Art Student Stereotypes: A Studio Artist's Views

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Purpose

○ Discuss stereotyping and discrimination directed towards college art students.
○ Focused on large studio art student group at BGSU because of the relative isolation of art courses on the east side of campus.

Method 1

○ Qualitative Interview
  • Respondent: Savannah Fulmer, a Digital Arts major at BGSU.
  • Includes 34 questions about life as a studio artist, views on art student stereotypes, and discrimination that results from stereotyping.

Major Stereotypes

○ Studio art is typecast as an "easy A" major.
○ Studio art students are stereotyped as:
  • Identifiable by an unconventional appearance
  • Poor at math and science.
  • Obsessed with fandoms
  • Politically liberal
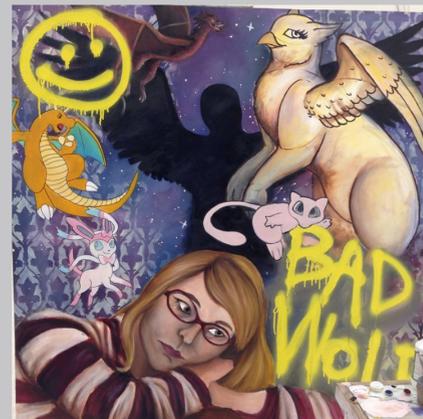 • Promiscuous

Method 2

○ Visual Imagery Study
  • Case study of how the inspirations for Savannah's artworks are influenced by stereotypes.
  • Qualitative interview about three artworks in Savannah's portfolio.
  • Further analysis of Method 1 answers as they relate to the artworks.

Imaginary Place

Imagination

Dissonance

Screenshot from short animation. Full length can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfDSRBSsXnI&feature=youtu.be

Final Findings – Method 1

1. Stereotypes about art students are not isolated from each other.
  • Savannah on the stereotype that art students are promiscuous: "I think that goes back to how most, a lot of art students aren't conservative . . . but I [also] don't think it's a very fair stereotype because they're basing it on how people are dressing."
2. The stereotypes are never entirely true or false.
  • Savannah on the stereotype that studio art is an "easy A" major: "I don't think that's an accurate stereotype at all," later explaining that it persists because *high school* art classes are particularly easy compared to other high school classes.
3. Discrimination surrounding the stereotypes seems to be mostly subtle, not overt.
  • Savannah on the discrimination she faces because of her dyed hair: "I feel like people don't want to talk to me as much because they're scared of me or they think I'm weird and different and I'm not a nice person even though I consider myself pretty nice."

Final Finding – Method 2

Savannah Fulmer's artworks often attempt to reclaim or disprove stereotypes.
  • The three artworks together reclaim a minor negative stereotype that art majors will not be able to find jobs in the future; all three were displayed at the 2015 Undergraduate Art and Design Exhibition in February

Artwork Analysis

○ *Imaginary Place*: "[Savannah's] artwork's a little different than the stereotypical art person's" and defies a minor stereotype that studio art majors create art intending to change society; instead she intends to create a new fantasy world to escape to.
○ *Imagination*: reclaims negative stereotype about art students being obsessed with fandoms by sharing how fandoms have "become a safe haven for [Savannah]."
○ *Dissonance*: disproves the art is an "easy A" major stereotype as it involved finishing a complete minute-long animation within five weeks.

Implications

○ Knowing how art student stereotypes affect this student group encourages non-art students to better understand art students' motivations and daily lives.
○ Findings concern interactions between all student groups on campus; understanding effects of stereotyping allows better communication between groups.

Further Research

○ Interview more art students to gain a more complete view of the stereotypes surrounding the studio art major.
○ Interview students from other majors to study perceived stereotypes and their consequences.