

Collaborative Painting

Meet James McBride. He is a thirty-something year old man. He is currently working as a journalist but feels a strong pull to quit his job and pursue his musical career. On several occasions in the past he has had similar urges, and as a result has held many jobs at prestigious newspapers as well as a successful composer. He comes to us wanting help with this decision and his recurring issues of being torn between his two careers.

James's mother is a white, Jewish woman, named Ruth. She ran away from her family after they forced her to get an abortion when a black man impregnated her. This man's father was an African American preacher and died before James was born. Ruth remarried a man who raised her current children as his own. James thought of him as his father. He too died early, leaving Ruth to raise her thirteen children alone.

Ruth had to learn to fit into a completely foreign society. This included learning all the implicit societal rules (McBride, 1996).

Imagine going into a society in which the implicit rules are not familiar to you. How would you feel?

Activity

We are going to work on a painting together, we will go around in a circle and each take a turn adding to the painting.

-Each turn, we ask "would you like to add to my painting?"

(It is suggested that the painting be turned away from the class so that personal contributions are not explicit, and that explanations for each artist's contributions can be discussed at the conclusion of the activity)

Before the painting activity begins, the class is split up into two groups. One group is asked to leave the room for several minutes as the remaining group is informed of an arbitrary behavior that will warrant praise or discrimination. For example, the remaining

group is instructed to applaud individuals that paint with their right hand and haze those that paint with their left hand. The “unaware group”, through the process of the painting activity, must learn the implicit rules of the classroom through social observation/trial and error learning.

Aware Group:

Knows what the implicit rule is and responds accordingly to the prompts.

Unaware Group:

Must attempt to discover the implicit rule as the activity progresses.

Things to consider:

Being in the unaware group, how did it feel not knowing the rules, how did it felt once they realized what the cue was?

Being in the aware group, what was the experience like regarding the unaware group’s effort to realize the cue? Was this frustrating?