

INCORPORATING ADOLESCENT IDENTITY:
DEVELOPING A MIDDLE SCHOOL EXPLORATORY ART CURRICULUM

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Abstract

Finding solutions to the demands and challenges of teaching in an exploratory middle school visual arts program is an ongoing process for an educator working in a large inner city school. Middle school students experience a shift from childhood towards independence. Gradually, they discover a sense of self apart from their families. During this stage, students begin to develop their own identity, which often embraces both popular culture and ethnic culture. With these truths in mind, there is a need to develop a school art curriculum that actively engages middle school students in exploring their own identity and culture to make learning art history, art skills, and art techniques relevant to this age group. This study presents one teacher's quest to create a meaningful middle school art program by focusing on concepts of personal identity and culture. The outcomes of this study highlight the need for further research on the impact of an identity-based art curriculum on the development of identity during the middle school experience.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Teaching art in a middle school is a dynamic experience. Teaching has exposed me to a diverse population of student learners from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. My experiences working with a broad spectrum of students equipped with various learning styles, has taught me to rethink and reassess the overall relevancy and main purpose of my middle school art curriculum.

Fresh out of the University of Hawaii's Post Baccalaureate Certificate in Secondary Education and into my non-tenured years of teaching in a predominantly low-income middle school, I admittedly and metaphorically became that "fish out of water". I had very little experience teaching solo, and I had little experience creating a year-long art curriculum. I was literally hired the day before school started, and my feelings of anxiety quickly swallowed my enthusiasm for getting my first teaching position. In planning the first week of teaching, I turned to my student teaching experiences and borrowed ideas from my previous cooperating/mentor teachers. I used their curriculum, taught their lesson plans, and graded student artwork, without contemplating if students actually learned or enjoyed any of the content that was taught. I felt comfortable going in this direction with the assumption that students would "catch on" to art. But during the first couple of months working with my students, I was dealt a stiff reality check as I continually had an arduous time in finding relevant subject matter that would make even the slightest impact on them.

My first art unit plans were based upon subject matter and themes very foreign to my predominantly Filipino and Polynesian middle school students. With a degree in Art

History, I thought that the fleeting light moments of Impressionism and the abrupt brushwork and bright colors of Van Gogh would leave them clamoring for more, but I was dead wrong. They weren't into it; the content was inaccessible to them. There were two other art teachers in my department who were highly experienced female teachers, each with thirty plus years of teaching. One teacher was in charge of the gifted and talented art classes, and the other teacher taught ceramics. I taught the over-enrolled art classes, which usually meant working with at-risk students with behavioral and academic problems. In the gifted and talented class, the focus was placed on entering a variety of state-wide art contests with consistent success and results. The ceramics teacher emphasized self-reflection and writing in the curriculum. Obviously, each teacher had developed a structured, well balanced curriculum. They managed their students, classroom environment, and curriculum well. There was an amicable level of rapport, and the students seemed to enjoy being there. As for my own classes, there was no structured art curriculum I was asked to follow, and I found myself in a sink or swim situation with these at-risk students. In my first attempt in making art feasible, I still held high expectations that were neither attained nor understood by twelve and thirteen year old children. In hindsight, fresh out of college, I did not understand the dynamic mindset of girls and boys in middle school. I could not relate to them and they could not relate to me.

For example, in a still life charcoal drawing lesson of various fruits, cups, and bottles set on a table, the art elements of value (different shades of light and dark) and shape (enclosed two-dimensional area created by line) were difficult to teach. The thought of using charcoal for drawing and smudging it was an entirely foreign concept to the students. It was challenging to say the least. Many students seemed distracted and

they could not fully grasp the rationale of the lesson. The students just regarded it as “work” and I found that they were more interested in what Britney Spears wore at MTV’s Video Music Awards the night before or which couples were seen holding hands under the stairwell during morning recess. It seemed that there was little to no connection between the student artists and the artwork they created. Personal pride and satisfaction in their art took a backseat to the students’ overall grades and project percentages. “What grade did you get?” were common questions that I overheard after each art project was returned or displayed on the bulletin boards. Although these low-income, at-risk students were artistically gifted and talented, in the end, the art unit failed to provide any sense of vigor, poignancy and self-reflection. The reason and question being, “Why are we doing this Mr. Tambio?”

Although the overall charcoal drawing unit was based on demonstrating media, the students became bored. My students had little to no interest in drawing techniques such as shading, outlining, and placing an emphasis on light logic and direct observation for visual reference. I saw it in their faces, with student eyes either rolling or wandering off to the windows, and loud, audible, exhales as I introduced new art terminology or media. Something was missing in the classroom and the curriculum, and at that time I couldn’t seem to pinpoint the problem. I knew one thing was certain: My teaching, curriculum, and pedagogy needed a makeover. Upon reflection, my art lessons and units were lacking in engaging content and ideas that would invigorate student interest. I found it very problematic to continually convey these types of art lessons every quarter, semester, and year. I also noticed that there was a lack of rapport and student awareness of each other amongst the microcosm of the classroom. Students arrived to class, did

artwork for forty minutes, cleaned up, and left for the next class period. In the midst of it all, there was no intellectual inquiry, peer or self-assessment, critical dialogue, or sense of connection. The overall classroom vibe and atmosphere needed something different. It needed change. To capture the interests of budding, yet impressionable minds, something had to be done.

A couple years ago, I noticed that there was a common interest amongst the students in purposefully placing photographs of themselves, friends, and family members inside the transparent covers of their school binders and folders. When asked whom or what the pictures represented, there was a sense of great fervor among students in providing an impromptu explanation of a given photograph. That same fervor and attitude held true for any personal belongings or artifacts such as extra-curricular sketches, drawings, sports memorabilia, school bags, wallets, and even with contraband items like cellular phones. When I discussed these items with the students, their demeanor changed for the better. My students seemed genuinely interested in offering me a fraction of who they were as individuals. By just showing the slightest interest in their lives, I created a connection to their personal worlds and minds. I got the shyest kid to say at least three sentences, and the most obnoxious student was humbled when reflecting about someone that they either looked up to or respected.

Soon after this, an educational epiphany overwhelmed me. In those special moments, I created the rapport and connection I lacked in the beginnings of my teaching career. I noticed that with objects that directed attention to themselves, students held great personal pride and passion in their own identity and uniqueness. It was then and there I decided that I wanted to uncover that unique spark within every student by

capturing something poignant in their lives, and using it as the inspiration for subject matter in my prototypical art curriculum.

I critically analyzed my curriculum and discovered that my middle school students were really into their own social network of friends, pop culture, fashion, trends, fads and what was “hip” and “cool” in terms of music, television and movies. At that moment, these topics were at the forefront of their lives, which meant everything to them. Everything else became secondary and was not that important. With this in mind, I hoped to create a bridge between what was most important in their lives and school. By addressing these topics in my discussions, I observed a new perspective of their multifaceted, ever changing, personal identities. I started to understand their minds, their interests and their lives. By further investigating the basic concept of identity and middle school philosophy, a whole new world opened up. I became aware of concurrent, contemporary themes and subject matter relative to a middle school student. This was what I needed to re-invigorate my teaching and my art curriculum. I was prepared to holistically re-affirm my students and their sense of personal self and awareness with this new knowledge.

Statement of Problem

It is imperative that the basic concept of identity be included in a middle school art curriculum in local communities consisting of student learners from culturally diverse backgrounds. There is a need to address the overall meaning of identity as a focus for engaging student learning, affirmation and personal reflection in public school districts across the country and in Hawai'i. With the constant influx of immigrant students, who primarily speak English as a second language, coupled with struggling, at-risk children,

who find school and learning having no sense of purpose, the school curriculum must have an emphasis on creating alternative, yet meaningful connections between every student and the lessons taught.

There are two things I consider problematic with creating those connections. Yearly, in all Hawai'i public schools, pressure is placed on the student body, faculty, and administration for having students meet or exceed Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on the Hawaii State Assessment (HSA). Teachers are required to adhere to a core set of grade level standards and benchmarks that they must teach to the students. By placing a direct emphasis on "teaching to the test" to raise scores, the core curriculum of Reading, Language Arts, and Mathematics must stay aligned with standards-based education. If the school fails to make gains from the previous year as measured by the scoring averages across the state, the school will ultimately move into "restructuring." Restructuring requires an audit by an outside committee made up of school administrators and other teachers. The audit determines what content areas and/or curricula are "lacking." Then suggestions are made to eliminate courses irrelevant to improving test scores. This is when teaching and creativity become separate instead of synonymous entities. Courses that are meant to engage students and be creative are put on the backburner for afterschool workshops and programs. Students are required to "double-up" on a mathematics or English class in favor of achieving higher test scores on the Hawaii State Assessment. This comes as a crucial point in the life of twelve and thirteen year olds, where they inquire about their identity and their roles in the community, school, and at home. Self actualization and realization for young, impressionable minds is vital, and there never has been more of a call for this type of urgency where focus should be on the

person as an individual, not just improving test scores. In proposing and implementing a middle school curriculum that emphasizes individuality all while fostering an awareness of differences, students will be given a “breath of fresh air”, when stepping into my art class. They will come to acknowledge the fact that there exist within art, numerous solutions to any given problem; especially when students can find solutions, subject matter, and inspiration from within.

Secondly, in this age of digital technology, popular culture, and the widespread, common use of the Internet has made many individuals lose their holistic sense of who they are, and where their roots are. Popular culture has pervaded personal, and ethnic culture. Today’s youth want instant gratification. It is the so-called “sponge” generation of progressive learners and thinkers who are so engrained with the “now” that they lose touch with aspects of their own identities, such as ancestral heritage, and pride. Core values such as respect, accountability, and resourcefulness are slowly becoming “diluted” in the wake of present day popular culture. For today’s middle school students, everything is moving forward and moving fast. Popular culture is to be eaten, worn, or absorbed and can be done, ordered, sold, or completed, all with one click of a mouse. In just a few seconds, television shows, movies, and music can be downloaded and viewed instantly on their laptop computers. Wireless, digital cell phones can play literally a song from the radio and queue up the exact artist and title from vast internet search engines. But, in the midst of all this mass marketing of technology and digital media, it still is a facet of an individual’s identity. In this study, the ever growing emergence of digital dependency needs to be addressed and embraced simultaneously with identity. As they

hold onto their dear cell phones or iPods, students can still grasp onto their unique sense of being creative and different.

In my quest for ongoing student enlightenment, cognition and self-affirmation, it is my belief that children should be empowered by meaningful ideas and concepts, particularly at the middle school level, where issues of personal identity, individualism, and peer acceptance permeate the school environs. This idealistic approach is simultaneously positive and problematic. By developing and implementing an exploratory, yet structured art curriculum that promotes using facets of identity to fuel content and subject matter, students first need to learn its basic construct and definition. Hypothetically, students can then positively reinforce and affirm an identity based on understanding themselves and their peers. My literature review will explore the resources that shed some insight on addressing the concepts of identity, common social/personal issues amongst adolescents, the role of the art teacher, the role of an exploratory art curriculum, its justifications, and limitations.

Statement of Purpose

The main purpose of this study is to argue the importance of identity in a middle school art curriculum. As an umbrella concept, identity covers several poignant, yet often ignored topics in teaching the visual arts at all levels of learning. Within each unit of this proposed year-long curriculum, I have aspirations in creating an atmosphere of consistent enlightenment where students are given positive reinforcement when being introduced to topics that reference their personal history and background. This comes as a reactionary measure to those naysayers that do not consider the visual arts important within the periphery of test scores and percentages. My project is based on the overall idea that

ideas and inspirations for art can come from aspects of an individual's identity, thus empowering them by creating a stronger sense of personal connection and discourse. Students in this curriculum will come to acknowledge there exist within art, solutions to any given problem, and that everyone is entitled to his/her own opinions, answers, and feelings. Students will learn to embrace their own personal significance within the microcosm of their school. As my primary focus, I will target the very issue and definition of identity, its constructs, and the available research and literature that address this topic.

Secondly, I want to use these identity based concepts with previous research in constructing a visual map to help students symbolize or layout "facets" of their own identity. Each student is represented by the center of that map, with outer facets symbolizing and other aspects of their identities. By creating an awareness of identity-based concepts, I want to employ these as themes in student artwork by delving into more identity-based topics and issues. This will enable the student learners to do their own qualitative research by analyzing aspects of their personal lives and creating a personal "data bank" from which they can access their own ideas and use them as subject matter for their artwork.

Before I begin my search for a meaningful art curriculum, several relevant questions surfaced, which I needed to research:

- What is the basic, overall definition of identity? What are its main/ sub constructs?
- How can I use these constructs of identity and include them in my middle school art curriculum?
- How are other art educators implementing the concept of identity in their own curriculum?

- How can identity become relevant to a student in middle school?
- What types of lesson plans can be developed when infusing concepts of identity?
- What art historical references can I present to the students as examples of artists who found meaning within in their own identities?
- How does this identity-based curriculum relate to the Hawaii Content and Performance Standards in Fine Arts and National Visual Arts Standards?

With these questions in mind, I will elaborate on the in my review of the literature in Chapter II.

Limitations of the Study

Time Constraints

While researching the main topic of identity and incorporating it into my art curriculum, several limitations surfaced. First, I anticipated time management becoming an important factor. Time management will affect my decision making in terms of choosing the most relevant art projects that would have the most impact in conveying aspects of a students' identity. In planning for one quarter, nine to ten weeks, my main concern was the number of art projects/units that were to be expected within that allotted time frame. I wanted to create assignments with specific learning goals, standards, and benchmarks in mind that eventually lead up to a major project or unit.

I anticipated teaching self-portraiture and the vibrant French movement of Fauvism for one entire week, approximately four class sessions, before venturing onto their self portraits. During the first week, the primary focus will be placed on discussions on personal identity, a brief art historical lecture/video on Fauvism; using color as a means of emotion and expression, and teacher demonstration on specific drawing and painting techniques that the Fauvists used. Also, to reinforce student learning and reading

and writing across the curriculum, new terminology will be introduced, coupled with short worksheets, sketches, and media studies. In summation of content learned from the first week, students for at least 2 weeks must successfully complete their own fauve portrait in whatever color media they desire. The rationale for learning new terms and techniques is to first expand the core base of knowledge and cognition so that students can independently apply what they learned toward the outcome, their self-portraits. Building cognitive awareness is essential to student awareness and understandings. This would require me to carefully manage my time by making the most of my fifty-five minute classes while more fully engaging my students.

Depth and Sequence of Curriculum

Another limitation I anticipated is the amount of time spent attempting to cover all aspects of a student's identity map in just one school year. This is also problematic for the semester students because when the two quarters are completed, our exploration of self would come to an abrupt end. Two semesters in learning about how to express themselves through art is not enough. Also, with a new set of second semester students arriving in January, I would have to re-teach the core concepts of my curriculum once again. In continuing the notion of self, two classes (semester and year) will now be merged into one, since some students remain in class while new students are entering. This seems difficult considering I would have to create two lesson/unit plans for the semester and year, respectively.

Class Size

Another challenge that impacts the classroom dynamic is class size. High teacher to student ratios are already a known problem within the public schools. In many art classes, the ratio is even higher, and art teachers often have thirty-plus students, which affects the dynamics of the class. Because core subjects are homogeneously grouped, elective classes such as art are continually “experiencing” new students throughout the semester. This high enrollment is in part due to the students who have difficulties in their core subjects resulting in a schedule change for an “easier” class, like art.

Classroom Management

Quite synonymous with class size, effective classroom management and disciplinary measure would have to be developed and enforced throughout the duration of the study. If not monitored well, problems can arise, thus greatly affecting students, their work, and valuable class time. The residuals can be overwhelming and greatly distract and frustrate both the students and teacher. Minutes spent on re-directing behavior could be used for instruction, studio work time, creating assessment, and self-reflection. Also, mixed with the classroom dynamic and the various tools that an art program has, focus is also placed on creating a safe and positive learning environment for everyone.

Art Materials and Supplies

Another limitation facing this project is the operating budget allotted to the visual arts department at my school. Although I am fortunate to have leftover art materials, tools and resources from the previous year, art materials always need to be replenished and/or

replaced. As school budgets dwindle and the costs of art media continue to rise, I have to be selective in purchasing the appropriate art media, tools, and materials for student projects. For my identity-based middle school art curriculum, art materials purchased or recycled must accommodate at least 180 students enrolled in the year and semester exploratory art classes. Art materials and supplies for the first quarter units include: Cone 06 Low Fire Clay, Low fire Cone 06 Lead free Glazes, 18" x 24" sulfite drawing paper, and drawing pencils and pens. For the second quarter art projects of Fauvism and Self portraiture, a wide variety of acrylic paints, paintbrushes, 9" x 12" canvas boards, scratchboards, and replacement X-Acto hand held knife blades are needed. For the third quarter, 5" x 7" linoleum/rubber blocks, blockprinting ink, drawing/construction paper, glue, and a wide variety of magazines will be needed for their cultural myth and collage projects respectively. In the fourth quarter, pastel/charcoal paper, dry pastels, compressed charcoal, workable fixative are art materials and media used for student Surrealism projects, and additional bags of Cone 06 Low Fire clay are to purchased for their ceramic slab box project.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter, I will review literature that address and define concepts of early adolescent identity, including middle school child development, multicultural education, and the significance of these concepts in a visual arts curriculum. As I researched the main concept of identity, several other yet equally important, topics surfaced, each providing further insight into my own pedagogy, teaching practice, and curriculum development. The six topics are: Rationale for a Visual Arts Curriculum, The Role of an Art Educator, Multicultural Education, Defining Identity, Exploring the Middle School Child, and The Limitations of a Middle School Art Curriculum.

The various topics studied will be explained in six sections, each having significant roles in contributing background research and information for my project. The first section justifies the overall significance of a visual arts program as an important venue for organizing life experiences to construct meaning, voice, and personal expression. This is critical for middle school since students are at a period in their lives where developmental, social, physical, and emotional changes occur that greatly affect the individual. The second section provides insight towards the importance of the art educators' role in developing and implementing a qualitative middle school visual arts curriculum. The key point argues on creating self-awareness for introspection to enhance teaching practice. In order for an educator to be effective in conveying content to students, one must first critically examine the very idea of self and the influencing factors that help shape ones identities. By thoroughly examining his/her own identity, the educator will have valuable background knowledge in proper planning and management

for a diverse classroom. The third section introduces the approaches and dimensions of multicultural education. James Banks (2007), notable African-American author and researcher on the issues and implications of multicultural education, highlights certain points that help address the need to provide such equal educational opportunities for all learners, regardless of their race, religion, ethnicity, or culture. In order to gain a definitive, yet uniform meaning on the multi-faceted dynamics of identity, several constructs and meanings from different resources will be examined in the fourth section. The fifth section focuses on the middle school child in providing further insight and perspective to the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social development needs of a middle school student. The last section highlights the middle school visual arts curriculum and its limitations in creating and teaching the concept of identity. In any middle school environment, a teacher must work amongst the dynamics in and around the classroom, students, time allotted for units and lesson plans, and the available resources.

Rationale for a Visual Arts Curriculum

The constant influx of students from culturally diverse backgrounds and learning styles has forced art educators to rethink their pedagogy, practice, and curriculum. James Banks (2007) claims that current demographics point toward Americans becoming more ethnically diverse:

The US Census projects that ethnic minorities including African Americans, Indian Americans, and Alaska Natives, Asian Pacific Islanders and persons of Hispanic origin will make up 47% of the U.S. population by 2050. (Hudalla, 2005). (p.11)

Banks (2007) also argues that most teachers in the classroom or in teacher education programs are likely to have students from diverse, racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups in their classrooms. He believes that teachers will need to “acquire new skills, knowledge, and attitudes in response to the growing diversity of the United States” (p. 248).

In standardized testing, emphasis is placed from the top down to “teach to the test” to raise scores nationally. As art teachers taking on such directives, we are forced to align both the national and state educational standards into our lesson plans. As a result, creativity in teaching and developing a progressive, yet exciting curriculum is hindered by the importance for students to meet and/or exceed a yearly summative, standardized test. A “top down” curriculum, with state issued mandates to raise scores on reading, writing, and arithmetic may hinder art teachers from carrying out a visual arts curriculum they personally would like to use. Some teachers feel that their autonomy in directing student instruction has been taken away (Brazee, 2000).

Another force working against the top down curriculum results from developments in cognitive theory that have caused a shift from curriculum centered instruction from the 1970’s to learner-centered instruction. By centering curriculum on the students, they will be engaged at their level of understanding that requires them to examine their own knowledge to come up with their own solutions (Wachowak and Clements, 1997). Focusing on the student learner is an ideal approach in reaction to transforming a curriculum that best suits the diversity of this nation. As educators, we must move away from what Paulo Friere (1970) calls “banking education”. Under this type of system, education becomes “an act of depositing in which students are the

depositories and the teacher is the depositor.” (As cited in Hudalla, 2005) In relation to Friere’s “banking education” theory, Slezky (1999) draws concerns with a similar problem in a “traditional” art class where, in a typical art classroom, the teaching practice becomes monotonous and mundane. The art teacher enters the class. The technique is demonstrated, work places are assigned, and the art “project” begins. The school bell then stops student activities, and grades are critiques, pronouncing judgment on solutions to the assignment. Rather than create an atmosphere of discussion, self-discovery, and expression, the art “project” as a whole has essentially been completed. Slezky (1999) emphasizes that an art class must involve students in a search for ideas so that they see themselves as art sources, generators of invention, recognizer of new ideas. Facing the unknown is central to any artistic challenge. In relation to Friere (1970), the overall aim stated is moving forward an education that provides opportunities to share experiences, identify social problems, and take action, instead of memorizing to regurgitate information. Friere used this concept to explain the framework for curriculum delivery that he believed existed in schools. Friere also believes that in order for an educational experience to be relevant and important, the teacher/student and the student/teacher need to work together by identifying the themes that focus on the student in order to create the program of education (Hudalla, 2005).

It is imperative that art educators rethink from a “top down” mainstream curriculum and focus on a learner-centered curriculum. In public school districts across the country, including Hawai’i, we are facing the dynamics of a growing diverse student population, a student population that poses challenges for a middle school art curriculum that primarily focuses on content and materials foreign to the learner. For learning to

occur, the school art curriculum must have an emphasis in creating alternative, yet meaningful connections between every student and the lessons taught.

Russian child psychologist Lev Vygotsky viewed the arts as cultural tools that humans use to organize their experience and construct the meanings with which they organize their world (Holloway and Lecompte, 2001). A major goal for art education is to encourage personal response and expression in art, promote the awareness of the artistic heritage, and to promote the awareness of the role of art in society (Lopez, 2009).

Holloway and Lecompte (2001) reiterate:

Through the arts, humans use movement, vocalization, visualization, imagination, verbalization, and auditory and sensory stimulation in a wide range of strategies to exercise their imaginations and to transform how they think and how they express their thoughts and emotions. Individuals can redefine and manipulate their meanings through the arts. In doing so, the arts provide ways for individuals to give voice to or depict their experiences, to try on new identities or perspectives, and even to visualize, articulate, or act out the impossible. The arts foster children to imagine themselves out of their current identities and to try on new ways of being (p. 360).

The visual arts can also be seen as a powerful source of awareness of diversity, and act as a vehicle to facilitate learning about diversity (Robles de Melendez and Black 2007). In Graeme Chalmers' (1999) monograph entitled *Celebrating Pluralism: Multicultural Approaches to Art Learning*, he places a strong emphasis on art, and how it fosters social and cultural awareness. Chalmers also suggests that it is possible for art educational programs and activities to:

- Promote cross-cultural understanding through the identification of similarities within and among cultural groups

- Recognize, acknowledge, and celebrate racial and cultural diversity in art within our pluralistic society, while affirming and enhancing pride in individuals own artistic heritage; and
- Address through all of the art disciplines issues of ethnocentrism, bias, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and racism.

Using a discipline-based art education as a framework, Chalmers (1999) also considers the challenges on making art education meaningful and relevant for students, many of whom live in several cultures and sub-cultures in a diverse and changing world. This is done through three approaches with the underlying questions of “What is Art For?” The three approaches are Art and Social Status, Art is Value, and Art is Phenomenological. Each approach provides opportunities for student learners in finding some unity in diversity while viewing art as a powerful source that shapes our attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors (Chalmers, 1999).

In the first approach, Art and Social Status, art is seen as a means of providing a sense of meaning of significance or intensity. In an art classroom, a teacher’s role is to convey how art can create some significance in students’ lives. With art teachers being facilitators, connections between students and curriculum taught must be emphasized to make learning and art production meaningful. In the Department of Education Hawaii State and Content Performance Standards Desk Reference (1999), the visual arts standards section states that students should “Exhibit visual understanding in their evaluation and use of visual themes, symbols, and metaphors”(1999). This is further defined and understood in the middle school grade six through eight benchmark stating to “Create original and personal imagery to convey meaning, and not rely on copying,

tracing, or duplicating material” (1999). This very benchmark served as one of the main reasons for this project. Using identities as a resource for subject matter, students can create artwork that generates a sense of personal significance. The second approach provided by Chalmers (1999), *Art is Value*, focuses on the intrinsic worth to the individual student artist. Besides art being valued for its economic significance, art can display a sense of emotional impact, its function for social criticism, and its potential political clout. Art in society is also valued for its sentimental associations; for its abilities to beautify, surprise, inspire, stimulate the imagination, tell stories, record history; for the insight it provides into the human condition; for its characterization of cultural spirits; and for the status it might afford its owner (Chalmers, 1999). Art can also be seen as a direct approach in combating ethnocentrism and mono-culturalism, where European culture is seen as the dominant, central culture (Wachiowak and Clements, 1997). The last approach, deals with phenomenology, or experience that art provides and how it affects people in all cultures (Chalmers, 1999). Art is prized as it enhances and enriches celebration and ritual in human events. It is seen as a communicative venue to records, transmit, generate meanings, ideas, and qualities.

Wachiowak and Clements (1997) offer a similar view on the global function of art. Where art is an international language, and is seen as a means for transmitting, maintaining, and analyzing culture. Culture is not just seen as a people’s artistic, musical, and historical heritage, it is also seen as the shared values, attitudes, belief systems, and cognitive styles that effect a group’s behavior that gives its members lives meaning. Wachiowak and Clements also go on further by stating that art has become an agent for social change, combating issues on racism, stereotypes, and prejudice.

The visual arts, on many levels, can assist in finding a solution to the overall meaning of identity and self as a focus on engaging cognition, affirmation, and personal reflection. With participation in the visual arts, bigger venues of self expression, development, and critical thought are created for the student to realize his/her identity. Student participation in the visual arts has shown to increase academic achievement, creativity, fluency, and originality in thinking and feelings of self-worth (Holloway and Lecompte, 2001). The arts help children express themselves in healthful ways, permitting them to try on a variety of alternative identities in relatively risk –free environments, (Friere 1970, Giroux 1993, from Holloway and Lecompte, 2001). The visual arts curriculum can provide children a chance to acquire an additional repertoire of skills for self expression and critical thought. Perhaps most important, the arts provide a way for the most children to express hate, jealousy, pain, rage, and frustration. The arts are a way to the heart and soul. Without arts, our schools are, for many children, heartless and soulless (Holloway & Lecompte, 2001).

If students engage with art content that mirrors their identity, students must be permitted and encouraged to look into their own contemporary culture to explore videos, heroes, fashion and music alongside their own fantasies and dreams-to locate inspiration for their creative vision (Slezky 1999). Middle school students have very unique interests, concerns, and experiences from which their art can emanate. Their own dreams, aspirations, and hopes can inspire creative and unique ideas that represent individual voice and opinion. Students must be permitted to look within their own lives in order to make a connection with their artwork and artifacts from popular culture such as hairstyles, hangouts, graphic art, video games, and other new technological gadgetry.

Creating a community of shared conversations and show and tell sessions, are valuable ways to encourage young artists to look at themselves and their own community for ideas and feedback (Slezky 1990).

The Role of an Art Educator

Laura Chapman (1982) suggests that for someone to teach art, that very person must be sensitive to the individual differences in students, have excellent skills in communication, and be committed to teaching. In order to be an effective art educator, Robles de Melendez and Black (2005) suggest that teachers must first examine themselves by critically investigating their own culture, ethnic background, cultural beliefs, and philosophy. Teachers of art are encouraged to reflect upon their own teachings as a matter of course by constantly practicing self appraisal, lesson evaluation, and continuous, ongoing reflection (Wachiowak and Clements, 1997). Teachers also need to examine their own attitudes and beliefs about teaching art, what art objects they prefer and why, what periods of art are most appealing and why they adopted these positions. Art educators must begin with an assessment of their own cultural backgrounds. They should then examine the cultural makeup of their classes and facilitate lessons geared toward specific cultures (Lopez, 2009). Teachers might ponder questions like: “Am I teaching my students something worthwhile? What is the purpose? Is it relevant to their needs? Does it build upon previous learning? Does it make them more human?”

A good art teacher helps students create and appreciate the work they create and how the final outcome of the artwork gives them good reasons to try (Wachiowak and Clements, 1997). An important goal is to help their ability to be careful thinkers and creators of imaginative drawings (Wachiowak and Clements, 1997). Effective teachers

also learn to identify and build on student strengths, to help students will learn more effectively than if a teacher assumes the child cannot learn very well. Slezky (1999) also proposes that an effective teacher:

Has a sense of humor, flexibility in demonstrating curriculum, planning, instructions, and purvey the sense of “practicing what they preach”, ability to actively listen, show unconditional caring, and have the thirst and passion for learning (p.228).

Slezky (1999) also suggests that a teacher needs to:

Guide students to uncover personal influences, challenging students to discover personal heroes and mentors, taking clues from their own interests. Students also need to discover their own pleasures, insights, and influences, and they should be encouraged to define these influences through their own work, to write and talk about their exciting discoveries with one another. (p.236)

Expressing personal concern, it is important the art teacher may provide a pivotal role in the student’s life at a critical time, and for the art program will provide a vehicle for the student to express his or her conflicts or develop positive responses (Wachiowak and Clements, 1997). The students should see the art teacher as a special person that welcomes student artistic discoveries and inventive performances that bring the classroom environment to life. When student’s favorite objects and collections are contraband in most other places, the art room must continue as the place where students individual possessions are respected and valued, and inventiveness highly encouraged (Slezky, 1999).

Multicultural Education and James Banks

The words of “culture” and “diversity” are being synonymous with modern day educational pedagogy. Multicultural education research provides grounded theory on the very idea that everyone deserves an equal opportunity in receiving a proper education. A major goal of multicultural education is to help students to develop the knowledge,

attitudes, and skills needed to function within their own micro-cultures, the U.S. macro-culture, other micro-cultures, and the global community.

Multicultural education emerged from the diverse courses, programs and practices that educational institutions devised to respond to the demands, needs, and aspirations of various cultural and social groups (Banks, 2007). It is a reaction to the educational status quo, where in the 1960's in the United States, white, Anglo-Saxon, pre-dominant masculine ideals and perspectives permeated school environs and in the workplace. The term *multicultural education* is not in actual practice one specific course or program. Rather, educators use the term to describe a wide variety of programs and practices related to educational equity, women, ethnic and cultural groups, language minorities, low-income groups, and people with disabilities (Banks, 2007). For example, in one school district, multicultural education may address a curriculum that incorporates the experiences of people of color; while in another school district, multicultural education may address the experiences of both ethnic groups and women. Multicultural education reinforces the idea of identity in curriculum. Multicultural Education is a reform movement trying to change the school culture and other institutions so that students from all social classes, gender, racial, language and cultural groups will have the opportunity to feel valued in the learning environment. In speaking about groups and group identification, Banks (2007) states that individuals learn the values, symbols, and other components of their culture from their social group. By definition a group is a social system that carries a culture. Culture is collectively shared amongst a group of persons who share an identity, thus presenting a feeling of unity.

James Banks (2007) emphasizes that in order to create and foster a meaningful learning environment, practicing educators must draw from pertinent resources from other cultural groups into their areas of discipline. Teachers will have to identify and determine how knowledge can be constructed from implicit cultural meanings. In accordance with one of the goals of multicultural education, an important component is prejudice reduction. Banks argues that school curricula must be adjusted in order to implement lessons and activities that foster and develop positive attitudes towards different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. Teachers will also have to examine the way they teach, in order to foster learning for all represented groups. Another vital component in multicultural education is the need to empower a school's culture by reassessing all activities based on its cultural diversity. School culture, at any level, must take steps to promote inclusion for all to create awareness. Incorporating these principles, empowers individuals from diverse backgrounds can be empowered with concepts of their own identity, thus gaining a sense of freedom, importance, and equality within the classroom environment.

Defining Identity

The very definition of identity is subject to ongoing research, which demands various definitions depending on the construct and content of specific work. One definition cannot holistically represent an accurate description of its meanings. Exploring various constructs and meanings of identity provides a better notion and understanding of identity, its formation, and the specific types past and present research.

Erik Erikson (1959/, 1980) states that identity is children's individual struggle to find out who they are and where they are going in life. Erikson says that a primary goal

at this stage is achieving a sense of identity. This includes trying to integrate their childhood experiences with their developing bodies and biological drives, in order for individuals to function as learners, family members, school or community members, and as friends (Chamberlain 2000). Webster's New Online Dictionary (2011) defines identity as the distinguishing character or personality. Fearon (1999) defines identity as a peoples' concept of who they are, or what sort of people they are and how they relate to others. Identity is also used to describe the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language, and culture (Deng 1995). Knowles and Brown (1999) offer a more poetic definition as: "Identity is a patchwork of flesh, feelings, and ideas held together by the string of the moment" (Bordeaux 1993).

James Marcia (1980) offers four resolutions in the search for identity: Identity Diffusion, Identity Foreclosure, Moratorium, and Achievement. In Identity Diffusion, the individual learns about specific curricular content but has no intentions on making a commitment to further explore the content being learned. Identity Foreclosure has a level of commitment, but no sense of the individual wanting to explore his or her own identity. Middle school students are often in a period of foreclosure or diffusion, where they can either accept the identity being ascribed by authority figures, lack commitment to a specific group, or avoid the idea of exploring their identity all together. Moratorium is described as exploration without commitment. Ideally, middle school students should be at this stage, with the existence of options within a school wide curriculum offered by the fine arts teachers (Knowles & Brown, 2000). Exploration of roles followed by commitment to a specific identity is called Achievement. Research supports that students

with an achieved identity or those who are actively exploring identity have higher self-esteem, are more likely to engage in critical and abstract thinking, are more advanced in moral reasoning, and report more similarity between their ideal and real self as compared with students who do not explore their on identity (Marcia, 1990; Akos and Ellis, 2008).

Identity can be specified further into other intertwining subtopics of identity formation and facets of a cultural, social, and personal identity. According to Mary Dilg (1999), the very formation and construction of identity is characterized by the constant changing of conditions that surround the individual. Some factors that contribute to the identity formation include the environmental, mental, physical, and emotional attributes of the child. Peers and family, also contribute to a person's sense of self. As individuals grow cognitively and physically, they develop an innate sense of task to create an identity of their own. They seek the need to communicate through social discourse and dialogue to help and understand each other across cultural lines (Dilg 1999). Including culture as a facet of a person's identity, Robles de Melendez and Black (1997) defines cultural identity as an umbrella concept that covers seven important identifiers and their definitions. They are:

- Nationality: Refers to the country of birth and citizenship.
- Race/Ethnicity: Defines cultural traditions that serve to shape individual identity or a person's cultural heritage/shared physical attributes amongst a group that shares the same likeness or qualities.
- Religion: Religious affiliation and the freedom to exercise any faith or beliefs.
- Social Class: Determined by income, education, occupation, lifestyle, and values includes roles and expectations.

- Gender: defines behavior socially accepted and assigned to females and males that also include roles and expectations.
- Exceptionality: Special needs or gifted persons/learning styles.
- Age: Social expectations of different age groups.

Within these identifiers, factors such as family, educational backgrounds, geographic region, language, socioeconomic level, occupation, and learning also help influence an individual's identity (Robles de Melendez and Black, 1997).

The social aspect of identity calls for a more specific definition based on the types of the social situations. James Fearon (1999) states that a person can have multiple identities depending on how one assigns himself/herself to a particular social category, or one that is assigned by others. This reflects the work of Erik Erikson (1968) where he states that:

Identity is: a) a social category that is defined by membership rules and allegedly characteristic attributes or expected behaviors or b) social distinguishing features that a person takes a special pride in or views as unchangeable by socially consequentials (p. 15).

James Fearon (1999) adds another dynamic facet to the meaning of personal identity. He states that a personal identity may be expressed as that which distinguishes you as an individual from other individuals. This can include the context of fashion and personal style as well as a person's physical attributes, specific beliefs, goals, desires, and moral principles. A self-discerning question of personal identity is "Who am I? Who am I really?" (p. 20). Personal identity is how individuals define who they really are, what things they take special pride in, and how the existence or absence of certain behaviors affect and influence them. These identity facets form the basis for self-esteem, dignity,

and self-worth. A personal definition encompasses a set of moral principles, egos, or goals a person uses as a guide to action in their lives.

Exploring the Middle School Child

It is vital to understand the very nature of the student learner in order to fully integrate the goals and objectives of an art curriculum that fulfills the needs of the students. Pupils in grades six, seven, and eight are commonly called “transescents”.

Donald Eichhorn (1984) coined the term “transescent” which is defined as follows:

The transescent is an individual in the stage of development which begins prior to the onset of puberty and extends through the early stages of adolescence. Since puberty does not occur for all precisely at the same chronological age in human development, the transescent designation is based on the many physical, social, emotional, and intellectual changes that appear prior to the puberty cycle to the time in which the body gains a practical degree of stabilization over these complex pubescent changes (p. 3).

This period of transescence, the period of transition between late childhood and the early stages adolescence, occurs between the ages of ten and fourteen. This is a period during which many physiological and emotional changes are occurring as the child attains physical maturity (Glenn, 1986). It is important for the teacher to have a keen awareness of the process of maturation, or metamorphosis, which occurs at this age level. It is the very nature of the student at this age level, which makes this period so critical in its affect on the students adjustment to the demanding challenges of adolescence (Johnson, 1990).

The Carnegie Council of Adolescent Development (1989) sponsored a document called *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*. The study emphasized the qualities of an effective middle school which included creating smaller learning environments, teaching the core of common knowledge, insuring the success for

all students and empowering the teachers and administrators. According to the Carnegie Council, a student who has received an appropriate middle level education will be 1) an intellectually reflective person, 2) a person en route to a lifetime of meaningful work, 3) a good citizen, 4) a caring and ethical person, 5) and a healthy person. The Carnegie Council (1989) also suggested that middle level schools are the “most powerful source to recapture millions of young adrift, and help every young person thrive through early adolescence” (p. 8).

In young adolescence, several developmental changes occur that greatly affect and influence the life of girls and boys. Wachiowak and Clements (1997) state physical, cognitive, and emotional changes for a 10-14 year old. Middle school identity is influenced by the physical development one experiences at this age. At this age students are slowly becoming a part of the middle school microcosm where an increasing amount of emphasis is placed on personal grooming, style and stature of appearance, and popularity (Wachiowak and Clements, 1997). Identity development of the young adolescent is not only a crucial stage as a learner, but young adolescents also worry about how they look, how they sound, and how they act (Chamberlain 2003). The most notable changes are height and weight in regards to physical development. Students vary greatly in size and maturity, with girls sometimes developing at a faster rate than boys. Each gender possesses different degrees of physiological and sexual maturity expected at the onset of puberty, which in turn, makes them more conscious of their changing physical characteristics. Girls usually mature faster than boys and are the brunt of sexually suggestive jokes, get the attention of older boys, and suffer the jealousy of their peers. Boys who are larger may excel in sports and are often put into leadership roles they may

not be emotionally or cognitively ready to assume. Smaller boys may become the class clowns to bolster their identity or may be intimidated by those who are larger and stronger. Later maturing girls may feel inadequate and revert to acting childish or “cute”(Chamberlain, 2003).

Cognitive changes result in a gradual move from dependence to independence. Young people tend to be self-conscious and sensitive toward personal criticism. They have the growing need for peer approval as the need for adult approval decreases (Chamberlain, 2003). Students take on roles and teachers begin to see the idiosyncrasies of each student reflected in their behavior and in their art. While students can be conformists, they also can be fiercely independent. They are slowly becoming more responsible, self-critical and reasonable. Also, new roles are tried out such as extrovert, loner, risk taker, planner, procrastinator, idol seeker, plodder, maverick, and the dreamer, among others. (Wachiowak and Clements, 1997). In dealing with their own struggles with identity and to establish relationships within the classroom, students may take on roles within the classroom such as the clown, the bully, the teacher’s pet, or the shy one (Chamberlain, 2003). Often being away from adults, students begin to criticize grown-ups and authority, and they tend to form or join separate gangs or cliques according to their interests, sex, ethnicity, neighborhood, and family status where they are either accepted, tolerated, or rejected (Wachiowak and Clements, 1997). In an expanding social landscape, importance is placed on peers getting to like them. They want companionship, and they want social interaction.

In school, peer acceptance and relationships often take precedence over teachers and family. Middle school students are characterized as being in a constant flow of

communication with their friends regarding pop culture, dating, television shows, movies, music, classmates' doings, teachers and parents foibles. Middle school students are also developing the idea of role models after sports stars, television personalities, recording artists, and actors. Another cognitive side of a middle school student delves into the realm of finding solutions for social problems. These students also are unusually sensitive to classmates' problems, often listening, but are at odds with the challenges because they don't know how to help. They are more inclined to daydream than perform, often increasing thoughts on dreams, aspirations, and goals, possibly as ways for self-searching. As they slowly see themselves as a part of this world, they may become fixated on the self (Chamberlain 2003).

The Limitations of a Middle School Art Curriculum

Wachiowak and Clements (1997) emphasize using the developing characteristics of a middle school child as a foundation in creating a sequential art curriculum. This is emphasized on the very notion that middle school children from sixth through the eighth grade are experiencing a renaissance of intellectual inquisitiveness that in some ways may never be matched again. Chamberlain (2003) states that in order for a student to develop an identity, schools must be required to provide a supportive and flexible learning environment and curriculum. Teachers who are knowledgeable about their students and contemporary youth culture can creatively adapt their curriculum. Dilg (1999) also suggests that teachers must be willing to engage in preparation that is extensive, ongoing and responsive to changing social and political conditions, especially in compensating for the mono-culturalism of their own academic background. She says

the educator must create a classroom climate that simultaneously encourages, honesty, trust, respect, support, and empathy. Most importantly, Dilg (1999) emphasizes that teachers attempt to be sensitive and responsive to each student's affective and cognitive needs emerging from multiple cultural and socioeconomic factors. Teachers must constantly be alert to the ways in which their own biases or lack of knowledge affect their curricular and pedagogical decisions.

Thematic units based on questions posed by students may be structured to encourage students to explore their culture heritages. The curriculum cannot be static, for it must change as the needs of the students change. Every year, each group, each individual brings unique issues to the school experience. In order to address these concerns, teachers need to adapt, be flexible, and connect learning to the lives of the students (Chamberlain, 2003). Johnson (1990) suggests that middle school art curriculum should foster the development of the student's creative philosophy with an emphasis on self-expression. It is important for students to have experiences with materials, which are relevant to their daily lives and provide opportunities for involvement in activities where students learn about themselves and their environment. The importance of a meaningful art curriculum is vital for the artistic and cognitive development of a middle school child. Students need proper role models in school to encourage them to achieve in a wide variety of settings and classroom environments. If children think that their drawings are not good enough and they decide that they are not good in art, many will develop into adults who feel limited in their ability to make and discuss art. Without teacher guidance and positive encouragement, students' art making skills and knowledge will remain static

and regress. This may eventually lead to discouragement, frustration, and apathy (Wachiowak and Clements, 1997).

CHAPTER III

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The central aim of my formative research in this study was to develop and implement an exploratory visual arts middle school curriculum that addresses the dynamic concepts of adolescent identity. The formative research method focuses on the curriculum itself, guiding the researcher's attention to a set of values, objectives, and standards (Bresler, 1994). Formative research is an integral part of developing programs or adapting programs, and is used while the program is on-going to help refine and improve program activities. The qualitative method of triangulation and member checking will assist in validating data to establish credibility.

By first defining the very term of identity and defining its basic psychosocial constructs, a cognitive awareness was created amongst the students in hopes of making personal connections from the lives of the student learner to specific art content, subject matter, and the art making process. With the acknowledgement and use of identity as specific subject matter, the learning process and discussion became student-centered. In teaching visual art in a public school setting, my drive for creating a learner-centered curriculum is based upon personal phenomenology and observations in working with middle school students. At the beginning of my teaching career, I experienced and observed that there was little sense of enthusiasm and connection between the art content and the students. In response, after going through a lot of trial and error with a vast array of art units, I needed to re-examine my curriculum and my teaching strategies. I carefully observed the overall dynamics of the classroom and came to the conclusion that I had to restructure my art units according to my students' interests. In order for me to change

what I taught, I engaged in qualitative research and inquiry about theories and foundations of middle level education, exploratory visual arts, and adolescent identity. To convey a sense of understanding the overall construct of identity, I had to look within myself. My own experiences, my own social and familial upbringing, education, and ethnic background were important to examine to gain a sense of who I am and what I was going to teach to impressionable middle school children about art and the creative process.

The Role of the Researcher

In developing an art curriculum focusing on middle school identity, the following factors played an important role during formative research for my study. For the past eleven years, these factors provided guidelines for the students as well as for myself in clearly delineating my role and the curriculum in the middle school classroom environment:

- Managing the classroom environment by consistently maintaining and providing visual art resources so that the classroom atmosphere can provide students a venue for voice, opinion, and self expression.
- Serving as a mentor for children between the ages of ten and thirteen.
- Establishing rapport amongst the students to foster and encourage teacher/student/peer interaction and relationships.
- Assessing and evaluating an art curriculum along with its lesson/unit plans that focus on middle school adolescent identity.

- Reformulating curriculum to address student awareness and acknowledgement of identity as well as their peers.
- Researching new ways to incorporate art media, materials, and techniques that would best suit a particular art unit that aligned major facets of middle school identity.
- Engaging in relevant and rigorous art activities that provide a stimulating and challenging learning environment.
- Defining, explaining, and providing examples of the term “identity” and use those examples to provide subject matter for bi-quarterly art projects.
- Developing formative and summative assessments to test and proctor student knowledge on a specific art unit.
- Demonstrating media specific techniques and expectations with each project.
- Conveying specific project expectations and goals by using rubric based assessment and criteria.
- Rationalizing the meanings and works of arts by past and present artists and create connections to those artists and the students.
- Formulating independent research and case studies that will improve teaching practice, pedagogy, and current curricula.
- Providing a safe and unbiased learning atmosphere that would address all individuals regardless of their race, ethnicity, cultural backgrounds, socio-economic status, and learning styles.
- Conveying classroom rules and project expectations.
- Re-directing student attention to art making and project content and criteria.

- Providing opportunities for teacher and student self-evaluation and personal reflection.

Sight and Participants

This formative research was conducted at the middle school where I have been teaching exploratory art for the past nine years. As a visual arts teacher, I am responsible for developing middle level, exploratory art unit plans that are age appropriate, engaging, rigorous, and most of all educational. Situated in Nu'uano, which lies on the outskirts of Downtown Honolulu, this middle school caters to diverse group of students that come from the communities of lower and upper Nu'uano, the Lanakila Public Housing complex, and from the areas surrounding Punchbowl and Lower Makiki. With five elementary schools feeding sixth graders to our school annually, the school boasts a population of well over 900 students divided between grades six, seven, and eight.

The empirical evidence for this study was gathered over the years from a variety of students in six exploratory art classes I teach between three to five times a week in 55 minute periods. Listed as "Exploratory Art/Beginning Art", students register for this elective course. The course syllabus includes the art disciplines and techniques of drawing, painting, ceramics, and printmaking as media to create personal works of art while addressing student identity. The diverse population of students attending the middle school represents students from socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. While most of the students live in this district, a small percentage of students with a "geographic exception" live outside the school district and have to travel the daily commute from as far as Ewa Beach on the Leeward side of O'ahu and Ka'a'awa on the Windward side of O'ahu.

The duration of my project and research spanned between the years of 2003-2011. In those nine years, my proposed middle school exploratory arts curriculum slowly “transformed” into my current pedagogy, practice, and teaching style. Over the years, the curriculum has gone through many phases of research, experimentation, and re-adjustment to arrive at its current format. The years spent developing my curriculum to focus on a student-centered approach were valuable and critical to my research and provided a wealth of information, data, and student work as evidence. As both a participant and observer in the ongoing process of collecting evidence and locating information to reinforce the basic idea of incorporating identity, I have re-discovered and reinforced my own identity and my own self-perception.

Credibility

According to Mertler (2007), credibility involves establishing the results of the qualitative research as credible or believable from the perspective of the participants in the research. Credibility is ensured through triangulation, member checking, and other validity methods. In order to enhance the credibility in qualitative research, the researcher has to identify and minimize threats to his or her research. One major threat that I anticipate with my identity-based curriculum is maturation. Maturation is everyday human activities leading to growth that occurs naturally as the study is implemented. These include maturation due to age, experience, physical development or an increase in knowledge and understanding of the world, which can affect the research and student outcomes (Burns, 2011). In regards to middle school adolescents, maturation is synonymous with the developmental changes that occur in adolescence, but pose a minimal threat to the student overall outcomes. As an example, throughout a self-portrait

painting, skin blemishes such as acne can pose as a threat by affecting the self-image of the student artist. At its worst, apathy can occur, thus causing the student to “not really be into it” or “not in it at all.” The very thought of staring into a mirror with a “zit” has its downfalls, especially with an adolescent.

Maxwell (2005) provides eight strategies that deal with validity threats. He also emphasizes that these strategies work only if researchers actually use them. These strategies include long-term involvement, searching for discrepant evidence, negative cases, triangulation, and comparison. I have made every effort in being unbiased and neutral when conveying and explaining information regarding the constructs of individual identity. In discovering adolescent identity, definitions for race, ethnicity, culture, gender, religion, experience, and environment were examined. The definitions and examples helped students to understand and think about their own identity-based constructs. These constructs enabled students to think of subject matter and ideas for their own artwork. Direct attention and proper credit were also given when providing art historical information regarding key artists and the significance of their artworks that incorporated identity as subject matter. As a certified elementary and secondary visual arts teacher I am licensed by the Hawaii State Department of Education to teach the visual arts to students in grades kindergarten through twelve. I have extensive curriculum development experience in meeting the Hawaii Content and Performance Standards, teaching the Elements of Art and Principles of Design and demonstrating a wide variety of art methods and materials. Additionally, as a practicing artist, I believed it is important to provide some of my own art as samples that met and/or exceeded project expectations.

This proved to the students my own professionalism, experience, and knowledge of the art content I am teaching them as part of our middle school curriculum.

Procedures

Before undertaking the curriculum designing process, the role of the educator resonates in developing an appropriate curriculum for students while considering student diversity, learning styles, and abilities. The educator should facilitate group discussions, gather background information, and encourage creativity among students. Chalmers (1991) contends that rather than viewing teachers as transmitters of huge bodies of knowledge, we should see them as leaders and facilitators who are able to focus on the process and assist students in their investigation and understanding the commonalities in the functions and roles of art across cultures. When planning a beginning art curriculum, every teacher should consider the following question:

Recognizing that this may be the last class my art students will ever take, what do they need to know in order to begin a lifelong engagement with the art of the past and unfolding of the present? (Gude , 2000).

Underlying factors also come into play in designing a middle school art curriculum:

Time, availability of art resources and materials, age appropriate content, subject matter, degree of difficulty, student rigor, and most importantly, identity.

I have found that planning two projects per quarter is an effective use of time and available resources. Dividing time in this way allows for students to increase and build their knowledge of art media and skills through formative assessments that further student understanding and awareness of single or multiple concepts of student identity.

Another significant aspect of the lessons is the inclusion of educational benchmarks that address art vocabulary and terminology associated with the project,

media, equipment and tools, the elements of art and principles of design. Based upon the basic art disciplines of drawing, painting, ceramics, and printmaking, a total of eight projects will be planned for the entire school year. In developing projects for each quarter, several factors influence the overall make-up of the units including the use of identity-based themes, media/tools/techniques used to create artwork, type/name of projects, formative assessments of art, historical/cultural references, and the elements of art and principles of design. The tentative curriculum from where empirical evidence is found is presented in Table 1, below:

Table 1

YEAR CURRICULUM	IDENTITY-BASED THEME	MEDIA USED	TITLE OF PROJECT	ELEMENTS OF ART AND PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN
FIRST QUARTER	My Identity, “Who am I?”, My Name (meaning and symbolism), Individual uniqueness	Low Fire Clay, 2-dimensional drawing mixed media	“Name Plates” “Identity Name Plaques/Tiles” “Texture Grid”	Line, texture, form, shape, emphasis, balance, repetition, pattern, unity
SECOND QUARTER	Portraiture and Masks, individual uniqueness of self and others, taking on a different role	Ceramic molds, low fire clay, scratchboard, acrylic painting	“Pop portraits” “self portraits”	Form, shape, value, texture, emphasis. Balance
THIRD QUARTER	Cultural Myths: personal inquiry into own cultural heritage	Linoleum and rubber blockprinting, Foam Printing	“Gods and Goddesses, Myths and Monsters, Fantasy or Folklore, Heroes and Heroines”	Value, contrast Color, texture, line, emphasis, proportion, pattern
FOURTH QUARTER	Dreams and Aspirations, surrealism. My enigma: Ceramic box	Charcoal and pastel drawing	Dream Pastel Drawing “E- box”	Form, color, value, balance, emphasis, proportion

Data Collection

To get a more detailed and balanced picture, empirical evidence for this study was gathered from observations of student at work in the classroom, student artwork, and

student responses and reflections. In the social sciences, “triangulation”, or “cross examination” are qualitative methods often used to indicate that more than two methods are used with a view to double (or triple) check the results of the study. By using two to three methods to get at the answer to one question, the hope is that two of the three methods will produce similar answers, each leading to the credibility and validity of the study. If three clashing answers are produced, the investigator knows that the question needs to be reframed, methods reconsidered, or both. Triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from more than two sources. In particular, it refers to the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon. By combining multiple observations, theories, methods, and empirical materials, researchers can hope to overcome the weaknesses or intrinsic biases and the problems that come from single method, single-observer and single-theory studies (Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triangulation_\(social_science\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triangulation_(social_science))).

Respondent validation or member check was used to validate the curriculum and research. According to Maxwell (2005), “member check is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstandings of what you observed” (p.111). In my study, member checking was done via teacher/student critiques, student written assessments (post-tests), and observations.

In summary, the data collected to support the study came in the following forms:

- 1) Quarterly lesson/unit plans

- 2) Student outcomes in artwork
- 3) Written student self-assessments
- 4) Photographic documentation of artwork and students working on their own art
- 5) Notes on personal classroom observations
- 6) Written teacher self-reflection assessments for growth and personal understanding

Each of these topics is synthesized in the data analysis section of this chapter.

Data Analysis-Findings

In analyzing my findings, categories were constructed with the main purpose of capturing recurring themes and patterns. The data that were measured (quarterly lesson/unit plans, student artwork, written student self-assessments, notes on personal classroom observations, photographic documentation of art projects and students working, and teachers self-reflection for growth and personal understanding) were separated and filed into two main categories, which included the “positive” and “negative” outcomes of a proposed exploratory middle school art program. Within the “positive” and “negative” categories, sub-categories also surfaced in the data analysis and provided further insight to the outcomes of the study. These include:

- 1) Individual student attitudes toward art class
- 2) Work observations, overall character, and classroom behavior
- 3) Effects on classroom dynamic and environment
- 4) Student responses and reactions at project outcomes
- 5) Miscellaneous

The “positive” and “negative” categories were measured on the basis of how students individually reacted to or interacted with the art project, and the overall student outcomes. “Positive” outcomes are related to the ideals of the curriculum presented. Similarly, “negative” outcomes were categorized on the overall basis of student reaction with their observable moods and sayings throughout the project.

Within the main two categories, sub-categories were also formed on the basis of aligning similar units of data. In the “positive” category, the data analysis method of category construction was implemented in hopes of finding answers to the relevance of using identity-based themes, to reflect the overall purpose of the art program, and to develop grounded theory for a descriptive narrative. Table 2 below separates the units of data into each specific sub-category:

Table 2

POSITIVE OUTCOMES Of an Identity Based Curriculum	NEGATIVE OUTCOMES Of an Identity Based Curriculum
<p>Effects on Student Artwork</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various, positive student outcomes in regards to uniqueness and creativity aligned to project goals, expectations, standards, and benchmarks • Quality of student work meets and exceeds expectations, leaves students “satisfied” intrinsically, especially if it addressed an idea that it related to their identity. 	<p>Effects on Student Artwork</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art Projects were too long, unit plan went over allotted time frame of 3-4 weeks • Students became bored after a period of time, in observations, once students started to have difficulties with their projects, apathy sets in, therefore they become “bored” • craftsmanship/creativity suffers • High level of difficulty with media, techniques, meeting project goals • Project expectations too high to meet or exceed
<p>Observed Work Ethic, Character, and Behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students were on-task doing the assignments and projects when they came to class 	<p>Observed Work Ethic, Character, and Behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apathetic with the idea of their identity, more concerned with overall grade percentages, middle

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students looked forward in coming to art class everyday, saw it as an escape from the core classes • Positive effects on students achievement: try harder for a better outcome • Intrinsic value: student pride over grade percentages • Self awareness with identity and classmates/peers • Student reactions- wanted to do projects that were new to them • Gave them a sense of challenge, rigor, relevance, connection to identity • Temporary poignancy and Relevance: personal connection was made to identity • Long term effects: High student enrollment year after year (with younger siblings) • Have siblings that want to take art (6th grade orientation video) • Foster student awareness of own, untapped talent. Make students believe in their art-making abilities. Make students believe in themselves • More attuned and excited to include aspects of popular culture, media, networking, technology into their artwork • Students were satisfied with the overall outcome (creativity, craftsmanship, presentation) • Peer popularity: gain more friends. 	<p>school culture, middle school issues problematic to student mindset, work ethic, and attitude during studio work-time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project themes with identity seemed redundant, monotonous (for students that were enrolled in the same art class as 7th graders the previous year), uninteresting to students that took art previously • Awareness of individuality/uniqueness takes backseat to middle school adolescence • Excessive socializing (i.e. gossiping, peer relationships, etc.) • If the art class wasn't their first elective choice during last years registration, students did not put much effort into work, did minimal work just to pass with a "D" grade.
<p style="text-align: center;">Effects on Classroom Dynamic And Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom atmosphere busy • Sometimes, class room is silent, yet active (depending on the time of day) • Student Rapport and Respect 	<p style="text-align: center;">Effects on Classroom Dynamic And Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students get too comfortable, tasks get ignored, causes distraction and disruption, unwanted behaviors arise (i.e. getting out of assigned seat to socialize with peers)

<p>established when artwork is displayed on the bulletin boards, students became more aware of each other and their art when asked who created a particular artwork.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constant re-directing of unwanted behaviors.
<p>Student Responses/Reactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students were “bummed out” when class time ran out. • Became more aware with ethnic culture/heritage of self and others • Students were satisfied with the overall outcome (creativity, craftsmanship, presentation) • Peer approval, reverence: Students were surprised to learn that other peers showed interest in inquiring about artist • Teacher approval reverence: Students were surprised to learn that their other teachers were also interested in inquiring about the artist • Students like working with new media such as clay, acrylic paints, scratchboard, linoleum and rubber blocks 	<p>Student Responses/Reactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student level of ability not even (since the classes are heterogeneous classes, I have to make the necessary accommodations, adaptations, instructions with students that are gifted and talented to students that have physical and mental disabilities) • Therefore, differentiation has to occur in teaching practice and pedagogy to address all students • Frustration leads to negative, unwanted behaviors: apathy, destructive behaviors, theft • Hated working with clay: “too dirty” and “messy.”
<p>Miscellaneous</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student artwork and respect established when artwork is displayed on the bulletin boards, were surprised to see their art displayed on a wall. 	<p>Miscellaneous</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attrition rate, absenteeism affects assignment/project completion and craftsmanship • Insufficient time to address all constructs of identity on identity map, • Year long curriculum does not address all forms of artwork and identity (i.e. batik, fiber, screen-printing, indigenous art forms)

My Disposition

Overall, there were some insightful and surprising outcomes within the sub-categories of: 1) Effects on student artwork, 2) Observed Work Ethic, Character, Behavior, 3) Effects on Classroom Dynamic and Environment, 4) Student Responses and

Reactions, and 5) Miscellaneous. In the first sub-category *Effects on Student Artwork*, the content of each lesson brought forth an array of student interpretive outcomes, all unique and creative in their own way. With students in my class adhering to my own personal advice of “Paying attention to project intricacies, rather than the grade percentages,” their work, attitude, and behavior shifts from the academic sense of perspective to a more aesthetic one. In my observations, students began to believe in themselves and that by creating an artwork, anything can be acceptable, especially when it focuses on their own identities, their interests, and their lives. Students are given a sense of independence by seeing themselves and their peers as resources, which in turn, had a profound, positive effect on the other sub-categories, such as work ethic, character, and individual behavior. Over the years, students have personally confided with me that out of the entire day, they looked forward in coming to art class. Students also expressed some disappointment as well and were “bummed” out when they didn’t have art because of the rotating class schedule we have at our middle school. On those days when students had art class, as they walked through the door, a sense of elation, joy, stoke, could be often seen or often heard. Needless to say, a majority of the students were glad to come to class. In my art class, students got a chance to visually and vocally express who they are, their thinking, their personality, flair, and talent. This was done through preliminary drawings, quarterly identity-based art projects, self and peer assessments, and group discussions.

Another observation that categorized as “positive” was the increased level of peer awareness and sense of uniqueness and individuality in the classroom. Although every student tackled the same subject matter with much rigor and creative effort, in the end, everyone got to see the overall outcomes of the entire class, regardless of who they are

within the middle school microcosm. For some, the idea of identity became more relevant in their lives, it became more substantial. For a fleeting moment, poignancy was achieved, which in turn created a sense of reverence of self and others. For passive, shy students that hardly voice themselves in class, their art spoke for them. The surrealism project completed in the fourth quarter provides such an example. Students are required to write a brief narrative of a memorable dream/nightmare and interpret it into a preliminary sketch. Afterwards, in small groups of three to four students, they are to share their dream narratives and sketches. From my observations, students love to listen to the wild, illogical, and unusual dreams their peers have and are proud to share their own dreams as well. An activity such as this establishes an open discourse amongst students that may otherwise seem to have nothing in common with one another. I feel it speaks volumes because it involves students sharing a snippet of their thoughts, creating a level of rapport and a sense of belonging that was probably non-existent prior to sharing these experiences with each other. Students in this environment feel that it's okay to be unique and weird, it's okay to be yourselves and it's okay express their individuality.

Recommendations

The data collected and discussed in this chapter indicate that my identity-based curriculum is at best, in an intermediate stage of development. The scope, sequence and dynamics of identity as content and subject matter within an exploratory middle school art curriculum has many possibilities. Developing and implementing constructs of middle school identity improved my curriculum and indicated that I need to continue this

research on middle school identity. It is important for me to sustain and expand the “positive” effects of the curriculum presented. The recommendations are to:

- Shorten and simplify art projects to accommodate and differentiate the different learning levels of the students
- Eliminate formal assignments to save time for deadlines
- Include more constructs on Popular Adolescent Culture as subject matter for their art (i.e. Music, Entertainment, and Technology)
- Incorporate new, multicultural, art media to increase student global art awareness and inquire why these works of art were created
- Reduce the degree of project difficulty
- Encourage constructs of identity to boost student pride
- Re-direct and re-emphasize art project guidelines, project expectations, grading criteria
- Continue to be consistent with specific methods of effective instruction
- Adapt, accommodate, and modify curriculum for special needs students
- Increase teacher/student/peer critiques for assessment

The importance of media variation is also a key aspect in providing an exploratory art curriculum. In order for students to gain a better sense of a middle school art program that is at its truest sense “exploratory”, a wide variety of multicultural art media, processes and techniques should also be considered and incorporated. Possible art forms, styles, and media not discussed in this study are Aboriginal x-ray paintings, Balinese *batik*, Hawaiian *tapa* printmaking, weaving and the fiber arts, stenciling and screenprinting, graphic design, various forms of sculpture, and *repousse*, just to name

few. The only drawback would be the art media such as those mentioned need and require further attention, research, and finances. To include them in a one year middle school art program would call for more time, professional development, and a slight curriculum re-adjustment.

It is also significant to note that the facets of a person's identity are always ever changing and dynamic, so it is important to do an initial "temperature check" with the students every quarter by having them revisit their identity maps they created at the beginning of the year. By revisiting their maps, students can clarify and build upon certain understandings of who they are and what they are thinking any given time.

Another finding that surfaced after looking at the data was the idea of visiting the annual Regional Scholastic Arts Awards Exhibition. In this statewide contest, secondary art students from the seventh through twelfth grades are recognized for their unique and individual approaches to media, style, technique, and craftsmanship. By taking note of what these students are doing at the middle and high school levels, and by networking with more art teachers, I can gain new ideas for my middle school exploratory identity-based curriculum.

CHAPTER IV

THE PROJECT

The development of an identity-based art curriculum proved an arduous task in planning and preparing art unit plans for the span of one school year. The problems in selecting and organizing content for instruction are more complex than they are in subjects, which have always been taught through texts or in some analytical way. Planning an art program may be especially difficult for some teachers who have little to no experience in working on a variety of media and are too often caught up in their own individual interests, fads, and easy-to-teach projects as a basis of their instruction (Johnson, 1982).

Although there is no single magic formula for an effective program, there are basic concepts, relationships, and principles that should be considered in planning. Laura Johnson (1982) outlines four components in planning an art program:

“The Why”: *Goal*-to help children generate their own ideas for personal expression.

“What”: *Approach to study*-Observing Nature and the Constructed environment
Content Possibilities-Children’s direct perception of land, sea, sky, the seasons, the weather, or structural forms in nature, and of buildings, roads, signs, and walkways.

“How”: *Teaching Materials and Activities*-Techniques to heighten children’s perception-discrimination of lines, colors, shapes; multisensory awareness; perception of symbolic aspects and contexts of purposes.

Student Materials and Activities- Means of recording and interpreting perceptions; cameras, sketches, diary, or tape recorder; direct work in a medium

“To What Extent”: *Desirable outcomes*- Children generate ideas for personal expression from their observations of nature and the constructed environment (p. 43).

In addition, Levy (1991) states that curriculum must be designed to meet the three specific needs of middle school students; those of which are:

Physical: may affect the development of self-esteem and a sense of identity

Social-Emotional: the quest for independence and self-identity, self competence and intimacy with others, constant struggle between wishing to be seen as unique and wanting to conform to group norms (peers), focus of social life switches from family to friends, self assessment of self worth is extremely fragile, self esteem is directly influenced by how well adolescents feel they perform in areas of importance: appearance, scholastic competence, athletic competence, and behavior, adolescents believe that they uniquely experience thoughts and feelings. They feel that no one else understands them or the intensity of their experiences.

Intellectual: cognitive development , broadening horizons, great curiosity, a young adolescent exhibits a vivid imagination and a wide range of interests.

Braze (2000) emphasizes that exploratory learning is important for young adolescents because it ensures hands on participatory, meaningful, and engaging experiences. It meets the most fundamental of middle level concepts-it is developmentally responsive and academically challenging for adolescents. When designing and implementing a curriculum, in order to effectively implement a curriculum, the appropriateness and content of the curriculum and the role of the educator must be considered.

By considering the suggestions in the existing literature along with personal grounded theories and some qualitative research methods on adolescent identity incorporated into art subject matter, my proposed art curriculum design below is summarized briefly for each quarter. It is then followed by a chart that displays the central themes of identity, formative assessments that build knowledge with concepts/terms/media/ and techniques, the culminating art project, elements of art and principles of design used, and finally relevant art historical and cultural resources to reinforce learning and overall cognition.

The Proposed Curriculum

In order to consolidate art media and available resources, I decided to simultaneously teach two different art units for all four quarters. To break the monotony and redundancy of teaching the same content all day, The six exploratory classes were split up into two groups; the “even” periods of 2,4,6 and the “odd” periods of 3,5, and 7. Each group was held responsible in learning the different types of media, art techniques, and terminology per unit. Midway through the quarter, the art units get “switched”. For example, once the “even” classes were completed with their ceramic identity tiles/plaques midway through the quarter, they were immediately assigned the Texture Grid unit that the “odd” classes did in the beginning of the quarter.

At the beginning of the school year, students are to individually create “Identity Maps” that solicit specific information about the identities of the students. The overall purpose of the identity map assignment is to foster student interest and awareness about themselves and to build a detailed construct stating who they are as an individual. Quarterly, the identity maps will serve to assist students in creating ideas for subject matter for their art projects.

The use of Cornell Notes in my curriculum was chosen to help students condense and organize notes. Created by Walter Pauk, a Cornell University education professor; the note taking format consists of three areas on a sheet of paper used to record, relay, reflect, and review specific information (Retrieved from http://lsc.sas.cornell.edu/Sidebars/Study_Skills_Resources/cornellsystem.pdf). This method of taking notes is aligned with what other teachers at my middle school are doing

in regards to the overall uniformity of teachers conveying information for student cognizance and awareness.

Quarter One

As an ice breaker to introduce my identity-based curriculum, a pre-test is given to assess student knowledge based on the core subject areas of math, English, science, and social studies. Simple questions such as, “What is seven multiplied by seven?” or “What is a noun?” is followed by “Who is the current president of the United States?” solicit answers based on facts that everyone in class can agree upon. As they answer and think about the degree of simplicity of the questions, here is where I throw them a curve ball. I urge the students to think hard and ask themselves, “Who am I?” Of course, student answers will vary, depending who you ask. The main point that I’m trying to get across is that with art, there can be various solutions for one problem. As an example, if students were to be given a ball of clay and are instructed to create an “animal”, most often, the project outcome will always vary. The animal theme will remain the same but interpreted differently from one another. . In the art class, my emphasis to my students is that diversity, individual interpretation and perspective is always welcomed and respected. There is no wrong answer. As a first assignment, the Identity Map worksheet will be such an assignment that reinforces the idea of diversity with answers or solutions.

I chose to have students work with clay in the first quarter because there is always an additional amount of time needed to finish their projects as greenware and to completely dry out the clay projects before the bisque and glaze firing process. This in turn will be the main starting point for their ceramic identity name plaques/tiles. With

actual texture, geometric and organic shapes, and form/mass emphasized into the project, those elements of art create a nice transition into their two-dimensional project of the Personal Texture Grid, where students must draw visual textures from their experiences, home environments and lives incorporated into a grid created from the various types of line in black and white media. Table 3 charts the formative assignments leading up to the identity based art project.

Table 3

Quarter One: My Identity
<p>Formative assessments:</p> <p>a. “My Identity Map”: Initial sketch done to map out each students identity based on the sample map construct. Students will then follow the constructs to create their own Identity Map. New terminology will be properly defined in order for students to understand the concepts that serve as a subtopic for identity. This assignment encourages acceptance within the diversity of students in the classroom and focuses on the student as a means of ideas, resource, and answers.</p> <p>b. “My Name Plate”: After creating their identity maps, a second drawing, resembling the size of a license plate will be created to showcase student’s name along with four facets of their identity based on birthday, hobbies/interests, cultural heritage, and a quote from another person that best describes them. Completion of all plates will be displayed on the bulletin boards to showcase student work. This encourages students to browse and see what other students have created.</p> <p>c. Cornell Lecture Notes: Line, Texture, Value: Students will learn terminology that will build up knowledge for the Unit/Project. Sample drawings will also be done by the students to evaluate and assess their knowledge of the elements of line, texture, and value.</p> <p>d. Cornell Lecture Notes: Form and Shape: A precursor note-taking assignment to working with clay. Students will learn the definitions of both form and shape and will learn to discern the two elements of art.</p> <p>e. Cornell Lecture Notes: The Origins of Clay and History of Ceramics. Students will learn historical and geological information regarding the creation of clay, and the first civilizations that used clay as a medium for sculpture and pottery.</p>
<p>1. Art Projects: “Texture Grid”: Non-objective/abstract drawing assignment to emphasize student differences, uniqueness, artistic merit, and originality.</p>

“Identity Tile/Name Plaques”: Ceramic adaptation of “My Name Plate” projects. The only difference is that symbols and images will replace words, meanings, and sayings.

“My Mandala”: Circular Drawing. Derivative project of “My Name Plate”. Using symbols and original pictures that represent themselves and their identities, students will learn about the soul and self according to East Indian philosophy and Sanskrit.

“Lions Club of Honolulu Peace Poster Contest”: An art contest sponsored by the Lions Club of Honolulu that entails students to create a poster that envisions a student's interpretation of peace. The contest theme is slightly changed annually.

2. Art media and Techniques:

2-D Drawing and Painting: Graphite pencils, water soluble markers, India ink, China marker, permanent pen.

3-D Ceramics: Cone 06 Low Fire Clay, Lead Free Glazes used for decoration and color.

3. Elements of Art: Line, value, (actual and visual) texture, shape, space, and form.

Principles of Design: Contrast, variation, proportion, unity, (visual) movement, variety, balance (symmetry), emphasis.

4. Formative Assessments: For all Projects, students are graded on a rubric. Project Rubrics are specific project expectations and criteria a student will have to meet or exceed in order to receive a satisfactory grade. (Note: Grading is subjective, and is based on solely the experience of the individual assessing/evaluating the work.) Students also have to complete a written assessment based on specific questions according to the project and type of media completed.

5. Art Historical/Cultural References: *Mandala* books, *The Art of Clay*, *Subway Art*

6. Hawaii Content and Performance Standards addressed:

Standard 1: VISUAL ARTS: Understand and apply art materials, techniques, and processes in the creation of works of art and understand how the visual arts communicate a variety of ideas, feelings, and experiences

FA.6-8. 1.1 Create an original integrated art product or performance and explain how this process enhances a specific art work

FA.6-8. 1.2 Apply selected elements and principles of art and design to communicate a particular message or opinion in an original work of art

FA.6-8. 1.3 Use art vocabulary when evaluating intent and content of works of art

FA.6-8. 1.4 Apply different qualities and characteristics of art materials, techniques, and processes to convey effectively different experiences, ideas, and opinions

FA.6-8. 1.5 Describe how different elements and principles of art and design and styles can be used to express a variety of moods, feelings, themes, and ideas

FA.6-8. 1.6 Use subjects, themes, or symbols from life experiences to convey personal ideas

FA.6-8. 1.7 Compare the characteristics of artwork from various historical periods and/or cultures

FA.6-8. 1.8 Analyze, using evidence, how cultural factors have affected works of art now and in the past

FA.6-8. 1.9 Analyze, using evidence, why specific works of art were created

Summative Assessment: Student self reflections or post tests are distributed to assess student knowledge, and learning based on specific terminology, art media and techniques associated with the art project and it’s outcomes.

Quarter Two

As a visual facet of their identity, the subject matter of portraiture focuses on the uniqueness of every individual in terms of their physical and emotional traits. In their first project, digital cameras will assist students in documenting their faces which will then be transferred onto a scratchboard. The elements of art and principles of design, and specifically value (different shades of light and dark) are emphasized along with color (fauve portraits) as means of capturing personal mood, emotion, and expression.

Table 4

Quarter Two: Popular Art/Portraiture
<p>Formative assessments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Cornell Lecture Notes: Value. As a precursor assignment to the Scratchboard Self-Portrait, students will learn how value is used to create a sense of illusion, realism, and form in 2-dimensional drawings and paintings from the early Renaissance to present day modern artists. Notable artists include Michelagnolo Buonorrotti, Leonardo Da Vinci, Raphael, Caravaggio, Rembrandt, Georges De La Tour, and Diego Velazquez b. 7 step value scale: In seven equidistant steps, students will learn how to create various shades of light and dark using a #2 drawing pencil, a color pencil of their choice, pointillist (stipple) technique, hatching/crosshatching techniques. c. Scratchboard Value Scale: Using a strip of scratchboard, students will use a sharp tool such as an X-acto knife to carefully remove the thin black film off of the scratchboard, thus revealing the white matted surface underneath. Emphasis is also placed on the <i>sgraffitto</i> “to etch” technique used to remove the black surface. d. Cornell Lecture Notes: Portraiture: Before embarking on their portrait projects, students will see a slide presentation based on art historical examples from a variety of cultures each showing unique ways of interpreting and representing a person. e. Cornell Lecture Notes: Color. Students will learn the basics of color theory by learning hue, brightness/intensity, and value. Additional information will be provided in the creation of secondary and tertiary colors and their relevance to color schemes and past and present artists that emphasized color into their artwork. f. Twelve-Step Color Wheel: This studio, exploratory assignment using watercolor

<p>and or acrylic will teach students basic color theory when mixing colors to create the primaries, secondaries, and tertiaries. Color schemes (complementary, split complementary, analogous, warm and cool) will also place attention for students to think about color schemes for their Fauve Portrait project.</p> <p>g. Tints, Tones, and Shades: The second color studio assignment emphasizes color, value, intensity, and opacity/transparency. Students firsthand will experience how one color (of their choice) changes in intensity and value when white, gray, and black are added in 7 steps.</p> <p>h. Cornell Lecture Notes: Fauvism: After previously learning about color, portraiture, and line, students in the exploratory class will learn about the short-lived style of painting called Fauvism, translation from French “<i>fauves</i>”, meaning “wild beasts” and the subject matter and expressive characteristics on how they used color in their paintings. Notable artists include, Henri Matisse, Georges Vlaminck, Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, Camille Pissarro.</p> <p>i. Contour Line Drawing #1: Hand drawing. Using careful observation and coordination, students will draw one continuous line that follows the outlines, and details of their hand. This will get students to rely on simultaneous eye and hand movement.</p> <p>j. Contour line drawing #2: Self Portrait. As a precursor to their actual canvas board drawing for their fauve self portraits, students will draw themselves using the contour line drawing technique using their reflections as subject matter.</p>
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<p>1. Art Projects</p> <p>“Scratchboard Portraiture”: The concepts of Portraiture as subject matter and color as the element of art are focused in this six week project. In this assignment students will gain an overall awareness and appreciation for value as having a double and/or metaphorical meaning, and the subject matter of Portraiture as a ways and means of documenting people. In years past, students substituted their self portraits with creating one of an individual they respect and admire from their lives.</p> <p>“Fauve Portraits” The culminating project is originated from learning color as an element of art. In their self portraits, emphasis is placed on the use of the French Fauve Style in expressing personal emotion rather than the realistic physiognomic traits that we associate with Photorealism. Another emphasis is placed on individual uniqueness, not just on self portraits, but rather on color choice sand drawing techniques.</p>
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<p>2. Art Media and Techniques: Sgraffitto-Scratchboard, cross-hatching, stippling Acrylic paint-scumbling, paintbrushes, palette Watercolor-Wash techniques (wet on wet application, wet on dry application).</p>
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<p>3. <i>Elements of Art:</i> value, line, color, form, texture <i>Principles of Design:</i> contrast, visual movement, variation, repetition, balance, unity and harmony.</p>

<p>4. Art Historical/ Cultural References: Scratchboard for Illustration, Vincent Van</p>
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Gogh, Fauvism, The High Renaissance, Baroque Art, Caravaggio, Rembrandt Van Rijn, Georges De La Tour, Pablo Picasso, Chuck Close, John Singer Sargent, fauvism, Scholastic Art Magazines, Modern Art, Art in Focus.

5. Formative Assessments: For all Projects, students are graded on a rubric. Project Rubrics are specific project expectations and criteria a student will have to meet or exceed in order to receive a passing grade. (Note: Grading is subjective, and is based on the experience of the individual assessing/evaluating the work.) Students also have to complete a written assessment based on specific questions according to the project and type of media completed.

6. Hawaii Content and Performance Standards addressed:

Standard 1: VISUAL ARTS: Understand and apply art materials, techniques, and processes in the creation of works of art and understand how the visual arts communicate a variety of ideas, feelings, and experiences.

FA.6-8. 1.1 Create an original integrated art product or performance and explain how this process enhances a specific art work

FA.6-8. 1.2 Apply selected elements and principles of art and design to communicate a particular message or opinion in an original work of art

FA.6-8. 1.3 Use art vocabulary when evaluating intent and content of works of art

FA.6-8. 1.4 Apply different qualities and characteristics of art materials, techniques, and processes to convey effectively different experiences, ideas, and opinions

FA.6-8. 1.5 Describe how different elements and principles of art and design and styles can be used to express a variety of moods, feelings, themes, and ideas

FA.6-8. 1.6 Use subjects, themes, or symbols from life experiences to convey personal ideas

FA.6-8. 1.7 Compare the characteristics of artwork from various historical periods and/or cultures

FA.6-8. 1.8 Analyze, using evidence, how cultural factors have affected works of art now and in the past

FA.6-8. 1.9 Analyze, using evidence, why specific works of art were created

Summative Assessment: Student self reflections or post tests are distributed to assess student knowledge, and learning based on specific terminology, art media and techniques associated with the art project and it's outcomes.

Quarter Three

In the second semester, students will look into their cultural backgrounds and seek ideas for their cultural myth projects. Again, the use of the identity map is vital in researching about their cultural heritage. Through various means of research (i.e. Resource books, personal interview with family, and the internet), students will find information to interpret those cultural myths into a blockprint image. The second half of

the third quarter draws ideas from a adolescent’s mind. In class they are presented a list of fifteen words that relate to middle school adolescence and popular culture. Words such as “love”, “parents”, “music”, and “stress” are presented to the students to solicit written responses which will be translated into a collage. The collage will be created from magazine and newspaper cutouts that display images, photographs, and words that are arranged in a visually interesting composition.

Table 5

Quarter Three: Cultural Heritage and Personal Meaning
<p>Formative Assessments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Re-visit quarter one assignment “My Identity Map”. This is to re-acquaint students with the map they have constructed in the beginning of quarter one. The main purpose in looking at their maps is to guide them into the right information, literature, and research for their cultural myth blockprints. Emphasis will also be placed on this facet of their identity as being a permanent fixture in their lives. b. Internet Research Assignment “GGMMFFHH”: The acronym represents “Gods and Goddesses, Myths and Monsters, Fantasy or Folklore, Heroes and Heroines”. Through qualitative inquiry, students will research and find information on a certain myth, story, history, person they, place, or thing that has some cultural significance. They then will use it as a starting point in developing a drawing proposal for their blockprinting projects. c. Drawing Proposals for Blockprint Projects: Using the information retrieved from internet, library, and familial resources, students will develop a minimum of three ideas based on the cultural myth they have chosen for their blockprint project d. Cornell Notes on Johannes Gutenberg: As developer and inventor of the worlds first movable type printing press, students will learn about the various types of printmaking that first led to hand-drawn illuminated manuscripts to the first printed bible done by Gutenberg himself. Students will also see examples of relief, intaglio, drypoint, and screen printing as forms of the printmaking techniques. e. FoamBoard Printmaking: To introduce students to the medium of printmaking, students use foamboards to show and experience what relief printmaking is like first hand. Also, the elements of art and principles of design will be emphasized and used effectively to create a non-objective composition f. Cornell Notes on Collage: In this lecture and slide presentations, students will learn the origins of Collage as first implemented by Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso. Focus on other artists will include Kurt Schwitters and Richard Hamilton, along with students own collages as examples of meaning and popular culture.

<p>g. Worksheet assignment: After the blockprint assignment, focus will shift from cultural myths to personal meanings. Students will brainstorm/free associate words that have relevance in their lives. With words already scripted into the worksheets, each student will come up with his/her own set of words that are brainstormed from the first initial word. Afterwards, students cut out words, letters, pictures, and or phrases from magazines for their collage projects.</p>
<p>1. Art Projects: “Cultural Myth Blockprinting project”: As an introductory project to the technique of printmaking, students will use the facet of ethnic culture as a resource in finding subject matter for their cultural myth projects. Visual examples of screenprints done by Pop Artist Andy Warhol will show students samples of variation and repetition for their composition.</p> <p>“Worksheet collage”: This project will showcase student understanding on proper compositional techniques in creating a collage that is filled with words, images, pictures, phrases, and/or symbols that relate to middle school identifiers like “stress”, “love”, “peer pressure,” and “family.”</p>
<p>2. Art Media and Techniques: Relief printmaking through foamboard/linoleum/ rubber blocks media. <i>Papier collage “to cut”</i></p>
<p>3. Elements of Art: value, line, color, form, texture <i>Principles of Design:</i> emphasis, repetition, variation, balance, unity and harmony, contrast, visual movement</p>
<p>4. Art Historical/ Cultural References: Japanese <i>Ukiyoe</i> Prints World Mythology, <i>The Art of the Myth</i> by Joseph Campbell.</p>
<p>5. Formative Assessments: For all Projects, students are graded on a rubric. Project Rubrics are specific project expectations and criteria a student will have to meet or exceed in order to receive a passing grade. (Note: Grading is subjective, and is based on the experience of the individual assessing/evaluating the work.) Students also have to a complete a written assessment based on specific questions according to the project and type of media completed.</p>
<p>6. Hawaii Content and Performance Standards addressed: Standard 1: VISUAL ARTS: Understand and apply art materials, techniques, and processes in the creation of works of art and understand how the visual arts communicate a variety of ideas, feelings, and experiences</p> <p>FA.6-8. 1.1 Create an original integrated art product or performance and explain how this process enhances a specific art work FA.6-8. 1.2 Apply selected elements and principles of art and design to communicate a particular message or opinion in an original work of art FA.6-8. 1.3 Use art vocabulary when evaluating intent and content of works of art FA.6-8. 1.4 Apply different qualities and characteristics of art materials, techniques, and processes to convey effectively different experiences, ideas, and opinions FA.6-8. 1.5 Describe how different elements and principles of art and design and styles can be used to express a variety of moods, feelings, themes, and ideas FA.6-8. 1.6 Use subjects, themes, or symbols from life experiences to convey personal</p>

<p>ideas</p> <p>FA.6-8. 1.7 Compare the characteristics of artwork from various historical periods and/or cultures</p> <p>FA.6-8. 1.8 Analyze, using evidence, how cultural factors have affected works of art now and in the past</p> <p>FA.6-8. 1.9 Analyze, using evidence, why specific works of art were created</p>
<p>Summative Assessment: Student self reflections or post tests are distributed to assess student knowledge, and learning based on specific terminology, art media and techniques associated with the art project and it’s outcomes.</p>

Quarter Four

The concepts of the human conscious/subconscious and of dreams are addressed in the fourth and last quarter. From a Western art historical viewpoint, students will learn the characteristics of surrealism and draw upon their own dreams and fantasies for subject matter in their pastel and charcoal drawings. The project will transition into the second half of the quarter into the “E-Box” projects where they have to implement the slab technique in creating an enclosed ceramic box that incorporates a personal, esoteric “enigma” within it. Dreams are also emphasized at aspirations and future goals. In contrast to the western sense of surrealism and dreaming, student will also be introduced to Aboriginal Art and the indigenous concept of “The Dreaming.”

Table 6

Quarter Four: Dreams-Surrealism and Objects of Enigma
<p>Formative Assessments:</p> <p>a. Cornell Notes on Surrealism: This lecture and slide presentation will introduce students to the world of Surrealism and dream interpretations. Visual examples will be show works created by Salvador Dali, Max Ernst, Marc Chagall, Frances Bacon, Yves Tanguy, Man Ray.</p> <p>b. Surrealism writing assignment: Students will write a short synopsis, summary about a particular dream/nightmare that they would want to share with the class for an oral presentation and reading. With the possibility for students that claim to not “dream” or are not willing to share a dream that they once had, an option is to create a fictional dream using teacher issued props (still life) to serve as objects in the fictionalized dream.</p>

c. Cornell Notes: Symbolism, Realism, Abstraction: Before embarking on their Ceramic projects (i.e. Identity Boxes/ My Room) students learned through lecture and a slide presentation on Symbolism/ Realism/ and Abstraction. By learning the terminology associated with this project, students will understand the differences between the meanings and will use those ideas into their own. Students will also learn and value the term “enigma” and use it to conjure up ideas from their personal lives and/or experiences and use them as subject matter for their ceramic project at the end of the quarter.

1. Art Projects:

“My Dream” Surrealist drawing: Using the available media of Dry Pastel and Compressed Charcoal, students will compose an image that best represents their dream as written in their Surrealist Writing assignments.

“Enigma Box/Identity Boxes”: This Ceramic Project entails students in creating six ceramic slab/tiles and creating a cube/box with some sort of secret hidden in the box. An emphasis will be placed on personal meaning, symbolism, poignancy, and secrets.

“My Room”: A variation to the Enigma Box, “My Room” was created in response to the available ceramic resources and has transformed itself into a cubicle form that students had to create a replica of their rooms. Other variations occurred with student evidence where students create projects unlike their real rooms at home and nevertheless built an object of fantasy.

2. Art Media and Techniques:

Charcoal/Pastel Drawings

Ceramic slab building, box making, using the ceramic slab roller, rolling pins

3. Elements of Art: Value, line, color, form, texture

Principles of Design: Visual movement, emphasis, contrast, variation

4. Formative Assessments: For all Projects, students are graded on a rubric. Project Rubrics are specific project expectations and criteria a student will have to meet or exceed in order to receive a passing grade. (Note: Grading is very subjective, and is based on solely the experience of the individual assessing/evaluating the work.) Students also have to complete a written assessment based on specific questions according to the project and type of media completed

5. Art Historical/ Cultural References: Salvador Dali, De Chirico, Rene Magritte, Hieronymus Bosch, Max Ernst, Aboriginal art “the dreaming”

6. Hawaii Content and Performance Standards addressed:

Standard 1: VISUAL ARTS: Understand and apply art materials, techniques, and processes in the creation of works of art and understand how the visual arts communicate a variety of ideas, feelings, and experiences

FA.6-8. 1.1 Create an original integrated art product or performance and explain how this process enhances a specific art work

FA.6-8. 1.2 Apply selected elements and principles of art and design to communicate a particular message or opinion in an original work of art

FA.6-8. 1.3 Use art vocabulary when evaluating intent and content of works of art

FA.6-8. 1.4 Apply different qualities and characteristics of art materials, techniques, and processes to convey effectively different experiences, ideas, and opinions

FA.6-8. 1.5 Describe how different elements and principles of art and design and styles can be used to express a variety of moods, feelings, themes, and ideas

FA.6-8. 1.6 Use subjects, themes, or symbols from life experiences to convey personal ideas

FA.6-8. 1.7 Compare the characteristics of artwork from various historical periods and/or cultures

FA.6-8. 1.8 Analyze, using evidence, how cultural factors have affected works of art now and in the past

FA.6-8. 1.9 Analyze, using evidence, why specific works of art were created

Summative Assessment: Student self reflections or post tests are distributed to assess student knowledge, and learning based on specific terminology, art media and techniques associated with the art project and it's outcomes.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

At the important stage of exploration and self-discovery, the middle school environment presents new and exciting challenges to an impressionable individual. Challenges in gaining new friends, fitting in to certain groups, and forming a sense of uniqueness and identity can get in the way of academic learning and focus. However, if a curriculum addresses such challenges, I believe that it can make an impact on learning, especially in the visual arts. The importance of an exploratory art curriculum that focuses on identity is vital for the cognitive and creative development of the middle school child. Middle school marks an important passage in students' lives, and I believe that curriculum must center on the adolescent world and what students are experiencing during that passage. In my study of developing and implementing an identity-based middle school art curriculum, my aim and focus was to make art more fun, feasible, and most importantly, poignant for students. The outcomes of my study were valuable in that the findings provided necessary data for improving my pedagogy, content delivery, classroom management, and future planning.

As I created my curriculum, I looked into the adolescent world and selected subjects that I felt students would take a personal interest in and be willing to commit time and effort to. At the same time, I tried to create a sense of discourse between the content and the student learner. In order to achieve this, students needed to have some kind of "connection" to what was being created. I discovered that a middle school child's personal interests in popular culture, entertainment, trends, friends, fashion, and fads provided a rich resource for themes and subject matter for their art projects. Right away,

those very themes garnered the interests and attention of the students in the classroom. The students reacted positively, and they took genuine responsibility for what they were learning and for the art that they created. Students reacted and responded well to their art, for it involved not only using different types of fun and exciting art media, but the art was all about them.

Furthermore, when students completed an art project, they felt good about themselves. From my observations, when the students walked into my classroom, they seemed to be relieved and happy. When asked, “Why do you like coming to art class?” many responded that they liked the “sense of equality,” which was a big change from their core classes where they were homogeneously grouped. In my heterogeneously grouped art class all students were presented with the same project and only the students’ own creativity and uniqueness, as opposed to their ability levels, determined the outcomes. This leveling of the playing field has caused a number of students to excel when they have only seen failure in other areas of academia. Another question that was asked was, “How has art changed the way you look at yourself?” The student’s positive responses varied, with many answered along the lines of “getting to know who I am as a person” and “knowing more about my own culture and identity.”

Overall, this study has provided me with insight into designing an identity-based middle school art curriculum. I have observed students, their project outcomes, their reflections, reactions, and comments, and adjusted my curriculum accordingly to meet their needs. The end result is a curriculum that is both effective and meaningful for adolescents as they strive to discover and mold their identities.

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APPENDIX