

Achieving joy through community-based culturally relevant art education: A case study of Korean-American elementary students in the Midwest

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impacts of ethnic community-based culturally relevant art education for a group of Korean-American elementary students in the Midwest, particularly with regards to how they relate to the students' experience of joy. The study defines joy within the context of culturally relevant education as students being culturally competent, critically conscious, and having a feeling of a sense of community within their home community (Ladson-Billings, 1995a; McMillan & Chavis, 1985). The study finds positive correlations between community-based culturally relevant art education and students' increased cultural competence and reinforced sense of community, which partially fulfill this definition of joy.

KEYWORDS: culturally relevant art education; community-based art education; Korean-Americans; ethnic communities; sense of community; joy

Justice-oriented work, while can be exhausting and frustrating (Acuff, 2018; Acuff, Lopez & Wilson, 2019), is known lead to a feeling of "pleasure, as well as joy, strength, healing, community-building, allyship, and kinship... when futuristic worldmaking is part of disrupting inequities" (Acuff, n.d, p. 1; brown, 2019; Cooper, 2018).

Within the field of art education, scholars (Acuff, Hirak & Nangah, 2012; Ballengee-Morris, 2005; Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001; Buffington, 2014; Lai, 2012; Lee, 2012) have shown that justice-oriented art education can empower historically marginalized students including racial/ethnic minorities who had often been largely disregarded in the "Eurocentric, culture-bound, elitist, or even racist" (Chalmers, 1992, p. 134) conventional art education.

Culturally relevant education is one of justice-oriented educational approaches which aims to empower, transform minority students by valuing, capitalizing on their home cultures (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2006; Gay, 2010). Culturally relevant art education has been increasingly implemented not only in formal K-12 education but also in communities through initiatives of organizations and individuals.

This study investigates the impacts of ethnic community-based culturally relevant art education for a group of Korean-American elementary students in the Midwest, particularly with regards to how they relate to the students' experience of joy.

Literature Review

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP)

CRP emphasizes validation, empowerment, and transformation of minority students, with a particular focus on those of color, as articulated by scholars Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995a, 2006, 2009) and Geneva Gay (2010). CRP rebuts the prevalent colorblind approach that education should be identical to all student populations which often makes students of color be considered "culturally-deficient" compared to their White counterparts. This deficit-oriented paradigm has also impacted students of other minority social identities, including gender, sexual orientation, and religion. On the contrary, the asset-based paradigm of CRP calls for educators to respect and incorporate the cultures of individual students in their teaching. This approach, which capitalizes on each students' culture in their learning, is ultimately intended to empower them.

The three propositions of CRP are academic achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2009). Ladson-Billings (2006) refers to cultural competence as students being confident and integral in their own cultures while learning about those outside their own. She (1995a) defined critical consciousness as that which "allows them [students] to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities" (p. 162).

In this study, I focused on analyzing the impact of community-based culturally relevant art education with regards to cultural competence and critical consciousness, but not academic achievement. This was because the former two were more relevant to this study which is based in a community rather than a formal school.

Moreover, although not discussed as one of CRP's three propositions, sense of community was added as a focus of analysis in this study. This was because the role of community was something that Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995a, 1995b) emphasized in articulating the framework which I found to be highly relevant to this study. CRP emphasizes the role of a home community in creating a learning environment that induces a sense of membership and collective empowerment (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a). Sense of community refers to "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be

together” (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9).

Against this backdrop, this study defines joy within the context of culturally relevant education as students being culturally competent, critically conscious, and having a sense of community within their home community (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a, McMillan & Chavis, 1985). This definition is also based on an understanding of the definition of pleasure and joy associated with justice-oriented activism as a feeling of liberation, empowerment through practices that tackle oppression and inequity (Brown, 2019; Cooper, 2018; Nieto, 2013).

I chose to use the term, “joy,” rather than “pleasure,” throughout this paper based on my understanding that the two terms are interconnected, yet carry slightly different connotations. Whereas pleasure is primarily sensory, temporary, and something that can be easily sought and achieved, joy is attitudinal, intense, and thus long-lasting (Sloan, 2011). While I acknowledged that pleasure may ultimately lead to joy, I believed that joy was the term that aligned better with the aforementioned expected outcomes of culturally relevant education.

Asian-Americans and Culturally Relevant Art Education

Despite abundant research (Acuff et al., 2012; Lai, 2012; Lee, 2012) regarding the positive impacts of culturally relevant art education for racial and other minority students in helping empower them, there is still a lack of such research concerning Asian-Americans. This is mainly due to Asian-Americans’ small population size compared to other racial minority groups in the United States, their intergroup diversity, and the model minority stereotypes.

Although Asians are the fastest-growing racial group in the U.S., they only account for five percent, or 20 million, of the total U.S. population (Chang, 2017). More importantly, the diversity within the pan-ethnic group makes it challenging for Asian-Americans to be discussed in a generalizable manner. Asian-American is an umbrella term that includes people who have ethnic backgrounds in South Asia (e.g. Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka), Southeast Asia (e.g. Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam), and East Asia (e.g. China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan) (Chang, 2017), whose respective countries have rich, distinct history and cultures.

Another factor is Asian-Americans’ relatively higher academic achievement and economic success within society which gives them the common stereotypical label of “model minorities” (Chow, 2011, p. 1). Asian-Americans are often seen as having a somewhat privileged position over other racial minority groups, frequently portrayed as

patient and hard workers, traits that other minorities are encouraged to emulate.

However, not only is this stereotype a myth (Chow, 2011; Wong, 2018), research (Chang, 2017; Iwamoto & Liu, 2010) shows that many Asian-Americans actually undergo considerable stress that results from racial, ethnic stereotypes both as “model minority” and “oppressed minority” (Chang, 2017, p. 1). Common identities of Asian-Americans as oppressed minority are “perpetual foreigners” and “Orientals,” which alienate, mystify, exoticify, and patronize them (Lien, Conway & Wong, 2004; Said, 1979). Moreover, similar to other immigrant populations in the country, many Asian-Americans experience confusion that comes from their blended cultural identity (Lantrip et al., 2015; Berry et al., 2006; Chae & Foley 2010). Thus, this study thus brings into attention the need for more culturally relevant art education for Asian-Americans.

Community-Based Art Education

Community-based art education, or informal art education, is broadly defined as art education “that takes place outside of K-12 schools” (Ulbricht, 2005, p. 7). Community-based art education can take place in a more systematized manner, for instance, at organizations such as museums, and local Parks and Recreation departments or can be organized for and by members of a community (Ulbricht, 2005). Community-organized art education has been implemented increasingly through programs that are intended to empower marginalized populations, including racial minorities, youth who are disengaged with school due to financial and other reasons, homeless individuals, and individuals with disabilities (Ulbricht, 2005).

Community-based art education is generally understood as implementing a more democratic, pluralistic approach to art education than that of formal art education. This is because community-based art educators usually seek to support a reform of the Eurocentric formal art education paradigm and to tackle real-life social issues through artistic endeavors (Blandy & Congdon, 1987; Ulbricht, 2005).

This study can be generally described as concerning a community-organized art education program although its atypical setting poses unique challenges related to achieving a more pluralistic, justice-oriented approach to art education. The context of this study will be discussed in more depth in the following section.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative, single case study in which I designed, facilitated a 10-week culturally relevant art curriculum for six second-

and third-graders (see Figure 1). My class took place within an art program which was offered by a Korean Christian church in the Midwest.

Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (2011) describe qualitative research as a “situated activity that locates the observer in the world...(which) consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible” (p. 3). Creswell & Poth (2016) define case study as:

A qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) ... over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information ... and reports a case description and case themes (p. 96-97).



Figure 1. *Students in my art class at a Korean church in the Midwest*

Data was collected through qualitative methods including ethnographic field notes (Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein, 1997) based on my experience of class facilitation and observation. Additionally, student art works, and semi-structured interviews with students and their parents were collected. Interviews with students were conducted pre- and post-study to discern the potential changes my art classes would have made for the students’ cultural competence, critical consciousness, and sense of community, and consequently their level of joy. In addition, my experience of working with the students prior to this study since 2017 also informed the research albeit not as direct data.

Collected data was transcribed, analyzed, and interpreted. Coding and categorization were used as strategies for data analysis and interpretation. Codes are identified as efforts of a researcher making meaning of the various bits of information collected in the field or generated during interviews, while categories can be produced through a comparative analysis of patterns between or among the individual codes (Chenail, 2008). I primarily focused on identifying codes and categories which respectively pertained to specific indicators and outcomes of CRP. I also focused on identifying students' joy which was connected to their cultural competence, critical consciousness, and sense of community within the context of CRP.

Korean Church in the Midwest

The case of my art class in this study is situated in a Korean church in the Midwest which predominantly serves Koreans and Korean-Americans in its area. Over 70 percent of Korean immigrants in the U.S. participate in Protestant Christian churches, and they are known to practice a fervent, church-oriented style of worship (Conner, 2014; Suh, 1985).

As their American counterparts, ethnic churches in the U.S. are known to assume social, cultural, educational roles on top of a theological one, for the populations they serve (Hirschman, 2004). Korean ethnic churches, including the one in this study, are no exception. The most prominent role of Korean ethnic churches is their social function as a "pseudo-extended family" (Kim, 1981, p. 199) through which their members form and extend their social networks and bonds. This social role is presumably prominent due to the Korean culture's strong emphasis on homogeneity, in terms of language, ethnicity, and solidarity (Min, 2006).

Korean ethnic churches also play a cultural role, helping members' cultural identification by offering a place where they can use their native language and celebrate their traditional culture, including holidays and food (Choy, 1979, as cited in Hurh & Kim, 1990). For this reason, Korean ethnic churches tend to play a positive role in helping second-generationers navigate their blended identity, with regards to their ethnicity, nationality, and religion (Cha, 2001).

Ethnic churches, including the Korean church in the study, also serve an educational role. The church's Art Class program, which serves around 30 students in total, is one of multiple educational programs that the church offers, alongside Sunday School and Korean Language School, which is a heritage school program. Heritage schools have operated in the U.S. as independent educational institutions

outside the formal education system since the 1880s, beginning with earliest ones that served German, Chinese, and Japanese immigrant populations (Wang, 2017). The purpose of their establishment by ethnic members was to help immigrants and their descendants develop linguistic abilities and cultural knowledge related to their heritage (Compton, 2001). Heritage schools in a form of weekend programs continue to be popular among Asian-Americans, including Korean-Americans (Coll & Magnuson, 1997; Zhou & Portes, 1993, as cited in Keller & Tillman, 2008).

The Korean church in this study is not a setting where justice-oriented community-based art education typically takes place. In fact, the church's adherence to conservative Christian doctrine, combined with Korean culture's emphasis on homogeneity as mentioned previously, make it a rather challenging site to implement justice-oriented art education. My choice of this site in the study, however, came as the church happened to be the largest community of Koreans, including children, in its area. I expected that the church, despite it being an atypical venue for justice-oriented art education, would be able to provide valuable insights into the idea of joy for Korean-American students who participated in culturally relevant art education. Besides, I identified church members paying growing attention to diversity and pluralism based on my conversations with them pre-study, which affirmed my decision to implement this study there. Church members were particularly vocal about the issue of racial equity and were increasingly interested in ways to cultivate relationships with non-Korean communities surrounding the church as a member of a wider community.

Positionality

Throughout the process of this study, I maintained a positionality as both an insider and an outsider of the church. I was an insider as I identified to a degree with members of the church due to shared heritage and faith. I have been a member there since 2016. However, I was simultaneously a self-perceived outsider, as I was critical of many church members who devoutly observed conservative, exclusive Christian doctrine. They were particularly discriminative towards certain minority groups including non-Christians and the LGBTQ community.

I attribute my insider/outsider identity within the church to my self-identity as a Korean, Christian with a progressive orientation (Taussig, 2006) and a critical multicultural scholar. Critical multiculturalism acknowledges unequal power relations and privileges that are deeply embedded in social structures, and systemic oppression they impose against subjugated groups (May & Sleeter, 2010). For this reason,

I have affiliated myself with Korean church communities in the different places I have lived in the U.S. and elsewhere but never felt like a fully integrated member.

My position regarding the conflicting values between conservative Christianity and critical multiculturalism is that more flexibility and pluralistic thinking are needed among Korean Christians in the U.S. If they are to seek racial equity in the American society, it makes sense that they also recognize the rights of other minority groups in terms of sexuality and religion. With the issue of social justice being particularly eminent in the current society, my concern is that conservative Christianity which lacks tolerance towards diversity would only isolate itself further from the rest of society.

Culturally Relevant Art Curriculum

The curriculum for the study took place for 10 weeks, with one lesson per week, during Fall 2018. The tenets of CRP informed the curriculum with regards to teacher posture of valuing, respecting, and capitalizing on students' respective cultures and backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 2009), as well as teaching strategies (Gay, 2010). Teaching strategies included creating a learning environment where students had a voice in responding to the curriculum; implementing a comprehensive curriculum which was focused on teaching the whole child rather than just art; and emphasizing care, validation, and mutual trust-building between the teacher and students (Gay, 2010).

The design of the curriculum, meanwhile, was influenced by tenets of contemporary scholars (Gude, 2008; Lampert, 2006; Stewart & Walker, 2005; Stewart, 2014; Walker, 2006) in the field of art education who have emphasized art education as a means to enhance understanding, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills among students through the use of big ideas.

Big ideas, or enduring ideas, are known as themes, topics or issues that reflect big questions about the human experience which have been investigated over time (Stewart & Walker, 2005). They are "broad, umbrella-like ideas that guide students in understanding what it means to be human, to live alongside others and in the natural world," such as "identity," "power," "conflict," and "spirituality" (Stewart & Walker, 2005, p. 25). Walker (2001) stated that big ideas are characterized by "complexity, ambiguity, contradiction, and multiplicity" and that they "do not completely explicate an idea but represent a host of concepts that form the idea" (p. 1).

I chose "Understanding of self and others in a multicultural society" as the big idea for my curriculum, as it was broad enough but also confined enough to tackle tenets of culturally relevant art

education with my students. The rationale (see Table 1) addresses the relevance of the big idea to my students. I developed three essential questions (see Table 1) to help students explore, discuss, and address the aforementioned big idea in class. They were intended to tackle the three key concepts in the curriculum, which were cultural competence, critical consciousness, and sense of community. The key concepts were drawn from the tenets of CRP, including its emphasis on collective empowerment and the role of community. Indicators for each key concept (see Table 2) were similarly derived from their definitions within the context of CRP in order to measure the impact of the curriculum in addressing the key concepts among students.

Table 1
Big idea, rationale, essential questions, and key concepts for the curriculum

Big idea	Understanding of self and others in a multicultural society
Rationale	Being able to understand one's self-identity and to position oneself in relation to others is important for children living in this era to navigate the multicultural, globalized world. As Korean-American Christians, my students inherently have a multidimensional culture which they are in an active process of exploring. Learning about different aspects of their culture by engaging in relevant creative activities and discussions may not only help their identity exploration, but also help them build cultural competence and critical consciousness. Furthermore, investigating the idea of "community" through art may help students consider others in society, by thinking about what constitutes a community, and thus concepts such as inclusion, exclusion, tolerance, and pluralism.
Essential questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What kinds of aspects describe a multicultural society? ● What kinds of things define our identity? ● What is a community to you?
Key concepts	Cultural competence, critical consciousness, sense of community

Table 2
Indicators for key concepts within the curriculum

Key Concepts	Indicators
Cultural competence	Cultural self-awareness (cultural confidence); ability to learn and build on varying cultural norms; valuing diversity; having a view on difference
Critical consciousness	Recognition of sociopolitical issues of race, class, and gender; ability to question the norm
Sense of community	Sense of membership, trust, interdependence, openness, respect, cooperation, connectedness, fluid relationships

I designed the curriculum (See Appendix 1 for a complete summary of the curriculum with topics, objectives, and activities for each week) for the class based on the aforementioned enduring idea, essential questions, and key concepts. The curriculum comprised three major projects and all classes consisted of artmaking and class discussions.

The first project was a storybook called My Community in which

students respectively created chapters on their self-portraits and their community. Then, students developed an autobiography map, *My Lifesland*, through which they visualized their life with symbols of people, places, objects that were significant, meaningful to them. These two were individual projects. Finally, we created a world map mural, *Us and the World*, which was a group project. Students were asked to not only paint but also position themselves on the world map with their initials made of yarn, while sharing their knowledge about cultures of different parts of the world.

Findings & Discussion

This section discusses major findings of this study, specifically regarding how my art curriculum impacted students with regards to their cultural competence, critical consciousness, and sense of community, and how this related to students' experience of joy.

Cultural Competence

Ladson-Billings (2006) refers to cultural competence as students being confident and integral in their own cultures while learning about those outside their own. Some indicators to determine students' cultural competence include cultural self-awareness, ability to learn and build on varying cultural norms, valuing diversity, and having a personal view on difference.

The art curriculum offered students an opportunity to consider, explore their self-identity through art which went beyond biculturalism and consisted of a blend of Korean, American, and Christian cultures. This contributed to students' increased cultural self-awareness, according to their reflections from post-study interviews. Students' increased cultural self-awareness fulfills the definition of joy with regards to cultural competence within the context of CRP.

Students' increased cultural self-awareness was also shown in their art works. For their self-portraits (see Figure 2), students carefully observed their physical features and recreated themselves in drawings that actually resembled them. These drawings were different from Barbie doll-like figures that they typically drew whenever they were asked to draw themselves prior to this study. Students' autobiography maps (see Figure 3), meanwhile, featured objects signifying their family, friends, toys, Jesus, and the Bible, which offered insights about their interests, values, and cultures that they identified with. Their autobiography maps addressed their identification with Korean, American, and Christian cultures.



Figure 2. *A student's self portrait*

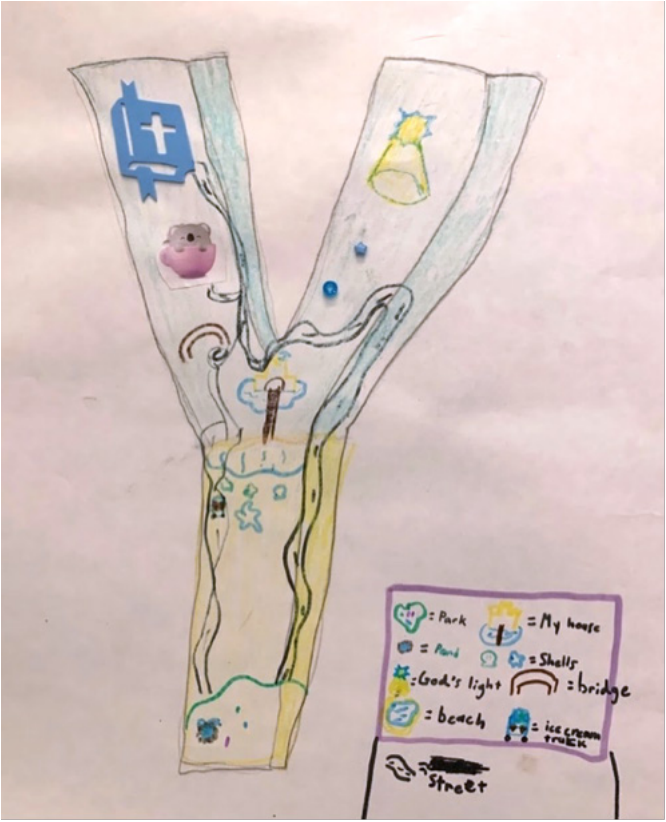


Figure 3. A student's autobiography map

The curriculum highlighted students' ability to learn and build on different cultural norms as well as cultural agility. They were literate in Korean, American, and Christian cultures and were thus agile to adapt to the different cultures and norms in a given context, whether it be school, home, or church. They were more "American," or assimilated to the mainstream culture at school; more conventionally "Korean" in terms of lifestyle, food, and language, at home; and both more "Korean" and "Christian" at church where a blend of the two cultures were practiced.

School was a place where students' American identity manifested most notably. Students told me in interviews that they spoke the English language at school, learned about the American history and cultures from mostly White teachers, and ate "American" food. Their friends were mostly non-Koreans as there were only a few Asians at their school. Students also said in interviews that they rarely had opportunities to share their Korean culture at school other than occasional events such as Heritage Nights where they introduced traditional Korean attire or food in front of their peers and their parents.

Students' orientation towards Korean culture at home, meanwhile, was indicated through their preference to speak the Korean language to communicate with their family, eat Korean food, and practice Korean culture such as holiday celebration, as per their parents' comments. Home thus served as a primary space where students stayed connected to their ethnic heritage. Students told me in interviews that they had family members including their parents and grandparents who were less fluent in the English language and that they wanted to learn the Korean language to primarily connect and communicate better with them.

The study identified students' dominant Christian identity through their expression of the centrality of faith and church in their lives in interviews and in class. Their Christian identity was apparent in their art works, including their autobiography maps (see Figure 3) which featured symbols such as the Cross, the Bible, and "God's light" as significant in their lives. In another instance, one student addressed her friends and peers at school in an interview, saying that she "felt connected" to everybody because "technically everybody is family" as God created everyone.

Students were exposed to diversity and perceived it as normal. The Korean and Korean-American students showed a generally open-minded attitude towards and valued diversity. Students often said "difference is good" in interviews because they learned so from school and saw diverse people at school and in their neighborhood.

Students talked about their peers and friends from school who were of various races/ethnicities, wore headscarves, and had special needs and thus needed their help. They described their life at school as “happy” and “good” which indicated that they were not opposed to the differences and diversity they experienced there.

Critical Consciousness

Ladson-Billings (1995a) defines critical consciousness as that which “allows them (students) to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities” (p. 162). Indicators for identifying critical consciousness are recognition and questioning of sociopolitical issues of social identities including race, class, and gender.

Students recognized social norms regarding race and ethnicity, religion, sexuality, disability, and socioeconomic status. They acknowledged that the White race, heterosexuality, and the middle class were considered the norm in society. With regards to race, they discussed how their White peers and teachers were dominant in number at their school and thus their culture was considered normal. Students also recognized that their conservative Christian religion was not the norm, discussing during class how they were not allowed by their parents to participate in costume-wearing at school or Trick-or-treating in their neighborhood on Halloween.

Students had a clear understanding of the middle-class norm which was often shown in conversations regarding their living situations during class. They talked about how some of them lived in a large single home with a big yard where they could have sleepovers, some in a condominium with no yard, and others in a rental apartment. They all expressed a preference for large suburban single homes which they perceived as representing the American middle class.

Meanwhile, students also recognized the norm around social identities such as sexuality, and disability. Through interviews with students and parents, I was able to learn that students understood that a family with two parents who were of opposite sexes and one being physically / mentally able were considered normal in society.

Students’ response to diversity and norms around different cultures in society, however, was largely limited to awareness of, if not conformity to, rather than questioning or taking actions to disrupt them. They often expressed confusion with navigating the diverse society they lived in in terms of what attitude to have or actions to take in varied situations. This was evident in how students particularly refrained from addressing their critical awareness regarding race and ethnicity.

Their parents, however, provided some helpful insights in this regard. Through conversations with parents, I was able to discern that not only did students recognize the norm, but they also showed considerable insecurities regarding their race/ethnicity, being inclined towards deficit-oriented thinking.

Parents discussed their children's frustration regarding their physical, cultural differences to their White peers. Parents told me in interviews that students sought to assimilate to, or physically "look more like," their White peers at school by wearing clothing and backpacks that were from specific brands which were popular among their peers. An important factor that contributed to students' deficit-oriented thinking, according to their parents, was their occasional encounters with unjust situations, for instance, being called out by their peers as having "ugly Chinese eyes." A parent said this particular instance had a negative, lasting impact on her daughter's self-confidence regarding her Korean ethnicity.

Parents also shared through interviews that their children, while frustrated, did not know exactly how they should tackle the previously discussed unjust situations regarding their race/ethnicity so they often chose to avoid addressing them. Moreover, parents said that they did not know how to help their children because they were not able to fully relate to their children's experience due to them having different migration experiences. Most parents were first-generational immigrants whereas most students were second-generationers.

The study finds that 10 weeks were a rather short period to identify substantial changes in or development of students' critical consciousness which tends to develop progressively over time. A cycle of critical consciousness development proposed by Paulo Freire (1970) (as cited in El-Amin et al., 2017) involves 1) gaining knowledge about the systems and structures that create and sustain inequity (critical analysis), 2) developing a sense of power or capability (sense of agency), and 3) ultimately committing to take action against oppressive conditions.

While my students recognized norms and injustice regarding diversity, they were yet to critically question them or take actions to disrupt them. True critical consciousness includes questioning and action factors which relate to the definition of joy within the context of CRP (Freire, 1970; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). To this end, students would need to develop a sense of agency and empowerment based on an understanding of social forces and structures that justify inequity (El-Amin et al., 2017). This provides an insight into why students experienced more insecurities and frustration rather than joy with regards to their critical awareness.

It is also important to note that the meaning of critical consciousness for the students in this study might be different from its conventional understanding. Identifying as Korean, American, and Christian, students navigated innate conflicting identities which made them consider themselves both oppressed and privileged minorities. Their Korean ethnicity made them self-identify as oppressed minorities who needed to assimilate to the mainstream White culture. Moreover, while they identified themselves as religious minorities being conservative Christians, they also conformed to exclusive Christian doctrine which condoned discrimination against certain minority groups including the LGBTQ community and non-Christians. This was indicated from their parents' intolerance of LGBTQ culture and religions such as Islam, and their efforts to raise their children with similar values as shown in interviews. Children's morality and values tend to be heavily influenced by their parents' (Suttie, 2015). Students did not express their strong opinion with regards to the LGBTQ culture and other religions such as Islam.

Students' such a conflicting self-identity can be explained by the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; hooks, 1981; McCall, 2005; Valentine, 2015) which emphasizes multiplicity and fluidity of ones' culture and identities. In fact, Gill Valentine (2015) makes a notable remark about the fluid nature of one's identity, stating that "given the multiple and fluid nature of our intersectional identities, most people over their life course can never be simply categorized by binary labels such as 'majority' or 'minority'" (p. 146). Essentially, intersectionality scholars argue that "everyone's unique social advantages and disadvantages should be subject to scrutiny" (Gopaldas, 2013, p. 91).

Sense of Community

As discussed previously, CRP emphasizes the important role community plays for minority students in enhancing their learning experience and inducing collective empowerment. Specifically, CRP calls for the involvement of adults in the community in students' education, serving as positive role models. Moreover, CRP prioritizes collaborative learning among students, and close connectedness and fluid relations among students, teachers, and the rest of community members (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

Based on my observation and experience, a strong sense of community was already established within the church community, as well as the art program. Most students, parents, and teachers discussed their strong sense of belonging in and commitment to the church community, saying that the church felt like "home," a place where they fulfilled their social, emotional, and religious needs, and had established trust-based relationships with other members.

The art program was taught by teachers who were dedicated church members and volunteers who had existing connections and fluid relationships with most of their students. Due to the wide range of careers the teachers had, from housewife, teacher, graduate student, and artist, they served as role models for children in the church. For instance, a student in my class said she considered pursuing a career as an artist due to her mother's influence. Her mother, a freelance teaching artist, served in the art program as a teacher.

My art class prioritized a fluid relationship between students and myself. I paid attention to make the relationship between the students and myself as "equitable and reciprocal" as possible (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 95). I made efforts to be a collaborative, responsive teacher who co-created the curriculum and class with them as a facilitator, rather than one who delivered a unilateral curriculum without considering student responses. During the study, I was open to tweak activities within the curriculum according to student requests and helped students with their individual or collaborative work without guiding them in a certain intended way.

Although students already showed a strong sense of community amongst themselves and within the church community at large, my curriculum helped further reinforce their sense of community. In particular, the world map mural, *Us and the World* (see Figure 4), which was a group project, encouraged students to enhance cooperation, codependence, and trust, while enhancing the connectedness and fluid relationships amongst themselves.

Prior to the mural project, students were well-bonded but preferred to engage in their artwork on their own based on my experience of working with them since 2017. However, with the mural project, I observed constant instances where students deliberated, discussed together to decide which color to paint a certain part of the map and their self-positioning on the map, and shared what they knew about different countries and cultures around the world. There seemed to be an understanding among students that in order to tackle this large-scale project they needed to rely on one another's participation, commitment.

Students said in their post-study interviews that they appreciated the world map mural project the most within the curriculum, particularly its collaborative aspects. They told me that they valued the fact that they were able to complete a large-scale, complex project by working together which they otherwise would have not been able to do so. They also discussed how they felt even closer to and identified more with their classmates after finishing this project. For this reason, they told me that they wanted to have more group projects in class in the future.



Figure 4. *A world map mural, Us and the World*

It is evident from such responses that students experienced much pleasure and joy from the world map project. Moreover, the reinforcement of a sense of community amongst the students through the project fulfills the definition of joy within the context of CRP.

Joy and Culturally Relevant Art Education

This study presented positive correlations between community-based culturally relevant art education and students' increased cultural competence and reinforcement of their strong sense of community. This partially addressed joy as defined within the context of CRP, which was students being culturally competent, critically conscious, and having a feeling of a sense of community within their home community (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a; McMillan & Chavis, 1985). Despite some confusion and frustration that students expressed regarding their critical consciousness, I was able to identify manifestations of their pleasure and joy during this study.

Art was a primary factor through which students in this study found joy. Students valued art's intrinsic benefit, saying that they felt "happy" and "good" when they were creating art. They said that they genuinely enjoyed working with different materials, themes, and being able to express their thoughts and emotions through art.

Yet through the lens of CRP, joy for my students came from their cultural competence, specifically their increased cultural self-awareness as Korean, American, and Christian. Students said in post-study interviews that my art classes helped them better understand their cultural identity which they had previously found to be difficult, confusing to navigate. They also said that they had rarely had an opportunity to consider their identity at school, home, or the church prior to this experience.

What amplified students' joy related to cultural competence was affirmation and validation regarding their self-identity which they experienced amongst their peers in class. Students explored and gained a better understanding of their self-identity together and often found out that they shared similar feelings or thoughts about their self-identity or diversity during this process. I observed that students became more comfortable addressing their identity in class and in post-study interviews over time as they realized that their self-perceived identity resonated much with one another's.

Students' joy with regards to sense of community resulted from its reinforcement through their participation in a group project in class. Students shared in post-study interviews that they appreciated the world map mural project for its collaborative aspects which helped them further cooperation, interdependence, and mutual trust

amongst one another. Outside my art class, students found much joy from a strong sense of community they experienced within the church community. Church was indeed a place of pleasure and joy for students. It was not only their primary social, cultural, and religious network, but also a safe space and refuge where they referred to as “home.” Major factors that contributed to this were their families’ committed participation in the church based on the interdependence and trust they shared with others in the church; and similar ethnic, cultural, religious identities its members shared.

In sum, the art class and the church community created an environment where students’ unique intersecting identities consisting of their Korean, American, and Christian cultures were explored, affirmed, and validated. The art class helped students increase their cultural self-awareness and enhance their sense of community without them feeling judged or stereotyped.

Students’ critical consciousness tends to be developed by their experiences and education at school, home, church, and elsewhere in their community. Therefore, it would be helpful to implement a similar research in the future in an alternative research site outside of the church and separate from their religious identity. This could be a Korean community center that is not affiliated with a religion or an afterschool multicultural education program.

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