



Building Interdisciplinary Bridges Across Cultures

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Abstract

Students at The University of Manchester are participants in an increasingly internationalised Higher Education campus which is embedded in a multicultural urban setting. Both the internationalised and multicultural character of this context provides students with opportunities, which they may or may not embrace, to live and study interculturally (or at least have some intercultural experiences). Given these opportunities, and the experiences they encourage, in this paper, I discuss what living in such an interculturally-rich context might mean for the personhood of the individuals concerned, and how visual-creative-arts (VCAs) can be used to explore this question. The study in question is my on-going doctoral research which, through the lens of 'mindfulness', attends to students as active thinking-agents who can, to a great extent, autonomously make sense of their intercultural experiences, and from whom I can learn about their individual understandings regarding who they are as they live and study in this interculturally-rich context. The primary focus of this presentation is methodological – in it, I outline the eight VCAs-based methods (such as 'Blind-portrait', 'Digital-edited Photography', and 'Free-style Painting') I am using to explore intercultural personhood. By using VCAs to explore how students take meaningful ownership of their intercultural experiences through VCAs, I offer a methodological contribution regarding the use of VCAs-based methods in, for, and as research. I explore interdisciplinary questions such as: 'What are the cognitive, psychological and communicative powers of the arts in understanding one's 'self' and the meanings of one's experiences?'; 'What do intercultural experiences mean to the 'self'? and 'How can the arts be used to illuminate one's understandings about being intercultural?'

Bio

Zhuomin Huang is a PhD student of Education at the University of Manchester (UoM), UK. She uses a variety of visual methods which are embedded in her main doctoral study - 'Mindfulness in Intercultural Communication: Understanding Mature Students' Intercultural Experiences at an Internationalised UK University'. She has experience of studying and living in different countries, such as Mainland China, Hong Kong, Switzerland, Turkey and the UK. She was trained to be an English as a Foreign Language Teacher in Hong Kong, and at the University of Edinburgh; and also, certificated to be a Chinese as a Foreign Language Teacher at Beijing Normal University. She has explored 'outside of the box' of Language Education by undertaking an MBA in Switzerland. Whilst undertaking her doctoral study, she works as a teaching and research assistant (e.g. supervising undergraduates, teaching MA students and working in a research-film project) at UoM.