

Worldview

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Purpose of Research

The chances of encountering different ethnic and racial groups is increasing as globalization allows more diversity in our day to day lives. Delacruz (2009) states, "The term globalization is also commonly meant to refer to those fundamental global transformations of human societies brought about by transnational expansion, integration, and interdependency of human social networks and flows of resources, goods, ideas, and culture" (p. xi). It is important for us to recognize and challenge our racial biases and stereotypes in order to have a better transition into a global world. Art, due to its visual nature, serves as a great way to discuss diversity in our classrooms and societies as a whole. By promoting open discussion about contemporary art, we can gain insight into our own biases and stereotypes and then begin the transformation to be more open global citizens.

Discussing the Issues

While living in Korea as a white male, I have experienced privilege and discrimination. A lot of attention is given to me as a foreigner in a homogenous society. Some days, I am elevated to rock star status. While walking down the street, people often break down their walls to greet me. I have even been asked to pose for photos. Brave children spew out as much English as they can muster, "Hello, how are? I'm fine, thank you. And you? Where are you from? Okay, thank you. Goodbye." Most of these encounters fall into one of two categories: a) they are genuinely curious about me as a foreigner and/or b) they want to practice their English. On the other hand, I have had a few negative experiences. I have been told that I was not wanted in Korea and to go back to my country and I have been accused of being here to take advantage of Korean women. Some of my female friends who are white and have blonde hair have been asked if they are Russians. This implies that they are prostitutes. Overall, my experiences have been good and the majority of stereotypes of white foreigners is that we are English teachers. Sometimes, the idea that we cannot hold a job in our home countries is added.

I am privileged a great deal due to my white skin. Most schools and academies want to hire teachers with white skin and an American accent. I have heard stories of black teachers having phone interviews, being offered a job and then being rejected

once the principal or director saw a photo. Many cite that black teachers will be scary for the students. Generally, Koreans prefer whiter skin. There are a number of skin whitening lotions on the market. The concept stems from the working class being out in the sun farming giving them darker skin.

I would also like to address the stereotypes and biases against Chinese and Japanese people here in Korea. I often hear my students say that Chinese people are loud and dirty; Japanese people are bad and deserve the disasters that happen in Japan. Their concepts about the Japanese are rooted in the Japanese occupation of Korea and terrible things that they did during that time. Many Koreans enjoy Japanese products but hate Japanese people. As far as I can tell, the concepts of Chinese people are a common stereotype in Korea. The majority of tourists in Korea are Chinese and they are often cited as being loud, spitting, and leaving trash about.

Research Findings

I researched several authors in order to better understand globalization and teaching about racial and cultural issues. In this section I will provide some of the insights gained from my research.

Knight (2006) discusses the importance of self-reflection by providing information from her seminar. She encouraged art educators to “challenge the values that underlie their curricular design, materials, and activities” because their biases could “limit their ability to teach all students, and may influence their actions with all students” (Knight, p. 41). Knight (2009) notes the importance of creating truthful and open discussion as well as creating a safe space for participants to give opinions without feeling judged. One way she created this was revealing her own biases. She also invited participants who were a bit shy to write their ideas in a journal (Knight, 2009). Knight (2009) employed a number of questions promoting critical analysis of one’s biases. She believes it is important for art educators to participate in such debates and discussions to prepare for the challenges that are presented with diversity (Knight, 2009). I would argue that everyone should be participating in such debates and discussions as society becomes more diverse.

Lee (2013) addresses using a transformative pedagogy to change our attitudes concerning race and racism. Lee (2013) suggests that by exploring racial and cultural

issues in the art classroom, students gain a deeper understanding of their relationship with the world in a state referred to as “wide awakesness” (p. 145). Lee (2013) also puts a strong focus on questions and discussion without judgement. Lee (2013) states “Listening calmly, attentively, and non-judgmentally to students” questions modeled appropriate behavior for classroom discourse” (p. 146). By modeling this behavior, teachers show that it is ok to have different opinions, but we must be willing to listen respectfully. Lee (2013) conducted a studio art class that focused on social issues to see if their racial attitudes would change. By reviewing class discussion, written assignments, artist statements and written reflections, Lee (2013) determined that “learning through art aided participants in the development of dispositions that potentially promoted their unlearning of racial biases” (p. 152).

Both authors maintain a strong desire to create safe spaces for people to debate and discuss topics as heated as race, identity, and cultural differences without being judged. They have confirmed my beliefs about hosting respectful debate in order to challenge our worldview.

Action Plan

I plan on approaching *Gallery Tongyeong* with my action plan for an exhibition. It is a gallery in Tongyeong, South Korea which shows contemporary art. They are open weekdays from 10:30am to 7:00pm.

It is my intention to start conversations about racial biases and stereotypes in an attempt to better racial attitudes. I will create 10-16 portraits of different ethnicities that represent some of the common stereotyped groups in Korea. In each portrait, the person will be holding or wearing a name tag stating “Hello, I’m...” and that area will be magnetic. I will survey members of each group and ask them for two sets of adjectives: 1) how they identify themselves and 2) how others have identified them. I will print these adjectives in English and Korean on magnets. It is my vision that participants will place adjectives on the name tag section of the portrait, sparking discussion with other participants and their friends. Why does this adjective apply to this portrait? Does it apply to other portraits too? Why or why not? Does this adjective apply to all people of this race or ethnic group? Do you have a personal experience with someone from this

race or ethnic group that influenced your choice? These are some of the questions I want participants to think about and discuss.

In the opening reception, I will hold an open forum for discussing stereotypes and share stories of discrimination. I will invite some of the people I have painted and ask them to share their stories personally. I will place some adjectives displaying my own biases and discuss my views and listen to others to demonstrate respectful discussion and debate.

By starting the discussion, I hope to encourage learning of other races and cultures to break down some of our biases and stereotypes. I believe that adding to our worldview will improve racial issues in Korea and around the world. The speed of globalization has increased due to technology. We are interacting with people from all over the world via the internet. Discovering our own biases and challenging them will help improve our relationships with diverse groups.

References

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