

A Descriptive Case Study of the Impact of a Professor's Teaching Strategies on Taiwanese College Students' Photographic Image Interpretations

by Chuang, Chia-chi, Ph.D., The Pennsylvania State University, 2005, 234 pages; AAT 3193167

Abstract Summary

In this descriptive case study, I investigated the impact of a Taiwanese college professor's teaching strategies on Taiwanese students who were learning to interpret photographs in his undergraduate photography appreciation course. His systematized teaching approach to photographic image interpretation is particularly important because it helps students to look more closely at photographic images, think more deliberately about them, and read signs embedded within them, rather than simply appreciate their composition and aesthetics.

My review of the literature focused on characteristics of effective teachers and student learning in university-level art education and higher education in general. I also reviewed adult/cognitive learning theories and research studies on photographic image interpretation and criticism.

The study addressed these four main research questions: (1) What are the knowledge, values, beliefs, and assumptions about photographic image interpretation held by the teacher in this descriptive case study? (2) What strategies were employed by the teacher during this study to teach photographic image interpretation in his photography appreciation course? (3) Did the teacher's teaching strategies impact the students' methods of interpreting photographic images over the course of the semester? If so, how, and in what ways do the students now make meaning of the photographic images they interpret? (4) Was the teacher in this descriptive case study, Professor Wu, effective in guiding his students to interpret photographic images during his photography appreciation course?

Using a descriptive case study design, I gathered data using written questionnaires (pre- and posttests) and oral questionnaires (interviews). I studied the impact of the teaching strategies of Professor Jiabao Wu on his 29 students' interpretations of photographic images in his photography appreciation course; I tested the students at the beginning and end of spring semester 2004. Additionally, I interviewed five student volunteers about their prior experiences in photography and their interpretation of photographic images during the course, as well as the instructor about his academic background and experiences in photography that had influenced his teaching. I also observed his teaching during the regularly scheduled class periods of the photography appreciation course during that semester at the Chinese Culture University in Taiwan.

At the outset of the study, the student-participants described subject matter and forms in images and paid little attention to signs and symbolic meanings in their photography interpretations. I concluded that the instructor's teaching strategies, which encouraged student classroom participation and interaction with both himself and the other students, had a strong impact on the students' ability to more fully interpret photographic images by the end of the semester. I conclude this dissertation

with recommendations for college-level teachers and for the Chinese Culture University.

Dissertation Advisers:

Wanda Knight

Jamie Myers

Mary Ann Stankiewicz

Karen Keifer-Boyd