PUBLIC SCHOOL ART TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVES ON CONTROVERSY AND CENSORSHIP: A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

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By

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ABSTRACT

Through interactions with so many people on a daily basis, teachers collect many stories, which hold a wealth of information. This study is a descriptive analysis of the stories told by teachers regarding controversial art and censorship. This study’s methodology consists of survey research; including both survey and interview methods.

To better understand what constitutes censorship and what does not, I have defined four categories focused on decisions made by teachers concerning art curricular content. These categories are: direct censorship, indirect censorship, self-censorship and censoring curricular decisions made to protect the emotional psyche of students.

On one hand, teachers need to uphold each individual’s constitutional right to the freedom of expression. On the other hand, teachers need to ensure the emotional well being of their students and their own professional security. There may be other variables.

The primary research inquiry is: What are teacher’s perspectives on the nature of censorship in the art classroom?

This research is a two-part process. The first part is a survey of teachers from a variety of schools. The second part of the research is interviewing art teachers. After planning, collecting and analyzing data from the survey, I planned the interviews. I collected and analyzed the data and combined the analyses of both parts into a final written analysis.
My research includes a survey of teachers in various educational settings: urban and suburban populations in elementary, middle and high schools. This survey addresses the following questions (although these questions do not appear verbatim on the questionnaire): Is some content controversial in an art curriculum, and why? What is censored in public schools? Who is censoring? And, for what reasons are they censoring? The purpose of the survey is to provide art teachers an opportunity to explain the selection process they go through when identifying content as appropriate or inappropriate.

After planning the survey, collecting and analyzing the data, I constructed semi-structured interview schedules based on responses to the surveys. The interview schedule contains questions that were asked to all respondents and also individualized questions for each respondent, based on his or her completed survey.

I was expecting the survey to lead to certain questions during the interview phase of research. Some of these questions are: What ways do teachers ensure their professional security? What steps are taken to ensure the emotional psyche of the students? Most art teachers probably have faced controversial student art, whether the teacher includes controversial art into lessons or not.
Although the stories are different, there are common themes from the teachers. I expected sexual, drug-related, and violent images to be censored in public schools. I also expected responses about policy changes in schools from tragic events, including the attacks at the World Trade Center and the shootings at Columbine High School. However, these two events were not discussed. These art teachers also discussed controversial content that I had not expected to be controversial. There were times when the participants and I were constructing new knowledge together. The conclusion synthesizes the analysis and provides suggestions for the field.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS CENSORSHIP?

Two critical elements in dealing with controversial art in the art curriculum are the teacher's philosophical-pedagogical standpoint and the student's motives for creating the work (Jeffers and Parth, 1996, Henley, 1997). It is important for students to deal with controversial issues in an environment that provides guidance, yet also freedom to make personal interpretations and judgments (Henley, 1997, Barrett and Rab, 1990). In a school setting, there are also factors extraneous to the art program that affect how teachers and students deal with controversies. There are many variables to consider.

To better understand what constitutes censorship and what does not, I have defined four categories focused on decisions made by teachers concerning art curricular content. These categories are: direct censorship, indirect censorship, self-censorship and censoring curricular decisions.

Direct censorship is the exclusion of content already in an art curriculum from that art curriculum by someone in power who has a direct relationship with the school on a day-to-day basis. This could be a teacher censoring a student's work or a school administrator (primarily working within the school) censoring a teacher's choice in content. Also, included in this category is an administrator demanding a teacher to
censor a student’s work. The critical aspect of this type of censorship is the censor’s awareness of the day-to-day happenings within the school environment.

Indirect censorship is the exclusion of content from the art curriculum by someone who does not have a professional relationship with the school. This type of censorship can occur because of parents (if they are not involved in the school’s day-to-day happenings), administrators not working within the school, members of the board of education, etc. This type of censorship is distinctly related to cases in which content is excluded when the censor is not working in the school on day-to-day basis.

The significant difference between direct and indirect censorship has to do with the amount of contextual information known by the censor. Many people who had not personally viewed the work The Holy Virgin Mary by Chris Ofili made many of the negative judgments surrounding the work (Barrett, 2003). They made judgments based on others’ descriptions and interpretations. Not only did they make judgments based on biased statements of others, but they also took particular elements out of context when they described and interpreted. I suspected that this same phenomenon happens in school settings. For this reason, I believe that the relationship the censor holds with the school is important.

Self-censorship occurs when one censors because of the fear of reprisal from others if they do not. Teachers have both their jobs and their licenses at stake. Teachers need to abide by their respective school’s rules, which can be ambiguous. They also need to adhere to the legalities of their license. Ohio Revised Code (Anderson’s Ohio Online Docs, 2003, p.? ) states that the State Board has the power to deny license to a person “engaging in an immoral act, incompetence, negligence, or conduct that is unbecoming to
the applicant's or person's position.” This ambiguous code could be used against teachers for the wrong reasons. The critical element of self-censorship is that the censor does not personally stand behind the decision; the censorship stems from fear.

The final, and most elusive category, censoring curricular decisions, occurs when someone excludes content from a classroom to protect the emotional psyche of the students. “Responsible educational decisions are based on the perception of student maturity, aptitude, and background, operating in a context of diverse community strengths, needs, standards, and interests” (Lankford, 1990, p. 26). In schools, we have what David Henley (1997) calls a “captive audience.” Although the first amendment protects the right to express ideas, there is also the freedom of choice on behalf of society to view the material. In schools, students see what other students create. The viewer is “captive” and does not have the choice to not view the material. It is educator’s responsibility to protect the emotional psyches of all students.

The questions guiding my research are about the nature of controversy in the visual arts in public schools. I am particularly interested in the perspectives of art teachers regarding this topic. Teachers interact with many individuals on a daily basis, collecting stories throughout the lengths of their careers. Through survey and interviews, teachers were able to share their stories, in their own words, about experiences in the classroom that shed light on these questions. My interest in this research is to gain insight into the nature of controversy in the visuals arts in public schools. Sharing individual reflections on teaching experiences is of interest to all teachers.

This thesis also includes discussion about qualitative survey methodology. I will explore survey and interview methods within the context of qualitative research.
Interview methods are not new to qualitative methodology and survey methods are generally considered part of quantitative research. I have thought much about the role of a survey in qualitative research when incorporated with interviewing methods. I have also wondered how the role of the interview changes when incorporated with survey methods in qualitative research. Overall, I am interested in how survey and interview methods complement one another as qualitative methodology.

As this research progressed, I found further questions, including: What subject matter becomes controversial in the art classroom? What is censorship? What is censored in public schools? Who is censoring? And, for what reasons are they censoring? We know that many of the people who were the most vocal about their negative judgments of Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ* (Figure 1) had not actually viewed the artwork (Barrett, 2003). Are there instances of this same phenomenon in public schools? If there are, in what ways is it relevant to art educators?

This thesis is an exploration of the issues regarding controversy and censorship and the implications for art education. The research methodology has been chosen with specific intentions for this research. For this reason, this research will also reflect the successes and failures of such methodology, as it applies to qualitative research.
Figure 1.1: *Piss Christ* by Andres Serrano (1987) (Riemenschneider & Grosenick, 1999)
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE: COMPARING CONTROVERSY IN SOCIETY TO CONTROVERSY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

What do Dennis Barrie, Jesse Helms, Robert Mapplethorpe and the Catholic Church all have in common? They all have been entwined in the web of controversy over particular artworks. They have all experienced divergence of values, opinions and morals when considering the public display or funding of art. In this chapter, I will review literature and research from various scholars that look closely into these situations. In particular, I will review articles and books that study the context of public controversy about contemporary artworks that are relevant to art education. These materials use historical and philosophical inquiry, case study and theoretical methods. The researchers focus on societal values and events, educational approaches, the role of the educator and controversial student work.
Figure 2.1: Exhibition catalogue cover for *The Perfect Moment* by Robert Mapplethorpe

(Bookstore Fiona Website, n.d.)
2.1 Controversial Art: The Relationship Between Society and Schools

In "Artistic Freedom: An Artworld Paradox," E. Louis Lankford describes two national events relating to the arts to explain the concept, "art world paradox." The first event he describes is a proposal made by Senator Jesse Helms for Congress to amend an appropriations bill to bar federal funds from being used to create obscene art. The second event is the controversy over Robert Mapplethorpe's exhibit, The Perfect Moment (Figure 2.1), at Cincinnati's Contemporary Arts Center (CAC). Using historical inquiry, Lankford's philosophically inquires about resolutions to the paradox, which are applicable to controversial art in education (Lankford, 1990).

During the summer of 1989, Senator Jesse Helms introduced an amendment to the appropriations bill that in part funded the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Gallery of Art, and the Smithsonian Institute. The bill prohibited federal support being used to:

- Promote, disseminate, or produce obscene or indecent materials, including but not limited to depictions of sadomasochism, homoeroticism, the exploitation of children, or individuals engaged in sex acts; also material which denigrates the objects or beliefs of a particular religion or non-religion; or material which denigrates, debases, or reviles a person, group, or class of citizens on the basis of race, creed, sex, handicap, age, or national origin (Lankford, 1990, p. 16).

Congress passed this bill, which affected the rules of the NEA. One new rule was that grant recipients must sign an agreement pledging not to use NEA money to produce art that is obscene (Lankford, 1990). The art world backlashed, according to U.S. News and
World Report. There was a "nationwide rash of provocative exhibits, designed to blur the boundaries of art and obscenity and affront public tastes" (Lankford, 1990, p. 17). Clearly, a sub-culture of artists was challenging repression from the dominant cultural paradigm. Lankford concludes his summary of the situation surrounding the amendment by arguing that offensive works do no justice for the arts, rather the effects are negative as they build even higher walls, segregating the artworld from the rest of society.

The second event Lankford discusses is the controversy surrounding Robert Mapplethorpe's exhibit, *The Perfect Moment*. This show consists of photographs that depict a gay sadomasochistic urban cultural style.

The controversy in Cincinnati over the exhibit began weeks before it opened. Citizen's groups and law enforcement officials had already mobilized their efforts to halt or censor Mapplethorpe's photographs. The Center promised to isolate the especially controversial works and implemented an age minimum of eighteen years of age for admission.

Apparently, the opponents of the show were not satisfied. A grand jury indicted the Contemporary Arts Center and its director, Dennis Barrie on misdemeanor obscenity charges punishable by fine and/or imprisonment. As a demonstration ensued outside, police closed the show for ninety minutes to videotape the exhibit as evidence. Federal judge Carl Rubin issued a court order barring police from confiscating more evidence or closing down the show. It seems as if the opponents of this show actually became an appendage of the monster they were fighting. The Center drew in unprecedented levels of attendance and membership to the center sharply increased (Lankford, 1990).
Lankford moves on in the article to answer the question: is the exhibit obscene? The Comstock Law of 1873 legally defines “obscene” (Lankford, 1990). The law was named after Anthony Comstock, a lobbyist for the Society for the Suppression of Vice. This law was challenged in 1957 and it was upheld. In 1973, the Supreme Court reinforced the ruling. The Supreme Court ruled that for something to be considered obscene it must meet three tests: “the dominant theme appeals to prurient interest; the material is an affront to community standards, as judged by a reasonable person; and the material lacks serious artistic, literary, scientific, or political value” (Lankford, 1990, p. 21). Lankford (1990, p. 21) applies these three rules to the Mapplethorpe exhibit:

While there is ample evidence that the Mapplethorpe exhibit has been an affront to some segments of the community, it is less clear whether the exhibit, taken as a whole, appeals to prurient interests. Even more contentious is the charge that it lacks artistic or political value, given that politics and the art world have been at the heart of the controversies and, especially, given the significant aesthetic merit of Mapplethorpe’s work.

Lankford is suggesting that the Mapplethorpe show is not obscene, as it does not meet all three criteria defined by the Supreme Court.

Another question Lankford attempts to resolve is: Do the actions taken against the NEA and the CAC constitute censorship? The Helms amendment was considered both “censorship of the arts” and the “proper management of public funds” (Lankford, 1990, p. 21). Lankford gives a poignant definition for censorship by Harold Lasswell, from the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences:
...the policy of restricting the public expression of ideas, opinions, conceptions, and impulses which have or are believed to have the capacity to undermine the governing authority or the social and moral order which that authority considers itself bound to protect (p. 21).

This definition gives reason as to why the same actions were viewed as censorship by some and management of public money by others (Lankford, 1990). He commits to two probabilities about the situations: the Helms amendment affecting the NEA seemed more about the use of public funds and less about censorship; and the controversy over the Robert Mapplethorpe exhibit at the CAC seemed more about censorship, as there was the threat of confiscation. Yet, Lankford concludes that it is difficult to assess whether or not censorship definitely occurred in the actions taken against the NEA and CAC.

Lankford believes that arts education can play a central role in resolving the issues involved in the “Art World Paradox.” Lankford (1990, p. 24) describes artistic freedom as a paradoxical element of the art world: “In order to provide an environment that fosters maximum latitude and protection for artistic choices, the art world must sustain a positive, nurturing relationship with other segments of society.” By opening the possibilities of artistic freedom, artworks created may offend public support, which in turn, is necessary to allow for maximum freedom. Art education is the best guarantee of a healthy relationship of a responsible art world and a well-educated, vigilant citizenry (Lankford, 1990).

Lankford gives three propositions to achieve a citizenry well educated in the arts, necessary for artistic freedom to flourish in society. The first is that “Controversies, issues, and problems facing the arts be addressed in classrooms” (Lankford, 1990, p. 25).
The earlier students start analyzing controversial topics, the more prepared they will be to
do so in the future. For instance, in 1989 a student at the Chicago Art Institute invited
visitors to tread over an American flag and respond to the query: What is the proper way
to display the American flag? Used in a classroom, students can respond to questions
about this work and its social impact.

Proposition two is that “students should learn about the social dynamics of the art
world” (Lankford, 1990, p. 26). Students should learn about the dynamics of the people
working in art galleries, museums, studios, and performance halls. It is important for
students to be aware of the politics “behind-the-scenes.”

The third proposition is that “aesthetic education should address the concept of
artistic freedom in the context of education” (Lankford, 1990, p. 26). Educators need to
match the goals of their teaching with the needs of the students and curricular goals. “A
teacher’s decision not to show Mapplethorpe’s X-Portfolio to elementary school children
is not an act of censorship. Responsible educational decisions are based on the
perception of student maturity, aptitude, and background, operating in a context of
diverse community strengths, needs, standards, and interests” (Lankford, 1990, p. 26).

Lankford inquires about two historical national events that challenge the role of
the government in the arts to justify the resolution of the “art world paradox.” Lankford’s
philosophical inquiry describes three propositions so be implemented in art education as
critical in the resolution of the issues involved with the paradoxical art world. These
propositions are useful in guiding a teacher in critical issues in teaching contemporary art.
These propositions also provide arguments for the valuable societal benefits for teaching
students contemporary art.
Figure 2.2: *Jim and Tom, Sausalito*, (1997) by Robert Mapplethorpe, part of the X-Portfolio (Danto, 1996).
2.2 Teaching Controversial Art to School Age Students

When looking at ways to deal with censorship in art education, one must go back to a case study done by Terry Barrett and Sharon Rab in 1990. The study is titled “Twelve High School Students, a Teacher, a Professor and Robert Mapplethorpe’s Photographs: Exploring Cultural Difference Through Controversial Art.” This is a study done of the critical controversial art show, The Perfect Moment by Robert Mapplethorpe in Cincinnati, Ohio, as discussed above. “The implications are forwarded for educating about controversial art of subcultures and educating for understanding cultural differences through art” (Barrett and Rab, 1990, p. 4). This study is the most salient case study research done on this topic in recent years as it gives insight on how to approach controversial art through the perspectives of students, a teacher, and a professor as they prepared and experienced a trip to view controversial contemporary art.

This study is a descriptive study of a field trip taken by twelve students, a teacher, and a professor serving as a critic-in-education to the Ohio Arts Council. The study describes the experience in which the students crossed cultural boundaries:

Mapplethorpe’s art tests the tolerance of people within mainstream culture. His photographs explicitly depict a gay sado-masochistic sub-culture and were foreign to these students of a predominantly white, conservative, working class community. Art such as this is usually not acknowledged in schools, and much less an object of study (Barrett & Rab, 1990, p. 4).
The authors discuss the information regarding the students’ experience with implications for education that would examine the art of a sub-culture that strongly challenges dominant cultural values.

The article includes a description of the museum visit. The trip was elective as part of an after-school arts program for academic credit. The local controversy had implemented an age restriction of eighteen-years-old for the exhibit excluding students under the age of eighteen. The authors also describe in the study the participating students’ actions which included: the option to preview the artworks in a book in the school library, a preparatory discussion with the critic-in-education, the guided tour of the exhibit, a journal entry reflecting on the experience and personal debriefing with the teacher (Barrett & Rab, 1990). The study describes the context of the specific trip as it applies to the overarching Mapplethorpe controversy.

The teacher’s account of the experience gives insight into what the driving purpose of the trip was, as she was the motivating force. She had already planned the trip to the exhibit when the local controversy arose, so instead of censoring the student’s experience, Sharon Rab, the teacher, saw this as a good opportunity for the students to learn about the issues of censorship in the arts (Barrett & Rab, 1990).

The teacher explained that she placed the artwork in the school library for the students to view. She felt that a preview of the artworks would put the students more at ease when viewing the works at the center. She had explained to the students that she felt nervous when she first viewed the photographs. When she asked what the students thought about the photographs, one student said, “We think you lead a sheltered life”
(Barrett, & Rab, 1990, p. 9). To me, this shows that high school students, although younger and less experienced, may not be as sheltered as presumed.

Rab also explained the discussion that occurred about the photographs (1990). The critic-in-education (the professor) passed out reproductions of Mapplethorpe’s photographs published in the exhibition catalogue, *The Perfect Moment*, randomly to each person, including the teacher, so that they could describe to the class what their photograph displayed. The students could trade their image for another if they felt uncomfortable with the one they received. This relieved students from the pressure of picking out the image themselves, but also gave them a choice, if it was necessary. According to the teacher, the student’s descriptions ranged from calm to slightly disgusted. She noted that one student used various euphemisms, rather than proper anatomical labels (Barrett & Rab, 1990). To me, this is indicative of the student’s unfamiliarity of dealing with images such as these in the classroom, giving evidence that the preparatory discussion was necessary.

The teacher’s account also included a powerful narrative of what the student’s reactions were at the actual exhibit. While viewing the X, Y, Z Portfolio, the main point of controversy surrounding the show, the students slowly moved back from the images, out of sight line from the images. They did this even as the tour guide was still speaking about the pieces. The teacher inferred that the student’s were looking to leave, as she was as well.

The professor’s account echoes the account of the teacher, but focuses more heavily on what the students were saying. The professor, Terry Barrett of Ohio State University, was associating the students with general notions of students of that age, and
at the same time, noting their idiosyncrasies, as he was trying to get to know them.

Barrett (1990, p. 11) also describes the student who chose to use euphemisms rather than anatomical labels when describing an image to the class:

Tod did a fine job describing the photograph’s subject and form, artfully employing several euphemisms for the man’s sex organ, unable to utter the word ‘penis.’ Several in the group noticed this, were amused, and gently chided him about it, he finally said the word and everyone laughed in good spirit. It made the rest of the discussion easier.

The professor’s writing gently pushes and pulls from the more general statement about students to specific statements about individuals reacting in certain ways because of their unique identity and personality.

The professor commented on the domineering attitude of the tour guide at the Arts Center. He realized that the tour guide made the tour “hers” instead of empowering the students to help guide themselves and their classmates. When the students were backing away from the X, Y, Z, Portfolio, the tour guide didn’t take notice. Barrett (1990) felt protective of the students and critical of the guide. Barrett’s (1990) statements strongly implied the importance of hearing student’s thoughts and statements during this experience.

The students’ accounts of what happened and what they felt are crucial to Barrett’s account of the experience. After preparing for the show, one student was unsure if she really wanted to see it, but then decided to. Afterwards, she was glad that she viewed the art and expressed gratitude for the preparation in school. Another student reinforced the professor’s belief that the tour guide did not allow the students enough
room to think for themselves by saying, "I wish that Sandy [the tour guide] could have allowed us to just walk around the exhibit and been quiet" (Barrett & Rab, 1990, p. 13). Although, it is stated that there was too much direction from the tour guide, one student made a comment suggesting that some guidance was appreciated:

…it seemed like we were all nervous about looking at one picture too much. I could be wrong, but I think if we were by ourselves—OK—if I was by myself—I would have looked at them longer, or more closely. Am I making sense? But when we were all together there was some pressure to appear like you didn’t really want to look at it. But we were all probably as curious as the next person (Barrett & Rab, 1990, p. 13).

This student analyzed the pressures of the collective group mentality. At least true for this student, possibly applicable to her peers as well, is that if they were not led to these images they may not have viewed them at all, even if they were curious about the images. The students’ reactions are a critical component of this study.

Through the personal accounts of twelve high school seniors, a teacher, and a professor, one notices the critical components of experiencing controversial artwork in regards to teaching and learning. The two major threads running through this study are the preparations and the structure of the experience. There was positive feedback from all sides regarding the preparation, first optional materials in the library to view and then a class discussion over the works. The students were provided the opportunity to view the artworks, but also given the choice to not view the artworks. During the class discussion, the students were given an image to discuss, but also given the choice to switch to another image. During the visit to the exhibit, the amount of guidance was once
again brought to attention. The students had been acclimated to the works in a guiding and caring environment. The tour guide strayed from this structure and took over, not giving the students much choice in the situation, as indicated in the reflections of the students, the teacher and the professor. This study makes clear that it is important to find a middle ground of guiding comfort and freedom of choice when approaching controversial art with students.

2.3 The Role of the Teacher: Philosophical-Pedagogical Orientations

In “Relating Controversial Contemporary Art and School Art: A Problem-Position,” Carol S. Jeffers and Pat Parth (1996) compare and contrast three field trips taken by students to different contemporary arts exhibits. Jeffers and Parth analyze teachers’ perspectives and expectations through a case study of four teachers for philosophical inquiry into the problem-position of school art and contemporary controversial art.

Jeffers and Parth discuss the field trip taken by the twelve high school seniors to The Perfect Moment exhibit (Barrett & Rab, 1990), taking particular interest in the teacher. They notice that it was Sharon Rab that made the trip possible for the students. Jeffers and Parth (1996) also mention the preparation the students had and how much the preparation was a positive approach for the students. Jeffers and Parth (1996) realize that the trip took place because of the teacher’s actions; and the trip was successful because of the teacher’s approach.
Pat Parth first studied the other two field trips and then both Parth and Jeffers re-examine the findings. In this study, students and teachers visited the feminist art exhibitions, “Bad Girls” and “Bad Girls West” (Parth, 1995). “Bad Girls” was exhibited in the New Museum in New York and “Bad Girls West” showed at the Wight Gallery, located on the campus of the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). There were four teachers (two for each group of students) that took part in this study. Parth uses this dual-study to look at how teachers’ philosophical-pedagogical orientation may affect their perspective on controversial art.

Obviously, the backgrounds and teaching experiences of the teachers involved is crucial, as it probably play a large role in determining their philosophical-pedagogical orientation. Jeffers and Parth (1996, p. 25) give a description of the four teachers:

Of the four teachers participating in Parth’s study, one had been teaching high school art and drama at a Catholic girls’ school in Los Angeles for 22 years, another had been teaching art in a public high school of the Los Angeles Unified School District for 27 years. A third teacher, who was in her second year of teaching at an alternative high school in Manhattan, described herself as an artist working on a grant from the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA). The fourth teacher also was an artist, working with the museum education and outreach program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). She had been teaching preschool and elementary school children for 13 years.

So, there are two seasoned public school teachers and two artist-teachers participating in Parth’s study.
Parth conducted a survey asking various teachers questions including: What is your opinion on censorship? The veteran Catholic high school teacher “does not believe in any form of censorship” and believes that people should decide for themselves if they want to participate in an event (Parth, 1995, Jeffers & Parth, 1996, p. 26). The other veteran teacher, from a public school, is swaying from her “absolutist” position on the subject. She states, “I’ve never been in favor of censorship in the past. Now I’m concerned about the increased showing of violence on TV and the negative effects it has on young people. Censorship of TV violence may be necessary in the future” (Parth, 1995, Jeffers & Parth, 1996, p. 26). Another teacher also thought about potential negative side effects when considering this question. The LACMA artist-teacher said that censorship is a difficult issue. This teacher also stated, “Art should not injure anyone’s psyche, socially, culturally, racially. It’s hard to determine” (Parth, 1995, Jeffers & Parth, 1996, p. 26). The MOMA artist-teacher focuses her response more on the art world, rather than on education. She states that censorship is an “eternally divisive issue for feminists and artists” (Parth, 1995, Jeffers & Parth, 1996, p. 26). Overall, there was a broad range of answers from these teachers.

These four teachers were also asked: “What do you expect your students to get out of the show?” Jeffers and Parth felt as if “the two veteran high school teachers seemed to view the exhibits as ends in themselves, as stimulating events or topics to be scrutinized and studied” (Jeffers & Parth, 1996, p. 27). The other two artist-teachers seemed to view the exhibits as the beginning of inquiry for students. The MOMA teacher expected her students to get “lots of questions” from the exhibit (Jeffers & Parth, 1996, p. 27). Likewise, the LACMA artist-teacher said that she expected her students to
explore (Jeffers & Parth, 1996, p. 27). The answers to these questions start to create a dichotomy of ideology: on one hand there are the veteran teachers who viewed the exhibit as an end, and on the other hand are the artist teachers who viewed the show as stimulation for deeper learning.

Once again Parth (1995) found two streams of ideas when the teachers were asked if they thought the controversial exhibits, “Bad Girls/Bad Girls West,” were relevant to school art. The veteran teachers thought the show was somewhat relevant to school art. The public school teacher stated that the show had “limited relevancy” (Parth, 1995, Jeffers & Parth, 1996, p. 28). The artist-teachers looked at the situation differently. The LACMA artist-teacher thought it to be “as relevant as any other show” (Parth 1995, Jeffers & Parth, 1996, p. 28). The teachers answered these questions from their unique perspectives. All in all, Parth (1995) found that the artist-teachers oriented themselves toward the world of art and the veteran high school teachers oriented themselves toward the world, as they knew it, at school (Jeffers & Parth, 1996).

Jeffers & Parth (1996) explain this phenomenon by difference in orientation. This phenomenon supports McFee’s (1991) description of the dichotomous relationship that seems to exist between the art of art education and the education of art education. The art of art education is more concerned with content. The education side of art education is concerned with ability to teach students of varying interest and skill levels in art (Jeffers & Parth, 1996). “...There [is] a difference between the agendas of the art world and the school world, [and] the art teacher as educator of the young might not have the same stance as the citizen outside the schools” (Smith, 1991, p. 6-7). Jeffers and Parth,
however, argue that when art educators align themselves heavily with education they may not be able to stay abreast of developments and issues in controversial contemporary art. Jeffers and Parth’s study acknowledges philosophical-pedagogical stances of teachers and how they relate to teaching about controversial art. F. Scott Regan (1990, p.4) states, “Perhaps we can no longer straddle the fence of artist/educator if education is to be defined as an activity designed to offend no one and reinforce a social vision that no longer approximates reality. If we must choose between artist and teacher will we have meaning? Will we have work?” It seems as if the more background a teacher has in contemporary and controversial art, the smaller the gap there is between art education and contemporary and controversial art. Jeffers & Parth state that the efforts of Barrett and Rab, when taking twelve high school students to the Cincinnati Contemporary Art Center, may serve as a model for bridging school art and contemporary controversial art. What experiences have other teachers had that can also serve as models for bridging school art and contemporary controversial art?

2.4 Controversial Student Art: Does Freedom of Expression or Censorship Prevail?

“Art of Disturbation: Provocation and Censorship in Art Education” (1997) provides real-life examples of how a teacher may handle controversial art that is created in the classroom. The article is highly narrative, rather than research oriented but provides valuable insight into how real-life situations were handled by the author, David Henley.
Henley was a professor at the Art Institute of Chicago during the exhibit in which a student placed an American flag on the ground (Figure 2.3), inviting patrons to tread on it (Lankford, 1990, Henley, 1997). Amid much controversy from groups such as the American Legionnaires and museum members, the Art Institute stood behind the student’s freedom of expression (Henley, 1997), until the work was submitted for display a second time the following year. The school did not want lose stature in the art world by refusing to show the work again, but the controversy would ensue. Also, the administration was worried about graduation proceedings being disrupted. The department chairs were polled as to their position in the matter. Most voted for the work to be admitted. Henley was one of the few who voted against admission of the work. His decision was based on reasoning that has since evolved into a personal philosophy on how to deal with controversial artworks created by students in a school setting. In this article, Henley states his philosophy and then illustrates how his philosophy applies to examples with school-age children.

Henley voted against the American flag piece being admitted a second time because he felt it would violate the rights of those not involved with the work. From this he developed the differentiation between the “right to create” and the “privilege to show.” His philosophy states:

While art educators must embrace an artist’s freedom of expression, this freedom extends only to the work’s right to exist. Should the art leave the studio and enter the public domain, it would be then governed by community values rather than individual freedom (Henley, 1997, p. 40).
The people attending the Art Institute while the artwork was displayed were there for many reasons other than to view this work, such as the commencement ceremony, to view other works in the show, etc. The majority of the people in attendance at The Art Institute during this exhibit would probably not support this artwork. Henley felt as if the community valued the work not being admitted more so than if the work was to be admitted. The work was in public domain and thus should be governed by the community values.
Figure 2.3: *What is the Proper Way to Display a U.S. Flag?* (1988) Installation for audience participation by Dread Scott (Scott, n.d.)
Henley applies his philosophy to the classroom with a few points in mind. Given the nature of public schools, the audience is captive, unable to freely decide if it can handle a work of art (1997). Educators must treat artworks displaying cultural values other than mainstream as potentially disturbing to others. These works, although they have the right to exist, may not be given the privilege to show. Educators should keenly observe the students as they create and decide whether or not the students are creating “art of disturbance”: that is, whether the students are creating the work for attention from their peers or if they are creating the work to sincerely express a sub-cultural value. Once this is decided, the educator then will either discuss with the student how to create a more sincere work of art or privately critique the artwork with the student, respective to each situation. Henley applies his philosophy, with these points in mind to real situations.

One example Henley discusses is of a drawing made by a five-year-old girl. The girl drew several bodies complete with their sexual differences. This is not standard subject matter for a five-year-old, therefore making the drawing controversial for this classroom (in this case, the family happened to be very open about nudity). Henley observed the student working and noticed that her artistic intentions were self-rewarding. The girl was not looking for approval from an audience with these drawings. The student was allowed her freedom of expression, but her work was not shown to others, as it displayed something other than dominant cultural values. The teacher provided the student with a one-on-one critique, in which the teacher “neither passed moral judgment or praised the work’s provocative content” (Henley, 1997, p. 42). Since the child was sincerely expressing a sub-cultural value (as her family practiced the sub-cultural value of nudity), the artwork was accepted “as-is,” just not shown to others.
Henley also illustrates an example in which the student expresses controversial content for attention. A seventeen-year-old high school boy created a collage, which depicted women in a hostile manner with sexual overtones. This collage offended many of his female classmates and he was directed to complete the collage at a place in the classroom out of view from the rest of the students. It was obvious to Henley that the student was trying to be humorous and clever, at the expense of his classmates. Instead of leaving the student in isolation to finish the collage, Henley chose to critique the work with the student. He found out that the student was trying to “explore female seduction and sexual enticement which he often found to be a ‘tease’” (Henley, 1997, p. 44).

Henley (1997) benignly supported the idea, commenting that this might be an important issue for the student. Henley proposed the idea of creating a more serious piece about the same issue so that the student could contribute to our understanding of male adolescents struggling with social pressure and urges (Henley, 1997). The student labored over the new collage, this time creating one that was acceptable to the other students, but still expressed the artist’s intended message.

Henley (1997, p. 45) views censorship as a “strategy that provides structure and guidance to keep disturbance a self-empowering element in the art experience.” Henley uses his personal philosophy, gained through an experience at the Art Institute of Chicago, for student artists of all ages.
2.5 The Process of Viewing Art: Implications for Controversy

When people view art, they are likely engaged in three mental activities: describing, interpreting and judging. These three aspects are not mutually exclusive and usually contain much overlap.

Although description is usually based more on fact, Barrett (2003, p. 63) provides evidence that the judgment of a work can influence the way in which it is described. In Interpreting Art, Barrett discusses a religiously controversial artwork: The Holy Virgin Mary by Chris Ofili (Figure 2.4). The most controversial aspect of this work is that it contains both elephant dung and a religious icon. Barrett gives three descriptions of the work from three critics whose judgments of the work vary from negative to neutral to positive. When describing the work, the critic with a negative judgment refers to it as “splattered with elephant dung.” The critic with a neutral judgment of the painting refers to the works in the show as “incorporating elephant dung, one way or another.” The critic with a positive judgment, describes the work by saying: “And, oh yes, they are often presented leaning against rather than hanging on a wall, supported on balls of varnished elephant dung, the way that overstuffed armchairs used to rest on carved wood spheres” (Barrett, 2003, p. 61). It is interesting to note that, in this case, that the more positive the judgment is the longer description. Although descriptions should be based on empirical evidence, they still provide interpretations and judgments through choice of vocabulary.
Figure 2.4: *Holy Virgin Mary* (1996) by Chris Ofili (Timms, Bradley, & Hayward, 1999)
Many times controversy over artwork begins with variances in interpretation. As Barrett (2003, p. 57) states, “Interpretation is central to controversy.” Usually, controversy is created by a divergence of interpretations. In the case of *The Holy Virgin Mary*, Chris Ofili stated that “the people who are attacking this painting are attacking their own interpretation, not mine” (Barrett, 2003, p. 59). The interpretations ranged from terms like “catholic bashing” and “hate speech” to “a rather exciting Black with impressive eyes” (Barrett, 2003, p. 58-59). Many different perspectives still are not necessarily controversial, though. Controversy occurs when one of those interpretations insists that it is the only interpretation that is correct. Stephen Dubin personifies this theory with his character, *Homo censorious*. There are a few very important characteristics of *Homo Censorious*. First, “*Homo Censorious* insists on a single interpretation of a work of art” (Barrett, 2003, p. 60). Secondly, *Homo Censorious* “takes a few elements out of context—specific words, titles, part of a design—and treats them as if they embody the entire work of art” (Barrett, 2003, p. 60). *Homo censorious* also usually holds a paternalistic attitude towards society and believes that various cultural expressions can “contaminate” the mind (Barrett, 2003, p. 60). So, an artwork becomes controversial when there are multiple interpretations of a work shown (usually within the public sphere) and at least one of those interpretations exhibits characteristics like those of *Homo Censorious*.

One very interesting aspect of the *Holy Virgin Mary* controversy is that many of the negative judgments involved in the controversy were made based on other people’s descriptions and interpretations. Barrett (2003, p. 63) states “Had the contributors to the furor over the painting first gone to see the painting in the Museum, there may have been
no furor at all.” He explains further, referring back to the descriptions of the elephant dung: “No one who saw the painting in person could accurately or honestly state that it was smeared, splattered, or splashed with dung” (Barrett, 2003, p. 63). The largest fallacy of basing judgments on someone else’s descriptions is that the description may not be accurate, and hence, the interpretations may be unfounded.

In conclusion, difficult topics expressed and exhibited include sexual, political, religious, racial and ideological ideas that subvert the dominant cultural paradigm. It is usually the exhibition of these expressions that creates the controversy. We have found that controversy arises from interpretations that do not allow for different interpretations, like those of Homo Censorious. We may even say that controversial topics arise out of interpretations that try to censor other interpretations.

2.6 Difficult Subject Matter, Ideological Differences and the Public Domain

I have discussed several examples of difficult art in society that became controversial for various reasons, such as: Robert Mapplethorpe’s Perfect Moment exhibit (especially the X, Y, Z Portfolio), Bad Girls and Bad Girls West exhibits, and The Holy Virgin Mary done by Chris Ofili in the Sensations exhibit. The topics that were found controversial in these works of art were sexual, political and religious.

Also controversial in society are artworks that deal with race. In Interpreting Art, Barrett (2003, p. 77) discusses the work of Kara Walker (Figure 2.5). Walker is an artist who, through the style 18th century portraiture silhouettes, creates large wall-size mural cutouts depicting difficult racial issues. Her artworks became controversial, even causing
African-American artist Betye Saar to initiate a letter writing campaign (National Coalition Against Censorship, 2003). The heart of the controversy is how the satirical images are perceived. “One argument says, it’s our history, why not deal with it in our art? Another contends these images are so powerful they can’t be subverted. Fearing that America doesn’t want to let go of them, this side argues, why pollute the world with more? The controversy continues to grow, fueled by clashing values, generations and artistic motivations” (*The Atlanta Journal / The Atlanta Constitution*, 1998). According to the National Coalition Against Censorship, “tensions [were] finally aired at a symposium at Harvard addressing the sensitive issue of the recycling and reframing of racially stereotypical images in contemporary culture” (2003). Interpretation also plays a big role in controversy regarding racial issues expressed in art.
Figure 2.5: Presenting Negro Scenes Drawn Upon My Passage Through the South and Reconfigured for the Benefit of Enlightened Audiences Wherever Such May Be Found, By Myself. Missus K.E.B. Walker, Colored (detail) (1997) by Kara Walker (Dixon, 2002)
All of the topics discussed have one common theme: they are sexual, political, religious, racial and ideological expressions that are a difficult to fit into the dominant cultural paradigm. Also, the controversy among all of these works was not necessarily about the creating of the work, but it was more about the exhibition of the work.

Not all controversy arises from difficult subject matter. In Interpreting Art, Barrett (2003) discusses the controversy over Norman Rockwell’s paintings (Figure 2.6). Rockwell’s subject matter is hardly difficult and widely accepted within the public domain. For this reason, his work is controversial within the art world. Barrett (2003, p. 68) explains, “...Rockwell’s work was hardly interpreted at all, because it was judged to be so obvious and transparent that it needed no interpretation; now, however, it is being judged positively and interpreted with seriousness.” The controversy arises out of various interpretations. This is one interpretation from Daniel Belgrad (a critic who obviously does not like Rockwell’s work):

Rockwell is accused of working with outmoded and restrictive stereotypes that offer us only very limited ways of engaging our complex social reality. The darker side of this reality—issues like divorce and loneliness, poverty, and environmental degradation—Rockwell simply ignores (Barrett, 2003, p.69)

David Hickey, who holds a positive judgment for Rockwell’s work, wrote:

Rockwell was the last, best practitioner of a tradition of social painting that began in the seventeenth century. In the history of America’s democracy and popular culture, he was something brand new: the first visual artist who aspired to charm us all, and for more than half a century managed to do it...To put it simply, Norman Rockwell invented Democratic History Painting—an artistic practice
based on an informing vision of history as a complex, ongoing field of events that occurs at eye level—of history conceived and portrayed as the cumulative actions of millions of ordinary human beings, living in historical time, growing up and growing old (Barrett, 2003, p. 71).

These two interpretations show the range of difference between thoughts on Norman Rockwell. Although not controversial in society at large, Rockwell’s work has become a point of controversy within the art world.
Figure 2.6: *Freedom from Want* (1943) by Norman Rockwell (The Norman Rockwell Museum at Stockbridge, 1995)
2.7 Is it Censorship or the Proper Distribution of Public Funds?

As discussed earlier, Lankford discusses the difference between censorship and the proper distribution of public funds. Lankford used the NEA amendment to illustrate the difference. Lankford concluded that it was difficult to assess whether the NEA amendment was more about proper distribution of public funds than it was about censorship. Peter Smith (1991, p. 14) elaborates in a paper presented at the National Art Education Association convention the following year. Smith objects to politicians giving moral guidelines, but he concludes his paper with four main points to take into consideration. Smith states, “Although artists have a right to say what they wish, there is an ethical problem in requesting public funds for disseminate views that are regarded as violating the ethics or morality of a given community” (1991, p. 14). Smith (1991, p. 14) further states, “Finally, there is a possibility that certain subjects depicted in artworks may be threatening to the well-being of the young. Perhaps that is the real definition of the word ‘obscene’.” As the distinction between censorship and proper distribution of public funds is relevant to society, the distinction between censorship and choices made by a teacher to protect the well-being of the young is relevant to schools.

Lankford and Smith agree that there is a distinction between censorship and proper distribution of public funds, although the assessment of each is not clear within the public domain. Just as there is the distinction between censorship and the proper distribution of public funds within the public domain, there is also the distinction between censorship and careful selections in schools. As stated by one teacher that participated in the study of the feminist art exhibit, “Art should not injure anyone’s psyche, socially,
culturally, racially” (Parth, 1995, Jeffers & Parth, 1996, p. 26). As Henley (1997) expressed in his article, in society we can distinguish between the right to create and the right to show within the public domain, but students in public schools have a captive audience. Everything made in a public school is within the public domain. According to Henley (1997, p. 40), the work created in public schools should be governed by community values. Unfortunately, the assessment of censorship and careful selection is not clear within schools either.

2.8 Summary

Through historical and philosophical inquiry, case study research and theoretical inquiry this literature reviews the national context of controversial art, approaches taken by educators, the perspectives of educator’s and the censorship issues concerned with student art. These methods help to clarify the issues involved with controversial art’s place in art education. Teaching about controversial art in schools may be beneficial to alleviating some of the issues within the paradoxical situation of the art world. Informing students of the complexities of the controversy and honing their analytical skills for sorting through the divergences will help prepare these students to become critical and astute art viewers and creators. Preparation is critical in teaching about controversial art. The teacher is imperative in creating an environment that is conducive for students to learn through, with and about controversial art. The students responded well to an environment that fostered support, but also allowed for the students’ to make their own interpretations and judgments. It is obvious that the role of the teacher is critical; the
teachers’ backgrounds and experiences influence their philosophical-pedagogical standpoint, which ultimately influences their approach to controversial art. Even if art teachers do not have an interest in teaching about controversial topics, they still may need to make decisions about controversial artwork. Sometimes, controversy surrounds art created by a student. The student’s motive of the art seems to be a key factor in deciding what approach to use with the work. The research reviewed provides many answers about the various perspectives on including controversial art into the public domain, more specifically a classroom setting.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY: A HYBRID OF METHODS

Through interactions with so many people on a daily basis, teachers collect many stories, which hold a wealth of information. This study is a descriptive analysis of the stories told by teachers regarding controversial art and censorship. This study's methodology consists of two-part survey research including both survey and interview methods. The first step is a survey of teachers from a variety of schools. The second step is interviews with the teachers. Survey research is not a popular method among qualitative researchers; however, interview research is a very popular research method among qualitative researchers. The methodology for this research is a hybrid of the best attributes of both methods: the breadth of a survey and the depth of an interview.
3.1 Survey Method

My research includes a survey of fourteen teachers in various educational settings: urban and suburban populations in elementary, middle and high schools (APPENDIX A). These teachers were recruited with the help of Dr. Mary Louise Poling, Program Manager in The Department of Art Education at The Ohio State University. Dr. Poling provided the mailing addresses of teachers likely to be interested in participating in this study.

This survey addresses the following questions (although these questions do not appear verbatim on the questionnaire): Is some content controversial in an art curriculum, and why? What is censored in public schools? Who is censoring? Why are they censoring? The purpose of the survey is to provide art teachers an opportunity to explain the selection processes they go through when identifying content as appropriate or inappropriate.

I constructed the survey using the Total Design Method, created by Dilman in 1978. "The theory says that a survey is a social interaction in which respondents act on the basis of what they expect to receive in exchange for their cooperation. They cooperate when social costs are low, when the expected benefit exceeds the perceived costs, and when researchers create a feeling of trust" (Neuman, 2000, p. 270). The practical application of the method includes advice on wording, length, question order and layout. The integration of the theory and the practical advice of the Total Design Method to conduct the survey encourage a better response rate.
The wording in the questionnaire is particularly important because the topic is inherently difficult. I carefully selected the wording so that it does not trigger an emotional reaction. For instance, research shows that although these words have the same meaning, people are more willing to “not allow” something than to “forbid” it (Neuman, 2000). Also, the use of simple vocabulary and grammar helped to avoid confusion (Neuman, 2000). As recommended by Dr. Mary Louise Poling (personal communication, 2003), questions regarding appropriate and inappropriate classroom content are used instead of loaded terms like “controversial art” and “censorship.” These questions are difficult because the topic is difficult; much care is needed to create this survey.

The lengths of the completed questionnaires vary because they contain open-ended questions. Respondents have the freedom to say as much or as little as they would like in their answers. As recommended by Dr. Candace Stout, Associate Professor of Art Education at The Ohio State University (personal communication, 2003), there is ample space for the respondents to answer the questions. It also clearly states that respondents might use the back or another sheet of paper to write longer answers. The survey is between three to four pages in length, with the space for answers included. Most of the final analysis focuses on the interviews following the survey. For this reason, the length of the survey is short. A long survey with the possibility of a follow-up interview might be discouraging for respondents. The survey is designed to be a pleasant experience for the respondents.

The order of the questions is critical to ensure a good response rate. First, the questionnaire includes a short introduction. Second, there are clear and concise
directions in italicized, bold type. The opening questions are interesting and easy to answer, helping the respondent feel comfortable with the survey. I avoided boring background questions and threatening questions in the opening of the questionnaire (Neuman, 2000). The questions in the middle are organized into common topics, with short introductory statements about each topic, if needed (Neuman, 2000). I placed the most threatening question in the middle of the survey, with careful attention to wording. “Thank you for your participation” concludes the survey (Neuman, 2000, p. 265).

Overall, the logical order and smooth flow of questions raises the respondents’ comfort levels, encouraging a good response rate.

The survey includes a cover letter, questionnaire and addressed return envelope with postage (APPENDIX B). The survey was sent first class, addressed to the teachers specifically. The cover letter is dated and carefully written on Ohio State University letterhead stationary. The cover letter requests respondent participation, guarantees confidentiality, explains the purpose of the survey and gives my name, phone number and email address (Neuman, 2000). All three items included in the survey are prepared with serious consideration.

If a response is not received, I sent a follow up reminder in the form of a letter ten days after the survey was sent (APPENDIX C). The follow-up letter politely asks for cooperation again and I offered to send another survey. These letters were also carefully constructed and of professional quality (Neuman, 2000).
3.2 Interview Method

"The term ‘qualitative interviewing’ is usually intended to refer to in-depth, semi-structured or loosely structured forms of interviewing” (Mason, 2002). In the book *Qualitative Interviewing*, Jennifer Mason highlights some common features of qualitative interviews: interactional exchange of dialogue; relatively informal style; a thematic, topic-centered, biographical, or narrative approach; and the process of contextualizing and situating knowledge.

The interview design in this study complements the qualitative survey design. I created a unique interview schedule for each participant. The survey findings provide some knowledge about teachers’ perspectives regarding the decisions they make about appropriate and inappropriate materials. One function of the interview is to contextualize and situate that knowledge. Another function of the interview, in this case, is to generate deeper knowledge than the survey findings. For these reasons, most of the questions on the interview schedules are specific to each respondent’s answers to the survey questions.

The interviews are semi-structured. According to Mason, qualitative interviews are an “interactional exchange of dialogue”; I, the researcher, and the other participants share the responsibility to generate data during the interviewing process. If one function of the interview is to situate and contextualize the participants’ knowledge, I should also situate and contextualize the knowledge that I am contributing to the dialogue. Rather than reading prepared questions from an interview schedule, I discussed the questions with the participant. The interview is just as much “theirs” as it is “mine.”
Ontological and epistemological positions are reflected in my methodological choice of qualitative interviewing methods. Mason states that one may choose qualitative interviewing if one's "ontological position suggests that people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality which one's research questions are designed to explore" (2002). I am interested in art teachers' perspectives on the decisions that they make regarding appropriate and inappropriate classroom material. Furthermore, I am interested in teachers' perspectives about what is being censored and who is censoring in their respective art programs. Ontologically, my position as a researcher asserts that these art teachers generate meaningful knowledge about the social reality of censorship in the art programs in public schools.

How do I access or work with art teachers to generate meaningful knowledge? My epistemological position is that talking interactively with people, asking them questions, listening to them, gaining access to their accounts and articulations, and analyzing their use of language and construction of discourse will provide insight into their knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions (Mason, 2002).

Ontological and epistemological positions affect the way one chooses to conduct interviews (data construction) and the way one reviews the transcripts (data collection). Mason describes three ways to read transcripts to collect data:

If, for example, you wish to derive data in a literal manner, then you would probably be interested in aspects of the interaction such as the literal dialogue, including its form and sequence, or the literal substance. If you wished to derive
data in an *interpretive* manner, then you would be wanting to ‘read’ the interviews for what you think they mean, or possibly for what you think you can infer about something outside of the interview interaction itself. And if you wished to derive data in a *reflexive* manner, then you would want to ‘read’ something about your role, and your interface with the interaction (Mason, 2002, p. 78).

I am interested in deriving data from the interviews in a *reflexive* manner. As a researcher, I play a large role in the data construction. It is necessary that I reflect on that interaction while collecting data from the transcripts.

Ethical dilemmas can occur while preparing the questions, conducting the interviews, and deriving data. I know that the topic might be difficult for some people to discuss. Through the entire interviewing process, I was constantly aware of what I asked, how I asked it, what I ‘let’ my interviewees tell me, how I can guarantee the confidentiality of the interviewees, and the power relations of the interview interaction (Mason, 2002). The structure of the interviews was guided by these ethical concerns.

Overall, the interview was structured much like the survey. The structure stimulates dialogue regarding the research topic and adheres to the ethical guidelines set forth in the study. However, the real purpose of the interview is to construct and collect data that cannot be constructed or collected through a survey method. The primary goal of surveying the respondents is to find out *who* is interested in this topic; the primary goal of the interview is to find out *why* they are interested in this topic.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS: FIVE PUBLIC SCHOOL ART TEACHERS DISCUSS THEIR EXPERIENCES

I mailed fifty-four surveys to art teachers in a variety of schools. I sent twenty-five surveys to art teachers teaching students in kindergarten through fifth or sixth grade in elementary schools. I sent eight surveys to art teachers in middle or intermediate schools. Teachers in middle and intermediate schools teach students in grades five through eight. I sent twenty-one surveys to art teachers at high schools that students in grades nine through twelve attend. Six elementary art teachers, one middle school art teacher and seven high school art teachers returned a completed survey. Five of the fourteen respondents participated in an interview. Three high school art teachers and two elementary school art teachers participated in an interview. All of the art teachers that I interviewed teach in suburban school districts at least ten miles, but no more than twenty miles, from the center of the metropolitan area.

4.1 Controversial Subject Matter: What is Censored in Public School Art Programs?

All of the participating art teachers discuss similar subject matter as being potentially controversial in their school. Most of these teachers bring up sexual content,
violence, and illegal drugs as subject matter that is potentially controversial. Some
teachers discuss issues such as artist lifestyles, cultural differences, and lesson themes
when discussing censorship.

4.2  Nudity and Sexual Content

All of these art teachers discuss nudity with me during our interviews. However,
these high school art teachers do not censor nudity, but the elementary art teachers do.
All three high school art teachers discuss situations in which they have incorporated
nudity into their class, mostly in books or videos. The teachers alluded that students of
all ages have trouble considering nude images in a serious way. Perhaps this is because
they are not used to seeing such things in a school setting.

At the high school level, teachers are able to work with the students to get past
their initial awkwardness with the subject matter. Most high school students are able to
realize that a nude image is not necessarily a sexual image. Both elementary art teachers
think that the younger students have a difficult time getting past the shock of nude
figures. Instead of focusing on the objectives of the lesson, the elementary art teachers
spend class time focusing on how to accept a nude image. Overall, the high school art
teachers are more concerned about showing sexual content to their students, whereas the
elementary school art teachers do not discriminate between nudity and sexual content and
are concerned about showing both.

Two of the art teachers, one elementary and one high school, discussed how they
bring books containing nudity into their classroom. The books are resources for students
drawing the human figure. The high school art teacher brings in college-level anatomy books and does not feel the images are sexual. The elementary teacher's books that contain nudity include "How-to-Draw" books and books with reproductions of Matisse paintings. This teacher draws "bathing suits" on the figures in black marker before the students access the books. The students notice the bathing suits and she explains that the figures are nude. She doesn't have a problem telling them that there are nude figures in the books, but she does censor the images of the nude figures. She does this for all nude figures, sexual or not.

4.3 Glamorizing Violence

All of these teachers think that violence is potentially controversial subject matter. Two teachers further elaborate, stating that violence can be self-inflicted, possibly culminating in suicide, or violence can be directed towards others. One teacher articulates that the glamorization of violence is potentially controversial and she chooses to censor that particular concept, but she does not censor works that explore violence in a way that does not glamorize it. These interpretations influence the judgment of the work.

4.4 Glorifying the Use of Illegal Drugs

Most of these teachers also think that the portrayal of illegal drugs is a point of controversy. Once again, one teacher points out that not all ideas portraying the use of illegal drugs should be censored. If a student chooses to explore the potential health
hazards of drugs or the effects of addiction, then that student should be able to make art exploring that issue. However, if a student, according to a teacher’s interpretation, is glorifying the use of illegal drugs in an artwork, then the artwork becomes subject to censorship.

In the survey, one elementary art teacher describes a lesson in which she includes materials that reference illegal drugs. She states that she has had “some reservation about the multicultural presentation of certain Hispanic art, i.e., Frida Kahlo, molas, Oaxacas and the like because the original representation often were images created by hallucinogenic drugs or peyote.” She does not tell the students the source of stimulation; rather, she tells them that the original representations come from dreams and the artists’ imaginations. After reading the survey response, I concluded that this would be defined as self-censorship. After further thought, I realize that I needed to know why she chooses to do this. During our interview, I ask her to share her reasoning with me. In her first response, she refers to teaching children through the D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) program to “Just Say No.” I infer that she, as these children’s teacher, does not want to condone the use of illegal drugs through her course content. She is making censoring curricular decisions with the children’s well-being in mind. However, her next statement is evidence that she is also self-censoring. Reflecting upon the hypothetical situation that she does tell the students that the source of stimulation for these artworks was drugs that are illegal in the United States, she comments that the parents’ and the administration’s ramifications would be awful. For these reasons, this experience includes both censoring curricular decisions and self-censorship.
4.5 Cultural Considerations

Some of the teachers discuss situations in which they have excluded content from their programs for cultural reasons. One high school art teacher carefully structures assignments that include speaking in front of the class. She asks students who do not natively speak English if they feel comfortable giving a presentation and also asks the English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) teacher if they have the English language capacity to give a presentation. An elementary art teacher does not require students to look her in the eye or draw pictures of themselves, as these things can be difficult for some students to do because of cultural differences.

At one high school, the art teacher also considers mainstream cultural connotations. For example, this teacher does not use red ink for grading. She thinks that red ink is a very “un-friendly” color for grading. She has decided that she does not want students to connote negative feelings with the assessment of their work. I consider all of these decisions made for cultural reasons to be censoring curricular decisions, not censorship in any form.

4.6 Censored, but Not Difficult

Through the process of qualitative interviewing, the teachers and I learn together about forms of censorship and controversy. At the end of one interview, just before I turn off the tape recorder, one elementary art teacher is explaining how art education has changed in the past twenty or so years. She comments on how art education used to
consist of “cut-and-paste Valentines.” She then realizes that she doesn’t include anything like that into her art program; she doesn’t include content about holidays or seasons.

When I ask her why she doesn’t include holidays or seasons in her lesson content, she replies, “The classroom teachers do a lot of that.” Clearly, holiday and seasonal themes are not difficult and they are widely accepted amongst classroom teachers, much like the work of Norman Rockwell. As stated previously, Norman Rockwell’s work is hardly difficult and is widely accepted within the public domain, but is controversial within the artworld because some art critics judge the work to be shallow. Although not controversial amongst teachers generally, holiday and seasonal content is controversial amongst art teachers specifically.

4.7 Artists’ Lifestyles: Curricular Choices that Affect Students’ Perceptions of Artists

One elementary and one high school art teacher reflect upon their decision-making process regarding what artists to include in their art programs. They both reflect upon how they share difficult facts about the artists’ personal lives with students. This discussion focused on verbal communication about artists’ lifestyles, not images depicting artists’ lifestyles.
One high school art teacher discusses her decision-making process when she focuses a lesson around an artist who struggled with mental illness or addiction, such as Vincent Van Gogh or Jackson Pollock. She doesn’t want her students to think that all artists have emotional troubles. After including an artist that did struggle with emotional problems, she then includes an artist that did not.

One elementary art teacher also is careful about informing students about artists’ personal lives. In her survey response, she states:

I have to be careful about how much detail I go into when we study certain artists. The students love to hear about their personal lives and including this in my lesson helps make an impression. I avoid talking about the artist’s drinking and/or drug use (such as how Pollock died, what [Paul] Gauguin really did in Tahiti, etc.) However, I do include Van Gogh’s suicide. I personally feel that artists lead colorful and interesting lives and I want to share as much of this information as I can with my students. However, it’s hard to draw the line sometimes about how much information is too much information.

In our interview, I ask the teacher why she includes Van Gogh’s suicide but not artists’ drinking or drug use. She states, “I don’t want them to think all artists and musicians are drug addicts and alcoholics.” I also asked the teacher how she approaches Van Gogh’s suicide with the students. She replies, “I don’t tell them that until they get to know him. I want them—I want them to have a rapport or relationship with Van Gogh before they find that out.” This elementary art teacher’s response echoes those of the high school art teacher.
Both of these teachers' are advocating for the arts. As teachers, they may be the only connection some students have with the arts. As teachers, they need to make censoring curricular decisions about the way they are persuading student opinions of the arts through their curricular decisions.

In the study "Twelve High School Students, a Teacher, a Professor and Robert Mapplethorpe's Photographs: Exploring Cultural Difference Through Controversial Art" (Barrett and Rab, 1990), there was positive feedback from the participants about the preparation before visiting the controversial art exhibit. The professor and teacher first provided students the option to view reproductions of the photographs in their school library and also held a class discussion about the works. When approaching Van Gogh's suicide, this elementary art teacher is also providing preparation for the students. She allows for them to get to know Van Gogh and build a rapport by providing other personal information about him and allowing students to view his artwork before telling them about his suicide. Students may be more understanding of the circumstances under which Van Gogh died if they have a personal connection with his work first.

4.8 Why is Certain Subject Matter Censored?

During the latter part of the interviews, I ask the art teachers to read over my four definitions of censorship in public schools. I want to know if my definitions apply to their experiences as an art teacher in public school and which type or types of censorship occur the most. Each teacher reads the same information from a document titled, "Defining Censorship" (APPENDIX D).
Upon reading the title, one high school art teacher states, "I don't censor. I pick." She then continues to read the definitions. She has not experienced direct censorship. She associates one recent situation in her school with the definition of indirect censorship. The school board in her district has requested to approve materials. Theoretically, teachers need to submit new materials to the Board of Education for approval before using the materials in their programs. This teacher was ambivalent about the definition of self-censorship. She does not think that self-censorship stems from fear; it is following the parameters of your job. She does not comment on the definition of censoring curricular decisions.

Another high school art teacher agrees with the definition of self-censorship but does not think that she practices it. She thinks that it varies amongst individual teachers. Commenting on her own practice, she states, "I just throw it all out there and just try to put a positive spin on it." She believes that direct censorship happens a lot, but does not think that indirect censorship happens very much.

Even though this teacher wasn't convinced that indirect censorship occurs frequently but she has experienced an instance of indirect censorship that was very difficult for many members of the school community. Two students were fulfilling an assignment for her class to create an installation in the school building, modifying an everyday environment. Two students began to create a mixed-media representation of contrasting societal values; one side of the piece would depict imagery representing grunge and heavy metal music symbols and the other side of the piece would represent more socially acceptable imagery. The students began to create the imagery representing grunge and heavy metal bands. They never did begin the more socially acceptable side of...
the work because an unknown person repeatedly tore down their installation while it was being created. When the students informed this teacher what had been happening, she told them, "When it gets torn down, you just get out there and you put it right back up."
The teacher finally found out who was censoring the work; it was a fellow student.

The administration supported the teacher and the two students' right to create and exhibit their artwork. They were slightly hesitant to support the symbols representing the musicians because the musicians' albums have Parental Advisory Labels. However, they decided to fully support the teacher and the two students. They suspended the student for tearing down their work.

The student responsible for tearing the work down claimed the work was "anti-Christ." She interpreted the work as being "anti-Christ" because it contained symbols associated with musicians who speak of the devil in their lyrics. Her parents agreed with her and took their complaints to the local newspaper. The headlines stated that the student was "Suspended because She Believed in God."
As I heard this during our interview, I was thinking to myself, "How many people involved in the situation, including students, administrators, parents, and the press, actually saw the work that started this controversy?" The teacher addresses this inquiry: the students, principals and a few teachers saw the work. Nobody else did. The student who tore down the work repeatedly was censoring the work in its original context and therefore, according to my definitions, was directly censoring her peers’ work. Her parents, and perhaps even the press who wrote and published the story, were trying to indirectly censor the students’ work. Neither the press nor the parents of the suspended student saw the work for themselves. They were judging the work based on the suspended student’s interpretations.

One elementary art teacher agrees that indirect censorship does not occur frequently, albeit, also has had a memorable experience exemplifying the definition of indirect censorship. This teacher’s experience also involves an artwork created by a student, but this time the teacher’s lesson was in question.

This elementary art teacher includes a lesson into the art program in which students in the third grade created pipe effigies with clay to simulate the stone platform pipes of the Ohio mound building cultures. She believes in providing a multi-cultural and historical base for the art created in her program. She tries to include as much local history into her program as possible. She told the students that most likely the pipes were used in celebrations, much like modern day birthday candles, communion at church, etc. She stresses the advancement of science and the now known effects of smoking on the human body, such as lung cancer. She provides the students with the information that she thinks they need to know; she is making responsible, censoring curricular decisions.
This lesson came into questions when one student went home and told his or her parents, "We're making pipes," and didn't provide the cultural and historical background that he or she learned before making the pipe effigies. The parents were concerned that pipe smoking was being promoted in the art program. The parents went to the principal, who sent them directly to the teacher. The art teacher explained the lesson in full. Once the parents were informed of the historical and cultural background of the lesson, the issue was dropped. Without all of the information, the pipe effigy was taken out of the context of the lesson and was misinterpreted by the parents. After learning the background information, the parents accepted the pipe effigy in its complete context as an appropriate material for their child.

Another elementary art teacher agrees with all four definitions of censorship. She does think that even though she knows it exists, she has not experienced indirect censorship. She attributes that to her own practice of self-censoring. She agrees that her self-censorship stems from fear. When reading "a person engaging in conduct that is unbecoming to the applicant's position," she comments, "I could see a parent going after that." After thinking about all of the definitions, she states that she has experienced self-censorship the most, but also has a lot of experience with direct censorship.

She discusses an experience that is relevant to this paper for several reasons. A visiting artist was creating a mural with her and the students at her school. The mural was funded, for the most part, by a public education foundation. The mural included nude figures. She stepped in and suggested that the students and visiting artist paint loin clothes onto the figures in the mural. This experience is extremely relevant because it
exemplifies direct and self-censorship, it was funded by public monies, and there is a strong parallel to Parth and Jeffer’s “dichotomy in art education” (1996).

This teacher states that she has more experience with self-censorship and direct censorship than indirect censorship and censoring curricular decisions. This situation exemplifies both self-censorship and direct censorship when considering the dual roles that she played in this situation. She censored her own work, since she was helping the students and visiting artist to create the mural. In this respect, she was self-censoring. As a supervisor for the project, she was directly censoring the visiting artist and students’ painting. This would not be considered indirect censorship because she had a strong relationship with the work. She was judging the work in its full context.

One of the main reasons she suggested covering nude figures was because public monies funded the mural. Although public monies fund public schools, this project also had an external public educational foundation provide financial support. This was a major influence on this teacher’s decision-making process. As Lankford (1990) questioned actions taken against the NEA and the CAC, do the actions taken in this situation constitute censorship or proper management of public funds? I argue that this situation encompasses both. The teacher did censor part of this painting, but did so mostly because the public funded the painting.

This experience also resonates the “dichotomous relationship that seems to exist between the art of art education and the education of art education” (Parth and Jeffers, 1996). In her survey responses, this teacher states that she thought that visiting artists are really “put off by this sort of censorship.” In our interview, I ask her why. She responds, “Because they are artists and not art educators. They may be an art educator
occasionally, but they don’t deal with the day in and day out politics of what real life is all about in public schools. And they are only here for a day; they don’t have to deal with the fallout that can happen. So, they don’t see the whole picture.” Clearly, this teacher is referring to the artist’s perspective, the art of art education, as one side of the dichotomy and her perspective, the education of art education, as the other side of the dichotomy.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: NOT ENOUGH DIALOGUE

I asked all five teachers if they think the decisions they make regarding appropriate and inappropriate material are an important part of their job as an art teacher. All five art teachers answered with a clear, "Yes." However, they didn't think that there is much discussion about this amongst other art teachers. One teacher felt that teachers in other disciplines, such as social studies, probably discuss this more. One teacher, while contributing to insightful dialogue during our interview, commented, "Funny, I have never even thought about censorship before." If art teachers think that these decisions are an important part of their job, why aren't they discussed?

5.1 Specific Conclusions: Indirect Censorship and Self-Censorship

When I began this research I learned that many of the people who were most vocal about their negative judgments of Andres Serrano's Piss Christ had not actually viewed the artwork. Their judgments were based on someone else's interpretation. I began to question if there are instances of this same phenomenon in public schools. I first defined this as indirect censorship and then began to survey and interview teachers in search of answers. I expected to find a high occurrence of this, but I did not. What I
did find was, although there is not a high occurrence of *indirect censorship* in these teachers’ experience, when *indirect censorship* does occur it affects many members of the school community in a powerful way.

*Indirect censorship* does not occur frequently, so art teachers probably do not have much experience in dealing with it in their personal experience. If teachers do not have experience in dealing with this and they are not discussing topics such as this, how are they effectively dealing with issues of censorship? It seems to me that there needs to be more discussion about censorship.

From this research, it is evident that *self-censorship* is prevalent among the art teachers involved in this study. One art teacher does not think that *self-censorship* stems from fear; she thinks that is it simply “following the parameters of [her] job.” Other art teachers agree that they practice *self-censorship* and that it does stem from a fear of losing one’s credibility as a professional, one’s position of employment, or even one’s license to teach art. Once again, if there is not dialogue amongst art educators regarding issues of controversy and censorship, how can art teachers effectively deal with these issues and also ensure their professional security, except to *self-censor*?

If art teachers rely on *self-censorship* too much, there are two limiting consequences. The first is that educational content will become more personally biased. Teachers use their own interpretations and judgments, based on personal belief to validate what they are teaching to their many students. This is extremely relevant in art education because many times there is only one art teacher in an entire school. Art teacher’s choice can potentially impact many more students than teachers in other disciplines.
The second consequence is the missed learning potential. As teachers *self-censor*, content is excluded from their art programs. If art teachers continuously *self-censor*, more and more content is excluded from the art program that could prove to have a high teaching potential.

"Interpretation is central to controversy" (Barrett, 2003), and communication, or lack thereof, is central to censorship. All teachers make *censoring curricular decisions*. It is important for art teachers to think through these decisions carefully and share their decision-making process with other members of the school community, as well as other art educators. Maintaining dialogue about censorship in art education will better inform art educators so that they can become more effective in dealing with controversy and censorship as professionals.

5.2 General Conclusions: Making Progress and Building Momentum

Art is not a static concept; it is ever changing. Historically, artists have been known to rebel against the dominant paradigm. How do art educators nurture student’s creative need to rebel, but also stay in control of their classroom, position of employment and long-term career? Lankford (1990) discusses the artworld paradox; this is the art education paradox.
I think that it is very important for art teachers to further learn about contemporary and controversial art. It is critical that art teachers become more aware of their own thought processes as they construct personal conclusions about contemporary and controversial art. Jeffers and Parth (1996) found that the more background a teacher has in contemporary and controversial art, the smaller the gap there is between art education and contemporary and controversial art.

Jeffers and Parth directly reference Barrett and Rab (1990) as a model for bridging this gap. Barrett and Rab (1990) provide a solution to the art education paradox: approaching controversial contemporary art with students. They were open with their own thoughts, yet guided students to personal conclusions. Barrett and Rab (1990) are supporting the rebellious spirit in art, but doing it in a responsible and controlled manner.

It is imperative that art teachers approach controversial art. However, it is not always appropriate. Barrett and Rab (1990) prepared students before going to see The Perfect Moment. Art teachers need to prepare everyone in the school community, if they are approaching controversial art.

What is if a student creates controversial artwork before the school community is prepared for dealing with controversial art? Henley (1997) has solved this dilemma by delineating the right to create and the right to show. He is attentive to students’ artistic intent; he is interested in finding out if the student is creating an artwork of “disturbation” or is creating an artwork that although is not socially acceptable is sincerely expressing a sub-cultural value held by the student. When he determines the student’s artistic intent, one of two things happen: he and the student negotiate another way to create the work so that it is not a work of “disturbation,” or he does not display the artwork.
Specifically, art teachers need to find their own solution to the art education paradox. As a future teacher, I know that it is important to approach controversial art with students. I also know that if controversy ensues, it can be detrimental to a teacher’s position, and even career. Every situation is unique, and teachers need to rely on their intuition to determine what is appropriate and what is not appropriate in their particular art program.

Generally, the solution to the art education paradox is like a pendulum. Unless acted upon by an outside force, a pendulum continuously swings back and forth in a state of equilibrium. A pendulum swings one way, and then it swings in the other direction with an equal amount of force. This occurs in an ideal situation. In our imperfect reality, a pendulum swings in air and atmosphere, creating resistance to the pendulum’s inertia. A pendulum needs to somehow replace this lost energy or it will slowly come to a stop. Art teachers need to find this state of equilibrium for their particular art program. If an art teacher approaches controversial art without preparing the school community, the pendulum has swung too far. The state of equilibrium has been disrupted and the teacher’s progression will undoubtedly be hindered. If an art teacher does not approach controversial art at all, the pendulum cannot swing on its own and becomes stagnant. Art is not a static concept. The solution is to swing the pendulum with slightly more force each time, staying close enough to the state of equilibrium to not create a disruption, but still widening the pendulum’s swing.
APPENDIX A

SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to provide art teachers with an opportunity to inform others about some of the challenging decisions they have made regarding what content is appropriate and what content is inappropriate in the art classroom.

*Please complete the following questions as specifically as possible, using full sentences. If you need more space, please use the back or separate paper. Do not include actual names of anyone discussed.*

1. Have you come across artwork created by students or professionals in the art classroom that you viewed to be inappropriate? You may list specific content or common themes.

2. For each of the items discussed above, why did you view the content to be inappropriate?
Sometimes what is appropriate to one person is inappropriate to someone else. The next questions ask about situations in which two or more people involved with the art curriculum have had different ideas about what is appropriate and what is inappropriate.

3. Is there content in artworks that you have included in an art lesson, created by students or professionals, that you thought to be appropriate but someone else thought to be inappropriate? What role did this person(s) have in the school setting (i.e. administrator, teacher, parent, student, etc.)? What was their perspective on the situation? What was the outcome? Please describe.

4. Have there been any instances in which you wanted to incorporate content into a lesson, but did not because you were apprehensive about what someone else would think? If so, please describe.
5. Is there content in artwork created by students or professionals that you thought to be appropriate but someone else thought to be inappropriate? What role did this person(s) have in the school setting? What was their perspective on the situation? What was the outcome? Please describe.

This question is much like the previous question, except vice versa.

6. Is there content in artwork created by students or professionals that you thought to be inappropriate but someone else thought to be appropriate? What role did this person(s) have in the school setting? What was their perspective on the situation? What was the outcome? Please describe.
The following information is needed for a possible follow-up interview. This information will not be associated with your responses in the final analysis.

Name:__________________________________________

School:__________________________________________

Phone Number:____________________________________

E-mail:___________________________________________

Date:____________________________________________

Thank you for your participation!
APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am a Graduate Student in the Department of Art Education at The Ohio State University currently conducting research. My primary faculty advisor is Dr. Terry Barrett. Dr. Mary Louise Poling has provided me with your name as someone who may be interested in participating.

My research area is focused in art teacher’s perspectives in the determination of what curriculum content is appropriate and is not appropriate in the art classroom. The survey attached is the first phase of my research. From the responses to this survey, I will randomly select teachers to interview. For this reason, this survey is not anonymous, but I ensure the confidentiality of all information collected. In the final analysis, all information presented will be anonymous.

Participation is completely voluntary. If you do choose to participate, you may withdraw at anytime, or refuse to participate in any part of the research. Participation includes answering the attached questionnaire and returning it in the addressed, stamped envelope. Some respondents may be selected for a follow-up interview that should last approximately one hour. The results of the research will be shared with all respondents.

I do hope that you will consider participating! Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. I thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

Rachel Smith
Graduate Student
The Ohio State University

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APPENDIX C

FOLLOW-UP LETTER

Dear Sir or Madam,

I recently sent you a letter regarding the research that I am currently conducting. My research is focused in art teacher’s perspectives in the determination of what curriculum content is appropriate and is not appropriate in the art classroom. Enclosed with the letter was a short survey.

Of course, participation is voluntary. This survey is not being done on a large scale and your participation will be greatly appreciated. If you should need another survey, feel free to contact me and I will be happy to send a copy of the survey to you. I hope to hear from you soon!

Sincerely,

Rachel Smith
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APPENDIX D

DEFINING CENSORSHIP

To better understand what constitutes censorship and what does not, I have defined four categories focused on decisions made by teachers concerning art curricular content. These categories are: direct censorship, indirect censorship, self-censorship and censoring curricular decisions.

Direct censorship is the exclusion of content already in an art curriculum from that art curriculum by someone in power who has a direct relationship with the school on a day-to-day basis. This could be a teacher censoring a student’s work or a school administrator (primarily working within the school) censoring a teacher’s choice in content. Also, included in this category is an administrator demanding a teacher to censor a student’s work. The critical aspect of this type of censorship is the censor’s awareness of the day-to-day happenings within the school environment.

Indirect censorship is the exclusion of content from the art curriculum by someone who does not have a professional relationship with the school. This type of censorship can occur because of parents (if they are not involved in the school’s day-to-day happenings), administrators not working within the school, members of the board of education, etc. This type of censorship is distinctly related to cases in which content is excluded when the censor is not working in the school on day-to-day basis.

Self-censorship occurs when one censors because of the fear of reprisal from others if they do not. Teachers have both their jobs and their licenses at stake. Teachers need to abide by their respective school’s rules, which can be ambiguous. They also need
to adhere to the legalities of their license. Ohio Revised Code (Anderson’s Ohio Online Docs, 2003, p.?') states that the State Board has the power to deny license to a person “engaging in an immoral act, incompetence, negligence, or conduct that is unbecoming to the applicant’s or person’s position.” This ambiguous code could be used against teachers for the wrong reasons. The critical element of self-censorship is that the censor does not personally stand behind the decision; the censorship stems from fear.

The final, and most elusive category, censoring curricular decisions, occurs when someone excludes content from a classroom to protect the emotional psyche of the students. “Responsible educational decisions are based on the perception of student maturity, aptitude, and background, operating in a context of diverse community strengths, needs, standards, and interests” (Lankford, 1990, p. 26). In schools, we have what David Henley (1997) calls a “captive audience.” Although the first amendment protects the right to express ideas, there is also the freedom of choice on behalf of society to view the material. In schools, students see what other students create. The viewer is “captive” and does not have the choice to not view the material. It is educator’s responsibility to protect the emotional psyches of all students.
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