Dissertation Prospectus

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Dissertation Title

Mapping Contested Identities in Dominican Art Education: A Critical History

Project Description

In my dissertation, I use archival research and oral histories to examine the development of art education in the Dominican Republic from 1899 to 1997, in relation to ideological constructs, social, political, and economic contexts, and foreign influences. The Dominican Republic gained its independence from Haiti in 1844, after 22 years of Haitian occupation. Discourses of national identity emerged after independence, emphasizing what made us different from Haiti: being Spanish, Catholic, and having lighter skin color. That led to narratives of identities that negated our African past, mythologized native Indians, and emphasized our Hispanic heritage. Cultural and socializing sites such as school, museums, and public art played a key role in the dissemination and consolidation of these narratives (Candelario, 2008; Mejía-Ricart, 1981; Moquete, 1986). The leading provocation of my research is finding out if these narratives were activated in the historical processes of school art education in the Dominican Republic. And if so, how did it happen, and how does it relate to larger social, cultural, and political contexts. This primary provocation generated the following research questions: (1) how did narratives of identity determent what kind of art education different social and racial groups had access to; (2) how the content, the aesthetic valued, and teaching approach of art education contributed to the consolidation of these narratives; (3) if art education was shaped by social, political, and economic models, and foreign influences, whose interests did art education serve?

Overview of Literature Review

In recent decades, histories of art education have moved beyond the concern with objectivity to incorporate more sophisticated conceptual frameworks, such as applying an explanatory thesis drawn from cultural, social, and natural sciences to understand historical moments (Efland, 1990;

Marché, 2000; Stankiewicz, 2007); creating metaphors to explain histories of art education (Delacruz & Bales, 2010); using art-based inquiry to present historical findings (Carpenter & Tavin, 2010); and using speculation to fill in historical gaps (Bolin, 2009). In addition, interest in social justice issues has prompted revisionist histories aiming to acknowledge the neglected contributions of women, African-Americans, and other minorities in the history of art education (Bey, 2011; Grauer, Irwin, & Zimmerman, 2003), and to point out how art education intersects with colonial and imperialist projects of the West (Irbough, 2013; Kantawala, 2012; Park, 2009; Rodriguez & Stankiewicz, 2016).

One common thread among those who have written histories of art education in Latin America is a preoccupation with the lack of indigenous models, and criticism of the blind replication of foreign systems (Barbosa, 1990; Bolin, 2009; Errázuriz, 1995; Sanchez Ortega, 2013). Some Latin American scholars have denounced the historically elitist and exclusivist nature of arts education in various Latin American countries. Fernandez (2009), argues that, in Mexico, the vagueness of the language used in arts education policy and the lack of research on the artistic expression of certain groups creates a double standard where, on paper, diversity and inclusion seem to be acknowledged but are not honored in practice. For Barriga Monroy (2013), the importation of foreign models in music education in Colombia in the 19th century and first half of the 20th century contributed to the alienation of Indian and African arts and culture from the school curriculum. Since discourses of nationalism were anchored in a dichotomy that contrasted the popular with the fine arts, European art was seen as refined, genteel, and clean, while the art of those on the periphery, was deemed as negative, dirty, immoral, and dangerous. Another common concern in histories of art education in Latin America is its marginalization as a school subject (Errazuriz, 1995). This pessimistic approach to the history of art education has also been echoed in the United States (Smith, 1996).

In the Dominican Republic, a systematic history of art education has not been done yet. A few undergraduate and master's dissertation projects have addressed issues of art education in

schools, but mostly focused on matters of professional development, and how schools are meeting the department of education requirements for that subject (Fermin, 2010; Villegas Lopez, 2014; Sebastian, et. al., 2004). This shortage of literature in art education has to do with the fact that art education as an academic field is a very recent phenomenon in the Dominican Republic. Only three Universities, fairly recently, have created options for specialization in art education within their colleges of education. Dominican art historians have mentioned the existence of learning centers for specialized art education to establish the genealogy and stylistic schools of famous artists (Rodríguez Demorizi, 1972; Valldeperes, 1957), or to highlight altruistic initiatives of artists who created academies in their places of origin (De los Santos, 2004; Miller & Ugarte, 2001), but do not address specific issues pertaining to the history of art education in schools. In my dissertation, I also examine seminal works on the history of education in the Dominican Republic (Mejía-Ricart, 1981; Moquete, 1986; Hernandez, 2001; Hernandez, 2004); and scholarly works from history, sociology, and literary criticism addressing the relationship between ideologies of race and identity and cultural institutions (Bosch, 1988; Candelario, 2008; Garcia Carrasco, 1983; Mateo, 1993; Franco, 1984; Veloz Maggiolo, 1980).

Overview of Methodology

Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and Chela Sandoval's *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000) inform my theoretical lenses. Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) was written in response to his experience in adult literacy programs in Brazil. Freire identified a culture of silence among oppressed people, and realized institutions, such as schools, contributed to that culture of silence by depriving the oppressed of the tools to be critical about their reality. Freire has been broadly cited in education and the arts in the context of learning initiatives dealing with social justice issues, and engaging minority groups (Duncum, 2008; Jung, 2015; Levy, 2007; Tavin, 2003). I argue that in addition to informing current pedagogical issues, Freire's critical tools can be applied to art education histories. For Freire, education and history, both in content and form, are never neutral. They either function to facilitate integration into the logic of oppressive systems, or contribute to the practice of freedom from it. Freire was interested in the circumstances that limit participation of certain groups to spaces where others, by virtue of the legacy of colonialism, exercise the role of authority, and where institutional structures both privilege and exclude particular readings, voices, aesthetics, and representations.

Although Freire stands as my main theoretical source, I also draw upon Chela Sandoval's *Methodology of the Oppressed* (2000). While Freire is concerned with forms of oppression linked to the state apparatus, Sandoval addresses forms of oppression created by global capitalism that transcend the boundaries of nation states. This is particularly relevant when analyzing instances where Dominican art education was shaped by foreign forces. Despite the unquestionable significance of Freire's work, his use of totalizing categories leads to an oversimplification of the intersectional identities of oppressed and oppressors, the histories and internal relations of marginalized groups, the sophisticated forms of dominations these groups exist under, and the diverse ways in which the oppressed exercise practical and political agency. Sandoval speaks to this complexity using a more current vocabulary.

I identify five concepts as foundational for a history informed by Freire and Sandoval: 1) acknowledging and deconstructing myths, or versions of the past, that served to normalize certain social relations; 2) identifying who count as historical beings at various times, and whose voices are negated, including whose aesthetics and art traditions were worth knowing; 3) identifying events in history as challenges that need to be grappled with today in order to generate more just conditions; 4) situating historical events within a larger fabric of social relations to identify who has control over the conditions of knowledge production; and 5) acknowledging strategies, agency, and forms of resistance developed by marginal groups that allowed the preservation of cultural practices and values outside norms stablished by the dominant order.

To analyze images, I use what Gillian Rose (2012) calls critical visual methodologies, which assumes rendering the world through different technologies of visual representation is never innocent. Images render social differences visible, providing a particular vision of social categories: class, race, and sexuality. Hayden White (1973), who explores the intersection between history and literary criticism, argues that writing history is a poetic act, since historians use emplotment strategies, metaphors, and formal and stylistic structures to build their accounts. In my research, mapping serves as a metaphor for framing a history of art education that aims to make visible various conceptual relations between events, ideas, concepts, and narratives. It refers to deconstructing (remapping) landscapes of knowledge, visual and conceptual topographies rooted in colonial experiences, that diminished certain aesthetics, culture, and arts. Since a map is a negotiation between reality and perception (Mitchell, 2008), mapping speaks of historical inquiry situated within a specific positionality.

In my narrative, I am interested in irony as a rhetorical tool, which, according to Hayden White (1973), entails highlighting paradoxes and contradictions. The work of Dominican artist Patricia Encarnacion provides a visual metaphor for how I see irony in my research. The picture

above shows the hair of a Black woman adorned with porcelain pieces decorated with colonial motifs. The hair is likely the most politicized part of the body in Dominican racial discourses (Candelario, 2008). Flattening hair, especially for women, has been a way to hide Africanness. By juxtaposing seemingly irreconcilable objects—porcelain pieces associated with colonial aristocracy and the hair of a Black body—Encarnacion aims to unsettle normalized understanding of race and identity rooted in colonial experiences. Contradictions abound in the history of art education in the Dominican Republic. Antidemocratic actions pursued in the name of freedom in Hostos' approach are examples. While Eugenio Maria de Hostos envisioned education as a means for democratic development, he did not value the knowledge and experiences of non-white groups. Highlighting these contradictions is a way, as Freire would argue, to problematize history; that is, making pervasive oppressive conditions objects of reflection to be dealt with today.

Dissertation Chapters

Comprehensive exam and research proposal provided a significant volume of the first three chapter of my dissertation: introduction, methodology, and literature review. I created a comprehensive virtual timeline to identify themes and connections that became organizing categories for three potential content chapters: Chapter 4, "Education for Progress and Civilization," will deal with how modern education, started by Eugenio Maria de Hostos, envisioned drawing education as a means to achieve an ideal of civilization, and social, economic, political and cultural progress. Hostos' belief in educating the totality of a child's personality led to the introduction of new school subjects in primary and secondary education, including drawing. Influenced by positivist ideas current at the time, Hostos and his disciples undermined the cultural and social value of the rural, local, and popular culture; western nations constituted the ideal for industrial progress and civilization. Chapter 5, "Drawing a Nation," will address how art education served construction of a particular image of national identity. This chapter examines earlier attempts

to build a national school and art after independence, but focuses on Trujillo's presidency (1930-1960) who proclaimed himself to be the creator of the true Dominican education system. Trujillo domesticated progressive ideas of the time, including indigenismo, Escuela Activa (progressive education), folklorism, and creolism, to serve his agenda. I examine how Trujillo's agenda to whiten the country and pro-Hispanic narratives of identity intersected with art education practices in school. Chapter 6, "International Influence: Collaboration or Imperialism?" will address the influence of foreign political and economic interests, including globalization, in the development of art education. This chapter considers the influence of United States occupation (1916-1924 &1965), Pan-Americanism, UNESCO, UNICEF, the USA AID, the World Bank, and the organization of Ibero-American States in Dominican art education. Chapter 7 will discuss overall conclusions and recommendations.

Research Relevance

While I rely mostly on documentary sources, last summer I interviewed art education supervisors at the department of education in the Dominican Republic to hear their perspectives on the development of art education in the last decades. As I explained the scope and purpose of my research, one supervisor reacted with surprise that I was interested in the history of K-12 art education in the Dominican Republic for a period of roughly one hundred years. School art education is barely 20 years old in our country, she said. She had in mind that 20 years ago, the Ministry of Education, for the first time, created a department called arts education. I explained: what I was interested in was not always called art education. Perhaps it was called drawing or plastic arts at different times. There is evidence of drawing education in schools as early as 1853. Our conversation revealed a lack of understanding of the functions art education has served throughout the history of schooling, even within individuals who are responsible for art education policies today. This is particularly troubling because the Dominican Republic embarked on a process of

education reform in 2014 that is promising for school art education. The question of what function art education plays in school has become an important subject of discussion (Diario Libre, 2016; INAFOCAN, 2013).

Since a history of art education has not been written, the lack of an understanding of the roles art education has played in school hinders the development of more informed reforms. Art education scholars agree that histories of art education are not just about the past, but are important to encourage more critical examination of current practices (Stankiewicz, 2001); to understand the historical moment we live in, and to articulate what kind of art education responds to our current social needs (Aguirre Lora, 2009); to inform future policies (Chalmers, 1993); to serve as a basis for formulating worthwhile questions about our present and our future, and to purge ourselves of ghosts from the past (Erickson, 1979). This critical approach to a history of art education in the Dominican Republic is relevant to current educational reforms, because these reforms are addressing long-standing issues of social inequality and cultural inclusion (Ministerio de Educacion, 2010). Histories of education scholarship are dominated by North-American and European accounts. By addressing issues of colonialism, globalization, race, nationalism, and social relations as constitutive of discourses of identity that were activated in children's artmaking in school, this research brings a new perspective to matters of identity in Dominican Studies. Histories of education scholarship are dominated by North-American and European accounts. This research expands the discourse of international histories of art education by making visible the story of a Latin American country.

Bibliography

Primary and secondary sources subject to analysis include newspapers, journals, textbooks, educational laws and ordinances, reports, surveys, monographs, and photographs. All primary documents were located in two archives: the national archive in Santo Domingo, holding about 90

percent of the primary sources, and the CUNY Dominican Studies Special collection, holding the remaining 10 percent. Last summer I spent two months in national archives and libraries in Santo Domingo collecting data. Last November, I spent two weeks at CUNY's special collection. That account for all the relevant primary resources identified so far. Most secondary sources identified have also been accessed through these two archives and through the Penn State Library. Some primary sources worth highlighting are the following:

Revista de Educacion, (from 1919 to 1976). Santo Domingo. A total of 61 issues available, constitute up to this moment the most comprehensive source of information about school art education in the Dominican Republic. The journal is about education in general, but contain a significant number of issues on art/drawing education; and educational laws, and departmental ordinances pertaining to art education.

Boletin de Investigaciones Pedagogicas (available issues from 1946-1947). Santo Domingo. Journal of Education published by the department of educational research.

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