

Chapter 14

Catastrophe: An Uncanny Catalyst for Creativity

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ABSTRACT

Natural catastrophes are seen as a catalyst for creativity in interdisciplinary arts-integrated preservice teacher education. Preservice teacher lesson plans and implementation focused on natural catastrophes such as hurricanes, floods, tsunamis, and tornadoes advance an understanding of visual culture, creative production and civic engagement. Teaching visual culture involves border-crossings, from the conceptual to the tactile, and emboldening hands-on production in interdisciplinary art education projects. Professional artists' works are analyzed as responses to environmental and related man-made catastrophes caused by climate change. The impact of the professional artists' imagery and intentions act as exemplars for arts-integrated classroom practices inclusive of civic engagement. Preservice teacher education is enhanced by an intellectual flexibility inherent in interdisciplinary lesson planning and meaning-making projects. Empathetic responses to natural and related man-made catastrophes develop preservice teachers' classroom pedagogies that further global citizenry.

INTRODUCTION

Though the Mayan calendar stopped in 2012 and some anticipated the end of the world, it did not happen. *Time* magazine's January 2013 lead article highlighted in photographs the extremes of global warming, an occurrence that is creating havoc on weather conditions around the world and something we can address only in incremental steps. How does one react to the tragedy on October 2013 of a typhoon killing 1,200 people in the Philippines or of super storm Sandy November 2012 that destroyed homes and businesses of people in Brooklyn, Manhattan, Staten Island, and many parts of the New Jersey shoreline? On March 13, 2015, there were three major articles in *The New York Times* reporting on catastrophes: "Starving sea lions washing ashore by the hundreds in California (caused by warm waters that are driving mother seals far from their young to look for food), "A struggle to recover as vast as the ocean" (Japan's slow recovery from the 2011 Tsumani) and "The southwestern water wars" (the conflict between urban and rural southwestern communities in the United States).

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-1665-1.ch014

Catastrophe

Words and images, as noted above, are our contemporary visual culture. Kerry Freedman (2003) has understood teaching visual culture to involve various border-crossing, from the crossing of conceptual borders to borders of medium and form. The power of the intertextual message detailing natural disasters underscores the possibilities of civic engagement through informed practices in interdisciplinary approach of arts and science/environmental education. An increase in natural disasters is evidence of climate change caused by elevated global temperature due to the planet's reliance on burning fossil fuels. Understanding the visual impact of desertification, deforestation, melting glaciers, and human and animal migration due to climate change has been pivotal in developing an understanding of the gravity of environmental catastrophes.

Considering increased global interconnectedness and the urgency for engaged citizenry in arts and science/environmental education, I share interdisciplinary arts-integration practices in preservice teacher preparation in this chapter. In this practice, the phenomena of natural catastrophes is seen as a catalyst for creativity to develop global citizenship to address and broaden ideas of visual culture, arts education, and environmental and global sustainability practices. Specifically, main objectives of this paper are to examine:

1. Visual culture and education,
2. Globalizing creative production and teacher civic engagement education,
3. Contemporary professional artistic practices,
4. Interdisciplinary and empathetic perspectives, and
5. Preservice teachers' arts-integrated approaches.

Through these approaches, the preservice teachers address environmental catastrophes, such as hurricanes, floods, ice storms, blizzards, tsunamis, and tornadoes with the goal of:

1. Emboldening their strategies in arts-integration lesson planning with intellectual flexibility and emotive understanding and
2. Gaining innovative practices that synthesize aesthetic literacies and scientific analyses through interdisciplinary teaching and learning.

After that, I will make suggestions about future research to explore further converging aspects of contemporary art and visual culture learning, as well as share some resources for possible online global civil learning and engagement.

WHAT IS VISUAL CULTURE?

Preservice teachers recognize how visual culture is a part of daily life in the design and advertisement of clothing, utensils, tools, games and the broad landscape of habitats, parks and urban design. Paul Duncum (2010) sees visual culture as imagery that characterizes everyday life in a historically unprecedented way. Visual culture is understood by reexamining what is represented, how this representation is negotiated, the allure and repetition of imagery, how one views the image, and as mentioned earlier, the intertextuality of imagery and the currency of multimodal imagery (Duncum, 2010). Dynamic visual images on digital devices are critical components of visual culture in and out of the classroom (Wilson

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