Project Abstract (max 200 words)
Your abstract of your findings should include enough detail so that rationale, methodology and outcomes are clear. Use plain language as this abstract will be posted on the LTO website.
The data from 940 Ryerson undergraduate students taking lower and upper level liberal studies electives in art history was examined to determine the impact of teaching diversity theory over multiple years. The courses introduced, developed, and promoted diversity and inclusion exposing students to a broad range of theories and examples across time and space. Student essay topic choices were analyzed to determine the impact of exposure and the levels of bias towards western teleologies and material culture when entering the university in comparison to upper level undergraduates. Quantitative results uncovered a significant bias and measurable differences in attitude to diversity before and after exposure over the standard four year undergraduate degree revealed in essay topic choices and supporting examples.

Summary of Work Accomplished (max 1500 words)
Describe the study rationale (including supportive literature), project methodology, outcomes and potential application of outcomes.

The rationale for this study comes from observation of student behaviour linked to essay topic selection. In both IRL100: World Art (lower level) and IRL500: Contemporary Art (upper level) students must choose a unique essay topic about art based on personal preference. Student choices appear to indicate patterns which suggest that teaching about diversity and inclusion throughout a single semester is not enough; completion of multiple semesters reinforcing diversity theory may be required to see quantifiable changes in student attitudes and research choices.

My objective with IRL100 (which does not require any prerequisite) was to answer the following questions: Why do students, when given the opportunity to study an object for their essay from any country in the world and any time period from c.50,000 BC to c.1900 AD, still appear to choose ‘western’ subjects from cultures historically promoted as ‘superior’ more than 50% of the time? The inclusion of one’s own identity and cultural background into the essay topic chosen is actively promoted in IRL100 with the opportunity to research the essay topic in foreign languages. The persistent bias towards French, Italian, and Greek material culture is in stark contrast to the diversity presented in class. Is this bias statistically significant? Why does it persist at a first year level? I am interested in determining if there are patterns that emerge – how often does exposure to new ideas and philosophies addressed in class translate into a desire to research more about it for an essay?

My objective with IRL500 (which does not require any prerequisite) was to answer the following questions: Does awareness and practice of critical thinking about diversity, equity, and historical bias result in a measurable increase in defining art more inclusively by third and fourth year? For their term paper, students are asked to define the word ‘art’
on their own terms using examples drawn from at least three different countries in the world. [Students are told that they can select anything in the world to define as ‘art’ rather than just traditional ‘western’ categories eg. painting, sculpture. This means a student could define anything from death metal, to sports cars, to interpretive dance as an art form – as long as they justify it with existing critical theory.] How often do students forced to choose examples from different countries go outside of ‘western’ norms and values linked to teleologies about cultural superiority? How far have they come in embracing critical thinking as it relates to the idea of diversity, fluidity, and flexibility in what constitutes ‘art’? By the upper levels at Ryerson are they more likely to choose examples which are non-western in origin? Which critique western hegemony in art historical discourse?

Supportive literature included:
Bowman, Nicholas A. “Conceptualizing Openness to Diversity and Challenge: Its Relation to College Experiences, Achievement, and Retention.” Innovative Higher Education. 29 (2014), 1 – 15. Openness to diversity and challenge (ODC) is an integral desired outcome for undergraduates. ODC is correlated positively with student engagement, achievement, and retention and may translate to enhanced success upon graduation. Engaging in interpersonal interactions across difference, discussing issues of difference and promoting a positive campus climate for diversity create the open-mindedness, critical thinking, cultural empathy, and intellectual flexibility associated with ODC.

Dean, Carolyn. “The Trouble with (the Term) Art.” The Art Journal. 65:2 (2006), 24 – 32. Exposes the ‘elephant in the disciplinary room’ of art history: the field has no clearly defined domain of study or boundaries when the Duchampian idea that anything can be ‘art’ is applied. Explores the fact that the concept ‘art’ as it is used in the west today has no equivalent in ANY historical culture. Western philosophies and conceptions of value attached to Duchamp have no relevance historically and to apply them is anachronistic and teleological. What Western art historians refer to as historical art is material culture. Normalizing non-western material culture as ‘art’ when the word and concept does not exist in another culture imposes Foucault’s concept of normalization. Western values, canons and hierarchies are projected onto material culture made for other functions. Once the object is ‘redefined’ as art it is categorized as ‘primitive’ and placed into an evolutionary trajectory.

Elicker, Joelle et al. “A Training Framework and Follow-Up Observations for Multiculturally Inclusive Teaching: Is Believing That We Are Emphasizing Diversity Enough?” Journal of Diversity in Higher Education. 2:2 (2009), 63 – 77. Some instructors are concerned that integrating multiple dimensions of diversity will drain their time, resources, and create unmanageable classroom situations. Others don’t see the value or believe they do not have the skill set to engage meaningfully rather than superficially with diversity. Student perceptions of inclusion in the classroom varied from what instructors believed they were achieving. This suggests a more integrated, layered, and saturated framework for training instructors and creating pedagogy is required to achieve diversity outcomes.

Fraser, Andrea. “Who are the patrons of contemporary art today?” Adbusters.org. February 14, 2012. Accessed April 12, 2012. Exposes the how many artists with radical political rhetoric today self-censor in the face of loss of patronage or are told to tone it down to ensure they remain popular with the super-collectors creating private ‘treasure vault’ museums. Fundraising donations and wealthy patronage dictate power centers in the art world – not actual diversity. Many artists claiming to be about diversity and freedom are subsidized by, or benefit from corporate engines of social inequality.

King, Patricia, Rosemary Perez and Woo-jeong Shim. “How College Students Experience Intercultural Learning: Key Features and Approaches.” Journal of Diversity in Higher Education. 6:2 (2013), 69 – 83. Intercultural effectiveness includes knowledge of diverse cultures and cultural practices, complex cognitive skills for decision making in intercultural contexts, social skills to function effectively in diverse groups, and flexibility and openness to new ideas. Students placed in environments where they directly
encountered differences and felt safe to explore them created and stimulated intercultural effectiveness. The emotional dimensions to interactions, whether positive or negative, served as affective mediators that increased empathy and reduced prejudice.

Lee, Amy, Williams, Rhiannon and Rusudan Kilaberia. “Engaging Diversity in First-Year College Classrooms,” *Innovative Higher Education*. 37 (2012), 199 – 213. First year courses engaging with novel ideas, unfamiliar contexts, and diverse social groups can prompt the cognitive disequilibrium critical to supporting cognitive and affective development. Collaborative, biographical, and reflective tasks provided the formal and informal opportunities to enhance diversity-related outcomes. Activities which facilitate reciprocity and respect, model openness and effective communication skills, and provide explicit and integrated support for peer interactions can lessen students’ anxiety about engaging diversity.

Mitter, Partha. “Interventions: Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery.” *The Art Bulletin*. XC:4 (2008), 531 - 548. Exposes and critiques the teleological, Western bias in Modernism using a ‘popular’ American 21st century art history textbook as example. Explores what Western Modernists choose to suppress in their attempts to relegate non-Western artists to a ‘derivative’ status. Famously introduces *Picasso manqué* syndrome which non-Western artists can ‘catch’ when they are judged by Western art historians.

Moxey, Keith. *Visual Time: The Image in History*. Duke University Press, 2013. Considered required reading for graduate art history students. Explores the concept of heterochronicity and its implications for diversity in art history. Artistic narratives in non-western material culture may come from a variety of conceptions of time/space which are not translated easily. Linear versus circular conceptions of time result in material culture with multiple, disjunctive temporalities. Art history in the west has been too attached to interpreting works based on teleological categorization demonstrating how each work influences the next in a chain of influences leading to western Modernism as supreme. The implications of rejecting this and embracing the diversity of time/space conceptions (heterochronicity) leads to addressing the ways verisimilitude eludes time in both the past and present and the role of time in nationalist constructions of history.

Pasque, Penny *et al.* “Pedagogical Approaches to Student Racial Conflict in the Classroom.” *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. 6:1 (2013), 1 – 16. Addresses how transformation in attitudes may be more effectively engaged through enabling rather than shutting down conflict in discussions of race and privilege in the classroom. The ‘skillful use’ and resolution of the cognitive dissonance created during uncomfortable conversations allows students to address their values in a safe environment. When handled well, classroom conflict can create the disequilibrium and questioning essential for new learning, engagement, and critical thinking.


Methodology and Outcomes:
Each student essay in IRL100 (593 students) and IRL500 (347 students) from 2008 – 2013 received a series of codes based on country of origin of chosen topic in addition to date, medium, artist/design (if known). Standard market research coding and tabulation was used. Project outcomes were measured using statistical analysis of data entered into a program designed to capture coded and tabulated student responses. These data points were then analyzed to confirm or refute hypotheses. This same methodology was used for IRL500.
Methodology and Outcomes IRL100 Data Collection
Coding tracked student essay topics but not who chose the topic. Every student in each semester/section was required to choose a different topic from any country in the world, any media, before 1900 AD. Data collected was used to determine: a) How many student essay topics will be non-Western? b) How many students will revert to Western examples not shown or discussed in class? Students chose essay topics from 60 different countries. However, 190 students (32.04%) chose from just two countries, Italy and France. This aligns with a typical Western art history textbook with its teleologies and reductivist biases (as outlined in Moxey and Mitter). In total, 345 students (58.18%) chose topics inside the Euro-American perspective whether shown in class or not. This was close to the 63.15% of ‘Western’ images in a typical art history survey textbook. Only 248 students (41.82%) chose topics outside the Euro-American perspective whether shown in class or not. Results revealed less than 50% of students felt comfortable talking about non-Western material culture in first/second year in a grading situation even when the course was dedicated to art and design around the world. For IRL100, a smaller sample, (N = 87) were given a data sheet included with the Essay Preparation Kit (worth 2% of grade). Students were asked the following questions: What object did you select for your topic? Where did you find your topic? Why did you choose your topic? Results were coded using standard market research protocols and then entered into the computer program as numerical inputs. Results revealed 57.47% chose their topic based on previous knowledge/interest linked to biases.

Methodology and Outcomes IRL500 Data Collection
Coding tracked student essay topics but not who chose the topic. Every student in each semester/section was required to choose at least three examples from three different countries in the world to support their personal definition of the word ‘art’ (in theory, this should encourage ‘some’ diversity). Examples could come from any country in the world, any media, any date. Each student, no matter how many examples they supplied, only counted as one example (creating a topic) and was coded with one of three codes:
1. Only chose examples from course materials no matter where they were from in the world. 2. Went outside the course materials but only for more Western examples. 3. Went outside the course materials and outside Western examples. Results revealed 161 students (46.40%) only stepped outside course materials for more Western supporting examples for their definition of the term art. Only 25.07% (87 students) were prepared to go outside of course materials and outside of western examples to support their definition while 28.53% (99 students) were unprepared to develop a personal definition of the term art which included any non-course materials. In presentation, these students were labeled as remaining within the security blanket zone with none of Bowman’s (2014) ODC (openness to diversity and challenge) indicated.

Statistical analysis of data points did indeed reveal a measurable bias towards the west in student choices for essay topics. The bias becomes less prevalent after multi-year exposure to diversity theories, but only marginally. For IRL100, the security blanket zone was 48.22% while in IRL500 the security blanket zone was 28.53%. While this seems to be an ‘improvement’, in IRL100 the Euro-American focus was overall 58.17% in a non-Western focused diversity theory-based course. In IRL500 there was still a Euro-American focus of 75.03% for supporting examples for personal definitions of the term art.

Application of Outcomes
There are three potential applications linked to research, curriculum revision, and pedagogy in classroom. In light of the feedback received at the Ryerson Faculty Conference, further data will be collected from the existing sample students to see if their essay topics correlate with Bowman’s ODC as measured by their exiting grades in the course. Bowman (2014) suggests that openness to diversity and challenge results in students achieving higher grades in addition to enhanced skills and success upon
graduation. Is there indeed a link between students choosing non-western topics and ODC? The second involves curriculum revision. Is there a greater need for non-western examples in IRL500 to reduce the 75.03% of students remaining situated in the west for their definitions of the word art? What types of theory and examples would meet the requirements of the course description (as presented in the calendar) while presenting further opportunities to engage with diversity of thought, practice, and outcomes? In-class pedagogy needs to address Lee et al. (2012) and Pasque et al. (2013) in a narrative that enhances discussions of diversity.

**Evaluation of Project's Success (max 600 words)**

**Explain how you know that the project was successful (Include evidence of rigorous evaluation.)**

The success of this project was revealed in the statistical analyses which were presented at the Ryerson Faculty Conference in May, 2014. The program developed to capture coded and tabulated student responses successfully confirmed a strong bias towards western values and material culture in first year undergraduate Ryerson students. Student responses from a large cohort (940 students) created statistically significant results. Evaluation of data revealed strong correlations with existing research especially King et al. (2013), Lee et al. (2012) and Pasque et al. (2013). Peer evaluation at the Ryerson Faculty Conference suggested classroom pedagogy and rigorous process revealed results that were relevant and timely for instructors at Ryerson engaged with enhancing diversity and tracking its adaptation. Questions posed by evaluators at the conference revealed a future research direction focused on further data collection and analysis to determine if the relationship with Bowman’s (2014) ODC is clear and statistically significant. A version of this research is being developed for submission to a peer-reviewed publication in 2015.

**Transferables (max 500 words)**

**List and describe knowledge gained in this project and how that knowledge could benefit faculty members in the Ryerson community.**

Statistical analysis of data points did indeed reveal a measurable bias towards the west in student choices for essay topics. The bias becomes less prevalent after multi-year exposure to diversity theories, but only marginally. This suggests that Ryerson faculty members teaching diversity require additional support for research, curriculum revision, and pedagogy in classroom. The 940 Ryerson students creating the samples in this study were our students and were from all Ryerson faculties and divisions. Thus instructors at Ryerson can gain knowledge from examining this data in light of its direct relevancy to our student cohort and our needs here in Toronto, in 2014. The tip sheet (handout) presented at the conference addressed itself to curriculum revisions and pedagogy that faculty members could use to further develop the use of diversity theory and practices.

**Media or Publication (max 500 words)**

**List any media attention your project has received internally from Ryerson or externally. List any publications or conferences you have attended where data from this project was presented. Confirm that you acknowledged or will acknowledge the grant’s contribution to your work in media, publication or conference presentations.**

Initial results were orally presented in session C1 Tracking Student Adaptation of Diversity Theory: A Multi-Year Perspective at the Ryerson Faculty Conference on Thursday, May 22nd, 2014. Acknowledge of the TDF grant received from Ryerson was contained in the conference abstract and presented orally. Future presentations are pending abstract acceptance including ICEHE 2015 in Montreal, Canada. I will acknowledge the grant’s contribution to my work in media, publication or conference presentations.
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