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## The response of secondary students from non-English speaking backgrounds to a visual arts course

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**THE RESPONSE OF SECONDARY STUDENTS FROM NON-  
ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUNDS TO A VISUAL ARTS  
COURSE**

by

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STC (Melbourne TC), ATA (WAustIT)

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements of the Award**

**of**

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## USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

## ABSTRACT

Interest in multiculturalism has been expressed by educators for a number of years. Much of the literature concerning multiculturalism in visual arts education calls for the adoption of a culturally inclusive curricula in order to meet the needs of all students. In his consideration of conceptions of curriculum, Eisner (1988) made reference to a preferred body of knowledge which often excludes students from minority groups within society.

Many Australian schools are experiencing increases in enrolments of students from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB). These students may themselves be immigrants or the children of one or both parents born in another country. This study is concerned specifically with the impact of such students' inherited culture on their perceptions of the visual arts which may be influenced by exposure to particular styles or forms of art experienced in the context of the family, or through visual arts education in the student's country of origin.

The research investigates students from non-English speaking backgrounds perceptions of the visual arts and visual arts education. The study's purpose is to determine the degree to which these perceptions influence the performance of NESB students undertaking a visual arts course at upper secondary school level. Although many students from various ethnic groups show an interest in and aptitude for the visual arts, they are often not successful in all aspects of the secondary level. From equity and justice perspectives it would appear that the opportunity to succeed in a chosen area should be available to all students and that in order to provide this opportunity, it is necessary to determine what factors influence the success or failure of these students.

This study involved the use of qualitative research methods and was conducted as a case-study. The sample or case was selected from a Year 11 tertiary entrance art class and represents a diversity of ethnic backgrounds. The seven participants originated from Australia, mainland China, Greece, Indonesia, Russia and Vietnam. The data was collected using a questionnaire, interviews, observation and examination of work samples. The data was categorised according to themes which emerged during the data collection and analysis stages.

Results showed that NESB students appear to be influenced by their early home and educational experiences and that these in turn are influenced by the ethnic and cultural contexts in which they were experienced. There is also evidence that the delivery and content of visual arts education plays an important role in influencing students' perceptions of the visual arts.

Information emerging from the study however suggests a need for further research in order to validate the findings. Replication of this research using a wider sample of students may help to reduce some of the variables impacting on the study. These may include levels of literacy attained by students in both their mother tongue and in English, continuity experienced by students in both general and visual arts education, and socio-economic status. Whilst it appears that further use of the case study may be appropriate, variation in both the research design and research instruments should also be considered.

## DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signature

Date October 9, 1999

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Overview of the Chapter

The focus of this study is to address issues related to multiculturalism in education. With growing enrolments of students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds in Australian schools, there appears to be a need to examine ways in which the educational experience of these students may be maximised. In particular, those students from non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB), need to be provided with opportunities equal to those provided for students from English-speaking backgrounds (ESB).

This study is concerned specifically with the delivery of visual arts education in a secondary school context. Much has been written about multiculturalism in art education in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, particularly from the perspective of adopting an inclusive approach to the teaching of the visual arts. Hart (1991) advocated the adoption of a pluralist approach to visual arts education claiming that with the increase of multiculturalism in schools, it was necessary for programs to reflect the influence of a variety of cultures. According to Hart (1991), the visual arts offer considerable scope for incorporating creative activities which originate in cultures from around the world, and she recommended that art history themes be drawn from a variety of cultural sources.

It is believed by some advocates of an inclusive approach to curriculum planning (Hart, 1991, Burke, Kaye, Matwiejczyk, and Rees, 1993) that NESB students often bring from their cultural backgrounds a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience which may be utilised in their educational development, provided that these students are encouraged to value their backgrounds as positive influences in their lives. Burke, et al. (1993) referred to Janieszewska (1989) who claimed that if the curriculum recognised and affirmed the perspectives and values of NESB students, these students would be encouraged to participate more effectively in their own learning. There appears also to be a need to identify other ways in which to increase these students' potential for success. As well as encouraging NESB students' participation in the classroom, alternative teaching/learning methods need to be identified to assist these students to succeed in their new educational context.

Considerable advances have been made in the area of teaching English as a second language (ESL). A concern for addressing the needs of NESB members of the Australian population was raised by Grassby (1978) who referred to the revolution in linguistics which had occurred since 1975 when Radio Ethnic Australia was launched (p. 162). A focus of ESL education has been the development of strategies for assisting NESB students to attain levels of literacy which enable them to succeed in mainstream education. This study aims to identify factors other than language which may influence the educational development of students in the visual arts.

In this introductory chapter the background or context for the study will be established. Following this, the significance and the purpose of the study will be outlined. The research questions which this study seeks to answer are stated and a glossary of key terms is provided to assist the reader.

## 1.2 The Background to the Study

The researcher teaches in an inner city Catholic school whose population comprises students from more than forty ethnic backgrounds. In recent years there has been a marked increase in the enrolment of immigrant students from Asian and African countries or backgrounds, with a predominance of Asian students. It is predicted that this situation will occur more frequently in Australian schools of the future as the Australian population in recent years has not been renewed at a parallel rate to growth by immigration. This prediction is supported by recent projections made by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (1997) which cited Australian Bureau of Statistics data in stating that immigration would continue to make a significant contribution to Australia's population growth.

The 1996 Census confirmed that approximately one fifth of Australia's population was born overseas and more than half of these were from non-English speaking countries. In Western Australia, more than one quarter of the population was found to be born overseas, more than half had one or both parents born overseas, and approximately twelve per cent of the population were from non-English speaking backgrounds. According to the 1996 Census data, one fifth of people from non-English speaking backgrounds in Western Australia were Asian (Appendix 1).

Governments at both state and national levels have acknowledged the multicultural nature of Australian society. The Western Australian government policy document *Living in Harmony: A Community Relations Strategy for Western Australia* (1996) claimed the government was committed to recognising cultural diversity as a national asset. The Commonwealth Government has also claimed a commitment to equality

of opportunity (Linden, 1996) for people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The inner city school at which the researcher teaches has also seen an increase in numbers of overseas (as distinct from immigrant) students, mainly from Hong Kong, Malaysia, Korea and Indonesia. Results of a national survey conducted in the 1970s (Lakshmana Rao, 1976) indicated that students of Chinese race constituted four fifths of the overseas student population in Australia, and that more than half of these came for secondary education. This pattern has continued into the 1990s because as A. Hawkes stated (personal communication, July 21, 1998), there are approximately five hundred overseas students currently enrolled in Western Australian Catholic secondary schools and a large proportion of these are from Asian countries. The researcher's school therefore, with its increasing number of immigrant and overseas students, could be seen as a microcosm of the future population of Australian schools.

Given the changing population of Australian schools, this study investigates the needs of NESB students from a visual arts education perspective. In the school at which the researcher is currently employed, teachers across the curriculum are facing challenges related to the increase in numbers of NESB students enrolled in tertiary entrance subjects which require high levels of literacy in English.

Grassby (1978) saw the early 1970s in Australia as heralding the beginning of a cultural revolution in which people from different ethnic groups strove to preserve their cultures and languages. He saw Australia emerging as "one of the great cosmopolitan nations" (p. 161) and he cited many initiatives by various government departments which addressed issues of language and provided opportunities for acknowledging and affirming cultural differences. Grassby (1978), suggested that there was

also a need for recognising the importance of art and arts education in a multicultural society.

In the researcher's experience, many students from non-English-speaking backgrounds often reveal enthusiasm and high ability in a variety of visual arts activities. They often demonstrate highly developed practical art making skills, as well as good understanding and sensitivity in the use of the elements and principles of design. Often a defining feature of the NESB students' work is a concern for technical excellence.

Although students from non-English-speaking backgrounds are enthusiastic and often highly competent in their visual arts making, many of them, particularly students from Asian backgrounds, appear to display less confidence in other components of the visual arts curriculum. For example, activities which include direct observational drawing, imaginative or interpretive representation and the expression of original ideas either visually or verbally, are often approached with less confidence by students from Asian backgrounds. These difficulties have become more apparent in the work of NESB students studying visual art in Years 11 and 12 where they appear unable to grasp concepts which are central to achieving success in the course. This inability to grasp visual arts concepts creates difficulties for these students, particularly in the areas of art theory (art history, art criticism), and in understanding the interrelationship between visual inquiry, studio practice, and art history/criticism.

A balanced visual arts curriculum which gives equal status to art criticism, aesthetics and art history together with the development and practice of creative skills and processes has been advocated for many years by both Australian and international visual arts educators. Most recently in Western Australia, The Arts Learning Area as defined in the Curriculum Framework (1998), established Outcomes (Arts Ideas, Arts Skills and Processes, Arts Responses and Arts in Society) which focus on



what students know, understand, value and are able to accomplish. It is important therefore, that students achieve these Outcomes when undertaking a visual arts course.

### 1.3 The Significance of the Study

The Western Australian Government policy document, *Living in Harmony: A Community Relations Strategy for Western Australia* (1996), has acknowledged the important contribution to society made by people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The authors of this document advocated the encouragement of people to maintain their cultural and ethnic identities.

Various initiatives have been taken by schools with multicultural populations in Western Australia (WA). Teachers have been encouraged to include activities in the curriculum which acknowledge their students' ethnic and cultural backgrounds in order to inspire confidence and a sense of identity. A number of schools have initiated practices of celebrating multiculturalism as a means of acknowledging and valuing the contribution of students from European, African, Asian and indigenous backgrounds. One association, established in Western Australia in 1993 (Access Asia), aims to increase teachers' awareness of Asia and to promote the inclusion of Asian studies across the curriculum in both primary and secondary schools. Government funding has been made available to teachers for overseas field-trips and professional development. Access Asia encourages initiatives which increase awareness of Asian cultures across the curriculum.

McFee (1986) claimed that visual art has a role in social continuity and change in that it reinforces people's cultural identities. According to McFee (1986), it is important for teachers to understand the background and cultural influences on a student's approach to curriculum materials

because past experiences influence their experiences of works of art. This complies with Chalmers' (1996) assertion (p. 8) that it is necessary for art educators to begin by focussing on what is familiar to a student and subsequently develop tolerance and understanding of other cultural backgrounds as well as of the dominant culture. This strategy should lead to a better understanding by students of what is expected of them whilst at the same time, acknowledging the influences of their cultural and ethnic backgrounds. By learning more about each student's perceptions of visual art and his/her expectations of a visual arts course, it is possible that links could be established between a student's past experiences and their current visual arts educational context.

Linden (1996) noted that second generation Australians of southern and eastern European origins had achieved educational levels considerably higher than their parents. According to Linden (1996), this achievement has been thought to improve the socio-economic status of these groups. If this is the case, then it could be argued that maximising the educational opportunities of NESB students will have far-reaching economic and social effects.

According to Chalmers (1995) arts education has a vital role to play in bringing about change in our society in terms of equity. Chalmers (1995) stressed the importance of using "a variety of lenses to look carefully at the many ways in which art is viewed, discussed, understood and valued" (p. 16). To this end, curriculum materials developed during the past decade have made reference to the role of arts education in recognising cultural diversity in society. The Arts National Curriculum Statement and Profile (1992) advocated an inclusive view of the arts "in all social and cultural contexts" (p. 4). The authors of the Statement asserted that the arts embody the values and opinions of a society and are useful in both maintaining tradition and facilitating social change.

Further support for this role for the arts is to be found in the Western Australian Curriculum Framework (*Consultation Draft*, 1997) where it is stated that studies in The Arts learning area should foster a sense of personal and cultural identity and provide the skills and understandings necessary to reflect critically on artistic values in the student's own and in others' societies (p. 49). The Curriculum Framework also highlighted the importance of The Arts in expressing the culture of diverse communities. One of the major learning outcomes, Arts in Society (p. 48), included the recognition of the diversity of cultures reflected in Australian society. The authors advocated "engaging with diversity" (p. 60). While the Western Australian Curriculum Framework (*Consultation Draft*, 1997) gave specific attention to cultural diversity, this has been given slightly less emphasis in the final version of the Curriculum Framework for Kindergarten to Year 12 in Western Australia (1998).

From the above it would appear that promoting equity for students from different cultural backgrounds is seen as one of the goals of education in Western Australia. On the other hand, much of the literature on multiculturalism in art education (predominately by American and British authors) which will be discussed later, has indicated a lack of attention to the needs of students from non-Western cultures. It appears therefore, that there is a need to understand the reasons for this perceived lack of equity and to consider the implementation of strategies to improve the chances of success of students from non-Western backgrounds.

#### 1.4 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the degree to which NESB students' perceptions of and beliefs about visual art affect their

response to and their experience of, the visual arts program designed for WA secondary school students. The possibility that NESB students' perceptions and beliefs inhibit their progress in a visual arts program developed for Australian students is also considered. A long-term goal (beyond the scope of this study) would be to devise appropriate strategies for improving the learning experience of these students. The need for such action was recognised by Munn and Knight (1987) who investigated the specific educational needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in order to develop appropriate teaching practices.

The importance of addressing the needs of educationally disadvantaged students was considered by Apple (1979) who according to Uhrmacher (1986, p. 7) expressed the belief that "schools reflect the general inequities in the larger society" and claimed that to achieve equity, the needs of the less advantaged should be addressed. From a critical theory position, Apple (1990) claimed that education systems needed to be "unpacked" (p. 44) to determine the degree to which they served the dominant economic and social ideologies. He claimed that education was "deeply embedded in the politics of culture" (p. viii) and that common culture should involve a contributive process in the creation of meaning and value. This view was also held by Grossman (1995) who noted that (in the United States of America) many students from non-European ethnic backgrounds were among the minority groups who were not given the same opportunities to succeed as "white" students. Grossman asserted that educators need to understand the influence of "diversity factors" (p. xii) on the educational experiences of students and on their ability to succeed. These diversity factors were defined by Grossman (1995) as inequities resulting from ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status.

By learning more about NESB students' perception of visual arts and their expectations of visual arts education, visual arts teachers will

be better placed to meet their students' special needs. In addition, curriculum development may become more inclusive if difficulties experienced by NESB students are identified and taken into account.

The need for greater equity was highlighted by Kindler (1994, p. 52) who asserted that art could play a major role in re-shaping education to address the needs of students from diverse ethnic backgrounds and to motivate and develop confidence in "at risk" students (i.e. those lacking basic English skills and therefore likely to experience failure). Similarly, Chalmers (1996, p. 1) recognised the importance of art education in promoting cross-cultural understanding. He proposed that all people from diverse cultural, racial and ethnic groups should experience equal opportunities to learn.

### 1.5 The Research Questions

In attempting to determine the factors that influence the achievement of NESB students in the visual arts, it is necessary to investigate their perceptions of the visual arts and their expectations of a visual arts education.

Therefore, the main research questions for this study are:

1. What do students from diverse ethnic backgrounds understand by the term "visual arts"?

This question assumes that NESB students have previously encountered visual arts works in an educational or other environment.

2. To what extent does NESB students' understanding of the terms "visual arts" and "visual arts education" influence their expectations and performance in the visual arts classroom?

## 1.6 Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this research, the following terms are operationally defined.

\* *DBAE*. Discipline-Based Art Education. A visual arts program developed by The Getty Education Institute for the Arts which views the four disciplines of aesthetics, art history, art criticism and the practice of art as inter-related and central to visual arts education.

\* *NESB*. Students from non-English-speaking backgrounds. For such students, English is not the first language spoken in the home. These students and/or their parents are likely to be either immigrants or refugees. Some NESB students are classified as overseas students.

\* *Immigrant students* are those who have left their countries of origin, in most cases with other members of their families with the intention of becoming citizens of Australia.

\* *Refugees* are those who have fled their countries of origin due to wars or political unrest, usually with members of their families. Often these people have been detained in refugee camps before settling in their present homes.

\* *Overseas students* are those who are living temporarily in Australia for the purpose of attending school and who expect to return to their countries of origin at the conclusion of secondary and/or tertiary studies. They are usually unaccompanied by members of their families.

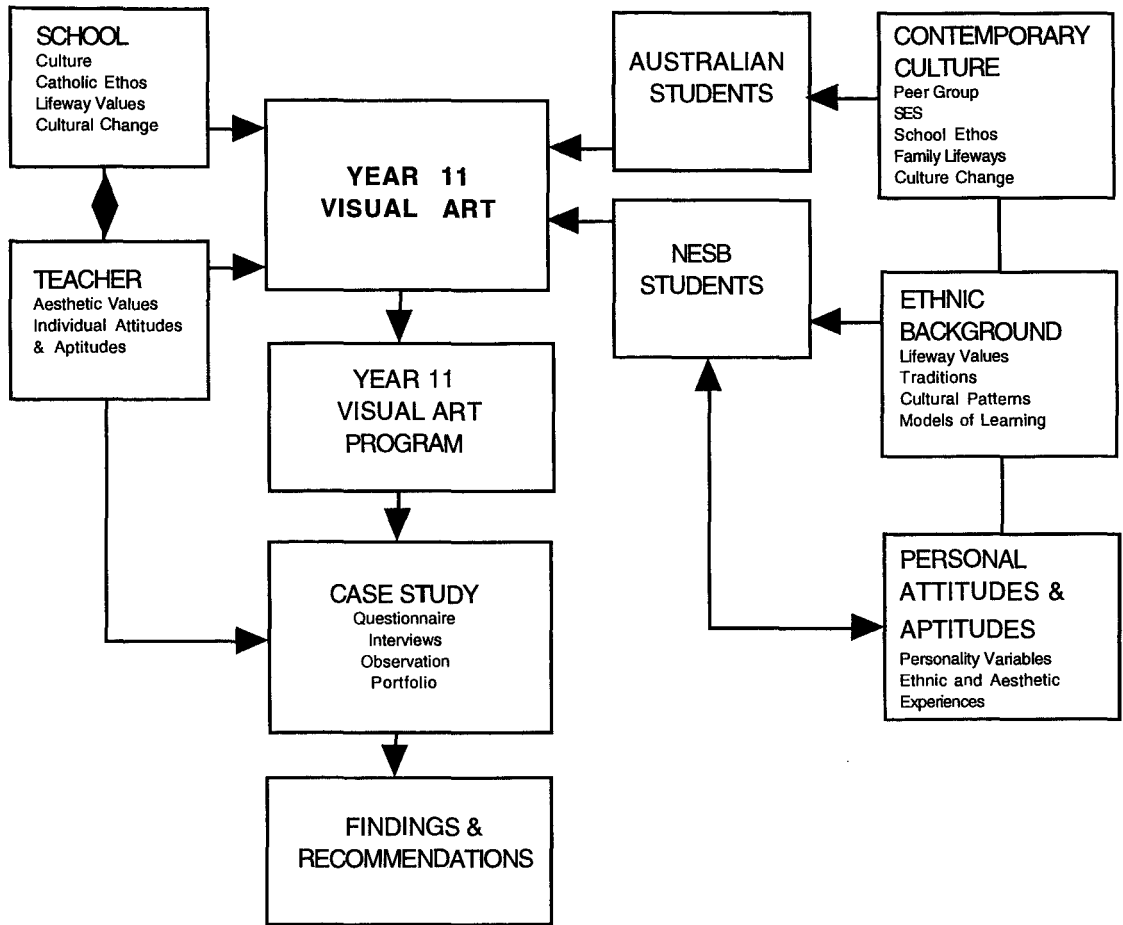
\* *Multiculturalism* is defined by Devine (1996) as “celebrating the diversity both of human individuals and of the cultures human beings create” (p. 43). Culture encompasses such factors as race, gender, age and social position (class). However, for the purpose of this study, multiculturalism is taken to refer to a diversity of ethnic backgrounds.

\* *Visual Arts* are defined by the Curriculum Council WA (1998) as “visual and tactile experiences in two and three dimensional forms, demonstrated through the interrelated processes of observation and visual inquiry, studio practice, exhibition, and reflection in both past and present contexts” (p. 52). The visual arts along with the other arts forms; dance, drama, media and music, constitute the Learning Area, The Arts.

\* *Western culture* refers to the mainstream culture with European origins and it is the dominant culture in Australia.

### 1.7 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework represented in the figure which follows, the variables which impact on the study are identified. It incorporates a conceptual model of an NESB student. For all students a number of factors are likely to impinge on their educational experiences. These factors include the ethos and culture of the school, the aptitudes, attitudes and values held by teaching staff, the students’ relationship to contemporary culture, socio-economic status (SES) and the influence of the peer group. For NESB students there are additional variables which may include traditional cultural values and educational experiences, teaching and learning patterns and aesthetic experiences. Added to these may be the circumstances under which students left their countries of origin and resettled in their present homes.



## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

### 1.8 Conclusion

The study is concerned with establishing the educational needs of NESB students. In the school at which the researcher is currently employed, teachers across the curriculum are increasingly facing challenges related to increased numbers of NESB students. For a number of years, the issue of language has been a focus of the school with the establishment of an Intensive Language Centre (ILC) to receive recent arrivals for assessment and preparation for mainstream classes.

According to Burke et al. (1993) the language level achieved prior to NESB students joining mainstream classes requires competence in oral



communication. While basic oral communication skills are often quite well developed, competence has not necessarily been achieved in written English which presents difficulties for students undertaking studies in other curriculum areas (particularly at upper-secondary level).

The visual arts area is seen by many students and their parents as less challenging because of the practical components of the courses offered; it is believed that an understanding of language is not a requirement of a visual arts course. On the other hand, many visual arts teachers would question this assumption believing that language does play an important part in a student's ability to succeed in all areas of the course, particularly those which require verbal responses either oral or written. This concern is supported by Dumbleton and Lountain (1999) in their recent publication *Literacy in the Arts*. The authors not only emphasise the importance of literacy across the curriculum but point out that literacy needs to be developed which is specific to the Arts learning area.

Whilst acknowledging language as a major factor in visual arts learning, this study addresses the possibility that other factors also make an important contribution to a student's response to a visual arts course. A number of authors (see literature review Chapter 4) support the notion that cultural and social factors play a large part in an individual's response to and practice of the visual arts. According to Wasson, Stuhr and Petrovich Mwaniki (1990) these include: socio-economic-status (SES), gender, physical and intellectual ability, peer pressure, parental expectations, family situation, physical and emotional well-being, maturity, religion and ethnicity. Whilst acknowledging the importance of all of these factors, this study seeks first of all to investigate the possibility that cultural and ethnic influences play an important role in shaping a student's perceptions of and responses to the visual arts and visual arts

education. This study also seeks to determine the degree to which these factors contribute to a student's performance in these areas.

It is anticipated that investigation of these factors will lead to a greater understanding of students' responses and needs. It is expected that directions for further research will be indicated and that this in turn, will eventually lead to a more culturally inclusive curriculum.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Overview of Chapter

For this study, literature was sought which focused on multiculturalism in education. It was also of interest to review literature which identified the aims and objectives of visual arts education because these provided the criteria against which the achievements of NESB students could be measured and difficulties identified. Of particular interest were findings and recommendations related to the educational needs of NESB students and the views expressed on the influence of ethnic and cultural backgrounds on students' understandings of the visual arts. To provide balance, the concerns expressed by some theorists about placing an over-emphasis on multiculturalism in education will be outlined.

In this review of literature, the following topics are considered: (a) curricular recommendations for a comprehensive visual arts program, (b) views on the place of multiculturalism in general education, (c) positions taken by a number of authors on multiculturalism in visual arts education, and (d) previous findings on multiculturalism in education.

#### 2.2 Curricular Recommendations

Most visual arts educators accept that in addition to making art, learning to respond to art works with knowledge and understanding should be an integral part of a visual arts course. Parsons (1994) identified

distances in visual arts education which need to be bridged. Among these were (i) distances in studio work and art theory (art history and art criticism) and (ii) distances between thinking in images and thinking in words (visual and verbal thinking). For Parsons, oral and written language are central components of a visual arts course.

Proponents of discipline based art education (DBAE) have recommended that art education should acknowledge the contribution of the four visual arts disciplines - aesthetics, studio art, art history and art criticism. Eisner (1988) suggested that lack of engagement with each of the disciplines meant that a child's educational experience would be shallow. He stated that there were four major things that people did with art (i.e. make it, look at it, understand its place in culture and time, and make judgements about it) and these constituted the disciplines of DBAE. Earlier Broudy (1983) referred to the disciplines as providing lenses through which to fully understand the creative experience. Further support for DBAE was indicated by Greer (1984) who stated that when concepts and skills from DBAE were taught concurrently, they "interrelate to reinforce one another" (p. 216). These views are reflected in Australian curriculum development in the visual arts at both a national and state level. As mentioned previously, the Western Australian Curriculum Framework (1998) presents an integrated model of visual arts learning with outcomes which mirror DBAE. It would appear to be essential therefore, that students are encouraged and assisted to develop skills in all components of a visual arts course.

### 2.3 Multiculturalism in General Education

Klein (1989) stated that "any practice which discriminates against groups of people on grounds of their race is unacceptable" (p. 4). She noted that there was agreement among educators in Britain that children from

ethnic minority groups were achieving at a lower level than “white” children. Klein (1989) claimed that there was a generally unexpressed view that the children from non-English-speaking backgrounds were less able than the white children and she suggested that a child’s lack of familiarity with the norms of the dominant culture were responsible for the disparity. Klein referred to research by Gipps (1990) which suggested that schools did not provide equal opportunity for *all* children to learn and that assessment procedures were culturally biased (p. 5).

Grossman (1995) compared the success of “white” middle-class American students with that of students from “minority” groups which included students from non-European backgrounds, all students with low SES, rural students, refugees, immigrants and those suffering gender bias (p. 1). Among the problems experienced by NESB students, Grossman (1995) noted erratic attendance at school, lack of parents to speak (in English) for them and insecurity resulting from relocation (p. 4) as being significant. Grossman (1995, p. 326) asserted that among the many recommendations for a culturally inclusive curriculum, of utmost importance is the need for teachers to address their own cultural biases and to take into consideration students’ behaviours and learning styles.

In researching the literature on multiculturalism it was considered appropriate to investigate previous findings and positions taken with regard to multiculturalism in general education, particularly in the context of Australian educational policy. Literature on this subject appeared to be more prevalent during the 1980s than in the present decade, although there was some evidence of more recent research conducted into multiculturalism in the context of religious education, literacy and racism. Religious education in Australian secondary schools was investigated by Eversden (1993) and Sattler (1995), and a study by David (1993) examined the problem of racism experienced by NESB teachers in Queensland. Issues related to literacy were investigated by

Cairney and Ruge (1998). These studies are discussed further in the section dealing with previous findings on multiculturalism in education (p. 39).

Adopting a global perspective, Crittenden (1982) asserted that “the acceptance of cultural pluralism is the consequence of recognising that freedom of thought and expression, of conscience and religion, and of peaceful assembly in association are human rights” (p. 10). Crittenden claimed that public education in Australia was “seriously at odds with pluralist values” (p. 56). In support of this view, Crittenden (1982) argued that a common curriculum could not be justified for the whole society given that society consisted of a diversity of cultural groups.

In comparing the merits of common schooling with schooling tailored to the needs of a particular cultural group, Crittenden (1982, p. 88) suggested that education in a pluralist society should reflect the middle-ground between the conflicting values of (a) social coherence, and (b) freedom of choice. He believed it was desirable to encourage ways in which schooling in the beliefs or cultural interests of a particular group could be combined with participation in the educational program of the school.

Crittenden (1982, p. 35) claimed that a distinctive culture existed in Australia and that this culture should continue to evolve and take new directions as the influence of a growing range of ethnic cultures impact on Australian society. He argued that a pluralist society required some features of a distinctive common culture; a distinctive Australian way of life shaped by the merging of ethnic cultures. Crittenden (1982) supported the use of common curriculum goals which encouraged the pursuit of excellence in relation to intellectual, moral and aesthetic domains.

Also in the nineteen eighties, Grigson and Buckley (1986) looked specifically at gender equity in relation to NESB students. Referring to previous research into the education of girls in Australian schools, the

authors claimed that the issue of gender equity for NESB students had been overlooked. They felt that this was due to the belief that gender roles in non-Western societies are culturally determined and therefore too sensitive to be questioned. Grigson and Buckley asserted that as NESB girls were part of contemporary culture, affirmative action was needed on their behalf. Teachers needed to confront the culturally determined attitudes and learning difficulties experienced by the girls and to devise strategies to help them succeed (Grigson and Buckley, 1986).

In a study conducted in 1998, Cairney and Ruge reported on issues related to multiculturalism in Australian education. In their study they investigated the literacy practices of schools, families and community groups in New South Wales and the ways in which these practices impacted on the development of literacy in students. Cairney and Ruge (1998) examined “matches and mismatches between the discourse practices of home and school and the impact that any differences have on students’ school success” (p. 1). The opinion espoused by the researchers was that schools reflected certain authority and linguistic patterns which favoured some social and cultural groups and ignored others.

#### 2.4 Positions on Multiculturalism Within Visual Arts Education.

The subject of multiculturalism in relation to visual art and visual arts education has been of interest to art educators and scholars for many years. Advocates of multiculturalism have sought to provide equal opportunities for all students, irrespective of their ethnic or cultural backgrounds. Students from ethnically diverse backgrounds were among those referred to by Wasson, Stuhr and Petrovich-Mwaniki as the “disenfranchised” (1990, p. 235). Wasson et al. claimed that the challenge for visual arts teachers was to avoid teaching from a specific cultural

viewpoint. They suggested that a more inclusive approach to curriculum planning is required (p. 142).

Dissanayake (1992) acknowledged a distinction between the belief in a universal aesthetic on one hand and on the other, the notion that aesthetics are socially and culturally constructed. She expressed a belief in a basic human need for aesthetic experience which may be expressed in a range of different contexts. Dissanayake (1992) asserted that aesthetic attitudes vary widely from one society to another and that these attitudes are wholly learned or cultural. Dissanayake's belief that aesthetic values are culturally determined appears to be reflected in much of the literature which advocates a multicultural approach to arts education.

Recent research into multiculturalism in visual arts education has been carried out in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. The following overview provides the stated positions of various authors on issues associated with multicultural education and their beliefs about the objectives and purpose of a multicultural visual arts education. Each author tended to favour one of four positions on multicultural education (a) socio-cognitive, (b) cultural pluralist, (c) socio-cultural and (d) critical thinking, although each may also have embraced aspects of the other positions.

#### 2.4.1 Socio-cognitive approach.

Parsons (1994) who adopted a socio-cognitive perspective examined issues of cognition and context in visual arts education. Parsons posited that the distance between "both persons and culture" (p. 7) was of widespread concern among educators and that there was a need to maintain differences whilst developing understanding among cultures. This view was also held by those adopting a cultural pluralist position (e.g. Chalmers, 1996).



Winner (1989) in comparing the creative development of Chinese children with children from Western cultures noted that Chinese children demonstrated more highly developed skills in both traditional Chinese ink paintings and in “Western-style” watercolours. Winner stated that Chinese art education needed to be studied in the context of Chinese child-rearing practices. She saw the learning of drawing and painting skills as the result of a child’s willingness to conform and an ability to concentrate. According to Winner (1989), Chinese child-rearing practices encouraged passivity and acceptance of adult control resulting in “placid, controllable, unquestioning children ... expecting to be led step by step” (p. 46). Attempts at becoming independent were discouraged. Winner saw the behaviour of children at school and kindergarten as a “performance” (p. 46). She claimed that children were set up to succeed and they were not challenged to think visually or to solve visual problems. Winner (1989) noted that Chinese children were trained in the art of calligraphy throughout primary school. The goal of such training was to master tradition, not to go beyond it.

Kindler and Darras (1998) referred to the socio-cognitive theory of Vygotsky (1978) who asserted that cultural and social influences were significant in the development of pictorial representation (p. 148). Kindler and Darras challenged Piaget’s (1937) notion of a “unilinear” development from the intellectual to visual realism (p. 147). They proposed that the development of pictorial representation in children occurs in an interactive socio-cultural environment and that cultural influences were particularly evident in the developmental stages referred to as “description” and “narration” (p. 152).

Fielding (1997) also adopted a socio-cognitive viewpoint in his belief that the notion of creativity is defined by social consensus. He asserted that an individual’s creativity is influenced by his or her interaction with the culture and the social environment. Fielding claimed that even

imagination and fantasy are linked with reality and therefore socially and culturally based (p. 90).

Like Winner (1989), Fielding examined the development of creativity within contemporary Chinese culture and compared child-rearing and education practices in both Chinese and Western cultures. Fielding noted that Chinese parenting and education encouraged a passive acceptance of knowledge which avoided exploration and critical thinking; there was little room for play and creative development. He also perceived a lack of emphasis on verbal learning which he believed was crucial to the development of imagination and critical thinking in adolescence. To support this view, Fielding (1997) referred to research conducted by Sharma (1996) conducted at several (unidentified) Hong Kong universities which indicated a positive correlation between levels of creativity and academic achievement. The research methodology was not specified.

Gardner (1980, 1989 and 1990) is another writer who has explored contemporary Chinese culture. In particular, Gardner identified differences in approaches to the visual arts and visual arts education between Chinese and Western (United States) cultures. Gardner (1990) defined the educational goals of the Chinese as “cultivation of the best from the past” (p. x). In contrast, he defined the western approach as providing opportunities for exploration and individual self-expression.

Gardner (1990) asserted that historical factors and traditional values existing in cultures were reflected in educational practices and that these were more likely to influence the visual arts than other curriculum areas such as mathematics. Gardner also claimed that cultural influences have a marked effect on the style of children’s drawing (1990, p. 19). According to Gardner, without the opportunity to explore through the process of drawing and given the emphasis on technical excellence, drawing is likely to become a craft rather than an art form.

In noting the differences between visual arts education in China and visual arts education in the United States, Gardner (1989), like Winner (1989), referred to the Chinese people as living life as a “performance” (p. 143). He identified a Chinese belief that control is essential and that basic skills needed to be learned sequentially and perfected before creativity could be encouraged. Gardner (1989) expressed the belief that the idea of perfecting one level or task before proceeding to the next is a continuation of centuries of painting and calligraphy according to culturally agreed standards. He drew an analogy between comparing Confucius with Plato and the contrast between “performance” and “understanding” (p. 145).

In a recent comparative research project, Cox, Perara and Fan (1999) noted differences in the style, composition, use of colour and the representation of depth when comparing drawings by children from China and the United Kingdom. This comparison is discussed further under the heading *Previous findings on multiculturalism in education* (2.6).

The findings by Winner (1989), Fielding (1997) and Gardner (1980, 1989, and 1990) would substantiate some of the concerns expressed by Zeplin (1994) regarding the adaptation of students from Asian cultures to education in Australia. Zeplin claimed that students from authoritarian or traditional backgrounds experienced difficulties in adapting to values of “white, western individualism, liberalism and self-expression” (p. 41). Zeplin’s views are discussed further under the heading *Socio-cultural position* 2.4.3.

#### 2.4.2 Cultural pluralist position.

Cultural pluralism was a position taken by several authors on the subject of multiculturalism in visual arts education. Chalmers (1995,

1996), Tomhave (1992), Hart (1991), Dilger (1994) and McFee (1970, 1978, 1986) all advocated the adoption of an inclusive curriculum.

Tomhave (1992) identified the objectives of multicultural education as being the development of “respect, acceptance, appreciation of all people’s aesthetic objects and histories” (p. 58). From the various approaches to multicultural education, derived from the work of Gibson (1976), Sleeter and Grant (1987), Tomhave identified an approach defined as *cultural understanding* as being the most appropriate. He explained this rather general approach as involving the practical application of the *multicultural education theory* approach which is defined as “participation in the activity of another culture for the purpose of understanding it on its own terms” (p. 53). The *cultural understanding* approach recommended comparative studies of one’s own and others’ cultures by providing access to the “insider” viewpoint of diverse cultures and ethnic groups (p. 56). Tomhave (1992) indicated that this viewpoint could be adopted by developing multiple standards from which to view and evaluate artworks. He suggested that these standards could be devised by eliciting information from different ethnic groups about their histories and cultures (p. 50).

Chalmers (1995, 1996) also adopted the position of cultural pluralism. Chalmers asserted that past and present thinking in art education was ethnocentric and that a perception of superior forms of art existed which was associated with “white males, wealth, leisure and power” (1995, p. 8). He stated that art teachers needed to encourage recognition, respect for and the sharing of students’ cultures. Chalmers (1995) claimed that students needed to be taught that art reflects the values and experiences of the people who made it and that the perception of art by groups and individuals is culturally influenced (p. 14).

Chalmers (1996) stated that the objectives of multicultural art education were those of providing (a) equal opportunities to learn

regardless of class, race and culture, (b) developing positive attitudes towards cultural, racial, ethnic and religious groups, (c) encouraging awareness of ethnic/cultural observances within an area, and (d) providing a curriculum that values and affirms differences and avoids stereotyping.

On the issue of aesthetics, Chalmers (1996, p. 3) posited that experts should be drawn from different cultures (in particular the cultures which had produced the art works in question), to determine the criteria by which the artworks should be judged. He believed the social forces which motivated and defined visual art within a given culture should be considered when making aesthetic judgements.

Hart (1991) also considered the need to examine both specific and implicit messages given in the teaching of art and aesthetics. She referred to criteria which were central to the Western approach to aesthetics (i.e. the authority of the individual maker, the uniqueness and originality of individual work, the centrality of painting and the formalist approach). She asserted that these dominant characteristics of Western art history and art criticism were inappropriate concepts to use when responding to non-Western art forms.

Another advocate of cultural pluralism was Dilger (1994, p. 55) who saw an inclusive approach as appropriate for assisting students from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds to overcome the barriers which impeded their learning. She asserted that the arts could play a major role in reshaping education to address the needs of students from diverse ethnic backgrounds by motivating them and developing their confidence. Dilger (1994) highlighted the issue of literacy by pointing out that NESB students were likely to experience failure in general education because they lacked basic language skills.

As long ago as 1970, McFee saw art education as a means of encouraging students from diverse ethnic backgrounds to value their own

cultures and to recognise the contribution of the arts of other cultures to a multicultural society. She argued that students needed opportunities to understand the symbolic meanings in their own environment and the symbolic meanings in the art forms of other cultures and sub-cultures.

In common with Chalmers (1996), although much earlier, McFee (1978) emphasised the importance of understanding the cultural factors influencing aesthetics. She claimed that educators needed to understand that perception was a result of culture - that people's past experiences influence their experience of works of art. She asserted that educators also needed to know the effects of contemporary multicultural exposure on aesthetic development. McFee (1986) claimed that art has a role to play in dealing with social continuity and change in that it reinforced people's cultural identity whilst at the same time acknowledging the accomplishments of individuals and groups.

More recently, Dumbleton and Lountain (1999) also saw the need for an inclusive approach to art education. They argued that curriculum content in the arts was devised according to the knowledge and values of particular groups in society and that bridges needed to be established between cultures. In addressing the issue of literacy in the arts, they emphasised the need to equip students with skills in critical analysis which relies on the use of appropriate art language (p. 3).

#### 2.4.3 Socio-cultural position.

Those researchers adopting a *socio-cultural* position on multicultural education also advocated the adoption of an inclusive curriculum to acknowledge the cultural diversity within a community. The major writers who adopted this position include Wasson, Stuhr and Petrovich Mwaniki (1990, 1992), Mason (1988, 1997) and Zeplin (1994).

Wasson et al. (1990), referred to teaching as social and cultural intervention. They asserted that students should be made aware of cultural biases in the dominant ideology and they saw the goal of visual arts education as fostering the formation of attitudes which would enable students, teachers and the community to confront their sociocultural biases. Wasson et al. (1990, p. 235) recommended that students' sociological and cultural values should be considered in curriculum planning and implementation. This concern for the individual was supported by Mason (1988) who saw the primary objective of a multiculturalist approach to art education as that of contributing to the individual's personal and social development.

In a more recent statement Mason (1997) claimed that the National Curriculum in Britain defined British culture in a "traditional/conservative way" (p. 14) and that ethnic minority groups felt excluded by the requirements that examples used in the teaching of art history were mostly drawn from Western European and British "high art" (p. 14). Mason argued that students and teachers needed to engage with the issues reflected in contemporary art. This would occur if consideration was given to the "strand" of contemporary post modern art in Britain which reflects the debate about cultural difference. In her address at an International Forum in Art Education in Victoria, Australia, Mason suggested that Australian students should be encouraged to look for similar meanings in contemporary Australian artworks.

Zeplin (1994) expressed a concern for the apparent failure rate of Asian tertiary students in Australia. She suggested that there was an apparent belief by Australian academics that education was "culturally neutral" (p. 41). Zeplin claimed that the values of white, Western individualism, liberalism and self-expression were presumed to be understood as the only way to learn. She asserted that in the context of

these values, students from more authoritarian or traditional cultural backgrounds were less likely to succeed. For example, where students had been taught to respect and repeat the wisdom of others, “copying” is acceptable. In the Australian education system, such copying is untenable because it amounts to plagiarism. Zeplin suggested that attention should be given to preparing teachers and educators to deal with multicultural issues by encouraging them to examine their own values, cultural biases, methods of communicating and teaching practices. This view has also been expressed by Chalmers (1996) and Wasson, et al. (1990, 1991).

#### 2.4.4 Critical thinking.

The significance of critical thinking which to some extent was advocated by Zeplin (1994) was also promoted by Apple (1990) and Stout (1997). As stated previously, Apple advocated encouraging the contribution of a diversity of cultures to the ideologies of the common culture. He suggested that in order to achieve equity in schools, education systems needed to be examined to determine their cultural biases.

Stout (1997) also emphasised the need for teachers and educators to examine their own cultural biases and to reflect on their own system of beliefs and assumptions (p. 105). Stout (1997) asserted that critical thinking was the means by which students could develop an appreciation of cultural diversity. Acknowledging the complexity of multicultural education, Stout argued that critical thinking encouraged the ability to “perceive and appreciate complexity and deal with it in a rational way” (p. 101). She suggested that students need to be assisted in developing critical strategies and that to enable this to occur, teachers need to engage in “reflective” teaching (p. 105) by exchanging ideas with the students rather



than presenting themselves as an authority. Stout emphasised the need for students to experience art as meaningful to themselves at a personal level in order to appreciate meaning in others' works and to develop a universal understanding. This concurs with Chalmer's (1996) recommendation that the teacher should begin with what is familiar and meaningful to the child.

## 2.5 Concerns Relating to Multiculturalism in Education

A number of authors (Smith 1994, Richmond 1995, and Kindler 1994) questioned some of the ideologies of multiculturalism. Whilst applauding the inclusivity of cultural pluralism, they cautioned against overlooking some of the values represented in the dominant Western culture.

Kindler (1994) asserted that a child's experience of culture was constructed from all that was available in a culturally diverse environment. She recommended that original values and traditions should be analysed in the context of their present value and their relevance to the contemporary generation of children.

Kindler (1994) stressed the importance of recognising the importance of a "multicultural culture" which each child could readily absorb (p. 55). Kindler (1994) asserted that there was a danger in focusing on separate ethnic groups and in assuming that children from ethnic backgrounds would identify with the cultural heritage of their parents. Kindler found this to be the case where a child had been introduced to a new culture at an early age and could no longer identify with the parents' culture.

In a similar vein, Smith (1994) suggested that students often wanted to identify less with the inherited culture than with their contemporary mainstream culture. Smith (1994, p. 15) asserted that the

most practical goal of multiculturalism was *repair* (as defined by Collins and Sandell 1992). This involved (a) the improvement of the self-images of students from diverse backgrounds by studying their ethnic heritage, and (b) promoting tolerance by developing an understanding of others' cultures. Smith suggested that the other approaches to multiculturalism (i.e. *attack*, *escape* and *transformative*) identified by Collins and Sandell (1992) encouraged a negative view of the dominant culture and could result in the emergence of smaller minority groups and a greater emphasis placed on cultural differences. In highlighting some of the difficulties associated with multiculturalism in art education Smith (1994) stated that language was a major factor in developing tolerance. He claimed that the values of different cultures could not be explained or understood without a knowledge of the language of each culture (p. 16).

Both Smith (1994) and Richmond (1995) questioned the tendency among some multiculturalists to view the dominant culture in a negative light. Richmond asserted that democracy (derived from western ideals) offered possibilities not available in many traditional cultures. He believed that in a multicultural society there needed to be agreement about permissible behaviours and a sharing of the same civil code.

Richmond (1995) saw the purpose of multiculturalism in a pluralistic society as developing a critical understanding of different forms of art and an appreciation of the lives of the people who produced it. Richmond (1995) asserted that the purpose of art education was to develop artistic understanding of good art from a variety of aesthetic traditions and to pursue aesthetic understanding in the context of a fair and accurate picture of people and their customs (p. 25).

## 2.6 Previous Findings on Multiculturalism in Education

In Australia, research into multiculturalism has occurred in the areas of religion, gender equity and language. The issue of racism has also been addressed. The place of religious education in a multicultural society was addressed by Eversden (1993) and Sattler (1995). Eversden examined existing curriculum models in Australian government and non-government schools and also reviewed models in Britain and America. Eversden (1993) recommended the adoption of a transcultural perspective where the “home” tradition was supported and indoctrination avoided.

Sattler (1995) criticised the New South Wales religious education course *Studies of Religion* (1992) which he claimed was a vehicle for government social policy and which privileged certain theoretical voices whilst rendering other voices silent. Sattler asserted that clarification was needed in defining the key concepts of “culture”, “multiculturalism”, “religion” and “religious education” if the objectives of increased compassion and justice were to be achieved.

Grigson and Buckley (1986) conducted an action research project to inquire into the specific educational needs of NESB girls. The study was conducted over a twelve month period by twelve teachers in Australian Capital Territory schools. The research findings strengthened the authors’ belief that teachers should confront the attitudes and learning difficulties experienced by the girls and that there was a need to devise strategies to help them succeed despite these disadvantages.

More recently, Cairney and Ruge (1998) conducted case studies in four Australian primary schools in an attempt to identify differences in language and literacy practices of schools, families and community groups and the perceived impact of these practices on students’ school success. The authors claimed (p. 30) that teachers needed to become

“reflective practitioners” (i.e. to design programs and classroom environments to reflect cultural and linguistic diversity). To do this they needed to form close ties with students’ homes and communities and to utilise cultural and socio-linguistic information to develop educational practices which respect cultural differences and contribute to the students’ success in literacy development.

Of the research conducted into multiculturalism and visual arts education, that of Mason (1988), Hart (1991), Rogers (1994) and Cox, Perara and Fan (1999) have addressed the issue of what people from non-Western cultures consider to be encompassed by the term visual arts. Qualitative research methods were used by these authors to investigate this values driven area. Mason (1988) documented the results of two case studies conducted in Britain which were designed to learn more about the culture of students in the multicultural classroom. Rogers (1994) used oral history techniques for a study which addressed the idea of art and its meaning in Aboriginal culture. Cox et al. (1999) conducted a cross cultural study to compare the drawing skills of Chinese and Australian children.

In his study of a group of Aboriginal (Adnyamathanha) people, Rogers (1994) found that their perceptions of art differed from those of people of Western-European origin. Rogers asserted that it was inappropriate to assume that the term “art” could be applied equally and with the same meaning in both Western and non-Western cultures (1994, p. 13). Similarly, Hart (1991) noted fundamental differences in concepts of art among students from different ethnic backgrounds. She observed that art made in non-Western traditions should be seen in the context of the relative criteria appropriate to each culture (p. 150). Hart argued that her findings highlighted the need for a pluralistic approach to aesthetics (i.e. drawing on the criteria appropriate to each culture). The observations made by Rogers (1994) and Hart (1991) suggest a need for clarification of

students' understanding of terms associated with the visual arts and visual arts education if the visual arts education program is to be meaningful for them.

Mason (1988) also addressed the issue of differences in perceptions of art among people from diverse cultural backgrounds. She advocated recognition and inclusion of people from different ethnic backgrounds in the designing of arts curricula and the teaching of aesthetics.

In a study to explore these concerns Mason's (1988) stated intentions included (a) to identify problems encountered by a teacher trained in the Western-European tradition of art in a multicultural school, and (b) to encourage students from "ethnic minority groups" (p. 36) to share their cultural experiences. Mason's (1988) study involved two stages; the first stage involved working with a group of students to produce a film; the second involved the production by a group of children of a picture/story book about themselves and their neighbourhood. Findings resulting from these studies were developed into curriculum materials which were disseminated among primary school teachers to be tested. Mason's findings suggested that there may be a difference in perception and purpose of art in some cultures. For example, Hindu temple art is both religious and communal. Mason also reported that for the practitioners of this art form the notion of individual ownership is inappropriate.

Hart (1991) also referred to the religious art of Hindu women and noted its practice as being "part of the ritual of daily life" (p. 147). As observed by Mason, Hart saw this traditional art form as highlighting a contrast to two basic characteristics of Western art (i.e. those of individuality and originality). From her 1990 study of Hindu women's ritual art in North India, Hart found that in contrast to the importance of the individual artist in Western culture, the ritual art of the Hindu women was a collective activity. She also noted a lack of concern for

originality. Symbolic elements were often repeated in an attempt to create “beautiful” images. Hart noted the distinction between this repetition of images and the concern for uniqueness which she saw as an important characteristic of Western art.

Similar findings by Rogers (1994) questioned the “universality” of Western perceptions of art. His research was conducted as part of an international cooperative research project which aimed to examine the effects of colonisation on selected groups of indigenous people in both Canada and Australia. Although the study involved Aboriginal people located in the Flinders Ranges (South Australia), Rogers suggested that the findings could be valid for other Aboriginal cultural groups (p. 13).

By interviewing members of the Adnyamathanha people from different age groups, Rogers (1994) found that there appeared to be nothing in their culture that would be defined by them as art. Artefacts and rock paintings were perceived as art only when applying standards imposed by white society. Aboriginal “art” was a modern construct emerging from the development of tourist art. Like the Hindu temple art referred to by Mason (1988), Aboriginal art had both practical and spiritual significance. It was often a communal activity not necessarily intended for preservation beyond its immediate usefulness. Rogers (1994, p. 13) asserted that it was possible to miss the essential qualities of Aboriginal art and the art of other cultures (e.g. Chinese, Indonesian, Egyptian) when applying the notion of art emerging from Western culture.

The need to relate all concepts to their cultural context is supported by Fielding (1997) who argued that his study of the development of creativity in Chinese culture provided evidence that creativity was culturally and socially based (p. 28). Fielding posited that Chinese child-rearing practices which emphasised obedience, respect for elders and submissiveness, discouraged exploration and creative development. He

found that in Chinese culture, the notion of creativity was not associated with being artistic, but with innovation in commerce, industry or politics (p. 32).

Cox, Perara and Fan (1999) researched the methods of teaching drawing in Chinese schools as a result of having viewed (in England) exhibitions of the art of Chinese children which revealed highly developed drawing skills. They considered the possibility that this high standard was due to (a) the high regard for drawing, painting and calligraphy in Chinese culture, (b) the formal style in which art is taught in Chinese primary schools, or (c) the possibility that the work seen in the exhibition was the product of private weekend art classes which are held in China for young children. According to Cox et al. art is seen in China as playing an important role in developing general intelligence as well as artistic expression and for this reason, is an important part of the curriculum.

Cox et al. (1999) conducted a cross-cultural study by assessing the drawings of children (aged from 6 to 13) from “ordinary” schools in China and the United Kingdom and from the special weekend art classes in China. Each group was given a common drawing task using materials which were familiar to them. The researchers concluded that there was little difference in the standard of drawing of students who attended ordinary schools in China and the United Kingdom. The examples from the special art classes however, were considered to be of a higher standard. It was also found that stylistic differences were evident between the children’s drawings from both Chinese groups and those from the United Kingdom.

Kindler (1994) conducted a longitudinal case-study designed to monitor the artistic development of her son, who was born in the United States of America to immigrant parents and to determine the influences of both his inherited and contemporary cultures. Kindler aimed to study the ways in which children construct their own culture in a

multicultural society. Kindler's (1994, p. 59) findings indicated that her son's artistic development had been influenced more significantly by his contemporary culture than by his inherited (Polish) culture and that he responded indifferently to attempts by his primary school teacher to interest him in the art of his parents' European culture.

## 2.7 NESB Studies

Because three of the five NESB students in this study were of Chinese background, information was sought regarding Chinese educational and artistic practices. As stated above, Fielding (1997) noted that the emphasis in Chinese educational practices was on obedience. There was a lack of encouragement to be creative and to develop language skills.

Fielding's (1997) observation of Chinese approaches to education and its reflection of Chinese child-rearing practices would appear to be supported by a recent survey conducted at the researcher's school which found that approximately seventy-five percent of students of Chinese background have their study program selected by their parents (M. Mandelt, personal communication 1997). Ninety five per cent of the students in this school survey perceived that their performance was governed by their parents' expectations. It was also found that ninety per cent were used to learning by rote. Students with a Chinese background were found to excel in written examinations based solely on written texts and handouts. The writing of essays however, which requires critical thinking and the skilful development of an argument often results in a large number of failures.

Information about the approach to the visual arts of people of Chinese background was also sought. According to Marsh, Watts and Malyon (1999), Chinese artists are characterised by conformity and



acceptance of authority, as they aim to represent order and harmony between man and nature. Marsh et al. claimed that since 1911, Chinese artists have been influenced at different times by modernist Western styles. However Western style realism held more appeal than abstract or non-figurative styles, especially during Mao Zedong's rule when photographic realism was applied to portraits of political figures.

Marsh et al. (1999) asserted that since 1979 Chinese art has seen a "continuous period of absorption, adaptation, and evolution of Western modernism" (p. 4). However, Marsh et al. claimed that under the influence of a continuing bureaucratic regime, artists continued to produce work which was conservative. During the 1980s and 1990s artists attempted to make political comment through symbolic and satirical works and realism continued to be the main form of expression.

## 2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter literature has been reviewed which was found to be relevant to the study. The literature included positions taken by various authors on (a) multiculturalism in general education and (b) multiculturalism in visual arts education.

It was found that literature by Australian authors was more readily available on subjects *other than* the visual arts. Accounts of studies relating to literacy, religious education and general education were reviewed as was literature aimed to support teachers of NESB students in general curriculum areas.

Accounts of recent research into multiculturalism in art education in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Canada were examined and the findings reviewed in the context of the various positions taken by the authors. These positions have been generally categorised into (a) socio-cognitive, (b) cultural pluralist, (c) critical thinking and (d) socio-

cultural approaches. Research articles concerning the visual arts by two Australian authors (Rogers, 1994 and Zeplin, 1994) have also been reviewed.

## CHAPTER 3

### **METHODS OF INVESTIGATION**

#### 3.1 Chapter Overview

In considering the possibilities for a research design for the study, it was decided that quantitative research would be inappropriate due to the size and nature of the sample to be used (see 3.3) and the type of information sought. Therefore qualitative methods were examined. Qualitative research appears to have been favoured by many educational researchers in recent years, particularly where social and political issues were being studied, noticeably in those studies where the focus has been visual art and/or visual arts education. Although there has been an increase in the use of qualitative methods in educational research, particularly where interpretation and understanding seemed more important than the collection of clinical data, the validity of these methods has been challenged. Gambell (1995) recommended that caution be exercised in the use of ethnographic research; he suggested that “enculturation” (p. 170) could occur if the researcher became too immersed in the research situation.

In this chapter, the research design is discussed and the strategies employed to collect, present and analyse data are outlined. The nature of the sample is described and measures taken to ensure validity of the findings are declared. The ethical considerations embedded in the

research are elaborated and the measures taken to maintain confidentiality are mentioned.

### 3.2 Research Design

Research methods considered for this study included (a) grounded theory, (b) narrative, and (c) the case study. The grounded theory approach whilst being helpful in obtaining information relevant to the research question, could limit the possibility of other information arising. The rigorous matching of theory against data deemed by Strauss and Corbin (1994) to be essential to this methodology could limit the possible directions which the study may take. It was expected that information and insights would emerge from the inquiry which although not necessarily those sought, would nevertheless be relevant to the inquiry. While the narrative research techniques may have been useful in obtaining information to help build a picture of the participants and their backgrounds, the diversity of information obtained could take the research away from the questions being addressed.

The case study research method appeared to be suitable for this study as it would yield information about individuals and the group as a whole. It was considered that a case study would adequately address the research questions and as recommended by Stake (1994) the data will be presented as a narrative.

A case study can be either qualitative or quantitative. Stake (1994) asserted that a case study should be designed to “optimise understanding of the case rather than generalisation beyond” (p. 1) and it should be seen as only a small step towards generalisation. Stake warned that emphasis on generalisation could detract from the features important to understanding the case itself. Stake (1994) suggested that whilst the researcher may focus on a particular issue, other information could

of their response to the visual arts course currently being undertaken. Due to the size and nature of the sample group it was considered unlikely that the findings would be conclusive or lead to generalisation about NESB students.

### 3.3 Sample

It was proposed that the sample would consist of a Year 11 Tertiary Entrance Art class consisting of fourteen students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. These included Australian; Chinese (from Hong Kong, the Republic of China and Taiwan); Nicaraguan; Greek; Indonesian; Russian and Vietnamese. The final sample group however, did not include the whole class. During the course of the school year, three of the overseas students left the school to attend a senior college, another three chose not to participate and returned to Taiwan before the research was completed. This highlighted a problem experienced with *some* of the overseas students whose guardians in WA found it difficult to control the behaviour of their charges who tended to be frequently absent and to arrive at school late. Others however displayed high standards of attendance and punctuality. The student from Nicaragua experienced emotional trauma resulting from the natural disasters currently occurring in his country of origin and it was considered inappropriate for him to participate. The sample therefore consisted of seven students from Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, Indonesian and Australian backgrounds. As the data was collated it became clear that from the group of seven participants, sufficient information was likely to emerge for the purpose of the study. Burns (1995) highlighted the possibility that too much information could be difficult to analyse adequately. He recommended designing the research to ensure that the volume of data likely to emerge was manageable.

The participants who were immigrants had lived in Australia for at least two years. The response of the Australian-born students was expected to provide a perspective on the acceptance of the Year 11 TEE Art Syllabus by the students for whom it was designed.

Chalmers (1996) claimed that students at senior secondary level were increasingly able to formulate independent evaluations and opinions despite peer pressure. This suggests that responses from Year 11 students to the research instruments and the delivery of the syllabus would present valid research data.

Chalmers (1996, p. 6) also suggested that Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) provided opportunities for students to learn about art in a variety of ways and using a variety of learning styles and to reflect, imagine and construct personal meanings. The Year 11 TEE Art course includes the components of DBAE (i. e. art making, art criticism and art history) and this allowed for evaluation of students' responses to these disciplines.

The small size of the sample group provided for all members to be participants in the study whilst the composition of the class was representative of a number of ethnic groups. This appeared to comply with Patton's (1990) claim that case studies are appropriate where much can be learned from a few exemplars. This would appear to be the case in a class which was heterogeneous in its composition.

### 3.4 Research Instruments

In order to fulfil the requirements of the case study; "to describe the unit in depth and detail, in context, and holistically" (Patton, 1990, p. 54) the intention was to employ a variety of research instruments. These included (a) analysis of student records, (b) questionnaires, (c) interviews, (d) observations and (e) examination of samples of the

students' work. Each data source provided a particular insight into the students' perceptions of the visual arts and their responses to curriculum. The use of a variety of data sources was intended to authenticate the responses and thereby assist in validating the research findings.

A questionnaire (Appendix 2) used a standardised set of questions which aimed to determine (a) students' responses to the current visual arts program, (b) their preference for the various components of the course, and (c) their previous experiences of visual art and visual arts education. It also contained questions designed to obtain factual biographical information (i.e. date of birth, country of birth, date of arrival in Australia). Responses to the questionnaire formed the basis for the interviews which were conducted both individually and in a focus group situation. Students' records were consulted to validate factual biographical, ethnographic and cultural information sought through the questionnaires. The students' records were also used to ascertain the academic progress of students in other learning areas.

The use of a questionnaire as a framework for each interview, allowed for clarification, expansion and an opportunity for additional information to emerge. The focus group interview and informal discussion encouraged some students to expand on their original responses on hearing the views expressed by others. Students often appeared to gain courage from observing others expressing their ideas and opinions.

Observation of students at work and their responses to set tasks recorded as anecdotes provided information about responses not necessarily verbalised. Some responses in fact suggested a contradiction to verbalised opinions. When this occurred, further discussion with individual students ensued. Participants were required to respond to a common art appreciation task (Appendix 3) designed to extract opinions

about artworks. Samples of both written and practical tasks completed as part of the Year 11 Visual Arts course were examined using an evaluative framework (Appendix 4).

### 3.5 Triangulation

Triangulation is defined by Burns (1995) as “the use of two or more methods of data collection” (p. 272). Its purpose is to provide a more accurate account of human behaviour by studying it from different viewpoints and by means of a variety of research instruments or methods. To this end, a number of instruments were used to collect data required for this study.

Given that many of the students may have experienced difficulty in understanding and responding to questions on a written questionnaire, particularly those who may be experiencing difficulty with written English, it was seen as necessary to validate the responses by means of oral questioning, informal discussion and observation of students at work and interacting with each other. Analysis of work samples also assisted in validating some of the responses to the other research instruments. According to Burke, Kaye, Matwiejczyk and Rees (1993) one of the characteristics attributed to second phase language learners is a reluctance to admit to difficulties and lack of understanding. For this reason, evaluating a student’s performance as well as collecting data using other means was expected to contribute to the construction of a profile for each participant. Thus the researcher could feel more confident about the findings.



### 3.6 Validity and Reliability

Burns (1994) suggested that the reliability of ethnographic studies could be difficult to assess because it was not always possible to replicate them. Consideration was given to the assertion by Burns (1995) that drawing conclusions from a single case study was not recommended. He also pointed out that external validity was not of great importance. Burns suggested however, that the validity of a case study could be indicated by a detailed account by the researcher of how the study was carried out. Burns (1994) recommended the use of multiple sources of evidence, pointing out that the case study was a presentation and interpretation of detailed information about a single unit.

Burns (1995) claimed that to ascertain reliability, it was necessary to reduce the possibility of error in the measuring instruments and to be aware of the many variables which may influence the results. These could include (a) the conditions under which a questionnaire was administered or interviews conducted, (b) individual personalities and social attributes of interviewees and (c) personal characteristics of the interviewer.

It was noted by Burns (1995) that problems of uniqueness can lead to the claim that no ethnographic study can be assessed for reliability and that conclusions are qualified by the social roles investigators hold within the research site. This was particularly relevant in this study where the researcher is also the visual arts teacher.

Burns (1994) suggested that the researcher needed to assume the primary responsibility for selecting the case, using appropriate observational techniques and interview procedures, as well as documenting and making the appropriate interpretations. Burns asserted that validity depends on the purposes to which the account of the research is put. It may be that the case would contribute to the reader's

own experience and that each reader would relate it to her or his own context.

Among the difficulties referred to by Burns was that of establishing whether the case was typical or atypical (i.e. a valid example of what we are supposed to be studying). Burns (1995) noted that many case study proponents argue that understanding of the general is enhanced by studying the atypical (p. 329).

To ascertain reliability it was necessary to reduce the possibility of error in the measuring instruments and to consider the many variables which may influence the results of a study of this nature. The conditions under which the questionnaire was administered and the interviews conducted were noted and the personality, social attributes and personal characteristics of the interviewees were acknowledged. This information is documented in Chapter 4.

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted with the approval and co-operation of the school principal. All information concerning individuals has been regarded as strictly confidential, and participants' names have been changed in transcripts to obscure identity. Consideration has been given to the welfare and protection of the participants. Participants and their parents were informed of the nature, purpose, methods, and expected usefulness of data collected. All participants and their parents gave their written consent for the research.

### 3.8 Data Reduction and Analysis

Analysis of data followed the process of constructing case studies recommended by Patton (1990, p. 388). This consists of assembling the

data, constructing a case-record and writing a case study narrative (Appendix 5).

Data to be analysed were comprised of biographical and ethnographic information, observations, written and oral responses to research instruments, student portfolios and written tasks. An inductive process was used to group the data obtained into categories or clusters. From these it was expected that patterns or themes would emerge. The categories included opinions about visual art and visual arts education, the participants' previous exposure to art and their experience of visual arts education, biographical data, evaluation of student performance in practical and theoretical tasks, and the level of achievement of participants in subjects other than the visual arts.

Statements were extracted and tables developed to display patterns or themes. An evaluative framework was used for practical and written work samples (Appendix 4). The findings have been recorded as a narrative which seeks to describe both individual and group responses to the study.

### 3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter the methods of investigation have been outlined. It includes the rationale and decisions made in selecting the appropriate methodology and research instruments, procedures adopted for the analysis and reduction of data and steps taken to address ethical concerns.

The intention was to provide understanding and awareness of the perceptions of the visual arts by NESB students and also, to identify their particular educational needs and expectations of a visual arts course. In view of the nature of the information being sought, a decision was made to use qualitative methodology for the study.

The use of qualitative methods by educational researchers has increased in recent years particularly where interpretation and understanding are central to the study. This has been particularly apparent in research involving the visual arts and visual arts education. Of the qualitative research methodologies available the case-study was chosen for its apparent suitability both to the nature of the information being sought and the decision to direct the research towards a particular sample group. This consisted of a group of Year 11 students from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds, who were engaged in a Tertiary Entrance visual arts course. This sample group provided a bounded system and was selected for its ethnic diversity, the level at which the students were studying and the nature of the visual arts course being undertaken. The selection of Year 11 students was influenced by Chalmers' (1996) view that students at upper-secondary level were capable of thinking independently without being influenced by their peers. Another consideration was the fact that the Year 11 visual arts course includes both practical and theoretical components thus providing the opportunity to evaluate the response of participants to the major disciplines inherent in a visual arts course.

Data was collected using a range of research instruments. These included (a) questionnaire, (b) individual and group interviews, (c) observation, and (d) examination of work samples. As recommended by Patton (1990) the data was reduced and categorised to provide material to be documented in the form of a narrative.

Despite the opinions of authors such as Gambell (1995) who have expressed concern about the validity of findings resulting from ethnographic research, the chosen methodology was expected to produce data which would prove useful in fulfilling the purpose of the study. This was to provide insight into and awareness of the perceptions of art by NESB students and their expectations of a visual arts course. Strategies

recommended for ensuring the reliability of the findings have been implemented. These included the implementation of a variety of research instruments, an attempt to link the various data sources and clear documentation of the steps and procedures taken.

## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION OF DATA

#### 4.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter information about the research context is provided in the chapter introduction. Data is then presented (a) as responses to the research instruments and (b) according to the themes under which the data has been categorised.

#### 4.2 Chapter Introduction

In order to understand the demographic context of the study it is necessary to consider the school environment and the setting in which the research was conducted. As previously stated, the researcher teaches in an inner city Catholic secondary school which in recent years has seen a marked increase in the enrolment of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds. These students originate from a variety of African, Asian and European ethnic backgrounds. However a higher proportion are from Asian countries. The creation of an Intensive Language Centre (ILC) within the school has been the reason for the entry of a large number of immigrant children to the school. The majority of these students proceed into mainstream classes after graduating from the ILC. In addition to NESB students, there are others who are attracted to the school by the presence of students from their own ethnic

backgrounds. Some of the students have previously met during the time they spent in refugee detention centres.

Prior to the investigation it had been noted that many NESB students had difficulty in achieving satisfactory results in the visual arts at Year 11 and 12 levels. They often showed a high level of aptitude for a variety of visual arts activities and competence in some practical areas, but appeared to lack understanding of some of the requirements of the course, especially the study of art history and art criticism. Most art educators accept that in addition to making art, learning to respond to art works with knowledge and understanding should be an integral part of a visual arts course. Therefore, data was sought which would provide a profile of each student's perception and understanding of both practical and theoretical aspects of the visual arts and the possible influences of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds on these perceptions. It was anticipated that this information would also indicate the degree of influence these factors would have on their response to the visual arts education program which they were currently undertaking.

Following the procedure recommended by Patton (1993, p. 388) for constructing case studies, the raw case data was assembled, classified and edited. In this chapter the data collected is presented according to its methods of collection (i.e. questionnaire, interviews, examination of work samples and observation) and the themes under which the information has been categorised. These themes are (a) NESB students' perceptions of the visual arts and visual arts education, (b) their previous experiences of visual arts education, (c) influences of NESB students' perceptions on their expectations and performance in the visual arts classroom and (d) other factors impacting on students' performance. Tables are presented to aid comparison of responses to the research data.

For much of the information sought, more than one source was used. Biographical and background information relevant to the study was

obtained from the individual questionnaires administered to participants and from the school records. This information was further substantiated during individual interviews. The questionnaire was also used to obtain data concerning each participant's opinions about and perceptions of the visual arts, their expectations of a visual arts course, their opinions about the visual arts course currently being undertaken, their previous experience or awareness of the visual arts at home or in their country of origin, and their previous experience of visual arts education. This information was also discussed during individual interviews and later in a group interview.

The researcher used a proforma (Appendix 4) to evaluate each participant's performance in (a) oral and written responses to the art history and art criticism components of the course including a set Art Appreciation task (Appendix 3) and (b) the practical projects undertaken in class. Observation was also carried out over several weeks whilst participants were engaged in the current visual arts activities and information emerging from informal discussions was noted. To ensure anonymity the students' names have been changed.

The data was condensed and classified, and tables developed under the following headings: (a) biographical/background data, (b) opinions about the visual arts and visual arts education, (c) evaluation of student performance in art history and art criticism, (d) evaluation of student performance in practical tasks and (d) previous experiences of the visual arts and visual arts education. These are presented within the text.

The data is presented in the first part of this chapter, as an account of (i) responses to the questionnaire and interviews, (ii) observations made by the researcher, (iii) evaluation of students' work samples and (iv) information gained from the school records. The data is then presented under themes which underly the research questions.



## 4.3 Data Collection

### 4.3.1 Questionnaire and Interview Data

In early November, the questionnaire (Appendix 2) was given to students who had returned the completed consent form. Participants completed the questionnaire during class time and were allowed as much time as they needed to respond to the questions. They did not discuss the questions with other participants. Each participant gave careful attention to each question and in some cases took considerable time to respond. The format of the questionnaire was explained, the reasons for its use reiterated and participants were given a chance to ask questions prior to commencement of the task. They were reminded that participation was not compulsory and that their responses did not in any way relate to assessment of their work. It was decided to include in the questionnaire questions relating to factual, biographical, ethnographic and cultural information to eliminate the necessity to examine school records for this information. However it was considered necessary to check some information (e.g. the dates of arrival of some students in Australia) against the school records, to ensure accuracy. It was also found to be useful to examine academic records to compare students' progress in other subject areas with their level of achievement in the visual arts.

During the following week arrangements were made for participants to be interviewed individually. Care was taken to ensure that interview times were convenient to the students and not likely to cause them anxiety about missing other classes or activities. Fifteen minutes were allowed for each student with sufficient time available for the interview to continue beyond the allocated time if this seemed appropriate. Participants were made aware of the fact that the interviews were being recorded. Although some appeared apprehensive at first,

without exception, they became interested in sharing their views and talked beyond the designated time.

Interviews were conducted using the questionnaires as a basis for discussion. They provided the opportunity to ensure that students had fully understood the questions and to amplify much of the information given. Many of the responses provided information which had not been sought, but in some instances, suggested other factors contributing to a student's success and confidence (e.g. the amount of encouragement and support given by parents).

The questionnaire and interview responses provided (a) information relating to the age and place of birth of students, the length of residence in Australia, the present family structure, the language spoken in the home and the parents' occupations, (b) students' opinions of aspects of the visual arts course presently being undertaken, their preferences for types or styles of art and their expectations of a visual arts course, experiences of art and art appreciation in the home and/or in their countries of origin; and (c) their previous experiences of art education.

Each of these topics will now be considered in further detail.

#### 4.3.1.1 Biographical/background data

The information sought included the age and place of birth of each participant and the year of their arrival in Australia. Also of interest was the language spoken in the participant's home and the number of family members living together.

Of the seven students who participated in the study, three (Ben, James and Maria) were born in Australia and two were from English-speaking backgrounds (ESB). The father of Ben and both of James'

parents were Australian. Ben's mother was from New Zealand, Maria's parents were born in Greece and speak mainly Greek in the home.

The other four participants were not born in Australia. These were Prami, Wen-jing, Natasha and Huong who were born in Indonesia, mainland China, Russia and Vietnam respectively. With the exception of Natasha, very little English is spoken by the parents and grandparents of these participants. Natasha's mother taught English in Russia and both her parents have occupations which require competency in English however Russian is mainly spoken in the home. Of the seven participants, therefore, five were from non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB).

Table 1: Biographical/Background Data

Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Prami	1981	Indonesia	1996	Indonesian	M F GM S B	Sales-manager	Home-duties
Ben	1982	Australia		English	M F S B	Panel-beater	Book-keeper
James	1982	Australia		English	M F B B	Finance-broker	Home-duties
Maria	1982	Australia		Greek	M F GM GF S B	Maintenance officer	Home-duties
Huong	1981	Vietnam	1991	Vietnamese	M F B B B B	Bakery employee	Home-duties
Natasha	1982	Russia	1995	Russian	M F B	Systems analyst	Administrative officer
Wen-jing	1981	China	1994	Mandarin	M F B	Unemployed	Home-duties

Note.

- |    |                               |    |   |
|----|-------------------------------|----|---|
| 1  | Year of birth.                | 5. | Parents (M, F), grandparents (GF,GM), brothers and sisters (B, S) living at home. |
| 2. | Country of birth.             | 6. | Father's occupation.  |
| 3. | Year of arrival in Australia. | 7. | Mother's occupation   |
| 4. | Language spoken at home.      |    |   |

All the participants currently live in Western Australia with their families. Prami came to the school in 1996 as an overseas student. His family has since migrated from Indonesia to Western Australia and he now lives with them. Wen-jing came to Australia from China as a refugee in 1994 and spent eight months in a refugee detention centre before arriving in Perth. She spent approximately one year in the Intensive Language Centre (ILC) before attending mainstream classes in 1996. Natasha also attended the Intensive Language Centre briefly before joining the mainstream classes in 1996. Huong spent time in a refugee camp after arriving in Western Australia in 1991. She has since attended catholic primary and secondary schools.

The mothers of only two students worked outside the home - James' mother as a book-keeper and Natasha's mother as an administrative officer. Wen-jing's father who had been a fisherman in China was currently unemployed. Prami's father was a sales manager (it was difficult to ascertain whether this was in Indonesia or Australia), Ben's father worked as a panel-beater/spray-painter, James' step-father as a finance-broker, and Natasha's father as a systems analyst. Maria's father was employed as a maintenance officer at a private school and Huong's father worked in a bakery.

Prami, Wen-jing and Huong studied English as a second language (ESL) during year 11 and will continue to do so in year 12. The other four students were studying Year 11 English or English Literature.

#### 4.3.1.2 Participants' opinions about visual art and visual arts education.

This data provides participants' responses to the current art project and their expectations of the Year 11 visual arts course. Their preferences for types or styles of art are also indicated.

The Year 11 Visual Arts course consists of three components (i.e. visual inquiry, studio practice and art theory). These components are

integral to each of the four projects undertaken during the year. The visual inquiry involves drawing, research into the work of relevant artists, experimentation with media and forms of visual expression and the development of ideas which are recorded both visually and verbally. These ideas are expected to culminate in a design to be completed in the designated studio discipline. Students are required to present the inquiry in a visual diary. The theoretical component consists of the study of both Australian and international visual art themes which may be drawn from a range of historical periods. This component also involves learning to critically analyse artworks. The studio practice is expected to occupy fifty percent of the time allocated to the project and to result in a finished art work. It is expected that the studio outcome will show a relationship to the other components of the course. Students are required to sit a written examination in art history and art criticism.

Students were engaged in completing a graphic design project at the time the questionnaire was completed. However some students also commented on the painting and printmaking projects undertaken during the previous terms. In this section it became obvious during the interviews that some of the questions had been misunderstood and in some instances the written responses were difficult to interpret.

Students' opinions about visual art and visual arts education are summarised in the table which follows.

**Table 2: Participants' Opinions about Visual Art and Visual Arts Education.**

Name	1	2	3	4
Prami	Practising, learning drawing & painting techniques.	Charcoal drawing.	Something peaceful, calm-like water. Artist: Abandi.	(b)
Ben	Art appreciation.	Research-for ideas and inspiration. Drawing; experimenting with ideas and techniques.	Monet-broken colour. Many types of art.	(b)
James	Realistic drawing and painting.	Cartoon drawing; graphic design.	Paul Rigby.	(a)
Maria	Visiting museums; learning others' ideas & techniques.	Experimenting with designs & typography. Still life.	Greek sculpture; paintings of Greek islands.	(b)
Huong	Technical skill -using pencil, then paint.	Drawing people & places.	Chinese landscape painting; Woodblock prints.	(b)
Wen-jing	Drawing & painting skills	Tonal drawing & painting.	Chinese paintings- landscape; fruit; nature.	(b)
Natasha	Drawing & painting techniques; art history.	Graphic design and printmaking	Impressionists. Russian folk art	(a)

**Note.**

1. The most important thing to learn in a visual arts course.
2. Preferred areas of the visual arts course.
3. Favourite artist/artists or styles of art.
4. Whether art should be (a) beautiful (b) expressive of ideas or feelings or (c) useful.

The graphic design project involved the design of a book jacket for a book about Australian art. This was intended to support the study of Australian art in the art history component of the syllabus although students were encouraged to select an aspect of Australian art or design which interested them, not necessarily representing those artists or

periods studied. The Student Brief (outline of the project), indicated a step-by-step approach to the studio outcome with regard to the design of image, typography and layout as well as exploring these disciplines through the visual inquiry process. Three of the participants (Huong, Natasha and Wen-jing), indicated that they enjoyed the approach of being given precise instructions as to how to proceed, whilst Ben and James felt impatient and wished to proceed to the final outcome without following the steps.

Prami indicated a lack of interest in the subject - this appeared to relate to some extent to his lack of understanding of the Australian art theme. He was absent from school quite frequently at this time which caused him to fall behind in both this and the previous projects. His absences also meant that he missed discussion and written exercises about Australian art. His difficulty with English discouraged and prevented him from catching up in this area. This was evident in Prami's response to the questionnaire. There was little written response to some questions which he admitted during the interview to not understanding. When the questions were explained to him he responded willingly and spoke at length about his experiences both before coming to the school and since joining the visual arts class. Prami indicated that he thought the most important things to learn in art were the techniques of drawing and painting, in particular drawing with charcoal. In response to the questionnaire and also during the interview he showed a preference for art showing painting which represented nature. He expressed this as "the beautiful, calm like water".

Further discussion however, indicated an interest also in more dramatic subjects. He identified his favourite artist as Abandi, a Javanese artist whose drawings depicted such actions as performances by Indonesian dancers and animals such as tigers. Prami expressed his high opinion of the Javanese artist in the following words:

Abandi is most famous in Java. I like his drawing because he draws about action ... like Indonesian dance and other dance using masks .... like Chinese lion dance, and the Barong. It's very good because the dance is moving and he still can draw it while they're dancing. That is very hard. He also does painting, mostly of Asian animals.

Further discussion revealed that Prami found the Australian landscape less interesting than the jungles and wild animals of Asia. He in fact had little knowledge or experience of the Australian landscape because he had remained in the city since coming to Australia. Prami appeared to miss Indonesia which he left because of political unrest. His parents appreciated Chinese paintings of nature and owned landscape paintings from Indonesia. Prami owned a drawing of a sports car done by an Indonesian friend. He was aware of painting and ceramics being popular art forms in Indonesia. Prami had attended school in Australia since 1996 but had not received any visual arts education either in Australia or Indonesia.

Wen-jing had received instruction in drawing and painting techniques as part of her primary school education in China. However, since leaving there at the age of ten, her general education had been interrupted and she had received no further education in the visual arts. Wen-jing saw the graphic design project as an opportunity of learning more about Australian art. With reference to the painting project, she indicated that she appreciated learning a variety of painting styles and techniques. She had not enjoyed the print-making project because it had been more difficult to produce a realistic outcome using the relief-printing process. Wen-jing identified drawing and painting techniques as the most important things to learn in art especially tonal rendering in a variety of media (e.g. pencil and watercolour) and liked to be given clear



instructions. She indicated a lack of confidence when asked to work imaginatively or expressively. She also felt that the study of the history of art was important although she found it difficult: "History is okay for me but the words are too hard to understand". She indicated that her favourite type of art (to look at) was tonal drawing and painting, in particular landscapes (the environment), also fruit. She was of the opinion that art should be expressive (i.e. should express the beauty of a place or object and invoke a feeling of peace in the viewer). Wen-jing reported that her parents appreciated traditional Chinese paintings of waterfalls, flowers and birds and tonal drawing/painting in ink as practised in China. In the family home they had paintings of the Great Wall of China one of which she thought may have been completed by her mother who also practised embroidery.

Both Ben and James, the two students from English-speaking backgrounds (ESB) indicated that they were happy with the Year 11 visual arts course. They did not appear to have any concerns about the content. Both students have shown a particular interest in the course and foresee their future careers as involving further study in the visual arts. Both students had experienced one semester of visual arts education during the previous year. Prior to that time Ben had received two years of visual arts education in New Zealand unlike James who had not received any instruction in the visual arts.

Ben expressed a preference for the graphic design project as this was his particular interest and possibly a future career path. He appreciated learning the task of the graphic designer (i.e. the disciplines involved) as well as becoming more familiar with various styles and examples of Australian art. He also saw it as involving more drawing than painting. Ben said that he enjoyed the painting project completed previously as he felt he had learnt and developed skill in a number of styles and techniques. However, he still felt more confident with drawing

and therefore was more satisfied with the final graphic design outcome than with his painting. As stated earlier, Ben had felt frustrated with not being able to proceed directly to completion of the final piece. He did admit however, to a feeling of satisfaction having completed each step leading to the outcome.

Ben expressed more interest than most of the other students in art appreciation, claiming that learning to analyse images and to understand an artist's motivation were among the most important things to learn in a visual arts course. He believed that art should be both beautiful and expressive; his favourite artist was Monet and he appreciated Monet's use of broken colour. Ben's parents had reproductions of work by the Australian Heidelberg school artist Tom Roberts displayed in their home. Ben remembered seeing examples of wood-carving in New Zealand. He reported that his grandmother enjoyed painting as a hobby, and his father had been interested in graphic design before becoming a spray-painter. Ben's parents also displayed art work in the home which had been done by their children.

James was also anxious to proceed directly with the final outcome. He had displayed this impatience with each of the previous projects. James was pleased with the outcome although felt that the lettering could have been better. He enjoyed this project because (like Ben), he saw it relating to a future career-path. He has an intense interest in cartooning and wants to pursue a career in visual animation. In both the painting project and in the previous print-making project, he showed a concern for technical excellence. He expressed a desire to undertake more realistic drawing because he saw this as being advantageous and as the most important skill to learn in a visual arts course. He wished to improve his figure drawing and his skill in the use of linear perspective. He admitted to being a "perfectionist" and admiring art that was realistic. James found it difficult to relate to abstract or expressionist art and therefore

had preferred the study of Renaissance art to other periods studied during the year. James' favourite artist was the cartoonist Paul Rigby because he most admired cartooning and realistic drawing and painting. He stated that his parents showed a preference for landscapes but there was no art displayed in the home. James indicated that his parents were supportive of his interest in cartooning and his ambition to pursue a career in animation.

In Natasha's response to the questionnaire she expressed enjoyment of the graphic design process particularly the lettering and design of the layout, but indicated at first that she would have enjoyed a subject other than Australian art: "I don't really like Australian art". She reported that she found the research for the project uninteresting. However, after it was suggested during the interview that her research could include Australian fashion design which appealed to her more, she began to show interest. Like Prami she had little experience of Australian landscape beyond the city. During the painting project undertaken during the previous school term she had shown a concern for finding examples of painting which represented European forests. Natasha had joined the class during second term and had missed the drawing unit undertaken in first term. She admitted to feeling disadvantaged by this as she was dissatisfied with her drawing skills. She expressed the opinion that the most important things to learn in a visual arts course were drawing and painting techniques and art history. During the interview she elaborated further on her interest in art history and her appreciation of many different periods and styles of art. She appeared confident in her ability to succeed in this discipline.

Natasha reported that she believed art should represent beauty and that she particularly liked the work of the Impressionists as did her parents. Original oil paintings of landscape which had been brought with the family from Russia were displayed in the home. The home also

contained copies of religious icons and books about the French Impressionists. Natasha was familiar with a variety of Russian art forms; she particularly liked examples of pictures burnt onto wood and then painted. She revealed that she had learnt this technique whilst in Russia. She reported that her aunt practised textile art as a hobby. Natasha had not studied art since coming to Australia. However she had attended private art classes in Russia.

Maria expressed enjoyment of the graphic design project particularly experimenting with typography and layout, despite her concern for not having time to complete the final outcome to her satisfaction. She indicated that she had also enjoyed the painting project. In response to the questionnaire she expressed a preference for still life and interior scenes as subjects. During the interview Maria stated that she was reasonably happy with the course but was concerned about finding sufficient time to complete all tasks. In response to both the questionnaire and the interview Maria expressed a desire to explore a number of studio areas and would have liked textiles to have been included in the course although she did not really want to have any of the other projects excluded. She also expressed an interest in having more art gallery visits to be included in the course. Like Ben, Maria felt that art history and appreciation were among the most important aspects of a visual arts course. She felt that studying the work of artists provided ideas and knowledge of painting styles and techniques. Maria said that she thought it was important for art to be both beautiful and expressive. Her favourite works of art were ancient Greek sculptures and contemporary paintings of the Greek islands. Her parents displayed photographs of Greek sculpture and architecture in the home as well as original examples of painting (landscape and still-life), tapestry and religious icons brought from Greece. They also displayed art work done by their three children. A family friend practised a variety of crafts which

she sold in local markets. Maria's previous education in the visual arts included one semester during the previous year and one in year eight. She had also experienced some previous art education in primary school.

Huong had also experienced one semester of visual arts education prior to the year in which the research was conducted. She was among the students who appreciated a step-by-step approach to the graphic design project. During the interview she said that she would have preferred the painting project to have contained more detailed instruction for the completion of the final outcome. Of all the projects completed during the year, she enjoyed printmaking the most. Again, this involved more detailed sequential instructions and she expressed her admiration for the examples of Chinese and Japanese woodblock prints which had been viewed in class. Huong also indicated that she enjoyed the drawing project and enjoys drawing people in her own time. She stated in her response to both the questionnaire and the interview that she believed instruction in drawing techniques to be the most important skill to learn. She suggested that this should be perfected before proceeding to painting techniques. Huong finds art history and appreciation difficult as she does not have the vocabulary (in English ) to express what she wants to say: "Other students use a lot of words; it's easy for them". Whilst appreciating the examples of woodblock printing which were discussed in class during art history and art criticism lessons, she found it difficult to participate in the discussions either orally or to respond in written form. When writing an essay she prepares it first in Vietnamese and then translates into English. In an examination or during discussion in class this was not possible and she was often not successful.

Huong expressed a preference for art that was expressive, and people and places as subjects. Huong did not indicate a preference for any artist or style of art in response to the questionnaire. However, during the interview she talked about a painting brought by the family from Vietnam

which she admired very much. Her parents had examples in their home of painting, textile printing and woodcarving brought from Vietnam.

#### 4.3.2 Examination of Work Samples

Participants in the study were asked to respond individually to an art appreciation task (Appendix 3). In the first section of the task (A) participants were presented with three original art works and four reproductions of art works:

- original art works included; a small Indonesian painting of a dancer in traditional costume, a Chinese scroll featuring calligraphy and natural forms, an acrylic painting by the aboriginal artist Bessie Liddle entitled “Snake Dreaming”.
- reproductions of art works including; Claude Monet’s “*Water Lilies*” 1899, Robert Delaunay’s “*Windows Open Simultaneously (First Part, Third Motif)*” 1912, Arthur Streeton’s “*Golden Summer, Eaglemont*” 1889, Hiroshi Yoshida’s “*Night After Rain*” from the series: Twelve themes about Tokyo 1929.

The participants were asked to indicate their preferences by numbering each work from one to seven. They were also asked to give reasons for their choice. In the second section (B), the participants were required to select an example of another artwork from a wider range of resources and to discuss the work.

This type of exercise had been utilised previously by the researcher in classes which comprised both ESB students and those from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The purpose of the activity was to begin the process of art criticism with artworks chosen by the students. It was hoped that understanding the process through interacting with artworks to which the students could relate, would enable them to eventually apply the process to other artworks. Both Chalmers (1996) and Stout (1997) emphasised the importance of beginning the critical thinking process

with artworks with which the students could interact on a personal level. The choice of works from European, Asian and Australian artists was made in an attempt to address the point made by McFee (1986) and Chalmers (1996) that students be given the opportunity to draw examples from their own cultural background when beginning critical thinking.

Four of the seven students selected the Streeton as either their first or second preference. The reasons given indicated a preference for landscape as a subject and for its naturalistic style. It should be taken into account that students may have responded to this example because they were currently studying Australian art and had been exposed to work by colonial and Heidelberg school artists. The Monet reproduction was also popular being the first choice of two students, and the second preference of another. The Indonesian painting was the second preference of the Indonesian student, and the Chinese scroll was rated highly by the Chinese student. The Delaunay painting was the second or third choice of all seven students. They liked the graded colour and surface pattern of shapes and colours. The Aboriginal painting was popular with the Vietnamese student (Huong) but not the others. Huong appeared to find it difficult to give a reason for selecting this work.

Samples of both written and practical work completed by the students were evaluated according to a set of criteria. The criteria applied to the written work included the student's apparent understanding of both the course content and specific tasks related to art history and criticism, their ability to analyse art works and verbalise their observations both orally and in written form using a satisfactory standard of literacy, and their ability to relate their knowledge and understanding of artists' works to their own creative tasks.

For practical tasks the criteria were established for measuring the students' success in attaining satisfactory levels. These included the students' handling of media, skills and processes; their ability to create

imaginative and original art works; their ability to express ideas visually and their apparent understanding and application of the elements and principles of design.

Prami experienced great difficulty in understanding both art history and criticism. It was necessary to spend a lot of time explaining the tasks to him and he often still appeared not to fully understand. In art history, he occasionally contributed to class discussions in a way that suggested some knowledge and understanding. This was also evident in essays and assignments begun in class and completed in his own time, although the standard of literacy was poor. Under examination conditions there was little evidence of knowledge or understanding of the material studied, or the ability to analyse art works. As stated earlier, Prami was frequently absent which no doubt affected his progress. However, it is possible that the difficulties experienced by him may have discouraged him from attending the classes. He was found to be experiencing great difficulty with both oral and written English and this was affecting his progress in all learning areas.

**Table 3: Evaluation of Student Performance in Art History and Art Criticism**

CRITERIA	1	2	3	4	5	6
PRAMI	ND/S	ND/S	ND	ND	ND	ND
WEN-JING	ND/S	ND/S	ND/S	ND/S	ND	ND/S
BEN	H/V	V	V	V	V	V
JAMES	H/V	H/V	H	S/H	S	H
MARIA	H	H/V	H/V	H	S	H
HUONG	ND/S	S	ND/S	ND/S	ND/S	S/H
NATASHA	H	H/V	V	V	H	H

Note.

- |   |   |                       |
|---|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | Demonstrates understanding of course content. | V = Very high         |
| 2 | Demonstrates understanding of task.           | H = High              |
| 3 | Oral analysis of an art work.                 | S = Satisfactory      |
| 4 | Written analysis of an artwork.               | ND = Not Demonstrated |
| 5 | Satisfactory standard of literacy.            |                       |
| 6 | Application to own work.                      |                       |



Table 4: Evaluation of Student Performance in Practical Tasks.

CRITERIA	1	2	3
PRAMI	S/H	ND/S	S/H
WEN-JING	H/V	ND/S	S/H
BEN	H/V	V	V
JAMES	H	S/H	S/H
MARIA	S/H	H/V	S/H
HUONG	V	S	H/V
NATASHA	S/H	H	H

Note.

- 1 Demonstrates competence in the use of media, skills and processes.
- 2 Demonstrates aptitude for creating original and imaginative artworks.
- 3 Demonstrates an understanding of and sensitivity in the use of the elements and principles of design.

V = Very High          H = High          S = Satisfactory          ND = Not Demonstrated

In practical (art making) areas Prami demonstrated some competence in observed drawing and in the handling of a variety media. He was particularly concerned with achieving technical excellence in printmaking and showed an understanding of and sensitivity towards the elements and principles of design. His painting showed concern for the formal qualities of design and composition. It appeared difficult for him to relate the study of art history to his own work and to understand the relationship between the visual inquiry and the studio product. Having developed images from his drawing and design experimentation, he preferred to take an unrelated or “borrowed” image for the subject of his studio work. When working on the printmaking project he took considerable care with the preparation of the lino-cut and showed concern for achieving technical excellence in the printmaking process. The graphic design project was not completed.

Wenjing appeared to find the theory areas difficult. However, she demonstrated a very determined approach to gaining clarity of the course

requirements and the set tasks. She contributed to class discussion when dealing with material already studied but was reluctant to participate in spontaneous discussion related to analysis of images. She appeared more confident when discussing technical expertise and style, but less inclined to discuss meaning. It was difficult to ascertain whether this was due to lack of understanding about what was required, or to difficulty in imagining or speculating about what an art work may mean or to suggest what the intention of the artist might have been. It was also difficult for her to synthesise the information gleaned from analysing the visual arts works. Essays which she had time to prepare were quite well written and obviously well-researched. Under examination conditions however, although there was evidence of having studied the appropriate content, the written information was difficult to decipher and she appeared to regurgitate factual information rather than address the question. Responses to image analysis questions followed a prescribed format and attempted to describe the works according to a set of criteria although the standard of literacy was inadequate. As stated previously, she had admitted during the interview to experiencing difficulty in this area.

In practical tasks, Wen-jing showed highly developed skill in the use of a variety of media and techniques. Although not initially comfortable with observed drawing from actual objects, she did gain confidence in this area and reached a satisfactory standard of realistic representation. She showed particular expertise in experimenting with mixed media and some intaglio printmaking techniques which required detailed drawing. Like Prami, Wen-jing developed some useful images from the visual inquiries, but found it difficult to relate this with her studio outcome. She would have preferred to copy an image from a photograph. She seemed to experience some difficulty in seeing the connection between art history and criticism and practical work, but to a lesser extent than difficulties experienced by Prami.

Wen-jing revealed that she had received instruction in realistic representation using pencil, ink and watercolour. In the early stages of the printmaking project which involved drawing and other visual inquiry work, Wen-jing produced drawings which showed sensitivity and competence in using a variety of media. She was reluctant however, to experiment with a range of printmaking techniques and demonstrated little enthusiasm for the final outcome. It should be noted that Wen-jing had given great care and attention to the previous painting project which she completed with obvious interest and enjoyment. The same interest was being shown in the graphic design project. These projects both employed skills and techniques with which she felt confident, having practised them previously. Wen-jing was experiencing the studio area printmaking for the first time and therefore felt less confident. During the interview she expressed her dislike of this activity and her preference for working directly onto the painting or drawing surface.

Ben displayed competence in both practical and theoretical areas of the course. He was a conscientious student and was sufficiently interested to work at all aspects of the course in his own time. He contributed willingly and confidently to discussions of artworks and participated enthusiastically in practical activities. He was dissatisfied with his studio piece for the printmaking project and completed another during lunch-times which showed a considerable improvement. He drew creatively with a variety of media and showed an understanding of the elements and principles of design in the development of images. His studio work showed a clear interrelationship with both the visual inquiry and the art history research. His written work was of a high standard and showed an understanding of the criteria for analysing art works and of the art history themes studied.

James also showed a clear understanding of the art history themes and was able to express his ideas verbally in both written and oral form.

He was perhaps less willing to try to understand the intention of artists whose work he had difficulty in relating to. James worked conscientiously in the practical areas and was prepared to work hard at some of the activities which he found more difficult. He produced some very sensitive and thoughtful responses to imaginative exercises although whilst working on these he often expressed the view that he could not see the point in engaging in these activities. James was particularly anxious to improve his skills in realistic representation. This was his goal in both the painting and the printmaking projects and he worked determinedly to achieve this goal.

Maria worked diligently at art history and criticism. She completed written assignments on time and always participated in discussions. She appeared to have a good grasp of the course content and to understand the process of analysis. Under examination conditions however, she appeared to have difficulty in expressing her ideas and some of her information was confused. Consultation with her English teacher revealed that she was experiencing some difficulty with written English.

Maria responded enthusiastically to all projects showing a willingness to experiment with a variety of activities. Her visual diary showed spontaneity in the use of media, techniques and styles. In some areas her work lacked control and she became frustrated with the results. There was a clear interrelationship between her visual inquiry, her research and the studio outcome. In the graphic design project, the visual inquiry showed more creativity and originality than the final outcome which appeared to be rushed. Maria appeared to be a particularly anxious student who was concerned with achieving success in her studies. At the time of the collection of the research data the end of year examinations were approaching and the current visual arts project was soon to be submitted for assessment. She showed particular concern for the completion of all work within the given time.

Huong experienced difficulty with art history and criticism. She indicated that she enjoyed researching artists and their works in connection with her visual inquiry and experimenting with painting techniques and styles. However, she had problems with understanding much of the content and verbalising responses to art works.

Huong's drawing skills were highly developed and she demonstrated competence and sensitivity in the handling of a variety of media. She worked slowly and meticulously. As stated earlier, she preferred to work within clearly defined guidelines. Because of working so meticulously, she had difficulty finishing within the required time. The relationships between her visual inquiry, research and the studio product were clear. However she worked very slowly and like Maria showed concern for the volume of work to be completed within the given time.

As stated earlier, Natasha joined the class in second term and felt disadvantaged by having missed the drawing unit and the art history theme studied in first term. However she seemed to quickly make up for lost time in both the art history and art criticism. Despite having completed only two years of mainstream English, she showed an understanding of the themes and was able to express her ideas verbally in both oral and written form.

Natasha showed concern for achieving competence in the use of a variety of practical skills and displayed understanding and sensitivity in the use of the elements and principles of design. She was particularly interested in learning printmaking techniques and explored a wide range of media and processes. Her final outcome showed considerable creativity. In the painting project she had also demonstrated an interest in experimenting with a range of media. As stated earlier, she was less enthusiastic about the graphic design project but eventually produced a satisfactory outcome. She was quite often absent or late to class and was

therefore unable to reach her full potential in some tasks. Most of her work, however, was completed to a satisfactory standard and some, in fact, was excellent.

#### 4.4 Themes Used to Categorise the Data

The data is presented here under themes which are central to the research questions. The research questions are:

- 1 What do students from diverse ethnic backgrounds understand by the term “visual arts”?
- 2 To what extent does NESB students’ understanding of the term “visual arts” and “visual arts education” influence their expectations and performance in the visual arts classroom?

The themes under which the data is presented are (a) NESB students’ perceptions of the visual arts and visual arts education, (b) previous exposure to the visual arts and visual arts education, (c) influences of NESB students’ perception of the term “visual arts” and “visual arts education” on their expectations and performance in the visual arts classroom and (d) other factors impacting on students’ performance.

##### 4.4.1 Theme 1: NESB students’ perceptions of the visual arts and visual arts education

Dissanayake (1992) asserted that aesthetic attitudes vary widely from one society to another and that these attitudes are wholly learned or cultural. This claim is supported by other writers who have addressed the issue of multiculturalism in visual arts education. Fielding (1997) claimed that creativity was socially and culturally determined as did

Chalmers (1996) who advocated the consideration of social and cultural differences when making aesthetic judgements.

In the light of these claims information was sought about the understanding by students of the terms “visual arts” and “visual arts education” and the degree to which their ethnic backgrounds may have influenced their understanding of these terms. This information has been extracted from the data recorded above.

Many of the opinions expressed about the visual arts at first appeared to vary little between the ESB and the NESB participants. Most appeared to be concerned with gaining technical excellence particularly in the area of realistic representation of natural and found objects. Understanding of the process of visual inquiry varied within the sample group. Two participants who had studied art in the previous year seemed to find it easier to follow the process and to meet the requirements which included observational drawing; interpretive and conceptual drawing; art appreciation; and design development. These students also accepted more readily the discipline of representational drawing of observed objects whereas others attempted to avoid this, finding it more challenging than copying an image from a photograph or another’s drawing. During the group interview Prami, Wen-jing and Huong shared the view that they could not see the point of observational drawing when a more acceptable result (in their opinion), could be achieved by copying. Wen-jing’s comment: “It looks better, more real” highlighted the emphasis placed on achieving the effect of photographic realism.

Some participants (Wen-jing, Huong, Prami) also indicated that they regarded experimenting with media and styles and working imaginatively as not serious art and preferred to avoid it. Initially, another participant (James), demonstrated a similar response but after questioning the value of such exercises he eventually became involved in the process of exploration and pursued a number of ideas. He expressed

the opinion that experimenting with the use of line, colour, pattern, etc. had helped him to generate more ideas for his Graphic Design project.

Of all the students, Wen-jing and Huong expressed the greatest need to be shown exactly what to do. They were uncomfortable about generating their own ideas and adopting an original and individual approach. Their expectations appeared to be that they should be taught what to do and how to do it. Huong suggested that it was important “to learn the technique of how to draw with a pencil first - before painting”. The other five students, appeared to be comfortable with pursuing their own ideas within clear guidelines although this often involved the use of cliches or borrowed images.

Ben claimed that experimenting with styles and techniques was among the important components of a visual arts course. This was evident in his own work. He appeared willing to take risks.

The visual diaries of students who had studied art in the previous year reflected more spontaneity than those who had not. Those of two of the Asian students (Prami and Wen-jing) appeared inhibited and restrained. Prami had difficulty with arranging the work chronologically and there were gaps in the diary where tasks had not been completed. As previously mentioned, his attendance at school had been erratic.

Four of the seven participants reported that art appreciation was important. Three of these four were NESB students. Of the three who did not say it was important, two (also NESB) were not being successful in this area which may have contributed to their opinion of art criticism and analysis. Those who did express the opinion that Art Appreciation was important said that among the aspects of this which they valued were visiting art galleries, learning to understand artists' reasons for working in the ways they did and gaining knowledge and inspiration from analysing art works. Maria expressed this during her interview as: “Going to museums and looking at how other people have used



techniques and special features to complete their work, this gives me ideas about my own work”.

Two participants (Natasha and James) claimed that art should be “beautiful”. Natasha nominated the painting of the French Impressionists as being her favourite whilst James expressed a preference for the work of the cartoonist, Paul Rigby. Natasha also referred to a process practised in Russia, in which a design is burnt into wood and then painted, and named this as one of her favourite art forms. The students who indicated that “expressiveness” was important indicated that they saw this as meaning expressing the beauty of an object or place rather than expressing ideas or feelings. All students had responded negatively to an exhibition of contemporary works by Asian artists (viewed at the Art Gallery of Western Australia earlier in the year) which highlighted political or social injustices. Whilst acknowledging that the work raised interesting and important issues, the students suggested that art should not be about those things. They preferred to view “nice” subjects.

Prami’s response to the questionnaire expressed a preference for “peaceful and beautiful” landscapes. During the interview he also referred to the work of a Javanese artist whose work he admired. This was described as representing action “like in Indonesian dance”.

Wen-jing expressed a preference for Chinese tonal painting using ink. She described examples of this as paintings of landscape, fruit and nature. Her opinion was that art should express beauty. Maria claimed that art should be expressive. She indicated that her favourite art works were Greek sculptures and paintings of the Greek islands. Ben also indicated a preference for art that was expressive but in the interview said that he liked many types of art. He named the work of Monet as his favourite.

All of the participants were concerned with being successful in the course and most appeared to be working to the best of their abilities and their understanding of what was required. Prami appeared to avoid some tasks which were difficult, particularly written assignments. He was frequently absent at the time these were given and at the time that they were to be completed. Some design development exercises also appeared to have been avoided by Prami.

#### 4.4.2 Theme 2: Previous experiences of art education

Ben, James and Maria, the three participants who were born in Australia and the Vietnamese student, Huong, completed one semester of Year 10 art at their present school during 1997. The course for that semester included a community arts project which involved the painting of a mural. The visual inquiry for this project involved drawing, relief-printing of images to be incorporated in the design of the mural, and Art Appreciation. Ben had attended high school in New Zealand during years 8 and 9, and had studied art there. He had learnt a variety of drawing techniques but had experienced no other visual arts activities or theory. He had attended primary school in Australia but did not recall any regular art classes. Maria had completed one semester of art in year 8. James had not studied art in years 8 or 9. Neither he nor Maria remembered very much about art in primary school. Huong had completed a semester of art in both years 8 and 9. At primary school in Vietnam she remembered learning only science, mathematics and Vietnamese: "I don't know about learning art in Vietnam; I don't think they do it in school". Prami had not studied art before year 11 either in Australia or Indonesia.

Wen-jing had attended primary school in China until she was ten, and art had been part of the curriculum. She described this as being different from what she was doing now:

I learnt to draw with a pencil, copying from a book .... everyone has a book of drawings of fruit and flowers. The whole class had to draw the same picture. Sometimes the teacher would show on the board ... how to draw ... how to do the colours ... the class had to do the same.

Wen-jing also revealed that she had received instruction in the use of ink and watercolour. The teacher would sometimes offer advice to individual students. Students were not encouraged to work imaginatively. This formal style of teaching art was noted by Cox et al. (1999). They found that from the age of 6, school children in China received regular instruction in copying techniques by art specialists.

Natasha had studied craft at her present school for one semester in Year 10. Art had not been taught at primary school in Russia. However Natasha attended private classes where she participated in a variety of visual arts activities including burning pictures into wood, painting onto fabric and painting onto plates applying a traditional Russian style to her own designs. In the table which follows, the students' previous exposure to visual arts education is presented.

Table 5: Previous Exposure to Visual Art and Visual Arts Education.

	1	2	3	4
PRAMI	Yes	Yes	0	Yes
WEN-JING	Yes	Yes	P	Yes
BEN	Yes	Yes	S	Yes
JAMES	No	No	S	
MARIA	Yes	Yes	S	Yes
HUONG	Yes	No	S	Yes
NATASHA	Yes	Yes	S	Yes

Note.

- 1 Art in the home - original works; reproductions; books.
- 2 Contact with artists or craftworkers - family or friends.
- 3 Primary (P) or secondary (S) visual arts education.
- 4 Awareness of traditional art forms in country of origin.

4. 4. 3 Theme 3: Influences of NESB students' perceptions on their expectations and performance in the visual arts classroom.

There seemed to be some correlation between the art with which participants were familiar and the art which they admired. In response to the questionnaire and the art appreciation task, most students indicated a preference for landscape as a subject and realism or naturalism as a style. Maria, Natasha and Ben expressed an interest in the art of the French Impressionists.

James expressed the belief that it was important to learn to draw realistically. He had been interested in cartooning from an early age and felt that representational drawing was a skill which he would need if he were to develop this art form. He said: "I want to do more realistic drawing, to improve. I'd like to draw more people - even landscapes. I'm not very good at perspective".

Wen-jing expressed her love for a watercolour painting of the Great Wall of China displayed in her home. At primary school in China she

had received instruction in developing skills in using pencil and watercolour.

Prami indicated an interest in landscape painting and also narrative art. This was evident in his reference to the Indonesian artist Abandi: "He draws about action, something like a tiger, it feels like it's moving ...I don't know what's going to happen. Animals racing towards me ... scary things".

Huong also expressed a desire to emulate artists whom she admired: "In our loungeroom we have a very big painting on paper. An Asian landscape ... it's beautiful, done with a brush. I would love to copy that".

Maria referred to her favourite art as paintings of the Greek islands and religious icons. Similarly, Natasha nominated a traditional Russian craft of burning pictures into wood and painting them as one of her favourite forms of art.

In the areas of art history and criticism all of the NESB students with the exception of Natasha, experienced difficulties albeit to varying degrees. As stated earlier, Natasha and her parents were fluent in English.

#### 4.4.4 Theme 4: Other factors impacting on participants' performance

The academic performance of all students irrespective of their ethnic background are influenced by a number of factors. These are defined by Wasson, Stuhr and Petrovich-Mwaniki (1990) and Burke (1993) as gender, socio-economic status (SES), physical and intellectual ability, peer pressure, parental expectations, family situation, physical and emotional well-being, maturity, religion and ethnicity. Other factors which need to be considered in assessing student performance are age and in the case of NESB students, the circumstances surrounding the

student's departure from their country of origin and of their arrival at their present place of residence.

Burke et al. (1993) noted that immigration and settling in another country with its uncertainty regarding housing and employment can impact on learning as can the fact that the education of these students has been disrupted. There are often wide gaps between attending school in the country of origin and attending school in Australia. Burke et al. pointed out that older students (upper secondary) were often coming to terms with the English language at the same time as finishing secondary school. This was the case with four of the NESB participants in this study.

In this presentation of data which deals with the factors which may impact on students' performance, consideration should also be given to physical and emotional trauma which may have been experienced as a result of leaving significant people and places, travelling to unknown destinations and beginning a new life in unfamiliar circumstances. Difficulties may be experienced in finding accommodation and work. Some may have lost members of their families through wars or natural disasters. Immigrants with refugee status have often arrived in Australia with very few personal belongings. These factors can adversely affect the performance of students at school. One student who was to participate in the study withdrew after news of natural disasters in South America which had claimed the lives of members of his extended family.

Two of the participants, Huong and Wen-jing were refugees. It appeared that both of these students had experienced hardship either prior to, or during their departure from their countries of origin. Wen-jing's parents had worked twenty hour days catching and selling fish in China. For her to receive an education, Wen-jing had been sent to stay with relatives in a nearby town in order to attend school. Huong had also been separated from members of her family during the journey from Vietnam to Australia. Therefore, both Huong and Wen-jing had

experienced gaps in their education between leaving their countries of origin and attending the present school.

Most of the NESB group (i.e. Huong, Wen-jing, Prami and Natasha) would be identified as second phase learners by teachers who specialise in English as a second language (ESL). Second phase language learners are defined as students who have graduated from language centres with basic language skills such as competence in listening and oral communication (Burke et al., 1993). These skills do not necessarily equip students for mainstream education particularly at upper secondary level because they often lack understanding and written language skills. Other characteristics of second-phase learners may include a lack of competency in the first language, reluctance to admit to experiencing difficulties and a desire to fulfil parental expectations. It is pointed out that these characteristics may occur in students who are born in Australia but rarely speak English at home (Burke et al., 1993, p. 55). This description could apply to Maria who was born in Australia, but for whom Greek is the main language spoken at home.

Another factor which might impact on a student's performance relates to the age at which they commenced school. There is also the question of continuity in the student's education. According to Burke et al. (1993) students with gaps in the learning of their first language will experience more difficulty in grasping new concepts and terms in the second language. This is more likely to occur where the students are refugees and have not come directly from school in their homeland to their present school situation. It was recently discovered by ESL teachers at the school where the study was conducted, that a number of NESB students from the same year group as the sample group, did not know how to write in their native language. Discontinuity in education can also impede future learning in subjects other than language (Burke et al., 1993).

There can be a degree of discrepancy in the ability of these students as a group to meet the demands of mainstream classes because their written language is often poor. This appeared to be the case with Huong whose development in English appeared to have been affected by the interruption to her education in Vietnam at an early age. Despite having been in Australia for eight years she was continuing to study English as a second language.

Added to these problems is the reluctance of many students to draw attention to themselves by admitting that they don't understand or by asking for help. Many have developed skills that enable them to hide their weaknesses. They may also appear to lack motivation, however, their lack of participation may be due to a lack of understanding. Avoidance behaviours can include forgetting books, absences or withdrawal. This appeared to be the case with Prami who was frequently absent and often failed to complete work. When questioned about his understanding of course material he usually responded in the affirmative. However, his performance indicated a lack of understanding.

A recent survey (M. Mandelt, personal communication, 1998) of overseas students in the school at which the research was conducted revealed that many students admitted to not understanding teachers when they talked. The overseas students however, indicated that they did not believe that it was because their (i.e. the students') English needed to improve. The same number said that they did not think the work was too hard for them.

Within the school, the researcher has participated in interviews with parents which have revealed that many of them have high expectations for their sons' and daughters' success at school. Some parents who have been deprived of a full education themselves appear to assume that the provision of educational opportunities for their children will ensure academic success. The seven students in the sample group



lived with their families. Both parents of one NESB student (Wen-jing), were unemployed. Others were low to middle-income earners.

Among the participants, most of the NESB students expressed nostalgia towards their country of origin. This was also evident in Maria's case. Despite being born in Australia, she had visited Greece and Greek memorabilia was kept in her home. The interview with Maria revealed that as a Year 11 student, she had already reached a higher level of education than other members of her family. This also appeared to be true of Huong and Wen-jing.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

As previously stated, the research was designed to present a profile of each participant which took into account their biographical and ethnic background, their educational background, their previous experience of the visual arts and visual arts education, their opinions about the visual arts and visual arts education and their response to the visual arts course which they were currently undertaking. The study also endeavoured to present an overall picture of the sample group.

The data presented is the result of the research instruments administered. These included individual questionnaires designed to enable participants to present authentic responses without being influenced by the responses of others, interviews which enabled participants to amplify some of the views expressed in the questionnaire and which ensured that they had fully understood what was being asked, and work samples from the disciplines included in the visual arts course (i.e. visual inquiry, studio practice, art history and art criticism) which provided evidence of the responses of participants to the visual arts course currently being undertaken. Observation of students at work and information obtained from student records (consulted to ensure the

accuracy of some of the information provided on the questionnaire) was also presented in narrative form.

The research design appeared to be effective in obtaining information in a variety of ways, each adding a further dimension to the profile of each participant and the group. Following the first of the research instruments to be administered, the questionnaire, individual interviews enabled the researcher to ensure that participants had understood the questions and to encourage further discussion. Observation of participants engaged in the visual arts course and examination of work samples contributed further information. The resulting data helped to identify ways in which participants responded to the visual arts course and to possible influences on their responses.

Although it was initially intended to include the fourteen members of the Year 11 visual arts class in the study, using the smaller group appeared to provide sufficient material and allowed for more attention to be given to the responses of each participant. With the departure of several students from the school this small group tended to form the nucleus of the class. Burns (1994) advised against accumulating a “deluge” (p. 327) of information which is likely to become unmanageable and may lead to a superficial interpretation.

Whilst acknowledging that the role of the researcher as participant observer has been called into question (Burns, 1994 and Gambell, 1995) it has been noted that the close association with the sample group over a period of time has allowed for continued interaction and observation. This has helped to validate some of the original findings and has provided the opportunity for a deeper knowledge and understanding of the participants and their responses to the study.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION OF CASE STUDY DATA

#### 5.1 Overview of Chapter

In this chapter the data which has been presented will be examined in an attempt to determine evidence of information which would address the research questions. Under the themes already presented, the emerging information will be discussed in relation to its relevance to the themes.

#### 5.2 General Influences

Whilst the research questions sought specifically to determine the degree to which students' previous experiences of the visual arts influenced their present response to the visual arts course, it was also necessary to determine other factors which were likely to have influenced their response. These general influences on all students irrespective of their ethnic background have been referred to in previous chapters. The influences were: gender, socio-economic status (SES), physical and intellectual ability, peer pressure, parental expectations, family situation, physical and emotional well-being, maturity, religion and ethnicity. Other factors include dislocation through immigration and settling in another country with the ensuing uncertainty regarding housing and employment. As indicated by Burke, Kay, Matwiejczyk and Rees (1993) these factors can impact on learning as can the fact that the education of

these students may have been disrupted. There are often wide gaps between attending school in the country of origin and attending school in Australia. For one participant in the sample group (Wen-jing) five years had elapsed between leaving school in China and attending the present school although for six months she had attended school in a refugee camp in Western Australia. Burke et al. pointed out that older students (i.e. upper secondary) were often coming to terms with the English language and with the stresses of late adolescence.

It was considered appropriate therefore to identify aspects of the students' backgrounds which might impact on their education. According to Fielding (1997) an individual's creativity is influenced by his or her interaction with the culture and the social environment. This appeared to be the case for those students (e.g. Wen-jing, Natasha, Maria and Prami) whose preferences seemed to reflect their previous experience of the visual arts.

As with all students the socio-economic-status (SES) was seen to be an important factor in the lives of the participants. Of the NESB students the parents of only one (Natasha) had received tertiary education. Three of the other students were the first in their families to have reached their present educational level. In many cases sacrifices appeared to have been made to provide educational opportunities for the students. Parent-teacher interviews have indicated that many parents of NESB students have high expectations for their children who, as a consequence, feel a responsibility to achieve sufficiently high results to gain entry into a university. For some however, there appeared to be a lack of understanding of the physical and emotional support needed by students at this level if they are to achieve their educational goals. Many students are required to undertake responsibilities in the home or businesses owned by relations or friends and this can leave little time for study. Three of the NESB participants Huong, Wen-jing and Maria

demonstrated anxiety about achieving success in their studies (i.e. a focus on results). Natasha appeared more confident and relaxed.

Whilst this study is concerned more with the students' response to the visual arts than with general education, concerns for achievement could be seen to influence the student's attitude to the visual arts course. Where the focus is mainly on "success" in terms of achieving at a high level, this could affect the student's attitude towards exploring and being creative and could explain the seriousness with which many of them approach the course.

All of the students lived in what appeared to be secure family environments with two parents and one or more siblings. Maria and Prami also had grandparents living with their families. However, both Huong and Wen-jing indicated that they had experienced emotional and economic insecurity prior to coming to Australia and in the process of settling here. Both had come to Australia as refugees. At the time the research was conducted both of Wen-jing's parents since coming to Australia had been unemployed and Huong's father had obtained intermittent casual employment in a bakery. Members of Huong's family had been separated from each other during the journey from Vietnam, an older brother being the first arrival.

The fact that Wen-jing's parents worked twenty hour days catching and selling fish in a coastal village in mainland China and had sent Wen-jing to stay with friends in a nearby town so that she could attend school, suggests a life of hardship and the parents' concern for their daughter's education. Neither of Wen-jing's parents speak English and since coming to Australia Wen-jing has been responsible for many practical aspects of living here. These include such things as negotiating banking arrangements, social services and accommodation.

Some of these factors suggest that if students have been required to assume adult responsibilities from an early age their attitudes towards

learning is likely to be more serious. Perhaps they are less likely to embrace the “fun” aspects of learning because they need to see a “point” or purpose of all activities.

It appeared that the families of Prami and Natasha were more secure financially. Both families however, had left their countries of origin unwillingly because of social and political unrest and they had therefore experienced some emotional trauma. Natasha’s parents were both employed and Prami stated that his father worked as a sales manager. Maria’s family was also financially stable because her father worked as a maintenance officer in a private school.

It has been noted that students who are refugees are often older than their peer-group due to gaps that have occurred in their education and the time devoted to learning English before being admitted to mainstream classes. This was true for Prami, Wen-jing and Huong who were one year older than the other students.

Language was seen to be a problem for Huong, Wen-jing and Prami. During their interviews both Huong and Wen-jing revealed their concerns about being disadvantaged by not understanding the “words” particularly in theoretical areas of the course. For the five NESB students very little English was spoken in the home. Of these, Natasha’s parents appeared to have the best command of English which was spoken in the home although Russian was the first language. Maria’s family, particularly the children, spoke some English at home although Greek was mainly spoken among the adults (parents and grandparents). The families of Wen-jing, Huong and Prami spoke almost no English at home.

With language being identified as a major factor contributing to the success of NESB students the above information regarding the participants would appear to be significant. Burke et al. (1993, p. 64) argued that students whose English is limited are unable to successfully fulfil the demands of the school system and many fall further behind as

emerge which may take the research in another direction. Conversely, some problems expected to be important may be found to be of little consequence. According to Stake (1994) case researchers seek out both what is common and what is particular, but the end result presented becomes something unique. It is important that the research subject is an unique, bounded system.

Burns (1995) also asserted that a case study must be a bounded system, the objective being to determine what goes on within that system. The purpose of case studies could be to provide hypotheses for future research or they could provide “anecdotal evidence that illustrates more general findings” (p. 314).

Patton (1990) claimed that case studies were appropriate where much could be learned from a few exemplars. He stated that in order to fulfil the requirements of the case study: “to describe the unit in depth and detail, in context, and holistically” (p. 54) it was necessary to employ a variety of research instruments. Patton (1990) recommended the analysis of research data according to a process of constructing case studies (p. 388). This consists of assembling the data, constructing a case-record and writing a case study narrative (Appendix 5).

As it was anticipated that the information sought would be inductive (i.e. that it would emerge from the study rather than specific data being sought) qualitative research appeared to be appropriate. It was proposed that a case-study be used because the sample provided a bounded system which was deemed by both Stake (1994) and Burns (1995) to be an important component of the case study methodology.

The purpose of this study was to inquire into the perceptions of NESB students of visual arts and visual arts education. It was expected that the findings which emerged from the investigation would provide an insight into the students’ expectations and experience of visual arts education, an awareness of their particular needs and an understanding

of their response to the visual arts course currently being undertaken. Due to the size and nature of the sample group it was considered unlikely that the findings would be conclusive or lead to generalisation about NESB students.

### 3.3 Sample

It was proposed that the sample would consist of a Year 11 Tertiary Entrance Art class consisting of fourteen students from diverse ethnic backgrounds. These included Australian; Chinese (from Hong Kong, the Republic of China and Taiwan); Nicaraguan; Greek; Indonesian; Russian and Vietnamese. The final sample group however, did not include the whole class. During the course of the school year, three of the overseas students left the school to attend a senior college, another three chose not to participate and returned to Taiwan before the research was completed. This highlighted a problem experienced with *some* of the overseas students whose guardians in WA found it difficult to control the behaviour of their charges who tended to be frequently absent and to arrive at school late. Others however displayed high standards of attendance and punctuality. The student from Nicaragua experienced emotional trauma resulting from the natural disasters currently occurring in his country of origin and it was considered inappropriate for him to participate. The sample therefore consisted of seven students from Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, Indonesian and Australian backgrounds. As the data was collated it became clear that from the group of seven participants, sufficient information was likely to emerge for the purpose of the study. Burns (1995) highlighted the possibility that too much information could be difficult to analyse adequately. He recommended designing the research to ensure that the volume of data likely to emerge was manageable.



The participants who were immigrants had lived in Australia for at least two years. The response of the Australian-born students was expected to provide a perspective on the acceptance of the Year 11 TEE Art Syllabus by the students for whom it was designed.

Chalmers (1996) claimed that students at senior secondary level were increasingly able to formulate independent evaluations and opinions despite peer pressure. This suggests that responses from Year 11 students to the research instruments and the delivery of the syllabus would present valid research data.

Chalmers (1996, p. 6) also suggested that Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) provided opportunities for students to learn about art in a variety of ways and using a variety of learning styles and to reflect, imagine and construct personal meanings. The Year 11 TEE Art course includes the components of DBAE (i. e. art making, art criticism and art history) and this allowed for evaluation of students' responses to these disciplines.

The small size of the sample group provided for all members to be participants in the study whilst the composition of the class was representative of a number of ethnic groups. This appeared to comply with Patton's (1990) claim that case studies are appropriate where much can be learned from a few exemplars. This would appear to be the case in a class which was heterogeneous in its composition.

### 3.4 Research Instruments

In order to fulfil the requirements of the case study; "to describe the unit in depth and detail, in context, and holistically" (Patton, 1990, p. 54) the intention was to employ a variety of research instruments. These included (a) analysis of student records, (b) questionnaires, (c) interviews, (d) observations and (e) examination of samples of the

students' work. Each data source provided a particular insight into the students' perceptions of the visual arts and their responses to curriculum. The use of a variety of data sources was intended to authenticate the responses and thereby assist in validating the research findings.

A questionnaire (Appendix 2) used a standardised set of questions which aimed to determine (a) students' responses to the current visual arts program, (b) their preference for the various components of the course, and (c) their previous experiences of visual art and visual arts education. It also contained questions designed to obtain factual biographical information (i.e. date of birth, country of birth, date of arrival in Australia). Responses to the questionnaire formed the basis for the interviews which were conducted both individually and in a focus group situation. Students' records were consulted to validate factual biographical, ethnographic and cultural information sought through the questionnaires. The students' records were also used to ascertain the academic progress of students in other learning areas.

The use of a questionnaire as a framework for each interview, allowed for clarification, expansion and an opportunity for additional information to emerge. The focus group interview and informal discussion encouraged some students to expand on their original responses on hearing the views expressed by others. Students often appeared to gain courage from observing others expressing their ideas and opinions.

Observation of students at work and their responses to set tasks recorded as anecdotes provided information about responses not necessarily verbalised. Some responses in fact suggested a contradiction to verbalised opinions. When this occurred, further discussion with individual students ensued. Participants were required to respond to a common art appreciation task (Appendix 3) designed to extract opinions

about artworks. Samples of both written and practical tasks completed as part of the Year 11 Visual Arts course were examined using an evaluative framework (Appendix 4).

### 3.5 Triangulation

Triangulation is defined by Burns (1995) as “the use of two or more methods of data collection” (p. 272). Its purpose is to provide a more accurate account of human behaviour by studying it from different viewpoints and by means of a variety of research instruments or methods. To this end, a number of instruments were used to collect data required for this study.

Given that many of the students may have experienced difficulty in understanding and responding to questions on a written questionnaire, particularly those who may be experiencing difficulty with written English, it was seen as necessary to validate the responses by means of oral questioning, informal discussion and observation of students at work and interacting with each other. Analysis of work samples also assisted in validating some of the responses to the other research instruments. According to Burke, Kaye, Matwiejczyk and Rees (1993) one of the characteristics attributed to second phase language learners is a reluctance to admit to difficulties and lack of understanding. For this reason, evaluating a student’s performance as well as collecting data using other means was expected to contribute to the construction of a profile for each participant. Thus the researcher could feel more confident about the findings.

### 3.6 Validity and Reliability

Burns (1994) suggested that the reliability of ethnographic studies could be difficult to assess because it was not always possible to replicate them. Consideration was given to the assertion by Burns (1995) that drawing conclusions from a single case study was not recommended. He also pointed out that external validity was not of great importance. Burns suggested however, that the validity of a case study could be indicated by a detailed account by the researcher of how the study was carried out. Burns (1994) recommended the use of multiple sources of evidence, pointing out that the case study was a presentation and interpretation of detailed information about a single unit.

Burns (1995) claimed that to ascertain reliability, it was necessary to reduce the possibility of error in the measuring instruments and to be aware of the many variables which may influence the results. These could include (a) the conditions under which a questionnaire was administered or interviews conducted, (b) individual personalities and social attributes of interviewees and (c) personal characteristics of the interviewer.

It was noted by Burns (1995) that problems of uniqueness can lead to the claim that no ethnographic study can be assessed for reliability and that conclusions are qualified by the social roles investigators hold within the research site. This was particularly relevant in this study where the researcher is also the visual arts teacher.

Burns (1994) suggested that the researcher needed to assume the primary responsibility for selecting the case, using appropriate observational techniques and interview procedures, as well as documenting and making the appropriate interpretations. Burns asserted that validity depends on the purposes to which the account of the research is put. It may be that the case would contribute to the reader's

own experience and that each reader would relate it to her or his own context.

Among the difficulties referred to by Burns was that of establishing whether the case was typical or atypical (i.e. a valid example of what we are supposed to be studying). Burns (1995) noted that many case study proponents argue that understanding of the general is enhanced by studying the atypical (p. 329).

To ascertain reliability it was necessary to reduce the possibility of error in the measuring instruments and to consider the many variables which may influence the results of a study of this nature. The conditions under which the questionnaire was administered and the interviews conducted were noted and the personality, social attributes and personal characteristics of the interviewees were acknowledged. This information is documented in Chapter 4.

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted with the approval and co-operation of the school principal. All information concerning individuals has been regarded as strictly confidential, and participants' names have been changed in transcripts to obscure identity. Consideration has been given to the welfare and protection of the participants. Participants and their parents were informed of the nature, purpose, methods, and expected usefulness of data collected. All participants and their parents gave their written consent for the research.

### 3.8 Data Reduction and Analysis

Analysis of data followed the process of constructing case studies recommended by Patton (1990, p. 388). This consists of assembling the

data, constructing a case-record and writing a case study narrative (Appendix 5).

Data to be analysed were comprised of biographical and ethnographic information, observations, written and oral responses to research instruments, student portfolios and written tasks. An inductive process was used to group the data obtained into categories or clusters. From these it was expected that patterns or themes would emerge. The categories included opinions about visual art and visual arts education, the participants' previous exposure to art and their experience of visual arts education, biographical data, evaluation of student performance in practical and theoretical tasks, and the level of achievement of participants in subjects other than the visual arts.

Statements were extracted and tables developed to display patterns or themes. An evaluative framework was used for practical and written work samples (Appendix 4). The findings have been recorded as a narrative which seeks to describe both individual and group responses to the study.

### 3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter the methods of investigation have been outlined. It includes the rationale and decisions made in selecting the appropriate methodology and research instruments, procedures adopted for the analysis and reduction of data and steps taken to address ethical concerns.

The intention was to provide understanding and awareness of the perceptions of the visual arts by NESB students and also, to identify their particular educational needs and expectations of a visual arts course. In view of the nature of the information being sought, a decision was made to use qualitative methodology for the study.

The use of qualitative methods by educational researchers has increased in recent years particularly where interpretation and understanding are central to the study. This has been particularly apparent in research involving the visual arts and visual arts education. Of the qualitative research methodologies available the case-study was chosen for its apparent suitability both to the nature of the information being sought and the decision to direct the research towards a particular sample group. This consisted of a group of Year 11 students from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds, who were engaged in a Tertiary Entrance visual arts course. This sample group provided a bounded system and was selected for its ethnic diversity, the level at which the students were studying and the nature of the visual arts course being undertaken. The selection of Year 11 students was influenced by Chalmers' (1996) view that students at upper-secondary level were capable of thinking independently without being influenced by their peers. Another consideration was the fact that the Year 11 visual arts course includes both practical and theoretical components thus providing the opportunity to evaluate the response of participants to the major disciplines inherent in a visual arts course.

Data was collected using a range of research instruments. These included (a) questionnaire, (b) individual and group interviews, (c) observation, and (d) examination of work samples. As recommended by Patton (1990) the data was reduced and categorised to provide material to be documented in the form of a narrative.

Despite the opinions of authors such as Gambell (1995) who have expressed concern about the validity of findings resulting from ethnographic research, the chosen methodology was expected to produce data which would prove useful in fulfilling the purpose of the study. This was to provide insight into and awareness of the perceptions of art by NESB students and their expectations of a visual arts course. Strategies

recommended for ensuring the reliability of the findings have been implemented. These included the implementation of a variety of research instruments, an attempt to link the various data sources and clear documentation of the steps and procedures taken.



## CHAPTER 4

### PRESENTATION OF DATA

#### 4.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter information about the research context is provided in the chapter introduction. Data is then presented (a) as responses to the research instruments and (b) according to the themes under which the data has been categorised.

#### 4.2 Chapter Introduction

In order to understand the demographic context of the study it is necessary to consider the school environment and the setting in which the research was conducted. As previously stated, the researcher teaches in an inner city Catholic secondary school which in recent years has seen a marked increase in the enrolment of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds. These students originate from a variety of African, Asian and European ethnic backgrounds. However a higher proportion are from Asian countries. The creation of an Intensive Language Centre (ILC) within the school has been the reason for the entry of a large number of immigrant children to the school. The majority of these students proceed into mainstream classes after graduating from the ILC. In addition to NESB students, there are others who are attracted to the school by the presence of students from their own ethnic

backgrounds. Some of the students have previously met during the time they spent in refugee detention centres.

Prior to the investigation it had been noted that many NESB students had difficulty in achieving satisfactory results in the visual arts at Year 11 and 12 levels. They often showed a high level of aptitude for a variety of visual arts activities and competence in some practical areas, but appeared to lack understanding of some of the requirements of the course, especially the study of art history and art criticism. Most art educators accept that in addition to making art, learning to respond to art works with knowledge and understanding should be an integral part of a visual arts course. Therefore, data was sought which would provide a profile of each student's perception and understanding of both practical and theoretical aspects of the visual arts and the possible influences of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds on these perceptions. It was anticipated that this information would also indicate the degree of influence these factors would have on their response to the visual arts education program which they were currently undertaking.

Following the procedure recommended by Patton (1993, p. 388) for constructing case studies, the raw case data was assembled, classified and edited. In this chapter the data collected is presented according to its methods of collection (i.e. questionnaire, interviews, examination of work samples and observation) and the themes under which the information has been categorised. These themes are (a) NESB students' perceptions of the visual arts and visual arts education, (b) their previous experiences of visual arts education, (c) influences of NESB students' perceptions on their expectations and performance in the visual arts classroom and (d) other factors impacting on students' performance. Tables are presented to aid comparison of responses to the research data.

For much of the information sought, more than one source was used. Biographical and background information relevant to the study was

obtained from the individual questionnaires administered to participants and from the school records. This information was further substantiated during individual interviews. The questionnaire was also used to obtain data concerning each participant's opinions about and perceptions of the visual arts, their expectations of a visual arts course, their opinions about the visual arts course currently being undertaken, their previous experience or awareness of the visual arts at home or in their country of origin, and their previous experience of visual arts education. This information was also discussed during individual interviews and later in a group interview.

The researcher used a proforma (Appendix 4) to evaluate each participant's performance in (a) oral and written responses to the art history and art criticism components of the course including a set Art Appreciation task (Appendix 3) and (b) the practical projects undertaken in class. Observation was also carried out over several weeks whilst participants were engaged in the current visual arts activities and information emerging from informal discussions was noted. To ensure anonymity the students' names have been changed.

The data was condensed and classified, and tables developed under the following headings: (a) biographical/background data, (b) opinions about the visual arts and visual arts education, (c) evaluation of student performance in art history and art criticism, (d) evaluation of student performance in practical tasks and (d) previous experiences of the visual arts and visual arts education. These are presented within the text.

The data is presented in the first part of this chapter, as an account of (i) responses to the questionnaire and interviews, (ii) observations made by the researcher, (iii) evaluation of students' work samples and (iv) information gained from the school records. The data is then presented under themes which underly the research questions.

## 4.3 Data Collection

### 4.3.1 Questionnaire and Interview Data

In early November, the questionnaire (Appendix 2) was given to students who had returned the completed consent form. Participants completed the questionnaire during class time and were allowed as much time as they needed to respond to the questions. They did not discuss the questions with other participants. Each participant gave careful attention to each question and in some cases took considerable time to respond. The format of the questionnaire was explained, the reasons for its use reiterated and participants were given a chance to ask questions prior to commencement of the task. They were reminded that participation was not compulsory and that their responses did not in any way relate to assessment of their work. It was decided to include in the questionnaire questions relating to factual, biographical, ethnographic and cultural information to eliminate the necessity to examine school records for this information. However it was considered necessary to check some information (e.g. the dates of arrival of some students in Australia) against the school records, to ensure accuracy. It was also found to be useful to examine academic records to compare students' progress in other subject areas with their level of achievement in the visual arts.

During the following week arrangements were made for participants to be interviewed individually. Care was taken to ensure that interview times were convenient to the students and not likely to cause them anxiety about missing other classes or activities. Fifteen minutes were allowed for each student with sufficient time available for the interview to continue beyond the allocated time if this seemed appropriate. Participants were made aware of the fact that the interviews were being recorded. Although some appeared apprehensive at first,

without exception, they became interested in sharing their views and talked beyond the designated time.

Interviews were conducted using the questionnaires as a basis for discussion. They provided the opportunity to ensure that students had fully understood the questions and to amplify much of the information given. Many of the responses provided information which had not been sought, but in some instances, suggested other factors contributing to a student's success and confidence (e.g. the amount of encouragement and support given by parents).

The questionnaire and interview responses provided (a) information relating to the age and place of birth of students, the length of residence in Australia, the present family structure, the language spoken in the home and the parents' occupations, (b) students' opinions of aspects of the visual arts course presently being undertaken, their preferences for types or styles of art and their expectations of a visual arts course, experiences of art and art appreciation in the home and/or in their countries of origin; and (c) their previous experiences of art education.

Each of these topics will now be considered in further detail.

#### 4.3.1.1 Biographical/background data

The information sought included the age and place of birth of each participant and the year of their arrival in Australia. Also of interest was the language spoken in the participant's home and the number of family members living together.

Of the seven students who participated in the study, three (Ben, James and Maria) were born in Australia and two were from English-speaking backgrounds (ESB). The father of Ben and both of James'

parents were Australian. Ben's mother was from New Zealand, Maria's parents were born in Greece and speak mainly Greek in the home.

The other four participants were not born in Australia. These were Prami, Wen-jing, Natasha and Huong who were born in Indonesia, mainland China, Russia and Vietnam respectively. With the exception of Natasha, very little English is spoken by the parents and grandparents of these participants. Natasha's mother taught English in Russia and both her parents have occupations which require competency in English however Russian is mainly spoken in the home. Of the seven participants, therefore, five were from non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB).

Table 1: Biographical/Background Data

Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Prami	1981	Indonesia	1996	Indonesian	M F GM S B	Sales-manager	Home-duties
Ben	1982	Australia		English	M F S B	Panel-beater	Book-keeper
James	1982	Australia		English	M F B B	Finance-broker	Home-duties
Maria	1982	Australia		Greek	M F GM GF S B	Maintenance officer	Home-duties
Huong	1981	Vietnam	1991	Vietnamese	M F B B B B	Bakery employee	Home-duties
Natasha	1982	Russia	1995	Russian	M F B	Systems analyst	Administrative officer
Wen-jing	1981	China	1994	Mandarin	M F B	Unemployed	Home-duties

Note.

- |    |                               |    |   |
|----|-------------------------------|----|---|
| 1  | Year of birth.                | 5. | Parents (M, F), grandparents (GF,GM), brothers and sisters (B, S) living at home. |
| 2. | Country of birth.             | 6. | Father's occupation.  |
| 3. | Year of arrival in Australia. | 7. | Mother's occupation   |
| 4. | Language spoken at home.      |    |   |

All the participants currently live in Western Australia with their families. Prami came to the school in 1996 as an overseas student. His family has since migrated from Indonesia to Western Australia and he now lives with them. Wen-jing came to Australia from China as a refugee in 1994 and spent eight months in a refugee detention centre before arriving in Perth. She spent approximately one year in the Intensive Language Centre (ILC) before attending mainstream classes in 1996. Natasha also attended the Intensive Language Centre briefly before joining the mainstream classes in 1996. Huong spent time in a refugee camp after arriving in Western Australia in 1991. She has since attended catholic primary and secondary schools.

The mothers of only two students worked outside the home - James' mother as a book-keeper and Natasha's mother as an administrative officer. Wen-jing's father who had been a fisherman in China was currently unemployed. Prami's father was a sales manager (it was difficult to ascertain whether this was in Indonesia or Australia), Ben's father worked as a panel-beater/spray-painter, James' step-father as a finance-broker, and Natasha's father as a systems analyst. Maria's father was employed as a maintenance officer at a private school and Huong's father worked in a bakery.

Prami, Wen-jing and Huong studied English as a second language (ESL) during year 11 and will continue to do so in year 12. The other four students were studying Year 11 English or English Literature.

#### 4.3.1.2 Participants' opinions about visual art and visual arts education.

This data provides participants' responses to the current art project and their expectations of the Year 11 visual arts course. Their preferences for types or styles of art are also indicated.

The Year 11 Visual Arts course consists of three components (i.e. visual inquiry, studio practice and art theory). These components are

integral to each of the four projects undertaken during the year. The visual inquiry involves drawing, research into the work of relevant artists, experimentation with media and forms of visual expression and the development of ideas which are recorded both visually and verbally. These ideas are expected to culminate in a design to be completed in the designated studio discipline. Students are required to present the inquiry in a visual diary. The theoretical component consists of the study of both Australian and international visual art themes which may be drawn from a range of historical periods. This component also involves learning to critically analyse artworks. The studio practice is expected to occupy fifty percent of the time allocated to the project and to result in a finished art work. It is expected that the studio outcome will show a relationship to the other components of the course. Students are required to sit a written examination in art history and art criticism.

Students were engaged in completing a graphic design project at the time the questionnaire was completed. However some students also commented on the painting and printmaking projects undertaken during the previous terms. In this section it became obvious during the interviews that some of the questions had been misunderstood and in some instances the written responses were difficult to interpret.

Students' opinions about visual art and visual arts education are summarised in the table which follows.



**Table 2: Participants' Opinions about Visual Art and Visual Arts Education.**

Name	1	2	3	4
Prami	Practising, learning drawing & painting techniques.	Charcoal drawing.	Something peaceful, calm-like water. Artist: Abandi.	(b)
Ben	Art appreciation.	Research-for ideas and inspiration. Drawing; experimenting with ideas and techniques.	Monet-broken colour. Many types of art.	(b)
James	Realistic drawing and painting.	Cartoon drawing; graphic design.	Paul Rigby.	(a)
Maria	Visiting museums; learning others' ideas & techniques.	Experimenting with designs & typography. Still life.	Greek sculpture; paintings of Greek islands.	(b)
Huong	Technical skill -using pencil, then paint.	Drawing people & places.	Chinese landscape painting; Woodblock prints.	(b)
Wen-jing	Drawing & painting skills	Tonal drawing & painting.	Chinese paintings- landscape; fruit; nature.	(b)
Natasha	Drawing & painting techniques; art history.	Graphic design and printmaking	Impressionists. Russian folk art	(a)

**Note.**

1. The most important thing to learn in a visual arts course.
2. Preferred areas of the visual arts course.
3. Favourite artist/artists or styles of art.
4. Whether art should be (a) beautiful (b) expressive of ideas or feelings or (c) useful.

The graphic design project involved the design of a book jacket for a book about Australian art. This was intended to support the study of Australian art in the art history component of the syllabus although students were encouraged to select an aspect of Australian art or design which interested them, not necessarily representing those artists or

periods studied. The Student Brief (outline of the project), indicated a step-by-step approach to the studio outcome with regard to the design of image, typography and layout as well as exploring these disciplines through the visual inquiry process. Three of the participants (Huong, Natasha and Wen-jing), indicated that they enjoyed the approach of being given precise instructions as to how to proceed, whilst Ben and James felt impatient and wished to proceed to the final outcome without following the steps.

Prami indicated a lack of interest in the subject - this appeared to relate to some extent to his lack of understanding of the Australian art theme. He was absent from school quite frequently at this time which caused him to fall behind in both this and the previous projects. His absences also meant that he missed discussion and written exercises about Australian art. His difficulty with English discouraged and prevented him from catching up in this area. This was evident in Prami's response to the questionnaire. There was little written response to some questions which he admitted during the interview to not understanding. When the questions were explained to him he responded willingly and spoke at length about his experiences both before coming to the school and since joining the visual arts class. Prami indicated that he thought the most important things to learn in art were the techniques of drawing and painting, in particular drawing with charcoal. In response to the questionnaire and also during the interview he showed a preference for art showing painting which represented nature. He expressed this as "the beautiful, calm like water".

Further discussion however, indicated an interest also in more dramatic subjects. He identified his favourite artist as Abandi, a Javanese artist whose drawings depicted such actions as performances by Indonesian dancers and animals such as tigers. Prami expressed his high opinion of the Javanese artist in the following words:

Abandi is most famous in Java. I like his drawing because he draws about action ... like Indonesian dance and other dance using masks ... like Chinese lion dance, and the Barong. It's very good because the dance is moving and he still can draw it while they're dancing. That is very hard. He also does painting, mostly of Asian animals.

Further discussion revealed that Prami found the Australian landscape less interesting than the jungles and wild animals of Asia. He in fact had little knowledge or experience of the Australian landscape because he had remained in the city since coming to Australia. Prami appeared to miss Indonesia which he left because of political unrest. His parents appreciated Chinese paintings of nature and owned landscape paintings from Indonesia. Prami owned a drawing of a sports car done by an Indonesian friend. He was aware of painting and ceramics being popular art forms in Indonesia. Prami had attended school in Australia since 1996 but had not received any visual arts education either in Australia or Indonesia.

Wen-jing had received instruction in drawing and painting techniques as part of her primary school education in China. However, since leaving there at the age of ten, her general education had been interrupted and she had received no further education in the visual arts. Wen-jing saw the graphic design project as an opportunity of learning more about Australian art. With reference to the painting project, she indicated that she appreciated learning a variety of painting styles and techniques. She had not enjoyed the print-making project because it had been more difficult to produce a realistic outcome using the relief-printing process. Wen-jing identified drawing and painting techniques as the most important things to learn in art especially tonal rendering in a variety of media (e.g. pencil and watercolour) and liked to be given clear

instructions. She indicated a lack of confidence when asked to work imaginatively or expressively. She also felt that the study of the history of art was important although she found it difficult: "History is okay for me but the words are too hard to understand". She indicated that her favourite type of art (to look at) was tonal drawing and painting, in particular landscapes (the environment), also fruit. She was of the opinion that art should be expressive (i.e. should express the beauty of a place or object and invoke a feeling of peace in the viewer). Wen-jing reported that her parents appreciated traditional Chinese paintings of waterfalls, flowers and birds and tonal drawing/painting in ink as practised in China. In the family home they had paintings of the Great Wall of China one of which she thought may have been completed by her mother who also practised embroidery.

Both Ben and James, the two students from English-speaking backgrounds (ESB) indicated that they were happy with the Year 11 visual arts course. They did not appear to have any concerns about the content. Both students have shown a particular interest in the course and foresee their future careers as involving further study in the visual arts. Both students had experienced one semester of visual arts education during the previous year. Prior to that time Ben had received two years of visual arts education in New Zealand unlike James who had not received any instruction in the visual arts.

Ben expressed a preference for the graphic design project as this was his particular interest and possibly a future career path. He appreciated learning the task of the graphic designer (i.e. the disciplines involved) as well as becoming more familiar with various styles and examples of Australian art. He also saw it as involving more drawing than painting. Ben said that he enjoyed the painting project completed previously as he felt he had learnt and developed skill in a number of styles and techniques. However, he still felt more confident with drawing

and therefore was more satisfied with the final graphic design outcome than with his painting. As stated earlier, Ben had felt frustrated with not being able to proceed directly to completion of the final piece. He did admit however, to a feeling of satisfaction having completed each step leading to the outcome.

Ben expressed more interest than most of the other students in art appreciation, claiming that learning to analyse images and to understand an artist's motivation were among the most important things to learn in a visual arts course. He believed that art should be both beautiful and expressive; his favourite artist was Monet and he appreciated Monet's use of broken colour. Ben's parents had reproductions of work by the Australian Heidelberg school artist Tom Roberts displayed in their home. Ben remembered seeing examples of wood-carving in New Zealand. He reported that his grandmother enjoyed painting as a hobby, and his father had been interested in graphic design before becoming a spray-painter. Ben's parents also displayed art work in the home which had been done by their children.

James was also anxious to proceed directly with the final outcome. He had displayed this impatience with each of the previous projects. James was pleased with the outcome although felt that the lettering could have been better. He enjoyed this project because (like Ben), he saw it relating to a future career-path. He has an intense interest in cartooning and wants to pursue a career in visual animation. In both the painting project and in the previous print-making project, he showed a concern for technical excellence. He expressed a desire to undertake more realistic drawing because he saw this as being advantageous and as the most important skill to learn in a visual arts course. He wished to improve his figure drawing and his skill in the use of linear perspective. He admitted to being a "perfectionist" and admiring art that was realistic. James found it difficult to relate to abstract or expressionist art and therefore

had preferred the study of Renaissance art to other periods studied during the year. James' favourite artist was the cartoonist Paul Rigby because he most admired cartooning and realistic drawing and painting. He stated that his parents showed a preference for landscapes but there was no art displayed in the home. James indicated that his parents were supportive of his interest in cartooning and his ambition to pursue a career in animation.

In Natasha's response to the questionnaire she expressed enjoyment of the graphic design process particularly the lettering and design of the layout, but indicated at first that she would have enjoyed a subject other than Australian art: "I don't really like Australian art". She reported that she found the research for the project uninteresting. However, after it was suggested during the interview that her research could include Australian fashion design which appealed to her more, she began to show interest. Like Prami she had little experience of Australian landscape beyond the city. During the painting project undertaken during the previous school term she had shown a concern for finding examples of painting which represented European forests. Natasha had joined the class during second term and had missed the drawing unit undertaken in first term. She admitted to feeling disadvantaged by this as she was dissatisfied with her drawing skills. She expressed the opinion that the most important things to learn in a visual arts course were drawing and painting techniques and art history. During the interview she elaborated further on her interest in art history and her appreciation of many different periods and styles of art. She appeared confident in her ability to succeed in this discipline.

Natasha reported that she believed art should represent beauty and that she particularly liked the work of the Impressionists as did her parents. Original oil paintings of landscape which had been brought with the family from Russia were displayed in the home. The home also

contained copies of religious icons and books about the French Impressionists. Natasha was familiar with a variety of Russian art forms; she particularly liked examples of pictures burnt onto wood and then painted. She revealed that she had learnt this technique whilst in Russia. She reported that her aunt practised textile art as a hobby. Natasha had not studied art since coming to Australia. However she had attended private art classes in Russia.

Maria expressed enjoyment of the graphic design project particularly experimenting with typography and layout, despite her concern for not having time to complete the final outcome to her satisfaction. She indicated that she had also enjoyed the painting project. In response to the questionnaire she expressed a preference for still life and interior scenes as subjects. During the interview Maria stated that she was reasonably happy with the course but was concerned about finding sufficient time to complete all tasks. In response to both the questionnaire and the interview Maria expressed a desire to explore a number of studio areas and would have liked textiles to have been included in the course although she did not really want to have any of the other projects excluded. She also expressed an interest in having more art gallery visits to be included in the course. Like Ben, Maria felt that art history and appreciation were among the most important aspects of a visual arts course. She felt that studying the work of artists provided ideas and knowledge of painting styles and techniques. Maria said that she thought it was important for art to be both beautiful and expressive. Her favourite works of art were ancient Greek sculptures and contemporary paintings of the Greek islands. Her parents displayed photographs of Greek sculpture and architecture in the home as well as original examples of painting (landscape and still-life), tapestry and religious icons brought from Greece. They also displayed art work done by their three children. A family friend practised a variety of crafts which

she sold in local markets. Maria's previous education in the visual arts included one semester during the previous year and one in year eight. She had also experienced some previous art education in primary school.

Huong had also experienced one semester of visual arts education prior to the year in which the research was conducted. She was among the students who appreciated a step-by-step approach to the graphic design project. During the interview she said that she would have preferred the painting project to have contained more detailed instruction for the completion of the final outcome. Of all the projects completed during the year, she enjoyed printmaking the most. Again, this involved more detailed sequential instructions and she expressed her admiration for the examples of Chinese and Japanese woodblock prints which had been viewed in class. Huong also indicated that she enjoyed the drawing project and enjoys drawing people in her own time. She stated in her response to both the questionnaire and the interview that she believed instruction in drawing techniques to be the most important skill to learn. She suggested that this should be perfected before proceeding to painting techniques. Huong finds art history and appreciation difficult as she does not have the vocabulary (in English ) to express what she wants to say: "Other students use a lot of words; it's easy for them". Whilst appreciating the examples of woodblock printing which were discussed in class during art history and art criticism lessons, she found it difficult to participate in the discussions either orally or to respond in written form. When writing an essay she prepares it first in Vietnamese and then translates into English. In an examination or during discussion in class this was not possible and she was often not successful.

Huong expressed a preference for art that was expressive, and people and places as subjects. Huong did not indicate a preference for any artist or style of art in response to the questionnaire. However, during the interview she talked about a painting brought by the family from Vietnam



which she admired very much. Her parents had examples in their home of painting, textile printing and woodcarving brought from Vietnam.

#### 4.3.2 Examination of Work Samples

Participants in the study were asked to respond individually to an art appreciation task (Appendix 3). In the first section of the task (A) participants were presented with three original art works and four reproductions of art works:

- original art works included; a small Indonesian painting of a dancer in traditional costume, a Chinese scroll featuring calligraphy and natural forms, an acrylic painting by the aboriginal artist Bessie Liddle entitled "Snake Dreaming".
- reproductions of art works including; Claude Monet's "*Water Lilies*" 1899, Robert Delaunay's "*Windows Open Simultaneously (First Part, Third Motif)*" 1912, Arthur Streeton's "*Golden Summer, Eaglemont*" 1889, Hiroshi Yoshida's "*Night After Rain*" from the series: Twelve themes about Tokyo 1929.

The participants were asked to indicate their preferences by numbering each work from one to seven. They were also asked to give reasons for their choice. In the second section (B), the participants were required to select an example of another artwork from a wider range of resources and to discuss the work.

This type of exercise had been utilised previously by the researcher in classes which comprised both ESB students and those from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The purpose of the activity was to begin the process of art criticism with artworks chosen by the students. It was hoped that understanding the process through interacting with artworks to which the students could relate, would enable them to eventually apply the process to other artworks. Both Chalmers (1996) and Stout (1997) emphasised the importance of beginning the critical thinking process

with artworks with which the students could interact on a personal level. The choice of works from European, Asian and Australian artists was made in an attempt to address the point made by McFee (1986) and Chalmers (1996) that students be given the opportunity to draw examples from their own cultural background when beginning critical thinking.

Four of the seven students selected the Streeton as either their first or second preference. The reasons given indicated a preference for landscape as a subject and for its naturalistic style. It should be taken into account that students may have responded to this example because they were currently studying Australian art and had been exposed to work by colonial and Heidelberg school artists. The Monet reproduction was also popular being the first choice of two students, and the second preference of another. The Indonesian painting was the second preference of the Indonesian student, and the Chinese scroll was rated highly by the Chinese student. The Delaunay painting was the second or third choice of all seven students. They liked the graded colour and surface pattern of shapes and colours. The Aboriginal painting was popular with the Vietnamese student (Huong) but not the others. Huong appeared to find it difficult to give a reason for selecting this work.

Samples of both written and practical work completed by the students were evaluated according to a set of criteria. The criteria applied to the written work included the student's apparent understanding of both the course content and specific tasks related to art history and criticism, their ability to analyse art works and verbalise their observations both orally and in written form using a satisfactory standard of literacy, and their ability to relate their knowledge and understanding of artists' works to their own creative tasks.

For practical tasks the criteria were established for measuring the students' success in attaining satisfactory levels. These included the students' handling of media, skills and processes; their ability to create

imaginative and original art works; their ability to express ideas visually and their apparent understanding and application of the elements and principles of design.

Prami experienced great difficulty in understanding both art history and criticism. It was necessary to spend a lot of time explaining the tasks to him and he often still appeared not to fully understand. In art history, he occasionally contributed to class discussions in a way that suggested some knowledge and understanding. This was also evident in essays and assignments begun in class and completed in his own time, although the standard of literacy was poor. Under examination conditions there was little evidence of knowledge or understanding of the material studied, or the ability to analyse art works. As stated earlier, Prami was frequently absent which no doubt affected his progress. However, it is possible that the difficulties experienced by him may have discouraged him from attending the classes. He was found to be experiencing great difficulty with both oral and written English and this was affecting his progress in all learning areas.

**Table 3: Evaluation of Student Performance in Art History and Art Criticism**

CRITERIA	1	2	3	4	5	6
PRAMI	ND/S	ND/S	ND	ND	ND	ND
WEN-JING	ND/S	ND/S	ND/S	ND/S	ND	ND/S
BEN	H/V	V	V	V	V	V
JAMES	H/V	H/V	H	S/H	S	H
MARIA	H	H/V	H/V	H	S	H
HUONG	ND/S	S	ND/S	ND/S	ND/S	S/H
NATASHA	H	H/V	V	V	H	H

Note.

- |   |   |                       |
|---|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | Demonstrates understanding of course content. | V = Very high         |
| 2 | Demonstrates understanding of task.           | H = High              |
| 3 | Oral analysis of an art work.                 | S = Satisfactory      |
| 4 | Written analysis of an artwork.               | ND = Not Demonstrated |
| 5 | Satisfactory standard of literacy.            |                       |
| 6 | Application to own work.                      |                       |

Table 4: Evaluation of Student Performance in Practical Tasks.

CRITERIA	1	2	3
PRAMI	S/H	ND/S	S/H
WEN-JING	H/V	ND/S	S/H
BEN	H/V	V	V
JAMES	H	S/H	S/H
MARIA	S/H	H/V	S/H
HUONG	V	S	H/V
NATASHA	S/H	H	H

Note.

- 1 Demonstrates competence in the use of media, skills and processes.
- 2 Demonstrates aptitude for creating original and imaginative artworks.
- 3 Demonstrates an understanding of and sensitivity in the use of the elements and principles of design.

V = Very High      H = High      S = Satisfactory      ND = Not Demonstrated

In practical (art making) areas Prami demonstrated some competence in observed drawing and in the handling of a variety media. He was particularly concerned with achieving technical excellence in printmaking and showed an understanding of and sensitivity towards the elements and principles of design. His painting showed concern for the formal qualities of design and composition. It appeared difficult for him to relate the study of art history to his own work and to understand the relationship between the visual inquiry and the studio product. Having developed images from his drawing and design experimentation, he preferred to take an unrelated or “borrowed” image for the subject of his studio work. When working on the printmaking project he took considerable care with the preparation of the lino-cut and showed concern for achieving technical excellence in the printmaking process. The graphic design project was not completed.

Wenjing appeared to find the theory areas difficult. However, she demonstrated a very determined approach to gaining clarity of the course

requirements and the set tasks. She contributed to class discussion when dealing with material already studied but was reluctant to participate in spontaneous discussion related to analysis of images. She appeared more confident when discussing technical expertise and style, but less inclined to discuss meaning. It was difficult to ascertain whether this was due to lack of understanding about what was required, or to difficulty in imagining or speculating about what an art work may mean or to suggest what the intention of the artist might have been. It was also difficult for her to synthesise the information gleaned from analysing the visual arts works. Essays which she had time to prepare were quite well written and obviously well-researched. Under examination conditions however, although there was evidence of having studied the appropriate content, the written information was difficult to decipher and she appeared to regurgitate factual information rather than address the question. Responses to image analysis questions followed a prescribed format and attempted to describe the works according to a set of criteria although the standard of literacy was inadequate. As stated previously, she had admitted during the interview to experiencing difficulty in this area.

In practical tasks, Wen-jing showed highly developed skill in the use of a variety of media and techniques. Although not initially comfortable with observed drawing from actual objects, she did gain confidence in this area and reached a satisfactory standard of realistic representation. She showed particular expertise in experimenting with mixed media and some intaglio printmaking techniques which required detailed drawing. Like Prami, Wen-jing developed some useful images from the visual inquiries, but found it difficult to relate this with her studio outcome. She would have preferred to copy an image from a photograph. She seemed to experience some difficulty in seeing the connection between art history and criticism and practical work, but to a lesser extent than difficulties experienced by Prami.

Wen-jing revealed that she had received instruction in realistic representation using pencil, ink and watercolour. In the early stages of the printmaking project which involved drawing and other visual inquiry work, Wen-jing produced drawings which showed sensitivity and competence in using a variety of media. She was reluctant however, to experiment with a range of printmaking techniques and demonstrated little enthusiasm for the final outcome. It should be noted that Wen-jing had given great care and attention to the previous painting project which she completed with obvious interest and enjoyment. The same interest was being shown in the graphic design project. These projects both employed skills and techniques with which she felt confident, having practised them previously. Wen-jing was experiencing the studio area printmaking for the first time and therefore felt less confident. During the interview she expressed her dislike of this activity and her preference for working directly onto the painting or drawing surface.

Ben displayed competence in both practical and theoretical areas of the course. He was a conscientious student and was sufficiently interested to work at all aspects of the course in his own time. He contributed willingly and confidently to discussions of artworks and participated enthusiastically in practical activities. He was dissatisfied with his studio piece for the printmaking project and completed another during lunch-times which showed a considerable improvement. He drew creatively with a variety of media and showed an understanding of the elements and principles of design in the development of images. His studio work showed a clear interrelationship with both the visual inquiry and the art history research. His written work was of a high standard and showed an understanding of the criteria for analysing art works and of the art history themes studied.

James also showed a clear understanding of the art history themes and was able to express his ideas verbally in both written and oral form.

He was perhaps less willing to try to understand the intention of artists whose work he had difficulty in relating to. James worked conscientiously in the practical areas and was prepared to work hard at some of the activities which he found more difficult. He produced some very sensitive and thoughtful responses to imaginative exercises although whilst working on these he often expressed the view that he could not see the point in engaging in these activities. James was particularly anxious to improve his skills in realistic representation. This was his goal in both the painting and the printmaking projects and he worked determinedly to achieve this goal.

Maria worked diligently at art history and criticism. She completed written assignments on time and always participated in discussions. She appeared to have a good grasp of the course content and to understand the process of analysis. Under examination conditions however, she appeared to have difficulty in expressing her ideas and some of her information was confused. Consultation with her English teacher revealed that she was experiencing some difficulty with written English.

Maria responded enthusiastically to all projects showing a willingness to experiment with a variety of activities. Her visual diary showed spontaneity in the use of media, techniques and styles. In some areas her work lacked control and she became frustrated with the results. There was a clear interrelationship between her visual inquiry, her research and the studio outcome. In the graphic design project, the visual inquiry showed more creativity and originality than the final outcome which appeared to be rushed. Maria appeared to be a particularly anxious student who was concerned with achieving success in her studies. At the time of the collection of the research data the end of year examinations were approaching and the current visual arts project was soon to be submitted for assessment. She showed particular concern for the completion of all work within the given time.

Huong experienced difficulty with art history and criticism. She indicated that she enjoyed researching artists and their works in connection with her visual inquiry and experimenting with painting techniques and styles. However, she had problems with understanding much of the content and verbalising responses to art works.

Huong's drawing skills were highly developed and she demonstrated competence and sensitivity in the handling of a variety of media. She worked slowly and meticulously. As stated earlier, she preferred to work within clearly defined guidelines. Because of working so meticulously, she had difficulty finishing within the required time. The relationships between her visual inquiry, research and the studio product were clear. However she worked very slowly and like Maria showed concern for the volume of work to be completed within the given time.

As stated earlier, Natasha joined the class in second term and felt disadvantaged by having missed the drawing unit and the art history theme studied in first term. However she seemed to quickly make up for lost time in both the art history and art criticism. Despite having completed only two years of mainstream English, she showed an understanding of the themes and was able to express her ideas verbally in both oral and written form.

Natasha showed concern for achieving competence in the use of a variety of practical skills and displayed understanding and sensitivity in the use of the elements and principles of design. She was particularly interested in learning printmaking techniques and explored a wide range of media and processes. Her final outcome showed considerable creativity. In the painting project she had also demonstrated an interest in experimenting with a range of media. As stated earlier, she was less enthusiastic about the graphic design project but eventually produced a satisfactory outcome. She was quite often absent or late to class and was



therefore unable to reach her full potential in some tasks. Most of her work, however, was completed to a satisfactory standard and some, in fact, was excellent.

#### 4.4 Themes Used to Categorise the Data

The data is presented here under themes which are central to the research questions. The research questions are:

- 1 What do students from diverse ethnic backgrounds understand by the term “visual arts”?
- 2 To what extent does NESB students’ understanding of the term “visual arts” and “visual arts education” influence their expectations and performance in the visual arts classroom?

The themes under which the data is presented are (a) NESB students’ perceptions of the visual arts and visual arts education, (b) previous exposure to the visual arts and visual arts education, (c) influences of NESB students’ perception of the term “visual arts” and “visual arts education” on their expectations and performance in the visual arts classroom and (d) other factors impacting on students’ performance.

##### 4.4.1 Theme 1: NESB students’ perceptions of the visual arts and visual arts education

Dissanayake (1992) asserted that aesthetic attitudes vary widely from one society to another and that these attitudes are wholly learned or cultural. This claim is supported by other writers who have addressed the issue of multiculturalism in visual arts education. Fielding (1997) claimed that creativity was socially and culturally determined as did

Chalmers (1996) who advocated the consideration of social and cultural differences when making aesthetic judgements.

In the light of these claims information was sought about the understanding by students of the terms “visual arts” and “visual arts education” and the degree to which their ethnic backgrounds may have influenced their understanding of these terms. This information has been extracted from the data recorded above.

Many of the opinions expressed about the visual arts at first appeared to vary little between the ESB and the NESB participants. Most appeared to be concerned with gaining technical excellence particularly in the area of realistic representation of natural and found objects. Understanding of the process of visual inquiry varied within the sample group. Two participants who had studied art in the previous year seemed to find it easier to follow the process and to meet the requirements which included observational drawing; interpretive and conceptual drawing; art appreciation; and design development. These students also accepted more readily the discipline of representational drawing of observed objects whereas others attempted to avoid this, finding it more challenging than copying an image from a photograph or another’s drawing. During the group interview Prami, Wen-jing and Huong shared the view that they could not see the point of observational drawing when a more acceptable result (in their opinion), could be achieved by copying. Wen-jing’s comment: “It looks better, more real” highlighted the emphasis placed on achieving the effect of photographic realism.

Some participants (Wen-jing, Huong, Prami) also indicated that they regarded experimenting with media and styles and working imaginatively as not serious art and preferred to avoid it. Initially, another participant (James), demonstrated a similar response but after questioning the value of such exercises he eventually became involved in the process of exploration and pursued a number of ideas. He expressed

the opinion that experimenting with the use of line, colour, pattern, etc. had helped him to generate more ideas for his Graphic Design project.

Of all the students, Wen-jing and Huong expressed the greatest need to be shown exactly what to do. They were uncomfortable about generating their own ideas and adopting an original and individual approach. Their expectations appeared to be that they should be taught what to do and how to do it. Huong suggested that it was important “to learn the technique of how to draw with a pencil first - before painting”. The other five students, appeared to be comfortable with pursuing their own ideas within clear guidelines although this often involved the use of cliches or borrowed images.

Ben claimed that experimenting with styles and techniques was among the important components of a visual arts course. This was evident in his own work. He appeared willing to take risks.

The visual diaries of students who had studied art in the previous year reflected more spontaneity than those who had not. Those of two of the Asian students (Prami and Wen-jing) appeared inhibited and restrained. Prami had difficulty with arranging the work chronologically and there were gaps in the diary where tasks had not been completed. As previously mentioned, his attendance at school had been erratic.

Four of the seven participants reported that art appreciation was important. Three of these four were NESB students. Of the three who did not say it was important, two (also NESB) were not being successful in this area which may have contributed to their opinion of art criticism and analysis. Those who did express the opinion that Art Appreciation was important said that among the aspects of this which they valued were visiting art galleries, learning to understand artists' reasons for working in the ways they did and gaining knowledge and inspiration from analysing art works. Maria expressed this during her interview as: “Going to museums and looking at how other people have used

techniques and special features to complete their work, this gives me ideas about my own work”.

Two participants (Natasha and James) claimed that art should be “beautiful”. Natasha nominated the painting of the French Impressionists as being her favourite whilst James expressed a preference for the work of the cartoonist, Paul Rigby. Natasha also referred to a process practised in Russia, in which a design is burnt into wood and then painted, and named this as one of her favourite art forms. The students who indicated that “expressiveness” was important indicated that they saw this as meaning expressing the beauty of an object or place rather than expressing ideas or feelings. All students had responded negatively to an exhibition of contemporary works by Asian artists (viewed at the Art Gallery of Western Australia earlier in the year) which highlighted political or social injustices. Whilst acknowledging that the work raised interesting and important issues, the students suggested that art should not be about those things. They preferred to view “nice” subjects.

Prami’s response to the questionnaire expressed a preference for “peaceful and beautiful” landscapes. During the interview he also referred to the work of a Javanese artist whose work he admired. This was described as representing action “like in Indonesian dance”.

Wen-jing expressed a preference for Chinese tonal painting using ink. She described examples of this as paintings of landscape, fruit and nature. Her opinion was that art should express beauty. Maria claimed that art should be expressive. She indicated that her favourite art works were Greek sculptures and paintings of the Greek islands. Ben also indicated a preference for art that was expressive but in the interview said that he liked many types of art. He named the work of Monet as his favourite.

All of the participants were concerned with being successful in the course and most appeared to be working to the best of their abilities and their understanding of what was required. Prami appeared to avoid some tasks which were difficult, particularly written assignments. He was frequently absent at the time these were given and at the time that they were to be completed. Some design development exercises also appeared to have been avoided by Prami.

#### 4.4.2 Theme 2: Previous experiences of art education

Ben, James and Maria, the three participants who were born in Australia and the Vietnamese student, Huong, completed one semester of Year 10 art at their present school during 1997. The course for that semester included a community arts project which involved the painting of a mural. The visual inquiry for this project involved drawing, relief-printing of images to be incorporated in the design of the mural, and Art Appreciation. Ben had attended high school in New Zealand during years 8 and 9, and had studied art there. He had learnt a variety of drawing techniques but had experienced no other visual arts activities or theory. He had attended primary school in Australia but did not recall any regular art classes. Maria had completed one semester of art in year 8. James had not studied art in years 8 or 9. Neither he nor Maria remembered very much about art in primary school. Huong had completed a semester of art in both years 8 and 9. At primary school in Vietnam she remembered learning only science, mathematics and Vietnamese: "I don't know about learning art in Vietnam; I don't think they do it in school". Prami had not studied art before year 11 either in Australia or Indonesia.

Wen-jing had attended primary school in China until she was ten, and art had been part of the curriculum. She described this as being different from what she was doing now:

I learnt to draw with a pencil, copying from a book .... everyone has a book of drawings of fruit and flowers. The whole class had to draw the same picture. Sometimes the teacher would show on the board ... how to draw ... how to do the colours ... the class had to do the same.

Wen-jing also revealed that she had received instruction in the use of ink and watercolour. The teacher would sometimes offer advice to individual students. Students were not encouraged to work imaginatively. This formal style of teaching art was noted by Cox et al. (1999). They found that from the age of 6, school children in China received regular instruction in copying techniques by art specialists.

Natasha had studied craft at her present school for one semester in Year 10. Art had not been taught at primary school in Russia. However Natasha attended private classes where she participated in a variety of visual arts activities including burning pictures into wood, painting onto fabric and painting onto plates applying a traditional Russian style to her own designs. In the table which follows, the students' previous exposure to visual arts education is presented.

Table 5: Previous Exposure to Visual Art and Visual Arts Education.

	1	2	3	4
PRAMI	Yes	Yes	0	Yes
WEN-JING	Yes	Yes	P	Yes
BEN	Yes	Yes	S	Yes
JAMES	No	No	S	
MARIA	Yes	Yes	S	Yes
HUONG	Yes	No	S	Yes
NATASHA	Yes	Yes	S	Yes

Note.

- 1 Art in the home - original works; reproductions; books.
- 2 Contact with artists or craftworkers - family or friends.
- 3 Primary (P) or secondary (S) visual arts education.
- 4 Awareness of traditional art forms in country of origin.

4. 4. 3 Theme 3: Influences of NESB students' perceptions on their expectations and performance in the visual arts classroom.

There seemed to be some correlation between the art with which participants were familiar and the art which they admired. In response to the questionnaire and the art appreciation task, most students indicated a preference for landscape as a subject and realism or naturalism as a style. Maria, Natasha and Ben expressed an interest in the art of the French Impressionists.

James expressed the belief that it was important to learn to draw realistically. He had been interested in cartooning from an early age and felt that representational drawing was a skill which he would need if he were to develop this art form. He said: "I want to do more realistic drawing, to improve. I'd like to draw more people - even landscapes. I'm not very good at perspective".

Wen-jing expressed her love for a watercolour painting of the Great Wall of China displayed in her home. At primary school in China she

had received instruction in developing skills in using pencil and watercolour.

Prami indicated an interest in landscape painting and also narrative art. This was evident in his reference to the Indonesian artist Abandi: "He draws about action, something like a tiger, it feels like it's moving ...I don't know what's going to happen. Animals racing towards me ... scary things".

Huong also expressed a desire to emulate artists whom she admired: "In our loungeroom we have a very big painting on paper. An Asian landscape ... it's beautiful, done with a brush. I would love to copy that".

Maria referred to her favourite art as paintings of the Greek islands and religious icons. Similarly, Natasha nominated a traditional Russian craft of burning pictures into wood and painting them as one of her favourite forms of art.

In the areas of art history and criticism all of the NESB students with the exception of Natasha, experienced difficulties albeit to varying degrees. As stated earlier, Natasha and her parents were fluent in English.

#### 4.4.4 Theme 4: Other factors impacting on participants' performance

The academic performance of all students irrespective of their ethnic background are influenced by a number of factors. These are defined by Wasson, Stuhr and Petrovich-Mwaniki (1990) and Burke (1993) as gender, socio-economic status (SES), physical and intellectual ability, peer pressure, parental expectations, family situation, physical and emotional well-being, maturity, religion and ethnicity. Other factors which need to be considered in assessing student performance are age and in the case of NESB students, the circumstances surrounding the



student's departure from their country of origin and of their arrival at their present place of residence.

Burke et al. (1993) noted that immigration and settling in another country with its uncertainty regarding housing and employment can impact on learning as can the fact that the education of these students has been disrupted. There are often wide gaps between attending school in the country of origin and attending school in Australia. Burke et al. pointed out that older students (upper secondary) were often coming to terms with the English language at the same time as finishing secondary school. This was the case with four of the NESB participants in this study.

In this presentation of data which deals with the factors which may impact on students' performance, consideration should also be given to physical and emotional trauma which may have been experienced as a result of leaving significant people and places, travelling to unknown destinations and beginning a new life in unfamiliar circumstances. Difficulties may be experienced in finding accommodation and work. Some may have lost members of their families through wars or natural disasters. Immigrants with refugee status have often arrived in Australia with very few personal belongings. These factors can adversely affect the performance of students at school. One student who was to participate in the study withdrew after news of natural disasters in South America which had claimed the lives of members of his extended family.

Two of the participants, Huong and Wen-jing were refugees. It appeared that both of these students had experienced hardship either prior to, or during their departure from their countries of origin. Wen-jing's parents had worked twenty hour days catching and selling fish in China. For her to receive an education, Wen-jing had been sent to stay with relatives in a nearby town in order to attend school. Huong had also been separated from members of her family during the journey from Vietnam to Australia. Therefore, both Huong and Wen-jing had

experienced gaps in their education between leaving their countries of origin and attending the present school.

Most of the NESB group (i.e. Huong, Wen-jing, Prami and Natasha) would be identified as second phase learners by teachers who specialise in English as a second language (ESL). Second phase language learners are defined as students who have graduated from language centres with basic language skills such as competence in listening and oral communication (Burke et al., 1993). These skills do not necessarily equip students for mainstream education particularly at upper secondary level because they often lack understanding and written language skills. Other characteristics of second-phase learners may include a lack of competency in the first language, reluctance to admit to experiencing difficulties and a desire to fulfil parental expectations. It is pointed out that these characteristics may occur in students who are born in Australia but rarely speak English at home (Burke et al., 1993, p. 55). This description could apply to Maria who was born in Australia, but for whom Greek is the main language spoken at home.

Another factor which might impact on a student's performance relates to the age at which they commenced school. There is also the question of continuity in the student's education. According to Burke et al. (1993) students with gaps in the learning of their first language will experience more difficulty in grasping new concepts and terms in the second language. This is more likely to occur where the students are refugees and have not come directly from school in their homeland to their present school situation. It was recently discovered by ESL teachers at the school where the study was conducted, that a number of NESB students from the same year group as the sample group, did not know how to write in their native language. Discontinuity in education can also impede future learning in subjects other than language (Burke et al., 1993).

There can be a degree of discrepancy in the ability of these students as a group to meet the demands of mainstream classes because their written language is often poor. This appeared to be the case with Huong whose development in English appeared to have been affected by the interruption to her education in Vietnam at an early age. Despite having been in Australia for eight years she was continuing to study English as a second language.

Added to these problems is the reluctance of many students to draw attention to themselves by admitting that they don't understand or by asking for help. Many have developed skills that enable them to hide their weaknesses. They may also appear to lack motivation, however, their lack of participation may be due to a lack of understanding. Avoidance behaviours can include forgetting books, absences or withdrawal. This appeared to be the case with Prami who was frequently absent and often failed to complete work. When questioned about his understanding of course material he usually responded in the affirmative. However, his performance indicated a lack of understanding.

A recent survey (M. Mandelt, personal communication, 1998) of overseas students in the school at which the research was conducted revealed that many students admitted to not understanding teachers when they talked. The overseas students however, indicated that they did not believe that it was because their (i.e. the students') English needed to improve. The same number said that they did not think the work was too hard for them.

Within the school, the researcher has participated in interviews with parents which have revealed that many of them have high expectations for their sons' and daughters' success at school. Some parents who have been deprived of a full education themselves appear to assume that the provision of educational opportunities for their children will ensure academic success. The seven students in the sample group

lived with their families. Both parents of one NESB student (Wen-jing), were unemployed. Others were low to middle-income earners.

Among the participants, most of the NESB students expressed nostalgia towards their country of origin. This was also evident in Maria's case. Despite being born in Australia, she had visited Greece and Greek memorabilia was kept in her home. The interview with Maria revealed that as a Year 11 student, she had already reached a higher level of education than other members of her family. This also appeared to be true of Huong and Wen-jing.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

As previously stated, the research was designed to present a profile of each participant which took into account their biographical and ethnic background, their educational background, their previous experience of the visual arts and visual arts education, their opinions about the visual arts and visual arts education and their response to the visual arts course which they were currently undertaking. The study also endeavoured to present an overall picture of the sample group.

The data presented is the result of the research instruments administered. These included individual questionnaires designed to enable participants to present authentic responses without being influenced by the responses of others, interviews which enabled participants to amplify some of the views expressed in the questionnaire and which ensured that they had fully understood what was being asked, and work samples from the disciplines included in the visual arts course (i.e. visual inquiry, studio practice, art history and art criticism) which provided evidence of the responses of participants to the visual arts course currently being undertaken. Observation of students at work and information obtained from student records (consulted to ensure the

accuracy of some of the information provided on the questionnaire) was also presented in narrative form.

The research design appeared to be effective in obtaining information in a variety of ways, each adding a further dimension to the profile of each participant and the group. Following the first of the research instruments to be administered, the questionnaire, individual interviews enabled the researcher to ensure that participants had understood the questions and to encourage further discussion. Observation of participants engaged in the visual arts course and examination of work samples contributed further information. The resulting data helped to identify ways in which participants responded to the visual arts course and to possible influences on their responses.

Although it was initially intended to include the fourteen members of the Year 11 visual arts class in the study, using the smaller group appeared to provide sufficient material and allowed for more attention to be given to the responses of each participant. With the departure of several students from the school this small group tended to form the nucleus of the class. Burns (1994) advised against accumulating a “deluge” (p. 327) of information which is likely to become unmanageable and may lead to a superficial interpretation.

Whilst acknowledging that the role of the researcher as participant observer has been called into question (Burns, 1994 and Gambell, 1995) it has been noted that the close association with the sample group over a period of time has allowed for continued interaction and observation. This has helped to validate some of the original findings and has provided the opportunity for a deeper knowledge and understanding of the participants and their responses to the study.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION OF CASE STUDY DATA

#### 5.1 Overview of Chapter

In this chapter the data which has been presented will be examined in an attempt to determine evidence of information which would address the research questions. Under the themes already presented, the emerging information will be discussed in relation to its relevance to the themes.

#### 5.2 General Influences

Whilst the research questions sought specifically to determine the degree to which students' previous experiences of the visual arts influenced their present response to the visual arts course, it was also necessary to determine other factors which were likely to have influenced their response. These general influences on all students irrespective of their ethnic background have been referred to in previous chapters. The influences were: gender, socio-economic status (SES), physical and intellectual ability, peer pressure, parental expectations, family situation, physical and emotional well-being, maturity, religion and ethnicity. Other factors include dislocation through immigration and settling in another country with the ensuing uncertainty regarding housing and employment. As indicated by Burke, Kay, Matwiejczyk and Rees (1993) these factors can impact on learning as can the fact that the education of

these students may have been disrupted. There are often wide gaps between attending school in the country of origin and attending school in Australia. For one participant in the sample group (Wen-jing) five years had elapsed between leaving school in China and attending the present school although for six months she had attended school in a refugee camp in Western Australia. Burke et al. pointed out that older students (i.e. upper secondary) were often coming to terms with the English language and with the stresses of late adolescence.

It was considered appropriate therefore to identify aspects of the students' backgrounds which might impact on their education. According to Fielding (1997) an individual's creativity is influenced by his or her interaction with the culture and the social environment. This appeared to be the case for those students (e.g. Wen-jing, Natasha, Maria and Prami) whose preferences seemed to reflect their previous experience of the visual arts.

As with all students the socio-economic-status (SES) was seen to be an important factor in the lives of the participants. Of the NESB students the parents of only one (Natasha) had received tertiary education. Three of the other students were the first in their families to have reached their present educational level. In many cases sacrifices appeared to have been made to provide educational opportunities for the students. Parent-teacher interviews have indicated that many parents of NESB students have high expectations for their children who, as a consequence, feel a responsibility to achieve sufficiently high results to gain entry into a university. For some however, there appeared to be a lack of understanding of the physical and emotional support needed by students at this level if they are to achieve their educational goals. Many students are required to undertake responsibilities in the home or businesses owned by relations or friends and this can leave little time for study. Three of the NESB participants Huong, Wen-jing and Maria

demonstrated anxiety about achieving success in their studies (i.e. a focus on results). Natasha appeared more confident and relaxed.

Whilst this study is concerned more with the students' response to the visual arts than with general education, concerns for achievement could be seen to influence the student's attitude to the visual arts course. Where the focus is mainly on "success" in terms of achieving at a high level, this could affect the student's attitude towards exploring and being creative and could explain the seriousness with which many of them approach the course.

All of the students lived in what appeared to be secure family environments with two parents and one or more siblings. Maria and Prami also had grandparents living with their families. However, both Huong and Wen-jing indicated that they had experienced emotional and economic insecurity prior to coming to Australia and in the process of settling here. Both had come to Australia as refugees. At the time the research was conducted both of Wen-jing's parents since coming to Australia had been unemployed and Huong's father had obtained intermittent casual employment in a bakery. Members of Huong's family had been separated from each other during the journey from Vietnam, an older brother being the first arrival.

The fact that Wen-jing's parents worked twenty hour days catching and selling fish in a coastal village in mainland China and had sent Wen-jing to stay with friends in a nearby town so that she could attend school, suggests a life of hardship and the parents' concern for their daughter's education. Neither of Wen-jing's parents speak English and since coming to Australia Wen-jing has been responsible for many practical aspects of living here. These include such things as negotiating banking arrangements, social services and accommodation.

Some of these factors suggest that if students have been required to assume adult responsibilities from an early age their attitudes towards



learning is likely to be more serious. Perhaps they are less likely to embrace the “fun” aspects of learning because they need to see a “point” or purpose of all activities.

It appeared that the families of Prami and Natasha were more secure financially. Both families however, had left their countries of origin unwillingly because of social and political unrest and they had therefore experienced some emotional trauma. Natasha’s parents were both employed and Prami stated that his father worked as a sales manager. Maria’s family was also financially stable because her father worked as a maintenance officer in a private school.

It has been noted that students who are refugees are often older than their peer-group due to gaps that have occurred in their education and the time devoted to learning English before being admitted to mainstream classes. This was true for Prami, Wen-jing and Huong who were one year older than the other students.

Language was seen to be a problem for Huong, Wen-jing and Prami. During their interviews both Huong and Wen-jing revealed their concerns about being disadvantaged by not understanding the “words” particularly in theoretical areas of the course. For the five NESB students very little English was spoken in the home. Of these, Natasha’s parents appeared to have the best command of English which was spoken in the home although Russian was the first language. Maria’s family, particularly the children, spoke some English at home although Greek was mainly spoken among the adults (parents and grandparents). The families of Wen-jing, Huong and Prami spoke almost no English at home.

With language being identified as a major factor contributing to the success of NESB students the above information regarding the participants would appear to be significant. Burke et al. (1993, p. 64) argued that students whose English is limited are unable to successfully fulfil the demands of the school system and many fall further behind as

they move through the levels of secondary education. They highlighted the difficulty for students who have to continue their education in a language in which they are not fully competent. The importance of language was also stressed by Cummins (1993) who according to Weis and Fine (1993, p. 101) suggested that the educational progress of NESB students was influenced by the degree to which educators and classroom teachers assumed responsibility for the issue of literacy.

It is also important to recognise the need to develop literacy relevant to specific learning areas. Dumbleton and Lountain (1999) pointed out that words have a particular meaning in the context of the visual arts. They emphasised the importance of learning the specialised ways of using language in order to obtain information relevant to the visual arts and to fully participate in visual arts activities. According to Dumbleton and Lountain (1999) special skills need to be developed in reading, viewing, listening and writing (p. 3) within the context of the subject area. They stated that students who are struggling to meet these demands are being prevented from achieving success in the visual arts. Dumbleton and Lountain (1999) identified the literacy requirements of students in the visual arts as (a) the use of a range of visual arts vocabulary and terminology, (b) the interpretation of texts, (c) the location and critical selection of information and (d) the development of language to articulate meaning.

Of importance also in the students' educational development is the level of education attained in their first language and the degree of continuity in their education. Burke, et al. (1993) identified both the students' previous schooling and the degree of literacy in the mother tongue as significant factors influencing their ability to learn in a second language.

Consideration of the NESB students' previous schooling and literacy in their mother tongue revealed significant differences within the

group. Maria, who was born in Australia, had attended both primary and secondary school in Australia. In all subjects she was extremely diligent and serious in her approach. She also attended Greek school on Saturdays. Natasha and Prami appeared to have had a continuous general education before coming to Australia.

Natasha had spent time in the ILC but appeared to have adapted fairly easily to continuing her education in English despite having come directly from a non-English speaking background. In Russia she had attended school until close to the time of leaving and had also attended private art classes. Her academic progress did not appear to have been adversely affected by her migration to Australia. Natasha's school records showed that she was achieving at a satisfactory to high level in most subject areas including English. She also appeared confident and involved herself in both social and sporting activities.

Prami indicated that he had attended school regularly in Indonesia. His English was very limited and he had not had any previous visual arts education. In other subject areas Prami's teachers indicated that he was experiencing difficulties. An interview with his mother revealed that she thought him capable of meeting the requirements of the visual arts course and that he needed to work harder. The researcher has experienced this attitude among other parents of NESB students.

Maria had received some education in the visual arts during the previous three years although this had not been continuous. Huong had been in a visual arts class for one semester during the previous year. At that time she had shown little confidence in her ability and was often critical of her achievements despite receiving praise and affirmation from others. Both she and Wen-jing had experienced gaps in their education since leaving their country of origin. Clearly this had impacted on their present achievement despite their determined efforts. Despite having come to Australia in 1991, Huong was still studying ESL English and

finding it difficult. She was very serious in her approach to tasks in the visual arts course and worried about her perceived lack of success. This could be exacerbated by her preoccupation with realism in graphic representation.

Maria was managing to maintain satisfactory levels in most of her subjects including TEE English although this was achieved through constant effort. Prami was failing to reach a satisfactory level in most subjects. Wen-jing and Huong were barely maintaining satisfactory levels in most subjects including ESL English although Wen-jing was achieving at a higher level in Accounting.

It would appear from the evidence emerging from the research that three out of the five NESB participants were struggling to achieve success at Year 11 level. They appeared to have been disadvantaged by their previous educational experiences, lack of competency in English and gaps in their general education.

The NESB students selected for this study were generally from a lower SES as determined from their parents' employment history. As noted earlier, the parents of the students all appeared to be committed to providing educational opportunities for their children. Some of the students seemed to have responsibilities outside of school which encroached on their study time. Both Wen-jing and Huong stated that they often spent long hours helping in businesses (e.g. restaurants, delicatessens) run by friends or relatives. They explained that this was necessary as their level of English was more advanced than that of the adults involved in the businesses. These two students (and Maria as well), indicated that in addition to the work outside the home they had responsibilities and duties within the home. Maria worked approximately twelve hours per week in a supermarket. She expressed the hope that this job would continue as it would help with expenses likely to be incurred if she gained entry into a tertiary institution. Therefore she was anxious to

comply with requests by her employer to work longer hours. She often found it difficult to allocate time for study. It appears that many secondary school students (both ESB and NESB) are employed in part-time work. However in many instances it is given less importance than study particularly at this post compulsory level.

### 5.3 Perceptions of Visual Art and Visual Arts Education

Students' opinions were sought on their perceptions of the visual arts and their expectations of visual arts education (Table 2: Participants' opinions about visual arts and visual arts education). By means of a questionnaire and interviews students were asked to identify their preferred artists or art forms, their preferred style of art and what they believed to be important to learn in a visual arts class. Three of the students claimed that art history and appreciation were important. The reasons given included "learning how others have used techniques; getting ideas" (Maria) and "learning to analyse images helps us to appreciate the artist's intention and motivation" (Ben). The development of technical skills was important for five of the students; "practising and learning techniques of drawing and painting" (Prami); and "learning technical skill in using a pencil, then learning to paint" (Huong). Huong's opinion reflected the notion that one skill should be perfected before proceeding to the next.

This sequential method of working (reflected in Huong's comment) was referred to by Gardner (1989) when highlighting the concern for control and perfection of skills as a characteristic of Chinese artistic and educational practices. Huong and Wen-jing displayed a degree of anxiety about making things "perfect". Both of these students also expressed a preference for being given step-by-step instructions for each stage of a project. There was a reluctance to apply techniques (previously learned

and practised) to an image generated by using imagination and/or experimentation. They would have preferred their final outcome to be a direct copy of a reproduction.

According to Marsh, Watts and Malyon (1999) a characteristic of Chinese artists has been their acceptance of authority. Marsh et al. (1999) stated that the purpose of Chinese art was to create order and harmony between nature and man, and that styles and traditions have been continuous: "There was no room for violence, anger or unedifying subject matter" (p. 2). There would appear to be a relationship between this continuity of tradition, the desire for perfection exhibited by students of Chinese origin and the information given by Wen-jing about the methods of teaching art in Chinese schools. All of the students from Chinese background (as well as Indonesian and Vietnamese backgrounds) indicated an admiration for Chinese painting held by both themselves and their families.

Among the activities claimed to be preferred by students, representational drawing was nominated by Prami, Wen-jing and Huong. Ben showed an interest in learning about the art of other cultures and in discovering new ways of representing subjects. This interest was reflected in his response to the questionnaire in which he nominated research as providing "ideas and inspiration". He also said that "experimenting with styles and techniques" was equally interesting and enjoyable. Of the projects undertaken in the visual arts course, graphic design was recorded as the preferred activity for Maria, Natasha and to a lesser degree James, who as previously stated, indicated a preference for cartoon drawing. James had been encouraged in this art form from an early age by his parents who had given him books about cartoon-drawing including one by the cartoonist Paul Rigby. He showed a very determined attitude towards pursuing a career in animation.

Preferred art and artists nominated by students seemed to correlate to some extent with those preferred by the students' parents or those which were displayed in the family home. This correlation is supported by Fielding's (1997) socio-cognitive approach to multiculturalism in visual arts education, whereby an individual's creativity is socially and culturally based. Students of Chinese background seemed to prefer landscape painting in watercolour or inks and these students reported that traditional landscape paintings were displayed in their homes.

Maria's preference for Greek sculpture and paintings of the Greek islands may be seen as an effort to maintain traditions and an interest in Greek culture within her family. Maria's attendance at a Greek school on the weekends and her family's observance of the traditions and celebrations of the Greek Orthodox Church provides further evidence of the durability of social and cultural influences.

Both Natasha and Ben indicated a preference for the work of the French Impressionist artists. Natasha stated that an interest in European art styles was shown by her parents both before and after their emigration from Russia. The presence of art books within her home reflected an interest in the visual arts within the family. Ben also stated that his parents showed an interest in the visual arts by displaying reproductions of work by Australian artists in the home. His father had wanted to become a graphic designer but possibly due to lack of educational opportunity had become a spray painter. Ben's parents appeared to encourage their children's studies in the visual arts by displaying their artwork in the home. Both Natasha and Ben enjoyed experimenting with a variety of painting styles during the painting project and exploring a range of ideas and media. They were less preoccupied than some of the other students with obtaining photographic realism and there did not appear to be the preoccupation with doing what was necessary to achieve a high academic result. Both these students had

experienced some visual arts activities at both primary and secondary levels.

A concern for realistic representation was also apparent in James' artwork and comments. Having been encouraged from an early age to develop his cartoon drawing skills he had more recently realised that to pursue a career in this art form would require that he broaden his experience and practice of the visual arts. There appeared to be little knowledge or understanding of the visual arts in his background. James often questioned the rationale for including many of the components of the visual arts course. Among these were interpretive and imaginative drawing, conceptualising images, exploration and experimentation with media, styles and design development. There were times however, when James allowed himself to work more imaginatively and he was agreeably surprised by the results. Because of his lack of experience of alternative ways of working, such imaginative approaches were not among the options in his art making. This would support the view of Fielding (1997) that creativity is shaped by the individual's culture and previous experiences. James also showed a limited acceptance of artworks by both past and contemporary artists. He responded negatively to a range of modernist and post-modernist styles, questioning the artists' motivation for pursuing any goal other than realism. Other than one semester of art in year 10, his exposure to a range of styles and periods of art had been very limited.

#### 5.4 Influences of Perceptions on Performance

Student performance was evaluated by means of observation of the participants at work, assessment of work samples, and written responses to the art appreciation task (Appendix 3). Evidence was sought to determine the extent to which the performance of students in a visual arts



course was influenced by their perceptions and past experiences of the visual arts.

There seemed to be a similarity among five of the seven participants, regardless of their ethnic origins, in their preference for art works which showed a realistic or naturalistic representation of the subject and a preference for landscape as a subject. However, discussion arising from the interviews highlighted some differences. The art works preferred by Prami, Huong and Wen-jing (also experienced in their homes), were landscapes painted in a traditional Chinese style using water colour. Prami also spoke of his admiration for the work of an Indonesian artist which featured either Asian landscapes with tigers or aspects of Indonesian dance. These preferences were reflected in the type of art the students wished to emulate. Prami expressed the wish to represent action in the style mentioned and both Wen-jing and Huong indicated that they would like to perfect or master the art of realistic representation. This desire was evident in Huong's comment: "I would like to copy that" when describing the Chinese landscape painting in her home.

James appeared to have experienced very limited exposure to artworks. He was motivated to improve his drawing skills by a desire to pursue a career in cartooning and animation. He had lived in Australian country towns and seemed to relate to paintings by artists of the Australian Heidelberg School. Like some of the other students, James appeared to be influenced by his parents' values and opinions. His single-minded interest in cartooning and animation was encouraged by his parents.

Of all the students, Ben and Wen-jing seemed to have been influenced at least to some extent by their present and previous experience of visual arts education. Ben had been encouraged to experiment and explore a range of media and drawing styles in previous

years and he showed an aptitude for working creatively and in appreciating a more diverse range of artworks than those enjoyed by some of the other participants. The influence of Wen-jing's art classes, attended seven years previously in China, appeared to be evident in her current approach to her own and others' works. In these classes she had learnt to draw and paint by copying images and techniques using pencil, ink and watercolour. As Marsh, Watt and Malyon (1999) posited, cultural influence seems to have an enduring affect on people.

The influence of parental attitudes could be seen in the responses of both Ben and Natasha. These attitudes included the parents' reported interest in the visual arts and interest in their children's visual arts activities. The fact that Ben's parents displayed their children's artwork in the home indicated that the children were encouraged in their endeavours. Maria had also indicated that she experienced this encouragement from her parents. The influence of her parents could also be seen in the presence of Greek artefacts in Maria's home which appeared to be reflected in her interest in and love of Greek art.

Natasha revealed that her parents had art works and books about art in their home which may possibly have supported her interest in art history. She had been given the opportunity to attend art classes in Russia where she had experienced a variety of activities using a range of media. Although she lacked confidence in her drawing skills, in the course currently being undertaken she approached painting, printmaking and graphic design projects with confidence and enthusiasm. Natasha also approached art history with confidence and appeared to have little difficulty in expressing her ideas in written form despite her non-English-speaking background. She also contributed to critical discussion of artworks despite some difficulty with spoken English.

Samples of the participants' work revealed highly developed drawing and painting skills in the work of Wen-jing, Ben and Huong

although each displayed different characteristics. Wen-jing handled media with confidence, especially pencil, ink and watercolour. Techniques using these media had been practised in her primary school in China and although she preferred to copy images, she gradually became more confident in being able to utilise these techniques in observational drawing. Wen-jing was uncomfortable with more imaginative and exploratory use of media and images and during the interview revealed that she experienced difficulty in generating ideas and in working experimentally. She found it hard to relate to anything expressionistic either in her own work or in the work of others.

Ben and Huong both enjoyed experimenting and combining media although Huong often undervalued what she did believing it should look “more real”. Although Huong had not received the early visual arts education that Wen-jing had experienced, she seemed to instinctively approach the handling of media with a sensitivity which produced results not unlike those of Wen-jing. There was a delicacy in her use of inks and watercolour and she seemed to bring out the inherent characteristics of media such as charcoal. Ben’s drawing was more imaginative and experimental. He was willing to mix media and explore different ways of using line, tone, colour and pattern and he didn’t appear to be concerned with realistic representation although often displayed an aptitude for this. Ben also appeared to understand the interrelationship between the visual inquiry, art theory and the studio practice. Unlike some of the other students, he appeared to enjoy exploring ideas and appeared less anxious about meeting deadlines. Both these students (Huong and Ben) had undertaken visual arts studies during the previous year.

Maria enjoyed experimenting and worked spontaneously and creatively although initially she showed less confidence and ability to control media. Maria became very involved in using media boldly and

expressively because of her interest in the work of Munch and Van Gogh. She developed a sensitivity towards the particular qualities of paint applied thickly to the painting surface and gained more confidence as she discovered the possibilities of working in this manner. Maria's comment that she preferred the graphic design project was not reflected in the final outcome of this project. She stated that she enjoyed working with layout and typography. However, the work did not reflect the spontaneity and enthusiasm apparent in her previous projects. Possibly her concern for completion of the task within the given time was a contributing factor and prevented her from developing her ideas towards a more successful outcome.

### 5.5 Informal Survey of Another Case

As part of her normal teaching program, the researcher had previously surveyed visual arts classes by means of informal questionnaires and art appreciation tasks in order to determine the preference of students for artworks and styles of art. The questionnaire used in this exercise (Appendix 6) addressed some of the issues included in the questionnaire designed for the research study (Appendix 2). The information sought included students' expectations of the visual arts course, their perceptions of the visual arts, their experience of the visual arts both at school and at home and their awareness of types of art typical of their respective cultures or ethnic backgrounds. Participants in the study were asked to respond individually to the same art appreciation task (Appendix 5) completed by the sample group. In the first section of the task participants were presented with three original art works and four reproductions of art works; these were the same examples which were used in the case study (Appendix 7). They were asked to indicate their preferences by numbering each work from one to seven. They were also

asked to give reasons for their choice. In the second section (B), the participants were required to select an example of another artwork from a wider range of resources and to discuss the work.

Following these exercises, students were encouraged to share their views within small groups and later with the larger group. The task was explained to students as being an opportunity to share with the group their preference for particular artworks and to practise the discipline of art criticism. It was also made clear to the students that their responses to the task was not related in any way to the assessment of their performance in the visual arts course. As previously mentioned, the visual arts classes in the school over the past few years had attracted a growing number of students of diverse ethnic origins and an attempt had been made to include examples of artworks from a variety of cultures as part of the normal teaching program. It was anticipated that students would be encouraged to become more involved if they could begin with examples to which they could relate.

The results of the above exercises completed by a 1999 Year 11 visual arts class were collated and examined in the light of the case-study. The 1999 class comprised several nationalities and many were NESB students. Included in the NESB group were students from Bosnia, mainland China, Indonesia, Korea, Iran and Vietnam. In an attempt to identify possible parallels between these results and those of the case-study particular attention was given to the responses of the NESB students from China, Indonesia and Vietnam as well as those of the ESB students.

At the time of the study the students were engaged in a print-making project and had been studying woodblock prints by Chinese and Japanese artists. During the previous term they had completed a drawing project.

The Chinese student in the class was a refugee from mainland China. Unlike Wen-jing (the research participant who was also from

China), she had experienced no previous education in the visual arts and had experienced a prolonged period of interruption to her general education. She appeared to have very little confidence in her ability to draw and avoided some of the tasks. This was found to be partly due to her not understanding the instructions. This student nominated learning to draw and learning to understand art history as the most important aspects of visual arts education. From the seven artworks presented, she selected as her first preference, an original example of Chinese calligraphy. She explained her reasons for this choice as: "It is not often seen; it looks important... not easy to copy, with very deep meanings". This student indicated that her family enjoyed Chinese and Japanese painting although there were no artworks displayed in the family home in Australia.

There were eight Indonesian students in the class. All were overseas students who were spending their first year at school in Australia. Unlike Prami (the Indonesian participant in the case study sample) all had experienced some visual arts education at school in Indonesia. Four of these students indicated that they thought it was important to learn how to understand the meaning of artworks, three stated that it was important to learn skills and techniques and two suggested that learning how to express thoughts and feelings was important. The four (Indonesian) students who showed an interest in learning to understand artworks indicated that they had been shown reproductions of works by European artists as part of their visual arts education in Indonesia. They had not however, been required to talk or write about them. Five of the students selected the reproduction of an Impressionist painting as their first or second preference and the Japanese woodblock print was also given first or second preference by five students. Three students gave first or second preference to the Chinese calligraphy example, and the reproduction of a cubist-style painting by

Delaunay was the second preference of one student. Most of these students indicated an awareness of traditional Indonesian art forms and six of them said that examples of batik, wayang puppets or Chinese landscape painting were displayed in their homes.

There was one Vietnamese student in the class who was also in his first year at the school having recently emigrated from Vietnam where he had studied art for two years at high school. He appeared to find the questions difficult and initially avoided completing the questionnaire. He required further explanation of the questions. This student described his art education as learning to draw with a pencil; he did not appear to have been encouraged to explore media or to work imaginatively. As with the Indonesian students in this group, he had been encouraged to view a variety of examples from art history. From the artworks presented, this student selected the Japanese woodblock print and in the second part of the task (B) chose a Chinese woodblock print. He explained his reasons as: "I like it because it is about a village in China; it makes me remember a place in my country which looks like that."

The two ESB students in the class were Australian born and had studied visual arts for the previous three years. Their selections of artworks differed slightly from each other. One chose the Impressionist reproduction and gave equal merit to the Chinese calligraphy and the Japanese woodblock print. The other Australian student also selected the woodblock print and when selecting from a wider range of examples, chose a reproduction of a mezzotint by the German artist Escher. Both students said that learning a variety of skills and techniques was important in a visual arts course as well as learning about the work of past and contemporary artists. One student said that her parents enjoyed Japanese and Indonesian art and that examples of batik were displayed in the home. The other student indicated that her family enjoyed and collected a variety of local crafts.

The responses of the NESB students in this group made evident the need to consider a number of variables in attempting to determine the influences on an individual's perception of the visual arts and their preference for particular styles. Compared with the sample group, a larger proportion of NESB students from Asia in this group had received at least two years of visual arts education before coming to Australia. The students from Indonesia and Vietnam had also been introduced to the work of a variety of international artists and styles. The student from China had not previously received any visual arts education.

The responses of the ESB students also suggested that their previous visual arts education and the interest of their families in the visual arts had been influential in their appreciation of a broad range of artists and artistic styles. These factors also appeared to have influenced their expectations of a visual arts course.

## 5.6 Review of Methods of Investigation

The information which emerged from the case study data provided a picture of each participant's ethnicity, socio-economic status and previous educational experiences. It also provided some insights into their previous contact with the visual arts and visual arts education, their perceptions of the visual arts, their expectations of visual arts education and their present level of achievement. The responses of ESB students provided a useful comparison.

The questionnaires encouraged the participants to give individual responses to questions without discussing them with others. They all responded with much care and attention, some taking considerable time to read the questions and write their responses. All participants contributed additional information during the interviews. Initially, most showed some concern about the presence of the tape-



recorder but quickly warmed to the situation and appeared to enjoy talking particularly as they moved further into expressing their views and talking about their families and past experiences. Most tended to go beyond the fifteen minutes allocated for each interview. The information emerging from the interviews therefore seemed to be an authentic indication of each participant's thoughts, beliefs and feelings about the issues being discussed. Further discussion within the group-setting helped to generate further ideas and to expand on previously expressed views.

Observation of students at work assisted in identifying aspects of the course in which participants appeared to display more or less confidence and aptitude. Examination of work samples allowed for further confirmation of earlier indications. It was observed by the researcher that more lively interaction developed within the group following the individual and group interviews. Some of the more quiet members appeared to gain confidence in sharing their opinions with each other and more readily communicated their ideas.

Although the role of participant/observer has been questioned, in this instance it appeared that as teacher/researcher it was possible to gain the confidence of the participants due to familiarity with them. By pointing out that the study was in no way related to assessment of students' performance it was hoped that students felt free to express their views. Some of the negative responses to aspects of the course and the visual inquiry process would suggest that this was so particularly in individual and group interviews where students appeared to increasingly gain confidence in expressing their views.

Therefore the research instruments and method appeared to be appropriate. Collating and categorising the research data enabled the identification of patterns and trends in the responses and led to the emergence of information which could be recorded as a narrative.

As relevant information emerged from the data, it became apparent that there were research avenues indicated for building a more complete picture of the influences on each participant's response to the visual arts course. These could include obtaining information about parents' attitudes and beliefs about the visual arts and more detailed accounts of previous life and educational experiences. Much of this information however, would need to be treated with extreme sensitivity and could perhaps be seen to be intrusive. Methods used to obtain information could be extended to include interviewing parents regarding their ideas about art and obtaining more detailed information regarding the home environment and how conducive it is to maximising the educational experience of the students.

For the purpose of this study however, the information obtained is useful. As stated earlier, it was expected that indications for further research would emerge.

## 5.7 Conclusion

The research questions were designed to determine the views and perceptions of the visual arts of NESB students and to identify the possible origins of these views. More specifically the aim was to determine the extent to which their perceptions of visual arts and their expectations of a visual arts course were determined by their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. It was also considered that possible problems and difficulties experienced by NESB students would be identified. For the purpose of this study the data obtained appeared to be sufficient to present a picture of each participant's socio-economic status, educational and cultural background, previous experience of the visual arts and visual arts education and their response to the course currently being undertaken.

As previously noted, it appeared that most participants belonged to a lower SES. This was indicated by the fact that the parents were either unemployed or low-income earners. However all students seemed to experience the security of living with their parents and siblings. It appeared also that families were supportive of students' educational goals.

The students' experience of art in the home or their understanding of the art typical of their country of origin did seem to influence, (at least to some extent), their preference for art styles and their own artistic goals. Most students showed an appreciation of art which was displayed at home. They did seem receptive to other art forms, and possibly for the more recent arrivals, lack of exposure to a wider range of examples would have influenced their choices.

The educational experiences also appeared to be an important influence on the perceptions of the students. Their previous experiences of visual arts education appeared to have influenced both their appreciation of artworks and their approach to practical components of the visual arts course. This influence became evident when the responses of the sample group were compared with those of the second group which was surveyed informally. There appeared to be a parallel between the art forms most recently studied and the examples selected by students as their first or second preferences.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Overview of Chapter

The purpose of the study was to identify the ideas and experiences which students bring to a visual arts class. More specifically, the perceptions of visual art and visual arts education of NESB students was sought in an attempt to determine how these perceptions may impact on their experience and performance in the visual arts course currently being undertaken. In this chapter consideration is given to findings which have emerged from the research data with regard to general influences on the educational development of participants in the case-study and the influence of their previous experiences of the visual arts and visual arts education.

#### 6.2 General Factors Affecting NESB Students

As the focus of this study was the participants' responses to the visual arts course information was sought about their previous experience of the visual arts. However, the first task was to address factors which affect the performance of all NESB students. These included socio-economic status, language spoken in the home, degree of literacy in the mother tongue, continuity in education and circumstances surrounding their migration to Australia. The task was also to determine

the degree to which these factors impacted on the performance of the research participants. It was stated by four of the NESB participants that their parents had not experienced secondary or tertiary education. Two of the students had experienced gaps in their education and three participants were struggling to achieve the competency in English which is clearly necessary to achieve satisfactory levels in secondary education. This information suggests that the NESB participants were in many respects disadvantaged in their pursuit of educational success at Year 11 level in all subjects, and that these factors also needed to be taken into account when evaluating their responses to the visual arts course. Factors such as SES and the level of education attained by the ESB students can be seen as equally significant in contributing to their educational development. The ESB participants in the sample group however, did not appear to have suffered some of the physical and emotional trauma which seemed to have been experienced by at least two of the NESB participants and to a lesser degree by a further two.

For these reasons, it would be inappropriate to attribute educational difficulties entirely to the participants' ethnic origins. However, the students' ethnic origins and experiences as immigrants or refugees appeared to have been an influence on their approaches to educational tasks and their concern for success. Contributing factors to the participants' educational difficulties included difficulties encountered through lack of competency in the English language and (in some cases) the assumption of adult responsibilities in the process of settling into Australian society with their families.

The importance of these factors would appear to indicate the dangers inherent in drawing conclusions from a case-study of this nature. To validate the findings further studies should be made using students of higher SES, with higher levels of literacy in the native language and with continuity in their primary and secondary education.

### 6.3 Perceptions of Visual Art and Visual Arts Education

There did appear to be a correlation between the participants' experience of the visual arts and their preference for certain types of art. Most expressed their opinions about the way art should be and this influenced their expectations of their own art.

Six of the participants had one or more artworks displayed in their homes and they were aware of the traditional art in their countries of origin. For the participants in the case study, this art seemed to correlate with what they believed to be good art. There was also evidence that traditional methods of working or learning influenced the students' expectations of visual arts education. Within the sample group there did not appear to be so much influence of the peer group because participants did not appear to consistently agree or disagree with each others' opinions. This lack of feedback does not however contribute proof that the peer group was or was not a significant influence.

It was noted that in response to the art appreciation task in which participants were required to indicate their preferences from seven reproductions of artworks, five participants selected the reproduction of a landscape painted by Arthur Streeton as either their first or second preference. This preference may be explained by the fact that during the previous weeks the group had been exposed to a number of artworks by Australian artists. Several students from the group of students who formed the second case and who were tested informally indicated a liking for a wood-cut print. At this time they were engaged in a printmaking project and had been introduced to a number of examples of woodcuts by Chinese and Japanese artists and they had not recently been exposed to examples of work by Australian artists. Interestingly, most of the students in this group placed the reproduction of the Australian painting

last out of the seven examples. This could indicate either that they appreciated the artforms which they understood through having studied them or that they responded to something that was familiar. Both groups however also indicated a liking for art forms which they had experienced within their families or in the case of immigrant students, in their countries of origin.

There was evidence of students wishing to emulate the skills or techniques which they admired in other artists and this was reflected in both the work of participants such as Huong and Wen-jing and also in their expressed opinions of art which they appreciated. Natasha's experience of a traditional Russian art form of burning designs into wood was reflected in her nomination of this as one of her favourite art forms. Huong had also expressed a wish to imitate a Chinese landscape which was displayed in her home

It is important to recognise the similarity in the response of both ESB and NESB students to what they saw as being a goal of the visual arts. This was reflected in what appeared to be a consensus of opinion that art should be "beautiful" or an expression of beauty. Although this could be attributed to perceptions of the visual arts related to the individual's particular ethnic origins it should also be considered in the light of the influence of the families of all the students. It is not uncommon to hear this view expressed by members of the general public. In Gardner's comparison of Eastern and Western views of art education (1990) he conceded that although the goals of visual arts education in Western society were to foster reflection and understanding, the exploration of new ideas, and the expression of feelings many people held similar views to those found in the Chinese goals of visual arts education. These are described by Gardner as "roles and rituals which are perfectly realised" (1990, p. 146).

All of the participants in the study responded in a similar manner to an exhibition of conceptual artworks which reflected social, moral and political concerns. The participants indicated that they found the works too confrontational.

In a study conducted by Parsons, Johnston and Durham (1978) which investigated the aesthetic responses of children, several developmental stages were identified. Under the topics of Semblance (what makes a picture), Subject Matter (what paintings should be about), and Feelings (how emotions affect responses) the researchers established three "stages". Under the topic Subject Matter, stage one characteristics included (a) paintings should be about pleasant, interesting or familiar things, (b) paintings should be about happy things not sad things, and (c) pictures should have some action going on. In responding to paintings, the importance placed on realism and a preference for subjects perceived to be "pleasant" was attributed to the first stage in aesthetic development. The early stages were also typified by an admiration for the skill, time and effort involved in producing an artwork and judgements based on personal preferences. According to Parsons et al. (1978), the development of awareness and understanding results from experiences with artists and artworks.

The preferences expressed by the participants for visual arts works that were pleasant and non-confrontational could be seen therefore as the result of a more universal phenomenon relating to developmental stages in aesthetic response and not necessarily related to language or cultural influences. It may be that because of lack of exposure to visual arts works the participants in the study demonstrated a relatively naive (as opposed to sophisticated) response.

The educational experiences have already been referred to with regard to the possible relationship between students' appreciation of particular artworks and their recent exposure to those particular periods



or styles. This also appeared to be reflected in the students' approaches to the other components of the visual arts course. Those students who had previously been encouraged to explore a variety of media and styles and to work imaginatively and creatively seemed to be more confident in addressing tasks or working with materials with which they were unfamiliar. Similarly, those who expressed their expectations of the course as being given detailed instructions in the use of both technique and subject-matter seemed to require this style of teaching. However some of these students also appeared to eventually gain confidence as they became more willing to experiment and take risks. The students who had experienced very little visual arts education appeared to lack confidence and needed to be encouraged to appreciate the various goals of visual arts education in order to be less preoccupied with always achieving a realistic image.

In the area of art appreciation, students who had been exposed to works from a broad range of styles and periods of art history seemed to show a wider appreciation of different art forms. They were less dismissive of examples which may have been different or unfamiliar.

The relationship between appreciation and familiarity with looking at and analysing art works was also revealed in the response of the participants in the follow-up informal study. The Indonesian and Vietnamese participants from this group had received more extensive art education than those in the sample group who were from the same ethnic background. The participants from the second group showed a reasonable amount of confidence and competence in drawing and in the development of images for studio work. They had also been exposed to a range of examples of works by famous international artists and indicated that they saw the study of these as an important component of a visual arts course. Participants in the second group indicated an interest in a wide range of works by international artists and a variety of styles. All of the NESB

students in this group however, with the exception of the student from Bosnia were experiencing difficulty in expressing their ideas both orally and in written form.

The ESB participants in the informal study had also received more visual arts education prior to reaching their present upper secondary level. They displayed more confidence in experimenting and exploring a range of media and techniques and approached new tasks with interest and enthusiasm. They had received exposure to a range of artworks both at home and at school and appeared to be more receptive to different ideas and approaches to visual representation than the participants in the first case.

#### 6.4 Implications for Further Research

The findings indicated above suggest the need for further research. There appear to be a number of possibilities for continued use of the case-study method. These could include a longitudinal case study which would involve selecting a group of students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and monitoring their progress over a two or three year period. Another possibility would be that of drawing the cases from different schools where there is some similarity in the SES of students. There could also be a study of cases of students with the same ethnic but differing socio-economic backgrounds.

Further considerations which may assist in validating the findings of a study of this nature would obviously need to address other factors such as levels of literacy and general education. Other studies may include students who have achieved higher levels of proficiency in their own language and in English. It would also be of interest to compare the response and performance of students from similar backgrounds to the participants in this study to others who have experienced continuity in

their education. As previously mentioned, the opinions of ESB students were sought in an attempt to provide a perspective on the acceptance of the Year 11 TEE Art Syllabus by the students for whom it was designed. To validate findings on this issue the study would need to be replicated using a larger sample.

In continuing the research into the response of students to the visual arts course it should also be noted that the questions asked and the tasks administered formed only a small sample of possibilities. It could be suggested that a different example of Australian art may have been received more favourably by the students who rejected the one presented and another example of printmaking may also have elicited a different response. Similarly, visual arts activities involving sculpture or textile design may have resulted in differing responses to the visual arts activities being practised by the students. Therefore, varying the research design and research instruments may also be considered necessary to validate any responses which may suggest conclusive evidence.

A final recommendation is that similar research be conducted by a researcher who is distanced from the target population. While a researcher who doesn't know the participants may obtain valuable data, it is possible that the participants may be less willing to respond, talk about their work and share their views on the nature of art.

## 6.5 Conclusion

To summarise the above account of the case-study and its findings it is necessary to once again state the purpose of the study and the information being sought by the research questions. A number of findings have arisen from the data collected and these suggest the need for further investigation.

The purpose of the study was to determine the degree to which NESB students' perceptions of and beliefs about the visual arts affected their response to the Year 11 TEE visual arts course currently being undertaken. Whilst acknowledging that these factors may also be relevant to the response of ESB students, the NESB students have formed the focus of this study for two reasons. The first of these is the increase in the numbers of NESB students enrolled in Australian schools and secondly the researcher's perception that the NESB students are often not successful in the visual arts at the upper secondary level.

The research questions being addressed in the study were designed to discover what students understand by the term visual arts, their perceptions of visual arts education and the extent to which this understanding influences their performance in the visual arts classroom. The intention was also to determine the degree to which these perceptions and understandings may be influenced by their ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

The findings of the study have indicated that students' perceptions of the visual arts appear to be influenced initially by their previous experiences. Among the participants in the case-study the influence of the family appeared in many cases to be strong and the artworks experienced through the family appeared to be directly related to art forms which originated in the ethnic background of the family. Students expressed their admiration for these art forms and also their desire to emulate these art forms and styles in their own work. The effect of this influence however seemed to diminish somewhat as the child's exposure to a broader range of examples increased. Those who had seen works by a range of international artists seemed to be inclined to show a greater appreciation of these. This might suggest that the influence of the home background was significant although this appeared to be modified by the students' educational experiences. Another finding was that the more

recent the students' arrival in the current educational context, the more likely they were to be influenced by their previous experiences. There was also evidence that the influence persisted if there had not been the intervention of other experiences of the visual arts or approaches to visual arts education. According to Kindler and Darras (1998) the system of pictorial representation developed in childhood years persists well into adolescence. They claimed that the type of imagery commonly produced by young children is seen in the artwork of adolescents and adults who have not received further visual arts education (p. 147). An example of the persistence of early influences is the Chinese participant in the sample group who had received no art education since leaving China at the age of ten and had remembered what she had learnt from her art classes in China. She was clearly influenced by her cultural origins in both her understanding of the nature of the visual arts and in her own artistic goals.

The Chinese student's performance was influenced by her early teaching and by the artwork preferred by her family and this appeared to be the case with other participants. Those who perceived art to be the realistic representation of landscape and the portrayal of ideal beauty expected to receive instruction in specific skills which would ultimately lead to their achievement of this goal. Those who had expressed an appreciation of more diverse styles and interpretations of subject matter and creativity in the expression of ideas were more interested in the opportunity to explore and create their own images.

As stated earlier in this chapter (Indications for further research) many other variables need to be taken into account. It can be concluded however, with some degree of confidence that both the ethnic origins and previous educational experiences appear to play a significant role in the response of students to a visual arts course unless they have previously experienced the intervention of visual arts education which broadens

their horizons and suggests other possibilities in the perception and creation of art. Further studies may determine the degree to which this intervention may alter the perceptions shaped by the individual's ethnic origins.

To restate the purpose of the study a long term goal of this inquiry and possible subsequent investigations may eventually lead to the development and implementation of strategies designed to improve the chances of success of NESB students. Among the many factors cited as influences on students' performance some of the more noticeable problems appear to be related to language and educational levels reached prior to undertaking the Year 11 visual arts course. Addressing problems of literacy and exposure to a comprehensive visual arts course prior to this level would clearly contribute to a student's chances of success.

The enthusiastic response of students to art works with which they were familiar reaffirms the recommendations by both Wasson et al. (1992) and Chalmers (1996) that (a) teachers should begin the critical thinking process with examples of artworks which are familiar to the child and that (b) examples used for the study of art history and art criticism should be drawn from a diversity of cultures. This apparent interest by students in discussing the art forms with which they are familiar suggests that art history and art criticism should not only be drawn from examples from different cultures but that they should be studied within the context of their origins. Stout (1997) recommended that teachers examine their own beliefs and cultural biases. She also saw a need to engage in "reflective" teaching which involved exchanging ideas with students, being willing to learn new ways of thinking, and approaching art criticism from the perspective of an exchange of ideas between students and teacher (p. 105). In practical visual arts activities the evidence of preferred teaching or learning styles as suggested by students requiring more detailed

instruction may highlight the need for the adoption of a more diverse range of teaching practices.

Cox et al. (1999) suggested that the teaching of “copying” as practised in Chinese schools did not necessarily stifle creativity. They referred to Wilson and Wilson (1977, 1984) who claimed that copying could provide children with a “larger repertoire of artistic skill” (p. 174). Winner (1989) also suggested that Western education could benefit from adopting some aspects of visual arts education as practised in China. In particular, she recommended the encouragement of perseverance and concentration which appeared to foster self-discipline in children.

Burns (1995) stated that a case-study may contribute to the reader’s own experience and that each reader could relate it to his or her own context. The researcher has found that the information arising from the study has increased her awareness and understanding of the opinions and concerns of participants in the study. This has contributed to her gaining an insight into the difficulties experienced by many students and an understanding of the specific needs of those from non-English-speaking backgrounds. The opportunity to interview participants both individually and within the group has enabled an exchange of ideas and opinions and as previously stated, has generated more interaction within the group. This appears to have enabled some of the more recent arrivals to communicate more confidently with their peers. Participants seemed to appreciate the opportunity to discuss the art which is part of their cultural heritage and to gain confidence in expressing their ideas and opinions.

The emergence of opinions and expectations has provided the opportunity to identify more specifically the difficulties experienced by NESB students and to consider appropriate strategies for addressing these problems. Hopefully this will eventually lead to the implementation of approaches which will assist students to bridge some of the barriers which impede their learning in the visual arts.

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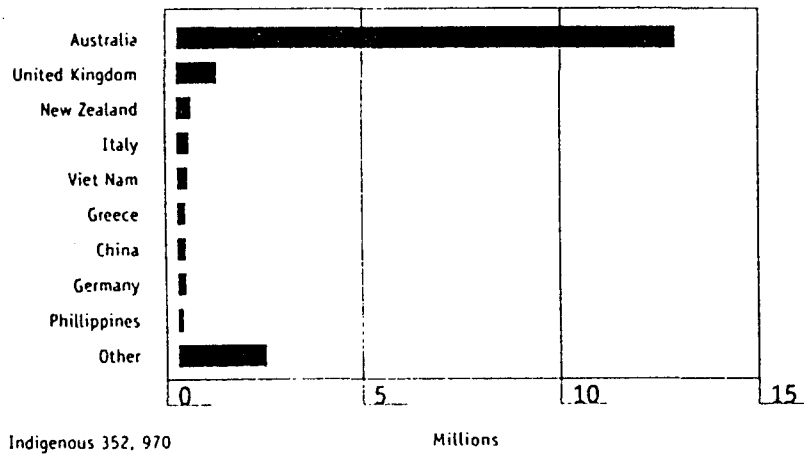
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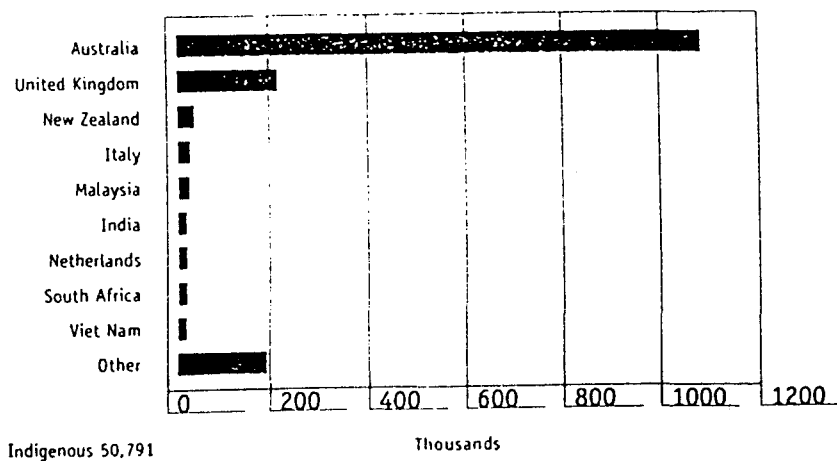
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APPENDIX 1: Birthplace (Countries) of the Population of Australia and Western Australia.  
Office Of Multicultural Interests (1996)

Birthplace (countries), Australia as at 6 August 1996



Birthplace (countries), Western Australia as at 6 August 1996



## APPENDIX 2: Questionnaire

Please supply the following information before completing the questionnaire.

1. NAME: .....

2. DATE OF BIRTH: .....

3. NAME OF CITY AND COUNTRY WHERE YOU WERE BORN:

.....

4. DATE OF ARRIVAL IN AUSTRALIA:.....

5. DATE OF ARRIVAL AT THIS SCHOOL:.....

6. SCHOOLS ATTENDED BEFORE COMING TO THIS SCHOOL:

.....

.....

.....

7. FATHER'S OCCUPATION:.....

8. FATHER'S COUNTRY OF BIRTH:.....

9. MOTHER'S OCCUPATION:

.....

10. MOTHER'S COUNTRY OF BIRTH: .....

11. LIST THE PEOPLE PRESENTLY LIVING WITH YOU INCLUDING  
PARENTS/GUARDIANS; GRANDPARENTS; BROTHERS; SISTERS; ETC.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....



## APPENDIX 2: (contd.)

- 1 What art project are you working on at present?
- 2 What do you think of this activity?
- 3(a) Which parts of the project do you enjoy most of all?
- 3(b) Which do you enjoy least?
- 4(a) Which parts of your work are you most pleased with?
- 4(b) Which are you least pleased with?
- 5 What do you think is the most important thing to learn in an art course?
- 6 Have you done art at school before?
- 7(a) What type of art do you like?
- 7(b) Do you have a favourite artist?
- 8 Number the following in order of preference.  

Art should be:	BEAUTIFUL
	EXPRESSIVE
	USEFUL
- 9 What type of art does your family like?

- 10 What art works do you have in your home?
  
- 11 What art forms are characteristic of your country of origin?
  
- 12 Are any of your friends or relations artists or crafts people?

### APPENDIX 3: Art Appreciation Tasks

- A. Examine the seven art works marked A, B, C, D, E, F and G. Use the table to indicate your preference (1 is the one you like most, 7 the one you like least). Briefly state your reason.

	ART WORK	REASONS
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		

- B From books, reproductions, or original works select an example of an art work which you like. Comment on the following:

- \* Subject
- \* Style
- \* Use of the medium
- \* Use of the elements and principles of design
- \* Meaning - what do you think the artist is saying?

WORK SELECTED
ARTIST
SUBJECT
MEDIUM
STYLE
COMMENTS

**APPENDIX 4: Evaluation Instruments**

<b>EVALUATION OF WRITTEN WORK</b>				
<b>DEMONSTRATES:</b>	<b>Very High</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Not Demonstrated</b>
Understanding of Task				
Knowledge & Understanding of Course Content				
Analysis & Synthesis				
Literacy Skills				

<b>EVALUATION OF PRACTICAL WORK</b>				
<b>DEMONSTRATES COMPETENCE IN:</b>	<b>Very High</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Not Demonstrated</b>
Use of Media, Skills & Processes				
Creativity & Originality				
Understanding of the Elements & Principles of Design				

### The Process of Constructing Case Studies

<p>Step 1</p>	<p>Assemble the raw case data. These data consist of all information collected about the person or program for which a case study is to be written.</p>
<p>Step 2 (optional)</p>	<p>Construct a case record. This is a condensation of the raw case data organising, classifying and editing the raw case data into a manageable and accessible package.</p>
<p>Step 3</p>	<p>Write a case study narrative. The case study is a readable, descriptive picture of a person or program making accessible to the reader all the information necessary to understand that person or program. The case study is presented either chronologically or thematically (sometimes both). The case study presents a holistic portrayal of a person or program.</p>

## APPENDIX 6: Questionnaire Completed by Participants in the Informal Study

- 1 What do you think is the most important thing to learn in an art course?
- 2 Have you done art at school before?
- 3(a) What type of art do you like?
- 3(b) Do you have a favourite artist or type of art?
- 4 Number the following in order of preference.  
Art should be: BEAUTIFUL  
EXPRESSIVE  
USEFUL
- 5 What type of art does your family like?
- 6 What art works do you have in your house?
- 7 What art forms are characteristic of your country of origin?
- 8 Are any of your friends or relations artists or crafts people?

## APPENDIX 7 Reproductions of Art Works Used in the Art Appreciation Task

- A A small painting on canvas of an Indonesian dancer by an unknown Indonesian artist.
- B A reproduction of *Water Lilies* 1899 by Claude Monet.
- C A reproduction of *Windows Open Simultaneously (First Part, Third Motif)* 1912 by Robert Delaunay.
- D A Chinese scroll featuring calligraphy and natural forms drawn in ink.
- E A reproduction of “Golden Summer, Eaglemont” 1889 by Arthur Streeton.
- F A reproduction of a colour woodblock print “Night After Rain” from the series: Twelve themes about Tokyo 1929 by Hiroshi Yoshida.
- G A painting “Snake Dreaming” by aboriginal artist Bessie Liddle.