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Week 6: Global Kids

Summary

The articles and chapters read this week provide a provocative discussion regarding children's visual culture and the teaching of art to students referred to as *digital natives* or *cyber nomads*. Author, Christine M. Thompson, in her chapter, "The Global and the Local: The Hybridity of Children's Culture," provides an analysis of children's culture as being both dictated and influenced by adults. Her chapter explains, "the complexities of children's culture, both global and local, lived among peers and within a world of objects, images, and technologies that invite children to navigate virtual and imaginative spaces," (p. 169). Her argument states the importance for art educators to understand these complexities and aid our students in become active and critical consumers of visual and global culture. Similarly, author, Elizabeth Delacruz (2009), explores issues and concerns for art educators to consider in regards to providing a productive art education to students in today's global media culture. Her article, "From Bricks to Mortar to the Public Sphere in Cyberspace: Creating a Culture of Caring on the Digital Global Commons," discusses, how art educators can, "encourage our technology-rich students to take their place in the cyber commons as responsible global citizens," (p. 11). Throughout her article, Delacruz enlightens the reader to terms and research that have evolved due to the younger generation's constant exposure to the digital commons since birth. Her argument revolves around the necessity to create a "culture of caring" through technology pedagogy. The chapter, "Beyond Visual Literacy Competencies: Teaching and Learning Art with Technology in the Global Age," by author, Ching-Chiu Lin, discusses the value of teaching visual literacy in art education. She ends her chapter determining that, "art learning in the age of global electronic media should move beyond mere technical understanding of discrete electronic devices and dissociated acquisitions of favored art, cultural knowledge, or skill sets, and toward, instead, connecting to individuals' lived experience locally and globally," (p. 203). As art educators it is important for us to realize and comprehend the impact of our students' exposure and inundation of visual culture and provide our students with the tools to interpret and extrapolate meaning from the barrage of visual communication in the ever-expanding global digital commons. Combining all

of the discussions provide by the previously mentioned authors, Michelle S. Bae presents an eye opening discussion on the development and preservation of female culture in South Korea in her chapter, "Glocal New Femininity in Mediascape: Korean Teenage Girls' Popular Cultural Practices." In this chapter, Bae defines for the viewer what is known as *hanryu,* a popular cultural movement that, "provides Korean girls with both a sense of cultural pride and power and an opportunity to maintain and reproduce their own particular meanings about Korean ethnic femininity through image consumption and creation," (p. 179). Bae provides insight to the viewer on the successes that South Korea has achieved in the fight against the hegemonic force of American culture in order to promote and preserve their own culture in lieu of globalization. Through her chapter she follows the creative endeavors of a Korean teenage girl to demonstrate the strategies of hanryu culture to promote a neo-feminist mindset that empowers young females while also encouraging young women to maintain traditional Korean morals and values of femininity. All of the articles and chapters read this week explore how children and young adults are heavily impacted and influenced by digital media and it is part of the art educator's responsibility to ensure that our students are active, aware, caring, literate, and responsible consumers of visual culture as they become contributing members of a global society.

Definition of Terms and Key Ideas

Visual Literacy: Visual literacy refers to, "student comprehension of works of art and other visual forms of expression and related cultural productions, as well as student ability to express and communicate ideas and experiences through various visual forms, including but not limited to new electronic media" (Lin, p.199).

Global Commodity: Is defines as, "things of universal or transcultural appeal that bear the creative imprint of the originality of a producing nation," (Cross & Smits, 2005, as cited in Thompson, 2009, p. 167). An example of a global commodity would be something like, Pokémon, which is intrinsically Japanese in its origin, but has been adopted and assimilated to local cultures all over the world. Thompson makes the valid point that children's visual culture and toy production does not flow unidirectionally from the US to other countries. Rather there

are plenty of cultural influences in the United States, especially regarding children's toys, cartoons, and visual culture that come from outside of the United States.

Hanryu: A South Korean popular cultural movement that was created to compete with the dominance of American culture in hopes of defining a uniquely Korean culture that creates a neo-Korean popular culture while simultaneously preserving traditional Korean morals and values. Hanryu is explored through Korean melodramas and TV programs, popular music, movies, music videos, fashion, and artwork. It has been so successful that hanryu has expanded beyond Korean boundaries and is being accepted by other Asian cultures as well (Bae, 2009, p. 179).

Personal Response

There needs to be a balance with the utilization of technology in school curriculum and traditional learning and instructional methods. It is mandatory for our students to take computer and technology classes so they learn programs like Word, Excel, and Power Point, and I feel it is essential for school curriculum to address typing skills and teach how to utilize technology in regards to learning, processing, and producing information. It is also important for teachers to utilize technology resources in their classroom practice, as students respond to learning through technology due to the nature of their facility with digital media, not to mention the resources that technology and the internet provide to heighten the learning experience. With that said, I feel that our schools are doing a great job at providing a strong technology skill set overall. We need to still teach our students the importance of patience, time investment, coping mechanisms for dealing with difficult problems, and the value of eye to eye/ face to face discourse. Kids today spend a lot of time "plugged in" during the day, and we still need to teach our students the importance and skills of functioning as an individual and social member of society being "unplugged." Otherwise, they are going to become more apathetic, distracted, fickle, and impatient than they already are. In her recent Ted Talk, "Alone Together," psychologist, Sherry Turkle (2012), paints a frightening image of how our society is more concerned with the meaningful relationships we are creating through our smart phones and social media than sitting down and having a meaningful relationship and conversation with our friends, family, and co-

workers face to face. I love technology and utilize it every day, but too much of anything, like sugar, can lead to addictions and tooth decay.

Of all the readings I did this week, I feel that author Ching-Chiu Lin, in her chapter, "Beyond Visual Literacy Competencies: Teaching and Learning Art with Technology in the Global Age," discusses an extremely pertinent issue and skill set that our "digital native" students need to learn. As educators, we always teach "don't believe everything that you read," and we need to teach our students how to analyze and synthesize information and imagery created digitally so that they are actively involved in the observation and learning processes and are not easily manipulated or persuaded. As an educator, I am more concerned with, "the need to emphasize the *processes* and *contexts* of learning instead of focusing so heavily on particular predictable results," (p. 202). In regards to teaching and implementing technology in the classroom and school curriculum, beyond the education and skill sets we are already providing our students, I feel it is our responsibility to teach students how to be fluent in visual communication, both reading and speaking, in order to be successful and educated global citizens. Visual literacy should not just be the concern of art educators either, and it needs to be addressed in all subject areas. I found an excellent video on YouTube created by an art educator in Canada, called, "Visual Literacy Across the Curriculum." As far as "do-able" strategies to provide necessary changes to the educational system in place today, I am thinking of pitching a professional development course for my peers that discusses the importance of visual literacy in providing a responsible education for our digital natives. I will also continue to expose my students in my classroom through my holistic approaches to teaching visual literacy as well as explore projects and lessons that dive more deeply into the meanings and contexts of visual culture. Having just learned about a documentary that is currently being created called, "Beware of Images," I look forward to using this video as a teaching tool, but in the meantime will utilize its FaceBook page, as well as other online resources, to create meaningful discussions on how to interpret and decipher visual content and communications in the media and digital commons.

References

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