Name That Place: Reconsidering Diversity and Globalization through the Architecture of Ethnic Enclaves

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GREAT IDEA FOR TEACHING

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Abstract

Introducing students to a conversation about the disbursement of cultures through globalization is often difficult to approach. In this single-class activity, globalization is introduced through a virtual game which is focused on ethnic enclaves, the small immigrant neighborhoods that retain much of the immigrants' original culture despite existing within a dominant one. Students will reconsider their intercultural communication, diversity awareness, and understanding about the effects of globalization and cultural assimilation by assessing stereotypes that emerge from the architecture of ethnic enclaves. By challenging students to identify the location of several ethnic enclaves through pictures, without the broader geographic context, a dialogue is started regarding the effects of globalization across the world and the microcultures that it can often create.

Courses
Intercultural Communication, Business Communication, Interpersonal Communication, and Visual Communication

Objectives
- Students will recognize architecture as a medium of cultural communication.
- Students will be able to identify ethnic enclaves by the enclaves' use of architectural signs.
- Students will understand the role that ethnic enclaves play for illustrating the diversity of global cities.

Introduction and Rationale

The direction of our increasingly connected cultures and economies has, in effect, mandated that communication scholars incorporate globalization in the undergraduate curriculum. Recent volatility regarding this issue, coupled with a general malaise in which globalization tends to be approached in rather shallow corporate-centric contexts, has, however, rendered the topic a difficult one to approach. This single-class activity offers a unique entrance for a discussion about the perception of place, assimilation, and ethnic groups as well as how they function in an increasingly diverse world. The activity was originally designed as an introduction for a unit on globalization in an undergraduate Business and Professional Communication undergraduate course, specifically to generate an open conversation about the

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basic assumptions we make regarding cultures through the often-overlooked communicative medium of architecture. This activity, however, should be useful for any course which introduces notions of ethnic diversity and/or globalization, such as Public Speaking, Interpersonal Communication, or Intercultural Communication. The activity functions as a simple game where students attempt to identify the setting of various images, unaware that each image depicts an ethnic enclave without its broader urban context, inciting incorrect answers which are drawn from cultural assumptions that the architecture communicates.

Architecture, in general, presents an interesting blend of art, engineering, and communication principles to an audience. Beyond its common functional and practical aspects, architecture necessarily consists of a "cultural aspect" which, at its heart, is a carrier of messages (Ballantyne, 2002, p. 2). In a helpful introductory volume to the study of architecture, Ballantyne (2002) relates this field to "gesture made with buildings" (p. 20), and when one encounters architecture, it inspires inferences from an immediate interpretation of its stylistic cues, thus creating messages regarding its cultural aspects. It is with this communicative function in mind that Hattenhauer (1984) delivers an argument that architecture is a valuable method of carrying messages and meaning through a visual medium, both rhetorically and semiotically.

This rhetorical dimension of architecture has already proven to be an appropriate resource for the communication instructor. Smith (2016) has previously proposed a single-class activity that demonstrated "how architectural texts operate rhetorically to address and shape audiences, while broadening students' understanding of what counts as rhetoric in the first place" (p. 7). Specifically, Smith suggests that studying the architecture of buildings on a college campus in order to "spark student interest in *how* the design of physical places and spaces works to influence human beings" (p. 7). Smith's activity is only one limited way in which architecture can open a dialogue about the way people communicate. Certainly, then, the communicative principles of architecture, understood rhetorically, can hold even more avenues for the discovery of underlying messages.

A particularly communicative and message-laden form of architecture can be found in the unique styles of ethnic enclaves. Portes (1981), who brought these particular communities into the sociology literature, defined ethnic enclaves as "immigrant groups which concentrate in a distinct spatial location and organize a variety of enterprises serving their own ethnic market and/or the general population" (pp. 290-291). These urban locales, such as Chinatown in New York City or Little Havana in Miami, are most often visually and architecturally unique, in part, because the foreign aesthetics of the facades there communicate to the passerby much differently than the city's broader surroundings. The "distinctive architecture" of the Little Saigon neighborhood in Orange County, California, for example, "communicates its Asian heritage, reaffirming ethnic identity, expressing nostalgia for places left behind and 'engraving' on the new landscape memories from the past" (Mazumdar, Mazumdar, Docuyanan, & Mclaughlin, 2000, p. 323). Many other ethnic enclaves also communicate the community's heritage, identity, nostalgia, and memories through unique architectural themes and visual cues, offering an especially ripe rhetorical entrance for a dialogue about how students see diversity in the midst of a swiftly globalizing world.

Perhaps, the relationship with globalization best justifies introducing students to the concept of ethnic enclaves. Lin (1998) has even gone as far to argue that the existence of such enclaves is one of the "leading edges of globalization" (p. 314). Despite its commonplace usage, just what globalization entails can be ambiguous, and its definitions are abundant. For example, Laïdi (2002) describes it as "a process of intensifying social relations on a worldwide scale that

results in an increasing disjunction between space and time" (p. 69). More simplistically, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Political Science* defines globalization as "a term indicating movement to a world society" (Bealey, 1999, p. 147). The entry, however, goes on to connect globalization to "the communication factor" of cultural dispersion (Bealey, 1999, p. 147). While the term *globalization* may typically evoke images of international conglomerates, these definitions make it clear that the phenomenon has social implications which stretch far beyond the business realm. As such, the benefit of studying the architecture of ethnic enclaves enables students to broaden narrow views of globalization through a physical medium of communication such as architecture. The aim of this activity, then, is to introduce students to the role of ethnic enclaves as cities continue to adapt to a globalizing society.

Description of the Activity

In this single-class activity, students are challenged with a sort of game or quiz which tasks them with guessing the location of the buildings which they see in a series of photographs displaying ethnic enclaves. (Several suggestions for such photographs are included in the appendices.) Students utilize visual cues and messages from the architecture showcased in the photos in order to draw from their knowledge about world cultures and globalization. The game is informal, with the primary task being to simply stimulate discussion while also revealing the sorts of generalizations that we normally make regarding ethnic communities. The teaching plan for this activity is divided into three components: (a) preparing a slideshow of ethnic enclaves to present as a visual quiz; (b) presenting the completed quiz to students, during which time they can track their answers; and (c) reviewing the correct answers and guiding the ensuing dialogue, leading to discussion about globalization. All three steps are detailed in the following sections.

Slideshow of Ethnic Enclave

To prepare for this activity, the instructor first must collect digital photographs of different ethnic enclaves around the world. The goal is to find particular enclaves that, due to their architecture and design, appear as though they are from somewhere far different than where they are actually situated when viewed without context. For example, a picture of the famed Chinatown in New York City, when presented without the remaining urban context, could suggest to some students that the location is actually somewhere in a Chinese city.[1] Royalty-free stock photographs for each location are easily attained on the internet, including at www.wikimedia.org and www.freeimages.com among various other online sources.

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[1] Additional examples to construct the quiz, in no particular order, could include Little Saigon in Westminster, California, on the outskirts of the Los Angeles metropolitan area; the various Chinatowns in North American cities, such as New York City, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Vancouver; the Polish Hill neighborhood of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with its distinctive cathedral and residences perched onto a mountainside which is reminiscent of Eastern Europe; Harbin, a snowy city in northern China with prominent Russian aesthetics; the Little Italy neighborhood of New York City; Quebec City's Haute-Ville and Basse-Ville, which maintain the French flair of a castle (Chateau Frontenac) surrounded by winding cobblestone streets and intact ramparts; Chechnya, a region of Russia with several monolithic mosques; Little Tokyo, a Japanese cultural district in Los Angeles; Hanoi's French Quarter, an urban remnant of Vietnam's colonial past; the European cafes along tree-lined boulevards in Shanghai's Old French Concession and Little Thames Town; Liberdade, a primarily Japanese district in São Paulo, Brazil; New Vrindaban, a Hare Krishna settlement centered around an ornate Hindu temple in rural West Virginia; and the many post-war German settlements in South America, such as Colonia Tolvar, Venezuela, and Córdoba, Argentina.

Additionally, some examples are provided in Appendices A, B, and C. As a substitute or supplement, any structures or monuments that appear contextually misplaced can accomplish this goal.[1] About 10 total entries should be sufficient, but I have used as many as 20 with success.

With a sufficient number of ethnic-enclave photographs, create a slideshow with PowerPoint, Prezi, Google Slides, or the presentation software of your choice. Affix one photograph per slide with no indicator about the photo's origins. Then, duplicate the slides so that the presentation repeats itself, adding text with each photograph's location on the second set of slides. The slideshow should now function as a game, with the first half offering a chance to identify the locations and the second half providing the answers.

Procedure

1. During class, ask the students to number a piece of paper from one to the total number of photographs that the slideshow includes.
2. Explain to the students that, as they see each picture, they should use their best judgment to determine where in the world that place might be located and to write it down; they can be as specific or broad in their answers as they like, so long as they are making an honest effort to use the architectural gestures to arrive at their conclusion. Be sure not to provide any indication that the pictures are from ethnic enclaves until students complete the quiz.
3. Once students have written their answer for each photograph, continue the presentation so that they can check their answers. It can be helpful if you know a little history behind the examples you've used so that you can describe the enclaves and their context.
4. As you review the correct answers, it is helpful to allow the students to openly discuss what they answered and how they reached their conclusions.
5. Ask the students to share their reactions to the activity with a neighboring student before sharing their thoughts with the entire class. In particular, have students discuss how they arrived at their conclusions and if they were surprised by any of the correct answers. After students work with a partner for about 2-3 minutes, each pair can share thoughts with the entire class.

Debriefing

The momentum of the open discussion while reviewing the correct answers, along with the brief discussions with a neighboring classmate, ensures that each student is involved with the activity's debriefing. To begin, ask students which location surprised them the most and why. This question starts a discussion about certain cultural assumptions that are commonly held regarding communicative modes as commonplace yet overlooked as architecture. This preliminary conversation often serves as an opening to discuss each location more deeply, addressing why particular minority groups selected that area for an ethnic enclave. Students then become familiar with the overall concept of an ethnic enclave as a notably visible effect of globalization-induced diversity because cultures which are normally considered to be distinct and distant are shown to be enveloped within the urban fabric of other, seemingly unrelated

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[1] Alternatives not conforming to the definition of an ethnic enclave could include the faux enclaves of Disney World's Epcot World Showcase in Orlando, Florida; Solvang, California's Danish-style tourism area; or Reading, Pennsylvania's mountaintop pagoda.

locales. This realization can prompt a reflection about how globalization affects diversity, why some people may choose to identify with a homogenous subculture, what it means to assimilate, and how a sense of place plays a role in how we perceive and communicate with others. As such, the activity's objectives are completed by the end of the discussion.
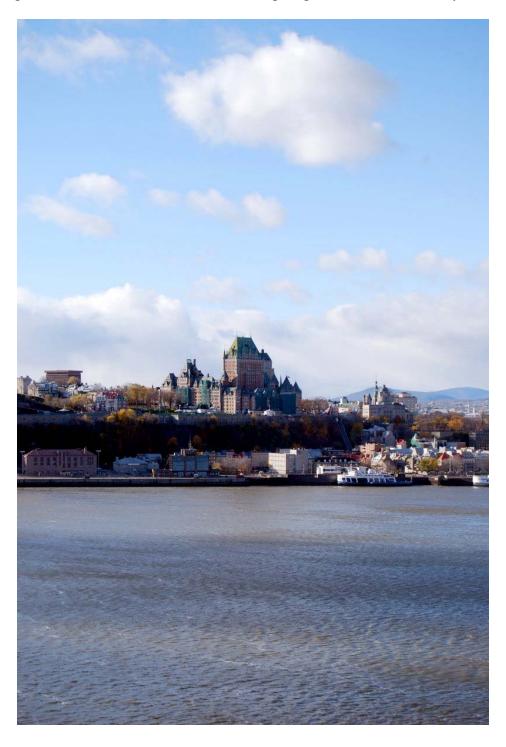
Appraisal

Upon completion, this activity upon completion affords students an opportunity to explore architecture as a medium of communication while also offering them an introduction to the role of ethnic enclaves in a globalizing world because the game challenges the preconceptions of place and, ultimately, the world's shifting diversity. Most importantly, this activity generates an honest and invested discussion about diversity in globalizing societies, facilitated by questions of colonialism, assimilation, and heritage. Students are often aware of globalization's economic effects, but this activity places the cultural implications in a multitude of places, bridging business to actual people, perhaps even close to home. Utilizing the activity's game-like structure ensures the completion of the objectives because gaming has become a serious consideration for pedagogy, even being noted as a particularly effective teaching mechanism for the Net Generation (Annetta, 2008). Many students have professed an interest in learning more about some of the individual ethnic enclaves presented during the game while other students have remarked that the architectural component spurred a new interest in visual communication.

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Appendix A
Image of Chateau Frontenac and surrounding neighborhood, Quebec City, Canada

Appendix B
Image of Chinatown "pai fang" (symbolic gate) in Philadelphia, PA

Appendix C
Image of cathedral and rowhouses in the Polish Hill neighborhood of Pittsburgh, PA