

# ScholarWorks@GSU

## Exploring Identity through Self-Portraiture

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Authors       | Barron, Rose M   |
| Citation      | Barron, Rose M. "Exploring Identity through Self-Portraiture." 2006. Thesis, Georgia State University. <a href="https://doi.org/10.57709/1062144">https://doi.org/10.57709/1062144</a>   |
| DOI           | <a href="https://doi.org/10.57709/1062144">https://doi.org/10.57709/1062144</a>  |
| Rights        | <p>I hereby certify that, if appropriate, I have obtained and attached hereto a written permission statement from the owner(s) of each third party copyrighted matter to be included in my thesis, dissertation, or project report, allowing distribution as specified below. I certify that the version I submitted is the same as that approved by my advisory committee. I hereby grant to Georgia State University or its agents the non-exclusive license to archive and make accessible, under the conditions specified below, my thesis, dissertation, or project report in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known. I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis, dissertation or project report. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis, dissertation, or project report.</p> |
| Download date | 2026-04-11 23:43:05  |
| Link to Item  | <a href="https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14694/752">https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14694/752</a>  |

# EXPLORING IDENTITY THROUGH SELF-PORTRAITURE

by

ROSE M BARRON

Under the Direction of Dr Melody Milbrandt

## ABSTRACT

### 1) Statement of the problem:

How can art education help students deconstruct stereotypical imagery and develop meaningful artwork? How can art lessons help students construct positive identity imagery and develop meaningful artwork?

### 2) Procedures:

I field-tested a unit of three lessons based on identity through self-portraiture to help students investigate the topic of identity in relation to personal and cultural sense of self. Student's artworks, reflections and responses were analyzed.

### 3) Conclusions:

Art lessons can help students construct positive identity and develop positive imagery. Art lessons can help students deconstruct negative stereotypical imagery and develop meaningful imagery.

INDEX WORDS: Identity, Portrait, Self-Portrait, Race, Gender, Class, Ethnicity,  
Contemporary Art Education

EXPLORING IDENTITY THROUGH SELF-PORTRAITURE

By

ROSE M BARRON

A Thesis submitted in Partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Art Education

In the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2006

Copyright by  
Rose McDaniel Barron  
2006

EXPLORING IDENTITY THROUGH SELF-PORTRAITURE

by

ROSE M BARRON

Major Professor: Dr Melody Milbrandt  
Committee: Dr Melody Milbrandt  
Dr Susan Richmond  
Dr Terry Ward

Electronic Version Approved

Office of Graduate Studies  
College of Arts and Sciences  
Georgia State University  
December 2006

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                     |    |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| LIST OF FIGURES                     | vi |
| CHAPTER                             |    |
| 1 INTRODUCTION                      | 1  |
| Need for the Study                  | 1  |
| Purpose of the Study                | 2  |
| 2 METHODOLOGY                       | 4  |
| Research Questions                  | 4  |
| How Data was Collected and Analyzed | 4  |
| Participants                        | 5  |
| Limitations                         | 5  |
| 3 REVIEW OF LITERATURE              | 7  |
| Educational Theories                | 7  |
| Contemporary Art Education          | 11 |
| Examples of Postmodern Art Lessons  | 13 |
| 4 LESSON PLANS                      | 17 |
| Lesson One                          | 17 |
| Assessment Instrument               | 19 |
| Lesson Two                          | 20 |
| Assessment Instrument               | 23 |
| Lesson Plan Three                   | 24 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Assessment Instrument                              | 27 |
| 5 DATA   | 29 |
| Student Responses                                  | 29 |
| Comparison of Student Self Assessments for Lessons | 35 |
| Journal Notes                                      | 36 |
| 6 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION                          | 40 |
| 7 CONCLUSIONS                                      | 51 |
| 8 RECOMMENDATIONS                                  | 53 |
| 9 REFERENCES                                       | 54 |
| APPENDICES   | 56 |

## LIST OF FIGURES

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

|                  |    |
|------------------|----|
| Figures 1 & 2    | 42 |
| Figure 3         | 43 |
| Figures 4, 5 & 6 | 44 |
| Figures 7 & 8    | 45 |
| Figure 9         | 46 |
| Figures 10 & 11  | 47 |
| Figure 12        | 48 |
| Figure 13        | 49 |
| Figure 14        | 50 |

## APPENDICES

|                     |    |
|---------------------|----|
| Figures 15 & 16     | 56 |
| Figures 17, 18 & 19 | 57 |
| Figures 20 & 21     | 58 |
| Figures 22, 23 & 24 | 59 |
| Figures 25 & 26     | 60 |
| Figures 27 & 28     | 61 |
| Figures 29, 30 & 31 | 62 |
| Figures 32 & 33     | 63 |
| Figures 34 & 35     | 64 |
| Figures 36 & 37     | 65 |

|                         |    |
|-------------------------|----|
| Figures 38 & 39         | 66 |
| Figures 40, 41 & 42     | 67 |
| Figures 43 & 44         | 68 |
| Figures 45, 46, 47 & 48 | 69 |

## **EXPLORING IDENTITY THROUGH SELF-PORTRAITURE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Need for the Study**

As art educators we need to eradicate prejudice in our classrooms and in ourselves. I have personally noticed in the inner city, where I teach, that many students have not been exposed to other cultures. They do not understand them and appear to hold a prejudice to those who are not like them or may be from another country. While there has been some progress towards the creation of greater equity in our schools, and support for diversity has increased in most of our society, racial discrimination is still alive and well. Most of us grow up with stereotypes of race, gender, class and ethnicity that remain in our thinking in various degrees (Andrus, 2000).

A study by the NEA in 1997 showed that all manners of race and ethnicity, language and religion, social status and sexual orientation characterize American community life in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Blandy, 1999). Globalization, changing demographics, and other socio-economic factors have led to increased diversity in our various teaching contexts. Differences in race, ethnicity, gender, age, physical abilities, language, sexual identifications, social class, religion, and political beliefs are making teaching more challenging. This change in population requires a thoughtful response from the field. I think this can lead to more exciting teaching. Art educators can empower students by broadening topics in the classroom to address issues of diversity by including

nontraditional, cross cultural, and controversial forms of art. As students encounter issues of diversity, they may negotiate their relationships to the contemporary visual world.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose and goal of my research was that students would make art that was meaningful to them and society, and that they would broaden their views of diverse populations, so they might better accept themselves and others. I have been influenced by the work of Wendy Ewald. I have had a dream to do work like hers, helping children in second world countries such as Asia. Although I was unable to leave the country, I was given the opportunity of teaching at a lower income inner city school of mixed races. I decided I could adapt a program such as Ms Ewald used in various countries (Ewald, 2002). We had a large number of students in our classrooms and were on a low budget without a photography department. I asked myself, “ how could I make an impact on student’s lives through a county system basic visual arts curriculum? How could my art lessons deconstruct stereotypes and reconstruct identity?”

I decided to construct a series of art lesson to address these concerns. The art lessons I constructed presented contemporary artists and the issues of identity that are presented in their work. Thousands of contemporary artists use their artwork to try to better our society through their artwork. In our complex society, many voices go unheard, people go unseen, and unjustified. The messages created through art become information, remembrance, resolution, and stories untold. Contemporary art tends to be provoking and positive. Being an artist today requires compassion and a love for others. Much of the artwork by contemporary artists explores women’s and men’s changing

roles, the balancing and/or conflict of living in dual or multiple cultures, and issues surrounding the family (Cahan & Kocur,1996). Contemporary artists whom I presented in my lessons included Ken Chu, Cindy Sherman, and Adrian Piper.

## **METHODOLOGY**

I constructed a field-test unit of three lessons based on identity through self-portraiture to help students investigate the topic of identify in relation to their culture and personal sense of self.

### **Research Questions**

1. How can art education help students deconstruct stereotypical imagery and develop meaningful artwork?
2. How can art lessons help students construct positive identity imagery and develop meaningful imagery?

### **How Data was Collected and Analyzed**

I gathered data by using three different sources to triangulate my research. I constructed a written reflection about identity in which included students' beliefs and attitudes towards identity. I incorporated students' art works and a journal of teacher observations. Reflection questions pertained to their identity and included questions such as: Where are you from? What is your and your parent's culture? Who are you in relationship to your family? What are your fears? How do you fit in with society? What do you like to do? What do you think about? What do you look like? What Who makes you happy, sad, or mad? Who is the person deep inside of you that nobody sees? Who is the person is that everyone sees? What do you think your future might be? What are your dreams?

I analyzed my notes, students' artwork, reflections, assessments, rubrics, students' writings and critiques.

## **Participants**

The participants in the study were current students in the fall of 2006, taking second year art. The school's demographics was 905 students consisting of 463 females and 442 males. It was predominately (95%) African- American with a small percentage of Bosnians, Romanians, Asians, Latins, and Caucasians. Even within the African- American population there was a lot of diversity with many students being from differing areas such as New York, New Orleans, Atlanta as well as the country of Africa. The class demographics was 32 students consisting of 12 females and 20 males. 30 students were of African American descent, 1 student Mexican and 1 student Caucasian constructed a written reflection about identity in which included students' beliefs and

## **Limitations**

Limitations of the study included the curriculum because the county already determined the district standards. Also the student was not a random strategic sampling of race and class but a sample based on the convenience of my class. The students' artwork was highly personal because it was based on the student's lives and issues they were facing, I anticipated that there might be some obstacles due to the perception teachers and administrators who might feel that much of the artwork was not suitable for display. When artwork includes depictions of life outside of school, it may depict controversial subjects.

While working with issues that were about the students and their lives it was important to create an environment that was lively, open and safe. Art teachers are

responsible for assuring that our classrooms are places that support diversity and teach tolerance. Deconstructing our own identities, learning about others, and modeling concerned and respectful behaviors can create a safe space for all.(Woywod, 2004).

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Educational Theories

I found the educational theories of social reconstruction, multi-culturalism, and postmodernism support my research interests. A social reconstructionist perspective is based on the belief that art education can make a difference in student's understandings of and action in the world. The term is used to describe a type of education that prepares students to become active citizens, fully participating in society. Connecting everyday experiences with social critique and creative expression shifts the focus from art for arts sake to issues and ideas students truly care about. When art becomes relevant to a larger life world context, art becomes a vital means of reflecting upon the nature of society and social existence. This theory supports making art class an important and meaningful experience and a good practice for living in a democracy (Woywod, 2004). The study of art can enhance multicultural and socially activist education by helping to build students' understanding of their own place in history. The arts can emphasize individual's abilities and capacities including those who have been culturally degraded, politically oppressed, and economically exploited (Cahan & Kocur 1996). Reconstructionists suggest that teaching and learning art will become meaningful when students are able to function as critical producers of visual culture rather than passive recipients in art classrooms (Cosier, 2004).

Multicultural education emerged out of the context of social activism of the 1960 movements, feminism, and the movement for gay and lesbian rights. These activist goals in education demanded more ethnic studies and women studies along with a greater

sensitivity to cultural and gender studies. The most effective ethnically based approach integrates the studies of art into more of a social, cultural, political and historical framework. As students become more aware of their role as cultural interpreters the ethical and social responsibilities of education becomes more self-reflective (Cahan & Kocur, 1996). Multicultural education can engage students in looking at the possibilities for locating identity and experiences in different ways. (Doy, 2002).

Multicultural perspectives should not be limited to isolated courses but should permeate every aspect of the curriculum. The goal of multiculturalism is to increase respect for diversity, reduce racism, and positively affect student learning. Works in multiculturalism by Cheryl and James Banks suggests a social action approach in which students examining key social problems and take action to resolve them. With teachers helping them acquire attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for social change the students feel empowered. Student's self-examination through value analysis, decision-making, problem solving, and social action experiences are essential (Knight, 2006).

The postmodernism movement followed the modernist movement. Features of the movement began to arise in the 1920's with the Dada art movement. Many features are still relevant in the art world as well as other disciplines today. Postmodern has been described as "a form of theorizing about societies and a period in social thought and characterized by calling for new images of the social, society, language and the human subject" (Denzia, 1986). With the beginning of the postmodern age came the

realization of the necessary coexistence of different cultures. Issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, and multi-culturism are now being discussed as essential to postmodern art discourse (Neperud, 1995).

Gender equity remains a problem in schools. Many art educators interested in gender identity issues encourage the use of images from mass media as starting points to analyze the representation of gender in culture. As art educators, we need to include classroom discussions on equality of gender. Feminists and women of color have embraced the postmodern critique of society. Art educators promoting feminist theory advocate exploring issues associated with the silencing of women, children and minority groups (Wagner-Ott, 2002).

Postmodern concerns have encouraged feminist scholars to move beyond the simplicity of sex-equity as an issue. Feminist concerns are usually wider than sex-only discrimination. They are usually intertwined with concern for oppressions that arise from race, ethnicity, age, nationality, sexual orientation, class, ability, among many other factors. Feminism is associated with both political and social change (Collins & Sandell, 1996).

Art educator Wanda Knight points out that as art educators we have to examine and challenge our own beliefs in order to resist the limitations they impose on our worldview (Knight, 2006). Current postmodern thinking understands and reconstitutes the self, gender, knowledge, social relations, and culture without resorting to linear, teleological, hierarchical, holistic, or binary ways of thinking and being (Collins & Sandell, 1996).

In our multi-racial, multi-faith country the curriculum must represent our students' socio-cultural diversity. In an era of increasing and sometimes dangerous awareness of national, ethnic and religious identity, the transmission of cultural values seems to be an important educational priority. Feminist art and activism can become resources for questioning and breaking down sexist, racist, and class-based hierarchies (Wyrick, M. 1996).

As art educators we need to ask if contemporary approaches to art are exclusionary for women and people of color. Many female artists and artists of traditional communities view art and life as connected. For many artists, art is more about storytelling, tradition, identity, and autobiography than it is about the end product. An understanding of this type of connection is basic to both feminist and postmodern theories (Congdon, K. 1996).

It's necessary to develop school practices that recognize how issues related to gender, class, race, and sexual orientation can be used as an impetus for learning. Teachers need to be attentive to the cultural resources of the communities where the students live their daily lives. Through postmodern art, art educators are beginning to deconstruct gender-race-based subjectivity in aesthetic production and experiences (Wagner-Ott, 2002). One educator who exemplifies how education approaches these issues is Myra Sadker. Sadker's work exposed gender bias in US classrooms and encouraged equitable practices in the classroom. Her work was to educate teachers about gender issues and advocate change in the classroom. Sadker Day established for

promoting education about feminist issues in classrooms and to involve students in activism helping to bridge their academic experiences with social involvement (Garber, 2003).

Many art educators believe teachers must avoid an ethnocentric, culture-bound view of the arts, instead emphasizing the need to draw on a range of cultures in a search for a humanistic arts education. Some, like Chalmers, (2002) have argued that the curriculum must be re-designed to be both multiethnic and multicultural. He suggests that art education needs to be reformulated to emphasize the unity within diversity, showing that all humans make and use art for similar purposes. Issues such as racism and sexism require us to implement approaches in art making that require social reconstruction. Educationalists Swift and Steers (2004) proposed a curriculum based on postmodern views emphasizing difference, plurality and independent thought. The emphasis is on the learner and learning, negotiating what they learn, learning how to learn, and understanding knowledge as a multiplicity of changing theories. Such differences become a focus for action and discussion pointing to a variety of methods, means and solutions for any issue. Independent thought develops individuality, the capacity to challenge, and creativity through introspection into the nature of learning as well as in teaching art (Steers, 2002).

### **Contemporary Art Education**

As educators, we can no longer only use traditional art and design activities such as drawing from observation. We need to locate such activities within the broader context of education and educating young people as citizens who can make a meaningful

contribution to society. Education specialist Hickman (2002) supports this theory and suggests goals for educating for citizenship. The first four goals fall into the general aims of educating towards citizenship and society. Knowing and understanding the cultural heritage of others encourages acceptance, tolerance, understanding, and respect. These aims help students to build defenses against propaganda, and to be sensitive of others. The last four have a link with aspects of citizenship: increasing students' understanding of their inner world is directly associated with knowing oneself, and empathizing with others. It is concerned with developing the imagination, which is essential if one is to see others' viewpoint. The aims of developing practical problem-solving and lateral thinking skills together, with promoting inventiveness and risk-taking, are vital components for a dynamic and evolving society.

Hickman (2002) lists the following steps:

- introduce students to their cultural heritage.
- introduce students to the heritage of others.
- develop student's understanding of the visual world through perceptual training.
- increase student's understanding of their inner world, feelings and imagination.
- develop practical problem solving through manipulation of materials.
- enhance creativity through developing lateral thinking skill.
- promote inventiveness and risk taking (p. 86).

Educators adopting a postmodern stance with regard to the art curriculum have stressed the need for a pluralistic approach that promotes cross-cultural understanding.

Art education has the potential to perpetuate and challenge racial and cultural stereotyping. Understanding and appreciating art from different cultures enables students to become more aware and sensitive to a wide range of philosophies and beliefs. The need for art and design education becomes more urgent in societies where young people are feeling increasingly alienated. Students studying art are also studying themselves, so art may become a path to self-knowledge. Before people can cooperate effectively with other people they must understand themselves. The production of art brings about a greater understanding of self through exploration of personal ideas and feelings (Hickman, 2002).

### **Examples of Postmodern Art Lessons**

Examples of people who are successfully teaching students to reconstruct identity, deconstruct stereotypes and make meaningful art are Bronx art educator Rikki Asher, artist and educator Wendy Ewald, art educator Mary Wyrick.

Rikki Asher. Ms. Asher has noticed that the African American, Hispanic, Caribbean and South East Indian students she teaches have often internalized a negative message from society. Some expressed feelings of inadequacy through self-depreciation, expressing they were not as good as their white counterparts. Many scorned those who were a shade darker than them. I have noticed in my own teaching that many scorn classmates with skin color a shade darker than their own, but students with lighter skin colors are looked at differently too. Many have struggled to survive when finding themselves in drug wars, crime and poverty. I too see this in my teaching. These students can see school, especially art class, as a safe haven to focus on themselves and a place to

permit creativity. Through her project of offering alternative approaches to representing self and community, Asher has provided his opportunities to understand themselves and others. Ms. Asher also witnessed that as the students used their artistic sensibilities, they started becoming a positive force in society (2000, Asher).

Photographer Wendy Ewald has spent much of her time and research on visual literacy with children and helping them to develop and express their complex emotional lives visually. Her approach to photography probes questions of identity and cultural differences. The work addresses history, cultural stereotypes, misconceptions and power. Ewald has worked in many parts of the US as well as in Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. Her work confirms that identity of the sexes differ depending on culture, race and class. Interestingly she found while working with children in an Indian reservation that the children's worldview was steeped in internalized racism. (Secret Games, 2002)

Ewald later taught in more structured environments such as public school classrooms, and confirmed that children who had trouble in writing were able to express more when it was about their own experiences coupled by visuals. Ms Ewald attempts to address what she sees as a need to attend to neglected physical and visual surroundings, and the need we feel to articulate and communicate something relevant about our personal and communal lives. She found that the children's pictures and writings gave an uncompromising look at the problems they faced. After examining photos and discussing them, Ms. Ewald gives assignments relevant to the children's lives, what they know

intimately their selves and their families, their communities to a more freewheeling concept of dreams. Using self-portraiture, Ms. Ewald asks students to explore ways to photograph themselves that best describes the singular beings they are. Her project has helped students identify their problems, including racism in their communities.

While working in inner-city schools, she was struck by how often discussions about community issues would center on race. Directly dealing with the issues of race when working with the school children of Durham, North Carolina school systems, Ewald asked the children to write about themselves, then to write another version imaging themselves as another race. They were acutely perceptive about the differences between blacks and whites and various skin colors. Vast differences existed between the two selves. The African American children had a clearly defined sense of how they were seen by white people. Sometimes they internalized this image and talked about their own white selves being nicer or smarter. The African American kids often spoke about things that happened to them during their interactions with white people, about times when they felt that whites were afraid of touching them, or harbored suspicions about them. One African American said if he were white, he would be normal. Many put their dreams and fantasies into their white selves (Ewald, 1988). The white children seemed naively optimistic. Many of them had no concept of how they were looked at by the other race (Ewald, 1988).

It seemed that the children who lived in an environment in which they felt safe could fantasize and plan for the future. They could translate their rich dreams as images and words as powerful as any artists (Ewald, 1988). Cultural influence was shown to play

a big part in Wendy Ewald's work with young white girls. The language of popular fiction and films reflected their problems and inspirations. The girls' were surprised that their own self-portraits depicted sadness and their preoccupation with sexuality (2005, Ewald). Ms. Ewald has been successful in impacting and enriching student's lives through their art. The student's art impacts the viewer with the identity of the artist as well as confronting the viewer and artist of any hidden stereotypes they may hold.

A powerful activist strategy by Mary Wyrick based a lesson plan around the Guerilla Girls. The Guerilla Girls is an activist group who buy ads and stage publicized protests to bring attention to feminist demonstrations against museums, galleries, and other art institutions. An example of their work is a 1989 street poster, black text to the right of a blank space reads, "You're seeing less than half the picture," and along the bottom, "Without the vision of women artists and artists of color." The lesson plan required students to make posters on issues of their choice (Wyrick, 1996).

The lessons I constructed also motivated my students to make meaningful art while deconstructing stereotypes and reconstructing identities.

## EXPLORING LESSON PLANS

Rose M Barron

**Overview:** I am creating a unit based on exploring identity issues that consist of three lessons to be used with 10-12 grade studio art students. These lessons will build from a pre-test self- portrait to self-portraits that explore different aspects of identity.

### **Lesson 1: Realistic Self Portraits**

**Objective:** The student will draw an accurate self-portrait from close observation that utilizes contrast, through the use of five values, and good craftsmanship. (Art Production)

**National Standards: 1.** Students will understand and apply media, techniques, and processes.

**Objective:** Students will identify and understand how artists of various periods have used the element of value in their portraits and self-portraits. (Art history/cultures)

**National Standards: 2.** Students will use knowledge of structures and functions.

**Resources:** Art Magazines, Creative Drawing textbook, and portrait examples from artists J. Ingres, U. Boccioni, W. Johnson, and K. Kollwitz.

**Motivation:** The teacher will present transparencies of a variety of portraits and self-portraits. Teacher will show students examples and lead discussion. Teacher will show portrait examples from artists J. Ingres, U. Boccioni, W. Johnson, and K. Kollwitz. Teacher will point out that although each artist uses a different style they each utilize contrast and good value tonality. Teacher points out that Ingres and Boccioni use a softer gradation of value while Johnson and Kollwitz use a strong dramatic contrast. Teacher

asks students if the two different styles create different moods from each other. Teacher will review the ten- point value scale and tonal categories

**Procedures:**

1) Teacher reviews drawing the shape of the face as an oval in contour line. Teacher demonstrates dividing the face into 3 horizontal sections to draw in eyes, nose and lips. Teacher will guide students to fill up the page as much as possible leaving room for neck and shoulders. Teacher will remind students to keep all line work light in the beginning.

2) The teacher will guide students to notice that even from a distance the facial features are recognizable through the use of contrast. In this assignment the teacher will guide and encourage students individually to draw realistically. The teacher will stress the use of value to students as she monitors their work.

**Materials:** 12x18 sulfite drawing paper, drawing media, and digital camera or mirror.

**Student Procedures:**

1) Students will first do sketchbook exercises of practicing facial proportions from textbook, then sketch someone from their table, then sketch themselves in mirror.

2) Using a mirror or photo from digital camera students will block in their composition with pencil on 12x18 paper. Students will draw in the outlines of their features, facial structure, and details. Students will shade in their portraits working from light to dark, adding any details as necessary. Students will clean up any stray marks and erase any outlines or guidelines that are available

**Closure:** Teacher asks students the following questions to close and review lesson.

- 1) What important element of design did they use to create volume in their artwork?
- 2) What principle of design can help create a strong focal point in a work of art?
- 3) What is a portrait?
- 4) Who are some artists we discussed who created portraits?

Teacher will inform students the next lesson will be a self-portrait utilizing identity.

**Assessment Questions:**

Did the student will draw an accurate self-portrait from close observation that utilizes contrast, through the use of five values, and good craftsmanship?

Did the student identify portraits and self-portraits by a variety of artists from different periods?

**Assessment Instrument:** Assessment will be done per rubric based on the following.

Each category is worth one to five points. Does your portrait exhibit careful observation and accuracy of description? Does your composition show at least five values and a strong area of contrast? Does your drawing exhibit good craftsmanship (is it clean from smudges and stray marks?) Can the student identify a portrait from a variety of different periods?

1 point = Does not meet expectation

2 points= Below average expectation

3 points= Average expectation

4 points= Above expectation

5 points= Exceptional criteria above expectation

| Portrait Rubric            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 Values                   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Strong Contrast            |   |   |   |   |   |
| Craftsmanship              |   |   |   |   |   |
| Able to Identify Portraits |   |   |   |   |   |

## Lesson 2: As People See Me Self-Portrait

**Objective:** Students will look at the theme of identity in artist's work and how the artist acknowledgements of identity are represented.

**Objective:** Students will create and evaluate a self-portrait with a strong concept, utilizing a full range of contrast, a balanced composition, and good craftsmanship. (Art Production)

**National Standards 2:** Students will use knowledge of structures and functions.

**Resources:** Image reproductions of Ken Chu's "I need more hair products" and Adrian Piper's "Self-Portrait".

**Motivation:** Teacher will show students reproductions of self-portraits done by Adrian Piper and Ken Chu opening up with questions such as "What do you think the artists

intent is? Do you think their art is meaningful? This will lead into a discussion of how many contemporary artists address concerns of eradicating prejudice to better our society. Teacher will ask students do you think others always see you as you really are or are they prone to look at outward appearances to make judgments? Teacher will stress that contemporary art tends to be thought provoking and positive and that being an artist requires compassion and a love for others. Teacher will explain work being shown over the next two lessons explores women and men's changing roles and the balancing of living in dual or multiple cultures. Artists we are looking at are categorized as deconstructive, "in your face" and political social artists. Teacher will point out that even though the aim of this art is to make a statement or awareness of an issue it still is a good work of art by aesthetic standards like the artists we looked at from the last lesson. Teacher will photograph a headshot of each student to print out for his or her self-portrait drawings.

**Procedures:**

- 1) Teacher will hand out reflection sheet for students to fill in. Teacher will emphasize there is no right or wrong answer; it is only used to help students in their next portrait assignment.
- 2) Teacher will hand out student photos and instruct students to do a practice drawing of their face before drawing it on the 12x18 paper.
- 3) Teacher will go over the four C's with students for their assessment (Concept, Composition, Contrast, and Craftsmanship) and hand out the rubric.

- 4) Teacher will review students on composition stressing the use of techniques such as balance and use of positive/ negative space relationship.
- 5) Teacher will instruct students to do 3 thumbnail drawings of ideas for composition using comments from their reflection sheet on how others view them.
- 6) Teacher will assist students with their concept development by encouraging them to work out ideas in developed studies that are thought provoking, interesting and show some risk taking or experimentation.
- 7) Teacher will assist students picking the most interesting composition and idea to draw on their 12x18 paper.
- 8) Teacher will remind students to work from light to dark and utilize a full range of value scale from previous lesson.

**Materials:** 12x18 or larger sulfite drawing paper, canvas, drawing media, digital camera or mirror and acrylic paint.

**Student Procedures:**

- 1) Students will reflect on their identity using the reflection sheet.
- 2) Students will do a practice drawing of their face from the photos the teacher has taken.
- 3) Students will review the 4 C's with the teacher reading over the rubric.
- 4) Students will do three thumbnail sketches using comments from their reflection sheet on how others view them utilizing balance and positive/negative space.
- 5) Students will strive to work out an interesting and thought-provoking concept in

thumbnail sketches.

- 6) Students will transfer one of the ideas to their 12x18 paper.
- 7) Students will work from light to dark values adding details where needed.
- 8) Students will assess and present their work using the rubric on the four C's.

**Closure/Reinforce:** This lesson builds on the fact that some contemporary artists explore issues of identity to eradicate prejudice and to better our society. Issues in art can be social and students and teacher will continue looking at other artists and artworks dealing with social issues such as stereotyping and gender bias in their work. Self-portraiture will be further explored.

**Assessment Questions:**

Did the student look at the theme of identity in artist's work and how the artist acknowledgements of identity are represented?

Did the student create and evaluate a self-portrait with a strong concept, utilizing a full range of contrast, a balanced composition, and good craftsmanship?

**Assessment Instrument:** Assessment will be done per rubric based on the following with each category being worth five to twenty five points.

**Concept:** Work is thought out and developed in studies, idea is thought provoking and interesting visually and intellectually, work shows some experimentation?

**Composition:** Worked out in informal or asymmetrical balance interesting positive/negative space relationship.

**Contrast:** Full range of simplified values utilized, viewer can read your drawing clearly from distance creating a focal point.

**Craftsmanship:** Materials are used well and evidence of mastery of technique.

Paper is not folded, crumbled or torn. Smudge marks are erased.

| <b>4 C's Rubric</b> | 25 | 20 | 15 | 10 | 5 |
|---------------------|----|----|----|----|---|
| Concept             |    |    |    |    |   |
| Composition         |    |    |    |    |   |
| Contrast/Value      |    |    |    |    |   |
| Craftsmanship       |    |    |    |    |   |
|                     |    |    |    |    |   |

### **Lesson 3: Attitude Portraits**

**Objective:** Students will look at and interpret contemporary artists dealing with the theme of identity through portrait and self-portrait works. (Art history/cultures)

**National standards: 4.** Students will understand art in relation to history and cultures.

Evaluates the influences of historical and social factors upon the development of selected works.

**Objective:** Students will create a ¾ to full-length body self-portrait expressing an attitude about themselves with attention to composition, contrast, concept, and craftsmanship. (Art production)

**National standards: 1.** Students will understand and apply media, techniques, and processes. **2.** Students will use knowledge of structures and functions.

**Objectives:** Students will interpret meaning of artist works Wiley and Sherman.

**National Standards: 5.** Students will reflect on and assess characteristics and merits of

artworks.

**Resources:** Images of Cindy Sherman's photography from her film stills and Kehinde Wiley's paintings from the Passing/Posing series.

**Introduction/Motivation:** Teacher will take full-length body shot of students and print these for student use. Teacher reviews last two lessons to engage conversation of different messages and meaning artists can convey through their self-portraits. Teacher will ask students about the differences reflected concern on how other people view them versus how they see themselves or wish to be seen. What do you think Cindy Sherman is saying in her image of "Film Still #"? What do you think Kehinde Wiley's paintings of men mean? Art images have been used to influence politics and social issues such as gender bias and racism throughout history. The media, icons in advertisements, slogans and more all influence our perception and our perceptions of our truths. We need to understand how images influence our thinking. How it creates a perception of truth that isn't the truth. Teacher will stress that good art projects might include not only making art but also dissecting some of these visual images and discuss how they influence how you feel about the topic.

**Procedures:**

- 1) Teacher will instruct students to do a practice sketch of themselves from the full-length body photo teacher has taken.
- 2) Teacher will instruct students to make a brainstorm list of ideas to incorporate into drawing that tells something about themselves. Teacher suggests that the lists can be done

with using symbolism or metaphors.

- 3) Teacher will assist students to narrow down ideas and choose something that is meaningful to them.
- 4) Teacher will have students sketch out ideas from their brainstorming lists.
- 5) Teacher will help students with their composition by stressing the use of design elements and principles.
- 6) Teacher will assist students cutting large roll paper into sheet sizes of 24x30.
- 7) Teacher will instruct students to transfer their design to the large paper.
- 8) Teacher will remind students to use full range of value when coloring in their designs.

**Materials:** Art history books, paper, drawing materials, pastels and colored pencils.

**Student Procedures:**

- 1) Students will make practice sketches working from full body length photographs.
- 2) Students will make brainstorming lists with sketches with composition has to express something meaningful about themselves.
- 3) Students will sketch out drawings on sheet of 24x30 paper cut from large roll paper.
- 4) Students will add elements for background chosen.
- 5) Students will color in using colored pencil or pastels. Students will use full range of value tones in their coloring.

**Closure/Reinforce:** This lesson builds on portrait work as well as the theme of social art.

You have looked at the history of this and adapted the style to express your ideas. Do you like your project? Why? Does your art feel more meaningful than some of your other projects. Good art projects include not only making art but can also influence our

thinking.

**Assessment Questions:**

Did the student look at and interpret contemporary artists dealing with the theme of identity through portrait and self-portrait works?

Did the student create  $\frac{3}{4}$  to full-length body self-portrait expressing an attitude about them?

Did the students interpret meaning of artist works Wiley and Sherman?

**Teacher's Research Assessment (compare and contrast):**

Which self-portrait best represents you?

Which portrait is the most meaningful?

Which portrait constructs positive imagery?

**Assessment Instrument:** Assessment will be done per rubric based on the following with each category being worth five to twenty five points.

**Concept:** Work is thought out and developed in studies, idea is thought provoking and interesting visually and intellectually, work shows some risk taking or experimentation?

**Composition:** Worked out in informal or asymmetrical balance interesting positive/negative space relationship.

**Contrast:** Full range of simplified values utilized, viewer can read your drawing clearly from distance creating a focal point.

**Craftsmanship:** Materials are used well and evidence of mastery of technique.

Paper is not folded, crumpled or torn. Smudge marks are erased.

| <b>4 C's Rubric</b> | 25 | 20 | 15 | 10 | 5 |
|---------------------|----|----|----|----|---|
| Concept             |    |    |    |    |   |
| Composition         |    |    |    |    |   |
| Contrast/Value      |    |    |    |    |   |
| Craftsmanship       |    |    |    |    |   |

**Student Assessment Writing:**

What did you want to communicate with your portrait?

Were you successful? How were you successful?

## DATA

### Student Responses

#### 1) What did you want to communicate with your portrait?

Student #1 “I wanted to communicate that I’m very nice and the dark side that I do have shines through.” I used roses which are signified as being delicate and feminine but I colored them black for darkness and mysterious but with the exception that all of my roses although black have a silver lining which to me signifies that although I am mean and people see that I’m also a good person though it all and there is some niceness to me everytime my attitude changes.

Student #3 “My second portrait depicts my future as being successful. I show success with the graduation hat. My third portrait shows my love and respect of self. I am on a hill and alone. Being alone and serene makes and keeps me peaceful. The wings represent having freedom.”

Student #5 “My portrait represents how my life is representing by an inverted heaven and hell. The flames express how my life is but the white expresses good points in my life.”

Student #6 “My second portrait basically that my friends thought that I am friendly, sharing, helper and quiet. My third portrait is what I think, that I am quiet and lonely because I don’t like to be in a crowded place or where there is a lot of talking going on for that reason I drew a lot of trees and vines which was to describe nature. Because nature is a quiet place and that fits my personality.”

Student #8 “Through my portrait I wanted to communicate that I like money and I’m not

friendly (lightning was the only way that I could think of describing unfriendly).”

Student #9 “ My second portrait that is how people see me. Some people see me as silly, goofy, happy and nice. I used bright colors and balloons.”

Student #10 “My full body portrait is telling you I’m in a place everyone would love to go (heaven). When I’m down I listen to music it makes me feel like I am in heaven. My heart bleeding just states that I was in pain and really down. The music calms me and makes me feel good inside. My second portrait is telling you my childish silly actions. I had some of my classmate put their comments and they equal up to my childish ways. So I felt like it was good to put their comments on my portrait.”

Student #14 “I want to get the idea that I am laid back and comfortable at the same time.”

Student #15 “My third project was showing that I am a young male dazed and confused. I put questions marks in the background to show I was trapped in two different worlds. The second project has black and yellow behind my face are to show the good and evil.”

Student #18 “On my second picture I tried to capture the fact that at school people see me as a laid back cool person. On my third picture I tried to capture the fact that I am more outspoken than people think.”

Student #21 “The second portrait I drew me as a devil and had flames in the background because sometimes I feel devilish. “The third picture I drew with cards and dice in the background because I am a gambler and risk taker.”

Student #16 “My love for the city. My inquisitive nature and y eyes by how I pay Attention.”

.Student #28 “The last one was saying that people do not understand that I am up to my

neck in water and that I feel like I am in a box.”

Student #29 “I used laid back and relaxing blue colors to describe myself. The black sand represents how rare a person I am. The white tee represents how calm I am. The expression on my face means that I am waiting.”

Student #33 “My second portrait is how people see me as funny, cool, charming, nice, crazy and athletic. My last portrait I put me on top of the world because I feel that I am more special than everyone.”

## **2) Were you successful?**

Student #1 “Yes, I was successful because everybody knows that roses aren’t black and black represents darkness but mine have a silver lining which to me signifies goodness.” but they also have a silver lining.”

Student #7 “I would say that I was very successful in doing my portrait because I took my time and put a lot of thought into my work.”

Student #8 “In my opinion I say yes I was successful because lightning sometimes scares people and I have money falling to show I like money.”

Student #10 “Yes my face portrait tells you I am silly and my third portrait tells you what makes me feel calm and good.”

Student #11 “ I think I was successful because people can understand what I am trying to say to.”

Student #14 “I believe that I did get my message across because my pose shows that I’m laid back and the money shows that I have a little cushion and I’m comfortable.

”Student #15 “Yes, I was successful. This is the best drawing I have ever done. It’s Fi.”

Student #17 “Yes, I was successful even though I’m not an artist, but I tried my best.

That makes me successful.”

Student #21 “Yes, I’m successful because I drew cards and dice to show symbolism with risk taking.”

### **3) Which self-portrait best represents you?**

Student #1 “The last portrait that we did best represents me because it has symbolism. I had the most fun doing it even though it was the hardest.”

Student #3 “The second and third portrait both represents me.”

Student #6 “The third one because the nature is quiet and that fits my personality.”

Student #7 “The portrait that best represents me is the last one because it was more and personal.”

Student #10 “Both portraits represent me. The second portrait represents how people see me. The third portrait represents how I want to be.”

Student #13 “The third one because I want people to know who I am on the inside not just on the outside.”

### **4) Which portrait is the most meaningful?**

Student #3 “I enjoyed project #3 the most because it was more about me and who I am, it took more time.” Student #5 “I like my 3<sup>rd</sup> portrait the best, the one with attitude because it was more fun and the outcome looks good.”

Student #6 “The life size self portrait I did was the most meaningful. I used a lot of time And thought to show my real personality in my background.”

Student #7 “The third one shows that I am waiting for a positive outcome in my life. My head tilted to the side shows that I am a little irritated on waiting.”

Student #8 “The second portrait was fun because it was about how others see us. It made me think.”

Student #9 “My third self portrait is the most meaningful. I drew an image of myself in front of society. It also shows me positive as being successful in life and climbing to the top. I used a hill in front of water.”

Student #10 “The third portrait because it shows what makes me feel good inside.”

Student #13 “The third one because I want people to know who I am on the inside not just on the outside.”

Student #17 “The last portrait is the most meaningful. Because that’s my real personality. Everyone thinks I am quiet but my inside there is peace that makes me quiet on the outside. When there is peace, there is love, joy, and long life.”

Student #21 “I like this last self portrait the best because it looks the best.”

Student #25 “My second portrait with the mask represents my happy side and my mean side. My third portrait shows that everyone will be a part of this world that is falling apart by using the bricks and I becoming part of it.”

Student #26 “The self-portrait that represents me the most is the full body image. The self-portrait that is most meaningful is the full body image with the puzzle pieces, red background, sun, and the black hole.”

Student #33 “My most meaningful portrait is the third one, it expresses how I feel about

myself and how I see myself sometimes. I feel myself on top of the world because I feel that I am more special than everyone.”

Student #34 “My second self portrait exhibited my love for music and how my craziness radiates off of me. This is shown by the lines that radiate around me and the bass clef that is stamped on my forehead. My third portrait exhibits my sin nature and creativity.

**Which portrait constructs positive imagery?**

Student #3 “All the portraits portray positive imagery, they all show positive things in different ways. My original is just pure. My 2<sup>nd</sup> one of how people see me shows successfulness in life. The balloons are showing celebration which means something good and positive. My life size one shows peacefulness and self love.”

Student #14 “The portrait that best represents me, is most meaningful, and has positive imagery is my life size drawing. I like that one more because of the background and the pose that I am sitting in.”

### Comparison of Student Self Assessments for Lessons

| Student | Self Portrait 1 | Self Portrait 2 | Self Portrait 3 |
|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1       | 72              | 85              | 85              |
| 3       | 80              | 90              | 90              |
| 4       | 75              | 77              | 90              |
| 5       | 72              | 85              | 100             |
| 6       | 85              | 90              | 90              |
| 7       | 76              | 80              | 85              |
| 8       | 76              | 80              | 85              |
| 9       | 72              | 78              | 85              |
| 10      | 75              | 80              | 90              |
| 11      | 78              | 90              | 90              |
| 12      | 72              | 80              | 90              |
| 13      | 72              | 75              | 90              |
| 14      | 72              | 85              | 95              |
| 15      | 72              | 70              | 75              |
| 16      | 72              | 75              | 85              |
| 17      | 85              | 82              | 90              |
| 18      | 74              | 85              | 100             |
| 19      | 72              | 75              |                 |
| 21      | 80              | 80              | 90              |
| 22      | 76              | 90              | 90              |
| 24      | 80              | 80              |                 |
| 25      | 85              | 90              | 100             |
| 26      | 80              | 85              |                 |
| 27      | 72              | 70              |                 |
| 28      | 85              | 85              | 85              |
| 29      | 72              | 80              | 90              |
| 32      | 80              | 80              |                 |
| 33      | 80              | 85              |                 |
| 34      | 85              | 85              | 90              |

## Journal Notes

Lesson #1: This was a simple lesson for the students. It appeared to be more of a review of lessons with value and portraiture work being stressed. Students were not concerned with the background and only drew their head and shoulders. This left a lot of room to work with composition as well as positive and negative space in the future. Students did not put much time into their work and completed the project fairly quickly.

Lesson #2: This lesson became more difficult for students to conceive. Most students did answer reflection sheets thoroughly even though it took prompting to get some students to reflect. I believe students are accustomed to giving superficial answers. Students did a comparison on how they think they are on the inside and how others see them. Some students took this step a little further and actually interviewed other students in class to determine how others see them. Most students seemed excited and really interested in gaining their peers' perspectives on their work. Some were hesitant to conduct interviews because they were shyer. Most students started thinking about how they could portray both sets of characteristics of how others view them and how they see themselves. Most students used brainstorming techniques with a list or sketches. This was a good exercise to develop higher order thinking skills.

When introducing contemporary artist Chu and Piper, artists working in the 80's one student's response was "they must have a low self esteem". This led to a discussion of questions: why would they have a low self esteem and it that important when interpreting their artwork? When we looked at artist Adrian Piper's self portrait with

exaggerated features from the 70's, students understood her idea but I don't think it made as much impact as it might have in the 70's because now mixed races are so much more common. I explained that the idea of "passing" is still relevant, as is mis-identifying a person on the basis of skin tone and that Piper was often mistaken as white.

Students in this class seem to be understanding conceptual art. They are starting to understand that an artist's intent addressing social issues and issues that is meaningful to them as the individual. They understand that art can send a message. I also think they are doing a good job making their class presentations and in the use of rubrics.

During lesson #2 photos were taken of each student and printed for use in lesson #3. Using a photograph as a basis for their drawing was a great motivation factor for the students. They were excited about the full-length body photos because they could depict more of an attitude. The students and I were pleased with the outcome of the photos. Although the photos were a great motivation tool for the upcoming lesson, unfortunately students appeared confused. I knew they were confused when I got such questions as, "why are we doing a headshot and a full body picture?" I explained it was a series or a unit dealing with identity issues even though all three projects would be completely different. That cleared up the confusion for most.

Lesson #3; I found it worked best to break down the project into little pieces to keep students from getting overwhelmed. Especially with lesson #3 students commented that this was a lot of work. Some wanted to take right off and draw large scale on the big roll paper. I had to slow them down back to the requirements and remind them to brainstorm and work out background ideas first by sketching first. I also found

that talking about metaphors and symbolism as a class helped alot. Some students got out their English books and the Art History books. One student reminded the other students about Frida Kahlo's work.

Some students complained that this lesson was too much work however, when they started on the large scale piece, they dove into it and really enjoyed it. Still some students tried to use simple backgrounds like hearts, which tended to be stereotypical. I reinforced that these items were too trite and to try thinking more abstractly. I prompted them to use things that might make people think more. It was exciting to see it "click" when they got it. They began transforming the representational tangible images of themselves into images that represented qualities that were intangible aspects of their personality and identity. It was exciting for students to see thee large images of themselves all over the art room walls. It was also exciting to see how proud they were when they finished. When students competed their art work they presented their work and ideas to the rest of the class. I think this was the most attentive audiences we have ever had during class presentations. Students were truly interested in presenting the ideas behind their art work and listening to the other students reveal aspects of their identity.

Most students dug down deep inside themselves to do the work that represented them. The Vice Principal of Instruction stated that this assignment produced "the most talent she saw generated from one class." (personal communication, 2006) progressively scored themselves higher on each self-portrait lesson in the unit. Students consistantly scored themselves higher on later lessons versus the first lesson.

Participation was also higher. Students were more excited about doing the later projects, which required more input, more thought and more work. Based on the writings, reflection and journaling, I believe this was due to the fact that the students were much more engaged in projects that were positive, personal and meaningful to them.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

During this study students completed a series of three self-portrait lessons for a unit on exploring identity. The first lesson was a realistic portrait executed in pencil using value. Students worked from a mirror or portrait taken by the teacher. All students chose to do a portrait of just the faces or head and shoulders. This project could be done in their sketchbook or on the 12x18 class drawing paper. The students then did a reflection sheet based on questions about their identity. The second lesson evolved from the self reflection question, about how others see them. Students did a self-portrait of their head and shoulders using their choice of medium. This project was done on 12x18 drawing paper. The third lesson was a full-length body self-portrait reflecting who they really are. They used their choice of medium; most students used marker or colored pencil, while some used a mixed medium, including paint. The size of the third self-portraits were required to be at least 30" in length.

Compared to other lessons that they've done in art class this unit was much more personal to them as it was less based on a technique or on the elements and principles of design. The lesson was also took more time compared to others they had done in class. This unit of lessons also over a month of class time to complete. The class meets one and a half hours five days a week. The last lesson took two weeks of work. This was a meeting time of 15 plus hours.

The students were very proud of their work. Everyone displayed his or her

Collectively this had a very powerful effect.

As a total project, I noticed students progressively produced stronger work in the context of aesthetics and concept. Most student's self- portrait one was a drawing of facial features in a stereotypical portrait. These were a flattened character of the person. Each further lesson developed a progression of identity primarily through the use of symbolic imagery used to depict an aspect of the student's personality. Most of the following summaries of students' artwork came from the students themselves. They generally suggest that students had specific ideas that they wanted to convey about themselves and how they want to be represented. Writing about their work gave students another vehicle to explain what they intended to convey through their use of symbols in their artwork.

Student #17 did her first portrait with a simple flattened drawing of her face and shoulders. Some values and shading was utilized but identity r personality was estranged Her second portrait of how others viewed revealed more of her identity. She showed more expression in her face. A slight smile is on her face and her eyes are drawn closed to signify shyness. She has added generic text in the background to depict a quiet environment, as if she was reading. She wrote, "I drew myself as a shy person. That's how they see me anyway. But it is not important, the real me is that I am beautiful, and serious. In my background I wrote something simple like some writing. Because while you are reading, you're quiet."



**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**

Her third portrait is a full body image depicting who she really is was executed much larger. She added color and lots of additional imagery. It is a view of her standing very confidently and serious. She is standing a bit to the side with her arms down by her side and one foot pointing to the front. She wrote, “The third portrait is the most meaningful because it tells of my real personality. People who know me very well will tell you how peaceful I am. In my background I drew a symbol of peace, that’s who I am. And a poster behind me, that poster shows what people cannot see in me inside. Because I love peace, love, harmony, that is what I wish for in this world.” This student’s third portrait shows personal imagery and voice. She is using imagery in her last her portrait to show us what she is really like. It is personal and meaningful to her because of her strong identification with peace. She wishes others to know her true self instead of what they see and judge about her from her outward appearance and mannerisms.



**Figure 3**

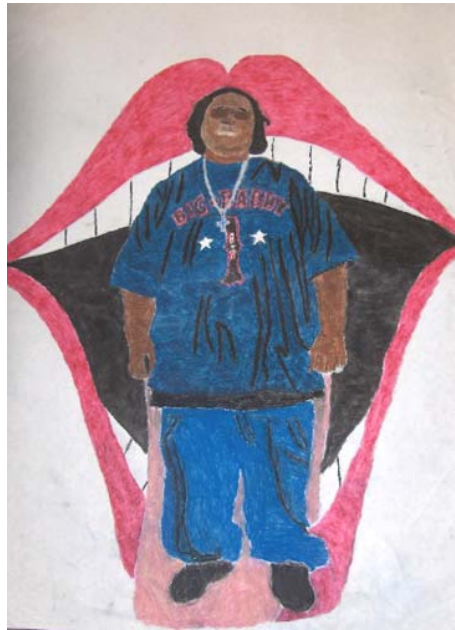
Student #18 also depicted himself in his first portrait in a stereotypical portrait. It is a flattened character of a person showing little identity. In his second portrait, he added color, text and symbolism to show his identity as others view him. He combined two portraits in one. The left half shows him with a solemn expression wearing brown sunglasses and a black tee. The word cool is added in the background. The right half depicts him as a clown. He has a white face, red hair, and red lips upturned into a smile. The word clown is added in the background. The student states that, “I tried to capture the fact that at school people see me as a laid back person and cool person where some see him as funny”



**Figure 4**



**Figure 5**



**Figure 6**

On his third picture the student did a full body self-portrait standing in front of a very large open mouth. He wrote, “On my third picture I tried to capture the fact that I am more outspoken than people think.” The size and placement of the mouth was meaningful to him because it signifies outspokenness. The student’s second portrait shows personal identity by using the imagery of the sunglasses to depict coolness or popularity while the clown imagery shows his sense of humor. The third portrait exhibits his personal identity by using the image of the large open mouth behind his image. This picture is done large

scale signifying the importance of how he wants to be seen.

Student #25 also show a progression from a representational superficial identity to portraits which depict his culture and inner personality. Although his first portrait was an accurate description of his features, it is a more stereotypical portrait. His second portrait attempts to show some identity by the use of a mask on his face and the Mexican flag behind him. All is done in black and white except the colors of the flag. He used the mask to show both sides of how people view him. He wrote, “People see me as Mexican and sometimes they see me happy and sometimes they see my mean side.” He is showing cultural identity by using the flag. He shows personal identity by using imagery signifying his personality.



**Figure 7**



**Figure 8**

His third self- portrait is done large and depicts his full body. He is in front of a brick wall holding a spray can, there is graffiti in the back and the wall is crumbling. Part of his body is blending into the wall. He explains, “Everyone is part of this world that is falling apart, but I try to get away. The brick wall is the world around me, and destroyed parts are what I am missing in my life and at the same time it means that this world is falling a part piece by piece. The spray can repressed ‘crime”, what we see everyday in this world. The spray in the floor represents what crime has already happened. The spray can in my hand represents me, the new generation of teen violence that is happening in this world.” This student has made his work personal from a social standpoint. This student work uses imagery from teen culture to identify how he feels about the world.



**Figure 9**

Student #26 self- portraits show a progression of identity representation. Her first self- portrait is done in a stereotypical style of a flattened caricature. Her second portrait exhibits more of a personal identity. It is a portrait of her head and shoulders with city buildings behind, question marks and eyes are floating throughout the background. She wrote, “The background of my self portrait represents my love for the city life. The question marks represent my inquisitive nature and the eyes symbolize how I pay attention to my surroundings. The black background shows that I like nightlife.



**Figure 10**



**Figure 11**

The student’s third self portrait is a full length body portrait done in color. She is standing with a sunburst around her on one side and blackness on the other side. There are puzzle pieces falling around her feet. The student comments, “My self portrait represents many things. On one side of my body there is a black hole that means I am lost. The sun on the opposite side represents my intellect. Both the sun and the black hole together represents the ying yang symbol which means the good and evil present within

me. The black and red lines are my bad temper. Lastly, the puzzle pieces beneath my feet symbolizes my life. The pieces are slowly being put together. I colored them black, aqua, marine and a little red. The aqua marine is my birthstone color and the black and red symbolizes the bad things I go through as I put my life together. Both of her second and third portrait exhibit personal imagery by use of symbolic things that represents her life.



**Figure 12**

Student #34 combined his first and second portrait. He has done a value drawing of head and shoulders, adding blue and orange squiggles in the background. He stated, “My second portrait exhibits his love for music and how my craziness radiates out of me. This is shown by the lines that radiates around me, and the bass clef that is stamped on my forehead.”



**Figure 13**

His third self- portrait is a three quarter length body portrait. He is dressed in black with a black evil mask. He is entangled in a red beam that surrounds his body. This beam appears to be coming out of his mouth with blood dripping from it. There is a stream of colors coming out o one hand. The background is a deep red. The student writes, “My third portrait exhibits my sin nature and creativity. Creativity is exhibited by colors flowing from the quill pen in my hand. The darkness signifies my evilness. The red background represents the blood of Jesus washing my sin away.” Both portraits by this student exemplify personal identity. The student has reflected upon his life and used symbolism for the things he felt was important to represented himself.



**Figure 14**

I as their teacher was very pleased with the outcome of the student's work. Overall, the students appeared to value the latter lessons more so than the first. I do believe this was because it was more meaningful to them. It was more meaningful to them because it was about them.

Other things I noticed beyond the scope of the study was that they appeared to accept themselves as well as others in the classroom more. Student #25 started wearing his poncho to class after we finished the unit of lessons. Other students started interacting with students whom they had not associated with previously. An example of this was the extraverted more social type interacting with the more quiet students.

## CONCLUSIONS

Art Lessons based on identity can help students deconstruct stereotypical imagery and develop meaningful artwork. Art lessons based on identity can help students construct positive identity and develop meaningful imagery. Identity is important to students. More education as well as research should be devoted to this. Identity exploration as well as identity recognition helps with student's self esteem, the drive to learn more, explore more and use higher level thinking skills.

Based on what I have observed in the student's artwork, reflections, and actions, the student's artwork was meaningful to them. Throughout the progression of the three lessons I observed that the students artwork grew more meaningful to them. The students put more time thought and effort into their third project demonstrating to me that it meant more to them. Their reflections backed this theory up. Students reflected that their third project was meaningful because it depicted their real personality. It was meaningful and positive because it displayed self love. The acceptance and love of self helps to broaden one's acceptance of others.

The unit of lessons also appeared to broaden their acceptance of diversity. The diversity was as cultural as I originally thought it would be but turned out to be more personal. Students # 11 and #25 are examples of students whose work exhibited their cultural heritage. In their second self-portrait they both used their countries flag in the background. However, as they progressed into their third self portrait their artwork comments, and writings reflected who their identity as a teenager. It appeared most

students grew to a broader understanding and acceptance of self.

Based on the students' actions I think there was a greater acceptance of cultural and racial diversity within the classroom. I noticed students interacting with peers who they previously had not. Some of the popular, boisterous, athletic types were mingling with students that were more quiet, reserved and laid back.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

I believe there are many areas for further investigation into the theme of identity in the art education classroom. The following list provides suggestions for further research:

1) I recommend more research be done to determine what ways art education can enhance students' self concept through an examination of personal and cultural identity. Exploration of identity can help build acceptance of self and others.

2) I recommend the development of integrated art lessons with other disciplines including English, History and health to further investigate the theme of Identity.

3) As diversity increases we need to broaden the understanding and acceptance of self and others. I recommend that more art education research be conducted to determine if lessons based on issues of identity can increase students' appreciation for their peers from another cultural or racial group.

4) Finally, I recommend further research be undertaken to determine if students involved in lessons that focus on the thematic exploration of identity might also encourage and develop students' higher level thinking. Lessons that engage students I synthesizing information about their identity and the identity of others may motivate students to utilize critical thinking capabilities to evaluate their ideas and generate more. More documentation of student achievement and thinking abilities in the art classroom is one way to demonstrate the importance of art education for all students.

## REFERENCES

- Andrus, L. (2000). Mixed media double portraits, *School Arts Magazine*, vol. 99, 44-59.
- Beckett, W. (1988). *Contemporary Women Artists*. New York: Phaidon Press.
- Blandy, D. (1996). *Issues in Postmodern Pedagogy.*, Reston, Va: National Art Education Association.
- Cahan, S & Kocur, Z. (1996). *Contemporary Art and Multi Cultural Education*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Collins, G. & Sandell, R. 1996. *Gender Issues in Art Education: Content, Contexts, and Strategies*. Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Congdon, K. (1996). Art history, traditional art, and artistic practices. Collins & Sandell (Eds.) *Gender Issues in Art Education: Content Contexts and Strategie*, 11-17. Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.
- Denzia, N. (1986) *Sociological theory*, Illinois, Urbano-Champaign, American Sociological Association.
- Doy, G. (2002). Reflections on multicultural art history. Addison, N. & Burgess, L. (Eds.) *Issues in Art and Design Teaching*. 199-210. London and New York: Routledge and Falmer Day.
- Ewald, W. & Lightfoot, A. (1998). *I Wanna Take Me A Picture* Boston: Beacon Press.
- Ewald, W. (2005). *American Alphabets*, Berlin-New York: Scalo Zurich.

- Giroux, H. (2002). *Hope, critical pedagogy and neoliberalism*. Addison, N. & Burgess, L. (Eds.) *Issues in Art and Design Teaching*, 167-177. London and New York: Routledge and Falmer
- Hickman, R. (2002). The role of art and design in citizenship education. Addison, N. & Burgess, L. (Eds.). *Issues in Art and Design Teaching*, 84-89. London and New York: Routledge Falmer
- Hutchens, J. & Suggs, M. (1997) *Student complaints and faculty moaning*, Reston, VA: National Art Association.
- Knight, W. (2006, July). Using contemporary art to challenge cultural values, beliefs, and assumptions. *Art Education*, 59, 39-45.
- Neperud, R. (1995). *Transitions in Art Education: A Search for Meaning*, April, 2006, [www.uic.edu/classes/ad/ad382/sites](http://www.uic.edu/classes/ad/ad382/sites)
- Smith-Shank, D. (2004). *Semiotics and visual culture=sights, signs, and significance*. Reston, VA. National Art Association.
- Steers, J. (2002). Art and design in the UK; the theory gap. Addison, N. & Burgess, L. (Eds.) *Issues in Art and Design Teaching*, (pp.19-30). London and New York: Routledge Falmer
- Wagner- Ott, A. (2002). Analysis of gender identity through doll and action figure politics in art. *Studies in Art Education*. 43 (2), 10-14.
- Wyrick, M. (1996). Teaching feminist art and social activism. Collins, C. & Sandell, R. (Eds) *Gender Issues In Art Education: Content Contexts, and Strategies*, 126-133. Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.

APPENDICES

SELF PORTRAIT LESSON EXAMPLES



Figure 15

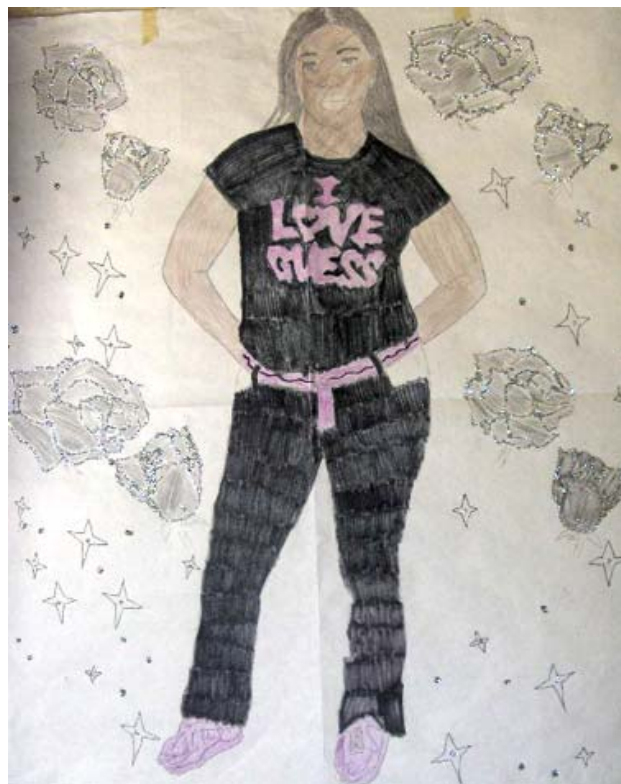


Figure 16

Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21



Figure 22

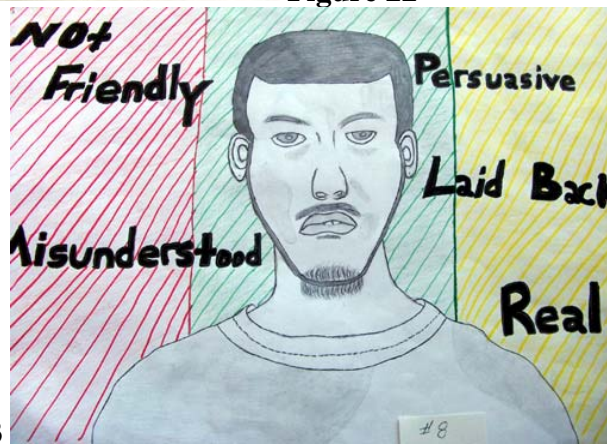


Figure 23

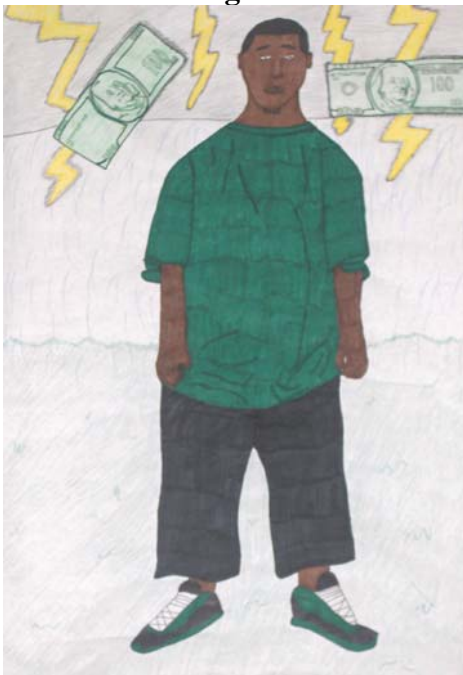


Figure 24



Figure 25



Figure 26



Figure 27



Figure 28

Figure 29



Figure 30



Figure 31

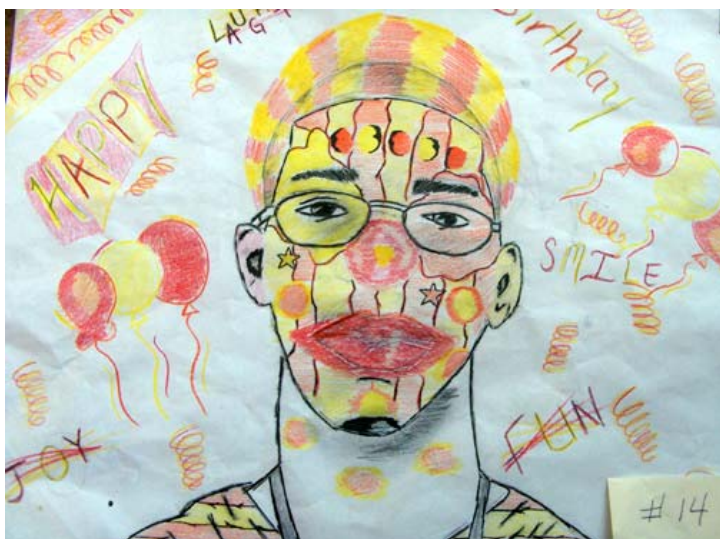


Figure 32



Figure 33



**Figure 34**



**Figure 35**



Figure 36

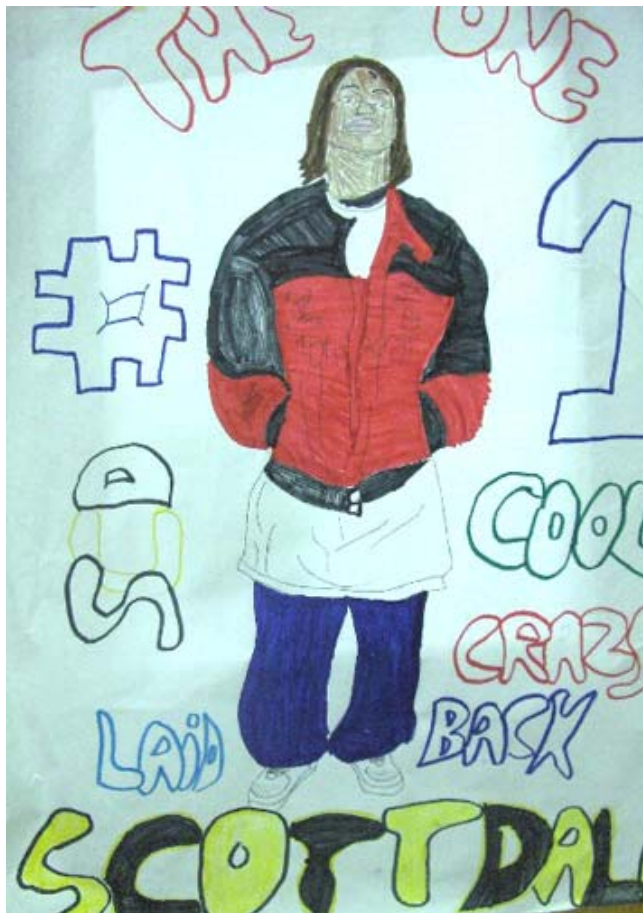


Figure 37



Figure 38



Figure 39



Figure 40



Figure 41



Figure 42

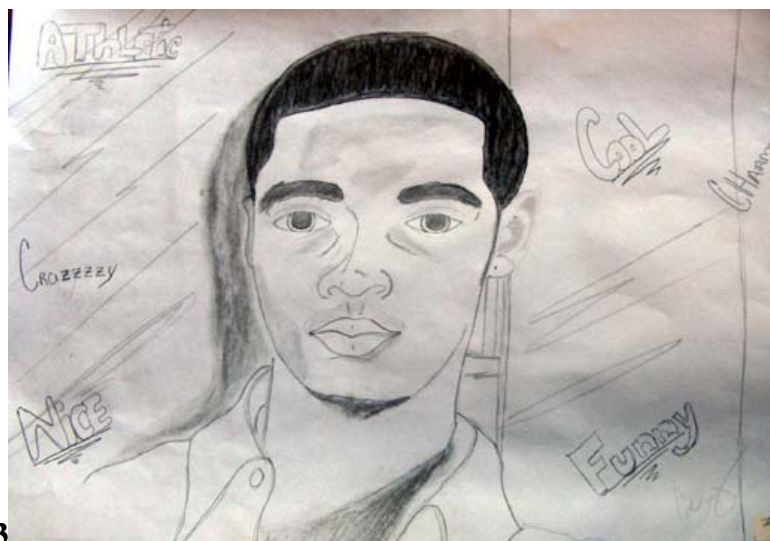


Figure 43



Figure 44

Figure 45



Figure 46



Figure 47



Figure 48

