



Sociology Unit 3 – Culture & Ethnicity

Area of Study 1 – Australian Indigenous Culture
2018 Holiday Homework
Due Term 1 Week 2

Name: _____

REPRESENTATION ANALYSIS

Sociology refers to examples as “representations”, one of the key skills you will have to demonstrate in Sociology is your ability to read a representation and respond to questions about it. It is a little different than straight comprehension, because the questions will increasingly direct you to incorporate theories and sociological viewpoints whilst using the representation as evidence.

1. **Read** and **annotate** Representation 1: ‘The Artist Needs Colouring In’, Andrew Bolt.
2. **Read** and **annotate** Representation 2: ‘Danie Mellor Relies’, Danie Mellor
3. **Answer** the three **questions**

Representation 1

The Artists Needs Colouring In

Andrew Bolt

The Blog of Andrew Bolt, Sunday, August 16, 2009

Yet another white who chooses to be black: THE winner of the 2009 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award has been announced and is set to be the most controversial in many years.

At a ceremony in Darwin last night, the \$40,000 Telstra Award was given to Canberra artist Danie Mellor for his work *From Rite to Ritual*, a large drawing on paper done with crayon, pencil and glitter pen.

The work is a dramatic departure from recent winners, which have had a style more readily identifiable as Aboriginal art.

It's not just the art but the artist that isn't "readily identifiable as Aboriginal". (For a clearer shot of the startlingly white Mellor, without the gloomy lighting, see below) Indeed, of all the racial identities open to him - "American", Anglo-Australian, Irish and Aboriginal - Mellor seems to have chosen the most distant (when, of course, he need not have chosen any):

This raises the question of the point of such "Aboriginal" art prizes.

Are they racially segregated in order to preserve Aboriginal tradition? In which case, Mellor does not qualify.

Are they supposed to give a break to black artists who'd otherwise face discrimination? Mellor, again, would not qualify.

Are they meant to help artists who are badly in need of the cash? Once more, Mellor does not qualify.

If these prizes are for the likes of Mellor, what on earth is their (legitimate) purpose? Other than to enforce a preposterous and offensive "one-drop-of-blood" style of racism, I mean.

By way of contrast, this is a previous winner of the award, Dorothy Napangardi - the kind of artist elbowed aside now by a Mellor:



Napangardi was again an entrant in this year's award, as was Mitjili Napanangka Gibson (below):



As was Walangkura Napanangka (below):



Representation 2

'Artist Danie Mellor Replies'

In response to Andrew Bolt's article, August 2009

Hello, thanks everyone for writing in, and thanks Andrew for your introduction. (And I say that without a trace of irony.) It would be good to start with a couple of things you point out Andrew, and that is that I 'elbowed other artists aside' - actually, I made and then submitted the work; judging the winner is not something I have control over, and rightly so, as I am an entrant.

It's possibly a little enthusiastic, Andrew to post pictures without acknowledging the photographer, or the web site or other source.

In response to denying other aspects of my heritage (95% according to one entry!), I am quite open about the fact my family comes from many different cultures, so I am not particularly sure of how to answer that accusation. I have worked almost every day of my adult life, rarely (not in the last 7 years) take holidays, and enjoy every minute of being productively active. I worked hard through university - I had help, and I also worked up to three jobs for a time there to support myself, the same as many other students. I graduated from a degree, a Masters, and a PhD, and now lecture in art theory and history and the University of Sydney.

I don't scream and shout about my Aboriginal ancestry, nor do I jump up and down and demand your respect or my advantage because of it, and hysteria is definitely not my style. I prefer to work, mostly in the background, and achieve positive outcomes for me and other people - there's no poor me, and to characterise me as a victim is really a little short sighted. I am immensely privileged to have Aboriginal ancestry, and it is active in the sense that I maintain my family ties with relations in a very real way.

It's a fundamental error (usually a non-Indigenous one) to mistake colour being a qualifier of Aboriginality (it's a little 1950's to be honest). Aboriginality or Indigeneity is actually one of the more complex personal challenges for someone in my position at this time and in our country, and it's one I am happy to be involved with.

In my mind it's more important to share knowledge and cultural and historical perspectives than it is to become a shrinking violet and hide, simply because someone has a go at your position. It would be far easier to walk away from criticism and even attitudes that talk of racial stereotyping and band wagons and government grants etc - who wouldn't want a life free of that sort of challenge? It would be relatively easy to apply the skills I have in another area or career that is entirely free of this particular type of tension. I'd prefer to stick around and work with certain issues though, and speaking very publicly about a shared history, and my place in that is a potentially very uncomfortable space to be in given the responses that do surface from time to time, but it's something I choose work with.

(Mr Bolt is certainly contentious in the eyes of many, but as yet I am not sure he's backed away from what he believes in, and I'm certain many of you who follow his writing and agree with his views would expect no less. Sometimes going along with what people expect of you just doesn't help progress in any field.)

People are interested, obviously, as many of you are writing in, and hopefully this will have helped explain the position and direction I choose to pursue. (BTW, I am competent in media other than crayon and glitter pens - ie oil and water colour, and have won national awards for drawing and ceramics. Google has some sites).

Regards, Danie

REPRESENTATION ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

1. Using the representation, describe Andrew Bolt's understanding of Indigenous Culture.

2. Using the representation, explain Danie Mellor's understanding of Indigenous Culture.

3. Discuss one reason for why Australians would have such different understandings of Indigenous culture. In your response, use at least one of the representations as evidence.
