW)—movements where teachers across the country have collectively challenged themselves to understand how to effectively engage young people in discussions of equity, civility, and empathy. Educator activists have been integral in all these movements, and art has been one form

of their expression of critical identity work, resisting oppressive systems, and connecting across cultural differences with colleagues, students, and community members. Art is essential to the human condition because it is a natural part of each of us. Art gives us insight into history and how it informs the present and future; it allows us to experience our full range of emotions through self-creation and reflecting on the creation of others; and it bridges gaps between cultures. In this book, Dewhurst allows the reader to experience each of these outgrowths of art expression through the lenses of teachers engaged in identity work.

Dewhurst cites Gloria Anzaldúa's writing on bridges and boundaries, and how crossing a boundary unlocks critical opportunities for transformation. The same analogy can be applied to artistic expression. Like bridges, art allows for channels and linkages that signify transitioning, crossing borders, and changing perspectives. This book beautifully nuances the richness and challenges that teachers experience—convergences and divergences—when using art to better understand the multifaceted nature of their identities and how issues of power and privilege intersect with those. What this book teaches us about the “stances” we can develop through art is central to understanding how to enact critical pedagogy and cultivate cross-cultural connections in learning spaces. Readers can expect to gain an authentic and deep understanding of how these stances foster more authentic and humanizing relationships between teachers, students, and community members.

Dewhurst's discussion of the aforementioned stances easily frames for the reader how educators can utilize art to make connections at micro (personal) and macro (systems) levels to sociopolitical issues that heighten their critical consciousness. The process of consciousness raising occurs through artistic critiques of conditions of inequity and injustice in their worlds and the larger society. Preservice and in-service teachers need to embody skills for critical identity work and model those for their students. What makes this text additionally unique is that the reader not only experiences the teachers' meaning making of developing art to better understand identity, but also gains an understanding of effective strategies that can be used across multiple contexts for enacting a critical arts pedagogy as an educator. The stances that Dewhurst takes up in this text are useful not only for art educators but also for educators across educational disciplines. As a teacher educator who focuses on issues of racial and social justice in my teaching and research, I believe readers will glean the applicability of the findings presented here across a variety of teacher education program components.

This book does not simply present findings from an empirical inquiry with current and preservice teachers; it gives us ways forward for embodying culturally responsive teaching and learning and humanizing pedagogy through engagement with art.

I have three elementary-aged daughters who are growing up during challenging national and global times. This moment requires multiple modes of expression to convey how my children and other youth are experiencing and making meaning of injustice in their schools, community, state, nation, and world. I want my daughters to be taught by teachers who understand the impact of their multifaceted identities on the lives of their students and who can also empower students (like my daughters) to express their multifaceted selves orally, in writing, and *through art*. We desperately need teachers who are products of programs that have effectively prepared them to understand issues of culture, power, and difference in the classroom, critically examine systems that dehumanize students instead of affirm their identities, and build healthy and sustained relationships with culturally diverse students and communities. Further, educators and the youth they work with need to be able to lead the way in what they learn about how to express their dreams, visions, resistance, and hopes through art media. The narratives and art of the educators and preservice teachers in this book give us hope for what education (not schooling) can and should be. Alex Grey states, “When artists give form to revelation, their art can advance, deepen, and potentially transform the consciousness of their community.”<sup>1</sup> This book allows the reader to see this happen with teachers engaged in making art about their own identities and learning to relate to people from different backgrounds, experiences, and cultural groups. It provides a way forward for all of us and practical application for the teacher education classroom, K–12 classroom, and out-of-school learning context in what have recently been bleak times. Educators, researchers, youth, and community organizers alike will glean insights that will continue to inform how they build relationships across difference to not only meet the needs of students in schools but also equip young people with the skills to cultivate the types of communities and societies in which they truly want to live.

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