MAN IN THE MIRROR: A STUDY ON HOW SELF-PORTRAITS REFLECT SELF-ESTEEM

A Report of a Senior Study

by

Cherese Renee’ Cobb

Major: Child Development

Maryville College

Fall 2013

Date Approved________________, by _______________________

Faculty Supervisor

Date Approved________________, by _______________________

Division Chair
Abstract

This study explores the connection between the self-esteem and self-portraits of African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian children, ages 6-8, living in Southern Appalachia. This study's hypothesis was that African American and Hispanic children would display lower levels of pictorial self-worth than their Caucasian counterparts. In order to test this hypothesis, the researcher taught a modified concept development lesson and instructed participants to create a self-portrait using typical school media. The hypothesis was not supported. However, a number of non-generalizable phenomena came to light as a result of this study. Specifically that females display a higher level of self-esteem than males. In addition, females are more likely to use stick figures, hats, cutaways, and cultural icons. Inversely, males are more likely to utilize geometric formations. This study also found that left-handed individuals are more likely to use language in their drawings. Finally, the study found that a majority of students are able to correctly identify their race.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figures</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Observational Categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tadpole Drawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Variation in the Limbs of Children’s Portraits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Number of Occurrences of Cultural Icons by Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Elaborate Detail Drawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tier Diagram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Zone of Proximal Development Graph</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

LITERATURE REVIEW

Grayish-white smoke swirls slowly as multi-colored flames lick at the night sky. Like the earth’s heartbeat, spindly hands beat the taut stretched face of a drum. Hundreds of earth-colored feet strike the ground in poetic unison. Brightly colored red and blue paint runs up and down the dancers’ jolting torsos while great wooden masks adorned with long, wispy feathers sit like a crown upon their heads.

Charles Darwin would claim that these kinsmen have beautified themselves, like a peacock, to attract a mate (Barcott, 2009). However, Ellen Dissanayake, a self-taught art historian, psychologist, and anthropologist, debunks Darwin’s “Peacock Theory” by stating that “an artist [takes the] ordinary [such as a tribal meeting] and [makes] it special [by adding paint and rhythm]… [he or she] places an activity or an artifact in a realm different from the everyday” (Barcott, 2009). Dissanayake’s “Making Special Theory” may sound obvious, but it explodes the conventional wisdom that the Lascaux cave paintings (15,000
B.C.) are humanity’s earliest known artistic creations. Ultimately, it pushes the emergence of human art back tens of thousands of years to the earliest known evidence of body marking, almost 4 million years ago (Barcott, 2009).

However, Dissanayake takes her theory one step further. She asserts that aesthetic abilities are primarily shaped by mother-infant interactions. Neonates show a preference, as well as, an immense interest in musical vocalizations and exaggerated facial expressions (raised eyebrows, open mouth, broad smile and widened eyes, sometimes with the adult’s head bobbed sharply upwards or nodded) shortly after they emerge from the womb. Paired with “mutual gaze” and interactive, self-regulative interactions, such as nursery rhymes and impromptu games, these interests allow infants to become part of a “society of intimates,” where everything needed for life is created by one’s own hands and relationships are established through reciprocal rites (Dissanayake, 2011).

Notably, mother-infant experiences (such as exaggeration, pattern, rhythm, and expression) are used by multi-media artists to generate feelings of mutuality, belonging, competence, meaning, and compassion. These proto-aesthetic experiences also empower individuals with the ability to rein in the powers of chaos, by visually expressing their fears of war, sickness, and death, as well as, joys such as birth and marriage (Barcott, 2009).

While Darwin and Dissanayake optimistically approach human creationism, Elizabeth Groz, a Feminist scholar, believes that art is the remedy for our psychobiological incompleteness (Rowling, 2010). In essence, Groz
builds on Sigmund Freud’s notion that the primary cause of human distress is the inability to master one’s self, especially considering our limited capacity to achieve or adapt (Rowling, 2010).

Regardless of whether humanity creates to fill an inner void, knit together a society, or continue the species, its rendering of the human figure, a network of symbols, has dynamically evolved (Rowling, 2010). In the Old Stone Age (20,000 to 10,000 B.C.), an era dominated by bird and beast, the human figure was flat and non-dimensional due to the fact that collectivistic man had not yet developed a self-concept (Burne, 1990).

During the next six thousand years, or the Neolithic Age, strict, symmetrical, and severe animalistic forms emerged in the form of idols, masks, totems, and charms. The talismans were used to exercise control over life and death; famine; disease; war; fertility, harvest, and bounty. “[During the Bronze Age, 3,500 B.C. to 1,100 A.D.] powerful, stable, complex societies [emerged and rested]… largely on four major developments in society: the discovery of seed to manage crop-growing and farming; the domestication and herding of animals to control a continuous food supply; the knowledge of the seasons and development of a calendar to regulate farming and fertility; and the ability to work metals into tools and artifacts for work, war, building, and worship” (Burne, 1990, p. 46). Figures of immortality, abstract looking portraits of deities, shamans, and kings, came to the forefront sporting a stable and semi-naturalistic look. Extensive two-dimensional decoration also developed during this era.
representing the natural forces which gods control, such as the bounty of plants and crops, the fertility of animals, and the power to win wars.

Three hundred years after the wane of the Bronze Age, Greece, sitting strategically close to three continents in the Mediterranean, rose as a maritime power, inviting trade, migration of peoples, and cultural exchange (Helker, 1912). This Hellenistic world birthed solider-citizens, democracy, pre-scientific observation, and reason. Individualistic man turned from worshiping nature gods to worshiping the virtues of Gods. The figure of perfection, eight heads high with rippling muscles, had symbolic grace, elegance, and charm, as well as ideal serenity and dignity. Surfaces became sensuous, tactile, and refined.

The decline of the Roman Empire and emergence of the Medieval Ages (500 to 1400 A.D.) gave rise to church learning, urban center development, and feudalism (Wells, 1921). Christian doctrine united the West, in spite of, warring royals and serfdom. Emphasis was placed on spiritual morality and impending judgment. The figure of moral man was stylized, strict, and distorted, showing the extremes of spiritual torment, terror, fear, and religious fervor. Elongated figures were placed in social and religious hierarchies (Burnes, 1990).

As Spain, England, and France vied for the heart of the New World in the late 16th century, humanism, the belief that all men are equal in the eyes of God, and a revival of Greek and Roman literature shook Europe out of its Dark Age slumber (Burnes, 1990). Faith and science tangoed together for the betterment of mankind while foreign capital birthed the bourgeois. Collectivism slowly
dissipated into an individual consciousness, which begot the modern era. The figure of man evolved into “a figure of grandeur and hope, suffused with the longings, the strivings, and the passions of universal mankind” (Burnes, 1990, pg. 49). It shed its strict anatomical pose for the natural-looking contrapposto pose, in which the weight of the body tends to be thrown to one foot creating rhythm (Kleiner & Mamiya, 2006). This figure of passion (1,400 A.D. to 1,600 A.D.) was rendered by amoral artists, such as Leonardo Da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti, who dissected human figures, against the will of the church, in order to accurately portray man’s twisting tendons and ligaments. It was the epitome of man’s earthly and spiritual knowledge, as the figure could fit in both a circle (which represented the cosmic and divine) and a square (which represented the rational and secular) (Lester, 2012).

Over the next two centuries, humanistic ideology “caught the imagination of men everywhere; in the New World, the American Democracy; in France, the First Republic; in England; the Glorious Revolution” (Burnes, 1990, p. 56). Meanwhile, dissatisfaction with the Catholic Church’s selling of indulgences, which reduced the time a soul spent in purgatory, led German theologian Martin Luther to nail his Ninety-five Theses to a church door in Wittenberg, ultimately sparking the Protestant Reformation (Kleiner & Mamiya, 2006). However, Reformists tried “[to destroy art] by…tearing [it] out of the heart [of man] through God’s Word and making [it] worthless and despised” (Stechow, 1966, p. 129). Nevertheless, Protestants were not above using art, particularly prints, to promote their own religious agenda. For example, Lucas Cranach, referred to by
most scholars as the “Painter of the Reformation”, depicted in his small woodcut
*Allegory of Law and Grace* the differences between Catholicism, based on the
Old Testament, and Protestantism, based on the New Testament (Kleiner &
Mamiya, 2006). The image is separated by a centrally placed tree. On the left,
Catholic half, the hour of judgment has arrived. Christ, hovering above the
clouds accompanied with saints and angels, raises his palm forward in a gesture
of damnation. Below, a skeleton drives a terrified person, who tried to follow the
Ten Commandments, into the pit of hell. On the right, Protestant side, streams
of blood flow from the crucified Christ who showers the sinner with grace. Farther
right, Christ emerges from the tomb promising eternal life to all of his followers.
While Protestants found most art to be deplorable, Catholics deemed it as
valuable for “curing the soul” (Klein & Zerner, 1966). However, Pope Paul III at
the Council of Trent, which concluded in 1563, placed restrictions on the
expression of the figure. He decreed that “in the invocation of saints, the
veneration of relics, and the sacred use of images, that all superstition [should
be] removed, all filthy quest for gain eliminated; and all lasciviousness avoided,
so that images [are not] painted and adorned with seductive charm…or perverted
by the people into boisterous festivities and drunkenness” (Klein & Zerner, 1966,
p. 516).

Even under the pressure of the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic
Counter-Reformation, the human figure matured further. The feminine figure, for
the first time in history, appeared as “a non-idealized, emotional, living, pulsating
form” (Hogarth, 1990 p. 56). The period was essentially ruled by the portrait.
Landscapes played second-fiddle as they were placed in the background to shed light on the mood of humanity. Artists began to use Chiaroscuro, the graduation of light into dark, and Tenebrism, the use of violent contrasts between light and dark, to depict the sincerity, sympathy, motion, and vitality of the Figure of Personality (Kleiner & Mamiya, 2006).

The Industrial Age (1800 A.D. to 1900 A.D.), with its nuts, bolts, steam, and whistles, gave way to national conflict, especially in Napoleon ruled France (Hogarth, 1990). While heavy blows were directed at conservatives in government and social institutions, artistic patronage was only handed out to academic traditionalists. Nevertheless, the art of the age was rebellious. Artists attempted to show the inner beauty of their subjects, who were “the lowly, the commonplace, the plebian; the distorted, the lame, the grotesque; the clown, the beggar, the prostitute” (Hogarth, 1990, p. 59). The figure of pathos, tortured and withdrawn, was often swallowed by landscapes and seascapes, which were symbolic of man’s struggle with god-like forces (Kleiner & Mamiya, 2006).

The modern era or Technical-Scientific-Analytical Age may be said to begin in the late 19th century in France with the defeat of Napoleon by German forces and the creation of the Third Republic. It is by no accident that France, which had earlier been hailed as the king of culture and arts in Europe, became the birthplace of the modern art movement. The country’s artists, who had been publically disinheritied and humiliated, unleashed their creative energies into a multiplicity of concepts and forms, which were far beyond the comprehension of
the press and public at the time (Barr, 1954). Caught up in the cataclysm of revolutions and world wars, the artist sought refuge in his creations. Modern art’s objectivity gave way to a personality of spontaneity and impulsivity coupled with a psychological, subconscious well-spring of feeling and emotion. The figure of introspection, unlike its predecessors, took several divergent paths. The synesthetic figure or sensate-reaction form consisted of frail, fleeting lines produced from “emotive experiences of pleasure feelings, energy drives, and primitive sensual urges” (Hogarth, 1990, p. 61). Inversely, the kinesthetic or physical reflex form consisted of jolting, thick lines induced by irrational neuro-muscular excitation through outer feelings of annoyance, agitation, irritation, or tension. The cryptesthetic form consisted of organic lines of varying consistency that were derived hidden pain, anxiety, chaos, and despair. Finally, the cryptesthetics form or intellectually reasoned form was composed of a playful arrangement of shapes and forms, which can be seen in art movements such as Cubism, Constructivism, and Purism (Kleiner & Maymiya, 2006).

The evolution of the human form is analogous to Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. As man conquered beast in the Old Stone Age, he fulfilled his basic physiological needs and obtained homeostasis, allowing other needs to be met such as safety, esteem, love, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). The emergence of iron welding in the Neolithic Age promised powerful, multifaceted civilizations “[protection against] wild animals, extremes of temperature, criminals, assault, murders, and tyranny” (Maslow, 1943, p. 379). The rise of Christianity, particularly of the tender, forgiving God of the Protestant
Reformation, in the Renaissance and the further development of humanism, an exploration of an individual’s potential, allowed Europeans to feel an intense non-sexual love and belongingness (Kleiner & Maymiya, 2006). The founding of art academies during the Italian Renaissance, where artists earned recognition and esteem from their peers and society at large, as well as the artists’ exploration of his intellectual and emotional fantasies, or self, during the Industrial Age allowed man to gain esteem and climb up one step of Maslow’s hierarchy (Burnes, 1990). The Industrial Age and Technical-Scientific-Analytical Age not only brought self-exploration; it provided a stage where artists could rebel, in subject (particularly the mundane), style (such as Abstraction and Cubism) and media (such as photography and filmography). In other words, these artist became self-actualized “doing what [he or she was] fitted for” (Maslow, 1943).

Maslow, Groz, Darwin, and Dissanayake’s theories on creationism particularly shed light on the self-portrait artist, who is a collection of thoughts, memories, and moments when his or her life stood still or spoke out loud. The origin of self-portraiture is shrouded in a cloud of mystery; although, Leon Battista Alberti, one of the original Renaissance men known for his architecture, credited the beginning of self-portraits to the moment when Narcissus saw his reflection in a pool of water and “trembled at the beauty of his own face” (Prato, 2008). Even though Alberti’s claim is rooted in mythology, the tale has symbolic meaning. First, no mortal had truly ever laid eyes upon his or her own face. Furthermore, it took the advent of the mirror, which is similar to a simmering lake, in the 15th
century, as well as self-esteem gained through humanism, to propel self-
portraiture to the forefront of art.

Rembrandt Van Rijn (1606-1669), a painter, draftsman, and printmaker
from the Netherlands, helped self-portraiture claim its stake in the art world
(Farthing, 2008). He glimpses out of more than eighty drawings, paintings, and
prints and has the longest lifespan of portraits ever painted, “a record of change
and decay unparalleled in the history of art” (Cumming, 2012, p. 82). To
capture his own image, he used two mirrors and contorted his face into a variety
of expressions, which early critics found to be purely vain. Nevertheless, using
this method he captured himself as a hostile youth illegally togged up in soldier’s
collar in Leiden and as an up and rising celebrity sporting a cap of ostentatious
feathers in Amsterdam. He also captured himself as a well-fed husband
cressing his wife on his knee, as well as, a Dutch burgher. Later, he captured
himself as a widow, ashamed of his two affairs, one with a woman in prison and
another with a woman many decades younger. Then after a mysterious gap in
which his parents, mistresses, and only child perished, he returned a lonely,
careworn man with knotted flesh, yellowish skin, and sunken eyes (Cumming,
2012). Rembrandt created in order to chronicle his life. His images allowed
him to recognize the rudiments of his present face and at the same time, denied
him the ability to re-enter his past or take advantage of hindsight (Prato, 2008).
Therefore, as Elizabeth Groz would suggest, Rembrandt’s creations acted as a
Band-Aid, covering the gaping wound that resulted in his incompetence to adapt
to or change his situation.
Rembrandt, however, was not the only master nursing his emotional wounds through creationism. Mexican painter Frida Kahlo generated over 150 works as a way to cope with her downward spiraling marriage to painter Diego Rivera, as well as, a horrifying bus accident at the age of 18, which broke her spine in three places leading to a life riddled with multiple miscarriages and relentless hospitalizations (the worst of which required doctors had to amputate her right leg). This self-taught artist, who idolized Stalin and Hitler, also felt the sting of colonialism, which threatened to extinguish the last trace of traditional Mexican culture. Additionally, she witnessed the bedlam and bloodshed of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1921) (Kleiner & Maymiya, 2006). Therefore, Kahlo painted herself as a victim with “[a] sword to the heart, neck noosed with bloody thorns, alone with her monkeys and dogs in despair; riven in two, trussed back together; her head emblazoned with a chakra containing a skull and crossbones, her mouth emitting a cornucopia of dead fish, weeping and showing her wounds” (Cumming, 2012, p. 223). Like Rembrandt, this martyr could not handle the cards life has dealt her. Furthermore, (as Maslow might suggest) she cannot form love-bonds with others or respect herself because her basic safety needs have not been met.

While Frida Kahlo played the victim, battered and scarred in the battle of life, Vincent Van Gough, “the most wronged and downtrodden painter in art”, never did (Cumming, 2012). His life in many ways is equally as turbulent. He was ill, plagued with nightmares and insomnia, as well as, poor, living on a diet of cigarettes, coffee, and alcohol, yet he cared for others, preaching a message of
hope through the whole of his life without ever being given a reason to hope. He failed in his early twenties as a preacher and art dealer, yet his zeal was unheeded. He was unrequited in love and unrecognized as an artist, not selling a single painting in his lifetime. In a wild fever, apparently triggered by a disagreement with Paul Gauguin over Rembrandt’s artistic aptitude, the artist cut off his earlobe and took it as a gift to a girl he had seen in a bar, which resulted in his admittance to Doctor Gachet’s asylum (Kleiner & Maymiya, 2006). At his lowest point, desperate for his brother Theo and treacherously abandoned by Gauguin, he commits suicide in a field “where the black crows caw, unable to [trudge on in] the shadows of [his] depression” (Cummings, 2012). Van Gough admitted that “it [was] difficult [for him] to know [himself]”, yet the artist’s self-portraits reveal the man in the mirror (Van Gough, 2003). In one self-portrait, he is a pale ghost floating against a dark background, which perhaps alludes to his invisibility in the artistic world. In another his flaming red hair jolts out from his almost entirely green face, revealing his Impressionistic style. In yet another his eyes are cobalt against a salmon-pink background, an inversion of cherry blossoms against a robin blue sky. His face is like a wind-flurried wheat field, or an anxiety filled, curlicued pattern of tendrils. In a later portrait, Van Gough pits the arsenical green of his overcoat against bright yellow walls. He leaves his ear bandaged, as if to show he has not forgotten his erratic actions. His aqueous eyes are weary, but his face is dignified and austere, his mood swings confined only to color and form, proving that he is not a martyr (Husker, 1996). Like Rembrandt and Kahlo, Van Gough paints to reign in his chaotic life. However, he
diverges from Darwin, Groz, Dissanayake, or Maslow’s creationism theories. Van Gough creates to discover his inner character or soul.

Van Gough was soul searching, but German printmaker, painter, and writer Albrecht Durer had no such goal in mind. As the first great sightseer in European painting, he hiked in the hazardous Alps; spent six days in a small boat during a bone-chilling winter looking for a whale that had washed up on a beach in Zeeland; and lived in Venice, Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands (Farthing, 2008). He annotated everything and filled his journal full of astonishing sites such as: “a great bed in Brussels [of] fifty sleeping men; soaring comets; Siamese twins; [and] the bones of an 18-foot giant” (Cummings, 2012, p. 47). More importantly, he had a keen sense of self, crafting his first self-portrait in silver point (which involves drawing with a fine stylus on pre-prepared paper where marks cannot be erased or corrected) at the age of 13. Nine years later, he would create a self-portrait where “[he looked] girlish, clean-shaven in his raked cape with its scarlet cockade, [and] fair hair artfully disarrayed” (Cummings, 2012, p. 51). In his hands, he holds an eryngium, symbolic of Christ’s suffering, as well as, a guard against impotence. Commenters have claimed to find nothing in this image but vanity; although, Durer’s face is expressionless. The portrait created by Durer six years later would be even more lavish, showing supreme vigor and “wood-carved manliness” (Cummings, 2012). He is dressed to the nines in a troubadour costumes with black and white doeskin gloves, defying the very notion of manual labor. Durer definitely
conforms to Darwin’s “Peacock Theory” as he is trying to attract females by
displaying his monetary prowess and religious faithfulness.

Self-Portraits do, however, have other course and straightforward
functions not explained by Darwin, Dissanayake, Groz, or Maslow’s theories. For
example, David Wilkie, a Painter-in-Ordinary to King George IV, in a race to
complete his enormous tavern scene The Blind Fiddler, inserted his own face in
the mobcap and wig of an intoxicated woman (Farthing, 2008). Irish-born
Francis Bacon, known for painting nightmarish visions and contorted images in
oil, rendered his own self-portrait “because everyone else was dying off like flies”
(Cummings, 2012, p. 67). Even Picasso, the sculptor, ceramist, printmaker,
collagist, and Cubism inventor who fashioned over 200,000 pieces of work in his
lifetime and dominated 20th century art, complained that he could never catch the
look of himself on paper and would have to cut a hole in a canvas and put a
mirror behind it just to glimpse what he really looked like (Farthing, 2008).

“[Self-Portraits truly are]…powerful tools; [tools] that can effect change
and growth, tell stories, and promote connections with [others through the]
invitation to view [one’s] unconditional self”, yet Picasso’s statement accurately
conveys that an image on paper only tells one half of a story, especially when it
pertains to children (Prato, 2008, p. 9). Children may create to reign in chaos;
make the ordinary extraordinary; pass on part of their genome; or fill the whole in
their hearts, but esthetic separatists, Neo-Freudians, and Jungians believe that is
only one side of the creation coin.
Roger Fry, an esthetic separatist, believes that artistic emotion is linked to form, which is an object’s shape and structure in a two or three dimensional space. Furthermore, Fry touts that "the form of a work of art has a meaning of its own and the contemplation of the form in and for itself gives rise in some people to a special emotion which [is not dependent on] an association of the form with anything else [whatsoever]." In other words, “an artist is pure...and he is opposed to all symbolism” (Fry, 1962, p. 362). A child’s emotional reaction, therefore, arises from “a recognition of order, of inevitability in relations” that may “get its force from arousing some very deep, very vague, and immensely generalized reminisces” (Kellogg, 1970, 228). Henry Focillion adds to Fry’s ideology stating that forms obey their own inherent rules which are located and centered in the regions of one’s mind. He also states that “the power of formal order alone authorizes the ease and spontaneity of creation”, which is highly applicable to children’s art due to the fact that youngsters have archetypical knowledge of basic forms and formal order, which develops through scribbling activities (Focillion, 1942). Unlike Fry and Focillion, Alexander Dorner contends that form was only a separate esthetic factor until the rise of the Bronze Age. He argues that man’s mental processes, desires, and creations in the Old Stone Age and Neolithic Age were confined to sensory experiences. He also believes that modern art originated in the rational, medieval world, where society was held together by a "rigid framework of space [and form that] represented…static material points" (Kellogg, 1970, p. 241). However, these ideas eventually gave way to the “interpretative force of energetic waves, [a] force which results in self-
transformation” (Dorner, 1958, 113). In his opinion, form and space are just superficial byproducts or art; they are stages in the evolution of art consciousness that are practiced by children worldwide. Claude Levi-Strauss refutes Dorner’s claim that form is a simply a byproduct of art. Instead, he believes that form operates in conjunction with pictorialism. He states that “the [artist] is always mid-way between design [using space and form] and anecdote, and his genius consists of uniting internal and external knowledge, producing [with his or her hand] an object [that] does not exist” (Strauss, 1966, pg. 25).

Jungians and Freudians, however, believe that esthetic emotions (or form and space) are secondary rather than primary. They consider art to be a servant of wishes and sexual conflicts. Specifically, Carl Jung asserts that art is a product of an individual’s collective unconscious (the timeless experiences of the human race) which is transmitted to individuals through archetypes or global symbols (such as the mandalas, triangles, squares, etc.). Therefore, each person is more than a total of his or her own life history; he or she has universally unconscious attitudes, knowledge, fears, and creative capacities. In addition, Jung denies the ego (the rational part of one’s unconscious) as the center of one’s being. He calls this the Self. The Self includes individual consciousness, which is personal, and individual unconsciousness, which has both personal and collective aspects (Jung & Wilhelm, 1932).

Neo-Freudian Anton Ehrenzweig believes that art simultaneously appeals to the conscious and unconscious, which consists of the ID, the uncoordinated
and instinctual part of the unconscious; the Superego, the critical and moralizing part of the unconscious; and the Ego, the rational and organized part of the unconscious that mediates between the ID and Superego. Gestalt vision, he claims, is “thing” perception and is agreeable to the conscious mind (Ehrenzweig, 1965). Thing-art creates a “good” Gestalt, which is a configuration, pattern, or organized field that has specific properties that cannot be derived from the summation of its component parts, which the brain has learned to organize. However, great art not only has good Gestalts but also has hidden forms, which can only be found in the “depth of the mind... [and has been] preserved [by an] infantile technique of perception” (Ehrenzweig, 1965, p. 32). According to Ehrenzweig, all hidden abstract forms of art are not really artistic, but sexual. He also contends that a child has no artistic awareness until the age five, at which time he or she gives up drawing pan-genital forms, which are abstract patterns only found in the depth of the mind, for libidinous scribbling. This is the time that the child “[leaves] the sublimity and grace of childhood” and enters the Oedipal or Electra conflict, where the child is antagonistic toward his or her same sex parent because they are a rival for the other parent’s affection (Ehrenzweig, 1965).

Further, Herbert Read adds that Ehrenzweig “can imagine a ‘pan-genital’ crisis when the maddened voyeur libido was deprived through the erect human gait of the sight of the female [or male] genitals and projected a pan-genital significance into any object of the external world” (1960, p. 91). In other words, every child alludes to his or her own external sexuality through abstract art.
Ernst Kris, another Neo-Freudian, adds that art enables the child to project an inner image onto a piece of paper or canvas under “the protection of...esthetic illusion.” He also claims that artistic creation is aimed at an audience, [which] requires...a sharing [on] the psychic level between the artist and viewer” (Kris, 1962, p. 63). Likewise, Kris suggests that outsides sources inspire artists. These sources relieve the burden of communication and imbue the work with a truth that stems from a higher authority than the creator. He asserts that the graphic art of a child is controlled by primary processes or is immediately discharged. According to Kris, only the adult artist can retrieve lost objects or the bliss of early infancy (Kris, 1962). Ultimately, he asserts that a child or adult artist to be truly inspired must experience passive receptiveness and self-regulated regression.

Otto Rank is another psychoanalyst greatly interested in children’s art. He repudiates the claim that children produce art, through regression and psychic endeavors, to deal with guilt. Rank claims that guilt stems from the individual's will to be independent and self-reliant, which cannot be openly expressed. Therefore, adolescents create to pay for a personal and societal guilt. He further proclaims that “creativity is not something [that only happens once], but is the constant continuing expression of the [individual's accomplishments], by means of which the individual seeks to overcome self-creatively the biological compulsion of the sexual instinct and the psychological compulsion to emotional surrender” (Rank, 1945, p. 68).
However, esthetic separatists, Jungians, and Neo-Freudians have overlooked a simple yet critical component in their theories. Children do not draw or paint like adults. As Arnold Gesell once said, “Our knowledge of children’s art is as reliable as a 15th century map of the world” (Kellogg, 1967, p. 19). It is like the skeleton of a great dinosaur, which psychologists, teachers, and scholars only began assembling in the last half century. Nevertheless, we do know that children typically begin scribbling around one-and-half years of age (Roland, 1990). Moreover, most observers of children’s art believe that infants simply engage in scribbling, which has 17 different placement patterns, for the “pure joy of moving their arms and making marks on a surface” (Kellogg, 1967, p. 21). These “tangles of spaghetti” also usually imply shapes, such as squares, triangles, and circles. By age four, however, children can outline these disguised shapes; although, they cannot assign a label to them. They then progress to making aggregates, which are balanced units of three or more lines or shapes (Kellogg, 1970). At this stage, however, males and females’ drawings cannot be told apart (Kellogg, 1967). On another note, weak lines during early pictorialism imply a lack of confidence or fine motor control. Around the same age, children begin to draw mandalas, which “are the oldest magical and religious symbols known to mankind [that have been] used by the human race for countless centuries” (Kellogg, 1967, p. 53). Balance and flawless symmetry is the main feature of the Mandela, which is the basis for suns, radials, and the human figure. After children master the magic circle, “they finally begin to combine the circle with one or more lines in order to represent the human figure. These
figures typically start out looking like “tadpoles” or “head-feet” symbols” (Roland, 1990). It is not uncommon for children’s first representations of the figure to be highly unrealistic, gender neutral, and missing a neck, body, arms, fingers, feet, or toes. Likewise, children will always try to balance the human figure, even if it means adding extra limbs (Kellogg, 1967). Just before entering school, however, children will begin to construct their own self-portraits, where the head is usually drawn quite large due to egocentrism.

By Kindergarten, though, children become increasingly aware of the world around them and begin to include in their images the many objects that make up their environment. These objects typically “float” and are seldom drawn in relationship to one another in position or size (Roland, 1990). During the same year, youngsters begin to draw animals that adults recognize, but more often than not, these animals either stand on two legs or have three or four arms dangling on one side of the figure (Kellogg, 1970).

By first grade, children can stay inside of boundaries of shapes and use every media possible, thanks in part to their increased physical strength and coordination. The stick figure, which is taught by adults or older children and is not a natural part of a child’s drawing tool set, also emerges (Kellogg, 1967). Furthermore, “most children will have developed a repertoire of graphic equivalents or symbols for the objects in their environment including a house, a tree, a person, and so on. These symbols are highly individualized since they result from children’s conceptual understanding or schemas rather than observation of the world around them” (Roland, 1990, p. 7). One of the most
noticeable changes that occurs in the drawings of children during early elementary school involves the introduction of the baseline to organize objects in space. No longer do objects appear to float all over the page as seen in children’s earlier attempts at representation. Children are now aware of relationships between the objects that they create, and they recognize that these objects have a definite place on the ground. Initially, children will line up people, houses, and trees along the bottom edge of the paper. They soon realize, however, that a line drawn across the paper can serve as a ground, a floor, or any base upon which people or object rests. Another major development during this period is the development of X-ray drawings, in which an object appears transparent or has a cutaway where one can see in side. Typically, this type of drawing is made whenever the inside of something is of greater importance than the outside, such as the inside of a child’s house, school, or car (Roland, 1990).

By third or fourth grade, many children exhibit greater visual awareness of the objects around them. As a result, they become increasingly cognizant of proportion and detail in their drawings. They typically include body parts such as teeth, nails, hairstyles, and joints as well as elaborate costumes in their drawings of people. Sadly, however, this budding concern for making pictures look “photo-realistic” leads to a period of storm and stress, where a child’s efforts often falls short of his or her expectations leading to an increasingly critical view of his or her pictorial abilities and a reluctance to engage in drawing activities. Nevertheless, “many older children continue to draw and paint symbolically in spite of the increased concern for realism in their artwork. Indeed, children’s
emerging capacity for abstract thought enables them to begin conceiving of images as visual metaphors. When children draw or paint metaphorically, they are using images to suggest an idea or emotion beyond the specific object depicted. For instance, older children are able to recognize that a picture of an isolated tree suggests loneliness and despair, or that a stag overlooking a range of mountains suggests nobility” (Roland, 2006, p. 13).

By discovering how drawing universally unfolds in childhood (from the schematic age to the age of crisis), teachers, scholars, and psychologist have amassed the legs of the great skeleton that is children’s art. Unfortunately, even with this new found mobility, researchers have not ventured very far. Fewer still have ventured in the realm of children’s self-portraiture. Therefore, the limited literature that follows is all that is available to allow the research the ability to stitch together the stomach of the great art beast.

Bolea, Felker, and Barnes tested 1,813 subjects in grades K-4. They discovered that a wider self-esteem gap exists in females (26 points) than males (16 points). Finally, the researchers found that 91% of African American children placed themselves in a positive self-esteem group, which debunked the authors’ original assumptions. pioneered a study where eight psychologists and human development specialists rated 50 cartoon-like picture cards on a positive and negative continuum of 1-50 (1971). Using these pre-made gender-specific cards, Bolea, Felker, and Barnes tested 1,813 subjects in grades K-4. They discovered that a wider self-esteem gap exists in females (26 points) than males (16 points). Finally, the researchers found that 91% of African American children placed
themselves in a positive self-esteem group, which debunked the authors’ original assumptions.

Claire Brechet, René Baldy, and Delphine Picard used similar pre-drawn cards to study the emotional recognition of children, ages 6-11 (2009). They found a clear developmental sequence with respect to the emotions. For example, the understanding of happiness developed in 90% of children by the age of six while 70% of children recognized fear and sadness by the age of eight. Finally, disgust and anger were only recognized by 40% of eleven year olds (Brechet, Baldy, & Picard, 2009). Brechet, Bald, and Picard’s finding have major implications in the world of children’s self-portraiture as their research suggest that most children cannot recognize or draw sadness, fear, disgust, or anger until middle to upper elementary school.

Steven B. Silvern, Douglas M. Brooks, Anna Griffin, and Carole Lee carried on Bolea, Barnes, and Felker’s study on self-esteem by having 75 fourth graders draw portraits of themselves in math and reading settings (1980). Researchers placed students into high-achieving (students with an average score above 80% in both areas) and low-achieving (students with an average score below 80% in both areas) groups. They found that low-achieving students drew pictures that were taller than pictures drawn by high-achieving students (Silvern, & Brooks, 1980).

These studies, although small in number, shed light on several significant phenomena. First and foremost, males display higher levels of self-esteem in their drawings. Secondly, complex emotions, such as sadness, angry, fear, and
disgust, may not appear in a child’s self-portrait until middle to late elementary school, and finally, the height of the figure corresponds to a child academic self-esteem.

Using this knowledge, drawing stages, and theories of creationism, passed down by theorists as diverse as Darwin and Freud, this study seeks to explore the differences in the self-esteems of African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian children in early, middle and upper elementary school living in the Appalachian region. In particular, it seeks to explore the validity of Bolea, Felker, and Barne’s claim that over 90% of Negro children have an elevated sense of worth. Since this study took place in the North, specifically Michigan, instead of the South, it is feasible that racial tension was less prevalent, which may have played a major factor in the inflated self-esteems of African American children.

Therefore, in order to explore the variation in self-worth of Caucasian, African, and Hispanic children living in Appalachia, particularly Blount County, the researcher plans to enlist students to create their own self-portraits using typical school media, such as crayons, markers, and pencils. The study will also attempt to disprove the previous research regarding the assumption that African American children portray higher levels of self-esteem in their self-portraits than their Caucasian counterparts. The Appalachian region has long been considered a predominately white section of the United States, even with its lengthy tradition of housing American Indian tribal groups and African Americans. Over the past century, numerous developments such as “the Great Migration of African
Americans to northern U.S. cities after World War I; the overall trend of the United States from a rural, agrarian society to an urban, industrial one; and the general out-migration of the Appalachian population to seek better economic opportunities” have served to further isolate the rolling hills of East Tennessee (Pollard, 2004, p. 1). By 1990, the percentage of minorities had shrunk to 9%, which is even lower than Appalachia’s pre-Civil War levels (Pollard, 2004). Because of the oppression of minorities and the prevalence of lingering racial tensions resulting from enslavement, separation, or cultural assimilation, the researcher suspects that children of color will display lower levels of self-worth in their self-portraits. In order to delve beyond the squiggles and colors that make up a child’s portrait, the researcher also plans on having short two to three minute interviews with each student in order to obtain the meaning, emotions, and symbolism of his or her self-portrait.
CHAPTER II

A DISCUSSION OF THE METHODS

Phenomenological research is a poetizing activity in that "it [seeks] an incantative, evocative speaking, a primal telling… that aims to involve the voice in an original singing of the world" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 13). Phenomenology, in its purest form, is a pedagogic philosophy of actions that ultimately aims to “[fulfill]…our human nature…to [shed light] on the [essence] of who we [really] are” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 12). This empirically grounded method employs the use of interviews, conversations, participant observations, action research, focus meetings, and analysis of personal artifacts, which allows for methodological triangulation. Epistemologically, phenomenological research, which involves minimum structure and maximum depth, is rooted in the personal and interpretive realms. It permits researchers to “cut through the clutter of taken-for-granted assumptions and conventional wisdom” (Lester, 1999). Furthermore, the interpretative nature of phenomenological research enables it to be used as a basis for practical theory, which can support or challenge policy and action.

This is a phenomenological investigation of children’s pictorially displayed sense of self-esteem. The scope of this inquiry is limited to a local elementary
school located in East Tennessee. This urban Title I school currently houses 44 full-time teachers and 708 pupils. Approximately, 52.1% of these students are eligible for either free or reduced Lunch. Furthermore, the majority of students are of Caucasian (68.5%) or African (22%) descent. Students of Hispanic (8.9%) or Asian (0.4%) origin represent only a small number of the student body.

The elementary school’s classrooms follow the 1970’s “open corridors” concept, which attempted to break away from the prison-like presence of four walls and a door. The concept also implies that the activities of students will be determined, to a great extent, by their interests and needs, not by the teachers (Colleen, 2007). These child-centered, open classrooms are arranged into eight pods by grade level. Specifically, the researcher will evaluate the self-portraits of first (N=7) and second (N=12) graders, after obtaining informed consent (see Appendix A). The researcher will investigate the students’ self-portraits by examining them for the following elements: handedness; sex of figure; racial alignment; conformity of traditional gender roles; figural height; emotional display; form (tadpole versus stick figures); and the use of cutaways or cultural icons (see Appendix B).

Design and Procedure

After obtaining approval from the Maryville College Institutional Review Board (see Appendix C) and, the principal of the Elementary School (see Appendix D), the researcher recruited one, first grade and two, second grade classrooms. The researcher then arranged for one, forty-five minute interval in order to teach a modified concept development lesson on self-portraits (see
Appendix E). In order to abide by the American Psychological Association’s Code of Ethics, the researcher began the lesson by assigning students a number, 1 through 19. The researcher then asked students to recall previous self-portraits and their elements, which were recorded on a whiteboard. The experimenter then displayed five examples (2 male and 3 female) of self-portraits (See Appendix F) from the children’s book *Just Like Me: Stories and Self-Portraits by Fourteen Artists*. After examining the ethnically various models, students added traits (such as comicalness, word usage, and the portrayal of personal objects) found in the artist’s stories to their brainstorming lists. Students were then instructed to create their own self-portraits, using any media of their choosing. Afterwards, students shared their self-portraits with the whole class. Students were instructed to explain the meaning behind their self-portrait in one sentence, which began with “I feel”. The researcher then conducted one-on-one follow up interviews with students whose self-portraits displayed unusual characteristics. After delivering the instructional design, the researcher evaluated each self-portrait for the traits listed below in table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observational Categories</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex of Figure</strong></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Alignment</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conforms to Traditional Gender Roles</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figural Height</td>
<td>Shorter than 8 heads tall</td>
<td>8 heads Tall Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Display</td>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Sadness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tadpole Form</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Limbs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hat to Balance Figure</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stick Figure Form</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of X-Ray Drawings</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Cultural Icons</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Baseline</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborate Detail or Costumes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For K-2 use only:
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

This study was executed in the afternoon on Halloween Day. The researcher gathered 19 first and second graders onto a blue carpet in the middle of the pod. After completing the modified concept development lesson, the researcher asked each student to create a self-portrait using markers and crayons from a clear, plastic tub. Students drew on top of a large, dismantled cardboard box.

In order to understand the progression of pictorial stages and emotional recognition of the sample, which consisted of 11 females and 8 males, it is necessary for the researcher to provide a rich description of the participants’ self-portraits. The following descriptions are segregated by gender.

Student 1, a right-handed Caucasian female, depicts herself with ghost-white skin and full, blood-red lips. Her medium brown hair arches like a defused halo around her bulbous head. A purple, V-neck shirt is tightly wrapped around her cone-like body, which has no arms or legs. To her left is a red-headed, male
stick figure and two hearts, a cultural symbol that can be traced back to before the last Ice Age (American Experience, 2012).

Student 2, a left-handed Caucasian female, has a round, yellow button nose; brown eyes with tiny black corneas that peer to the left; and a poppy red smile that stretches from eye to eye. She dons a dark green, symmetrical necklace, as well as, a pair of chandelier-like earrings. Her medium brown and orange hair lies in wild strings, held in place by a red clip. Her garment is composed of red and green, complementary colors, with a touch of brown. Above this limbless figure, a light fixture dangles, acting as a pseudo-hat creating pictorial balance. Amidst the pink background are the bold black words: peace, justice, god, and love.

Student 3, a left-handed Caucasian female, depicts herself with popping orange eyes and eyelashes. Her nose is a black, side-turned “U”. Her orange, crooked smirk leans to the right. From her four-limbed, rectangular body a blue flower blooms, showing that “love is growing from inside [her].” The background is chalked full of hearts, smiley faces, and peace symbols.

Student 4, a right-handed Caucasian female, has “a pig-like nose” and close, pencil-gray eyes. Her lips and shirt are a “feminine”, dark pink. Her skin is a soft peach. Around her neck, she wears a garland of flowers. She also has a large head crowned with long, straight, brown locks. A yellow bow is tied to the left side of her head, creating pictorial instability. In the background, ribbons of blue merge together creating a sky line, which is interrupted by puffs of cloud and a round, yellow sun.
Student 5, a right-handed Hispanic female, paints herself as a dark-skinned beauty with an L-shaped nose and wide, red, U-shaped smile. Her eyes are squinty, without pigment and her brown hair is short, resting just above her chin. She wears a yellow and purple amulet and white jacket. “An angel and a devil”, two dark pink, stick figures, crawl on her left shoulder trying to “tell her what she needs to do.”

Student 6, a left-handed Caucasian female, has a sun-colored, kidney-shaped head topped with brown waves; a toothy smile surrounded by electric, pink lipstick; and white oval-shaped eyes encompassed by dark blue eye shadow. The figure has two long arms and is dressed in a long black turtle neck. Peace signs, hearts, and smiley faces float in the background along with the word “love.”

Student 7, a right-handed Hispanic female, paints herself as pale-skinned instead of tan. She has black dots for eyes and a black, “U” shaped smile that stretches from cheek to cheek. Her body has four rectangular limbs. Furthermore, her hands and feet are circular. She wears a pair of dark blue jeans and a plain green shirt. She also uses dark green to create grass or a baseline. A heart floats in the right picture plane.

Student 8, a right-handed Caucasian female, has a round, orange head topped with a brown arch for hair. She also has a dotted red noise and toothy red and purple smile. Furthermore, she has oval-shaped, red eyes and arched, electric pink eyelashes, which form a mandala. A pink bow, that matches her slippers, sits on the middle of her head. Her body is a blue rectangle, with two
green cut-away hearts. Her two arms curve like waves in an attempt to “reach out to others.” Swirls and a smiley face grace the background.

Student 9, a right-handed Caucasian female, has a bulbous, peach colored head with two tiny brown dots for her eyes. Moreover, she has a large, black dot for a nose and a red, crooked smile. Her hair hangs in wispy, brown waves past her shoulders. A peace symbol sways from her neck. Her limbless body is garbed in a “rainbow” colored shirt.

Student 10, a right-handed Caucasian female, has an oval-shaped head with deep blue eyes; an orange button nose; and swollen pink lips. Her brown hair is thick and square-like. Her dark-pink, triangular dress is offset by a deep green scarf. Her hands are round and bear-like with five bony fingers. The figure is surrounded by apple trees and a squiggle of turquoise sky. The sun peeks out on the upper, right side of the picture plane. The student uses a light green to create a baseline.

Student 11, a right handed Hispanic female, draws her face so that it “glows like the sun.” The lips, nose, and eyes are depicted by light peach markings. The figure’s hair is strands of pink wildly flying sideways. This four-limbed figure sports a triangular, purple dress and pink hat, which creates figural balance. Tangles of blue create the illusion of a skyline. In addition, the figure is surrounded by eleven hearts. It is also gazing to the left rather than looking directly at the viewer.

Student 12, a right-handed Caucasian male, has a brown smile that rises discretely to the left and two brown dots for eyes. This nose-less, rectangular
chap has a brown arch for hair. His attire consists of red pants, brown boots, and a shirt with black and green triangular patches. He also creates a baseline with two thin strokes of a green marker.

Student 13, a right-handed Caucasian male, sketches himself with a long, balloon-like head. His eyes are a flurry of circular scribbles. His long, oval mouth is agape showing both sadness and fear. Inside of his black, triangular body rests a red colored sad face, an x-ray drawing. Furthermore, the student’s arm is scythe-like, a singular stick with a sharp knife-like point. The background is an eerie, white wasteland.

Student 14, a right-handed Caucasian male, emphasizes geometric shapes in his self-portrait. His head resembles a jack-o-lantern, with wide circular eyes; a blue triangular nose; and an almost toothless, black smile. His figure lacks a stich of hair. Instead a black, square hat sits on top of his head. His body is composed of three, large, orange rectangles, and two, small, orange squares. His red, four-fingered hands also flail about in both directions while his green colored feet point to the left. The student’s body floats half of an inch above a thick green baseline. In addition, this student separates the skyline into two distinct spheres.

Student 15, a right-handed Caucasian male, has red, puffy eyes to show that he is “crying”. He also has an inflamed, W-shaped nose. His green outlined lips turn down into a pout, showing obvious sadness. This large headed lad has a tuff of purple colored hair, which was influenced by Student 1’s eye color choice. Like his mouth, this student’s thin arms turn downwards. A football, with
the letter “H”, is placed in the center of his being in order to show the sport’s importance in his life.

Student 16, a right-handed Caucasian male, represents himself as a “happy, pig-noise[d] smiley face.” This body-less boy has large brown eyes and a red smile that leans slightly to the right. His hair is composed of rapid diagonal and horizontal strokes. The student does not include a background in his self-portrait.

Student 17, a right-handed Caucasian male, colors himself green because he feels like he is “going to throw up.” Paradoxically, the student depicts himself as a happy child, with large puffy cheeks and an equally balanced black smile. He has a W-shaped nose and large, circular, black eyes. His large head is covered with a line of ginger-colored hair. His neck is composed of a brown square and his limbless body is cone-like. It is wrapped in a red shirt that says the school’s name. The background consists of popcorn-like clouds and thought bubbles that have the words “flying” and “hi” inside.

Student 18, a right-handed Caucasian male, composes two self-portraits. One depicts the blood and muscles on the inside of his body while the other depicts his outer-self. His “true” self has an imperfect, round head with deep blue dots for eyes. His self-portrait lacks a nose but has a large gaping smile. His head is covered with two patches of hair, one blonde and one brown. A short neck leads to a cone-like torso with two square arms. At the end of each arm is a bear-like paw with five daggers for fingers. His hips and legs are composed of
three gray rectangles. Finally, he depicts himself with two baby-blue shoes, which go in opposite directions.

Student 19, a right-handed African American male, draws himself ghost-white with a set of six, orange eyes to “keep a watch so others do not hurt [him].” He lacks a nose or ears but has a contorted, lime green smile. This figure has a black singular stroke for hair. His body is composed of four rectangles and one triangle (his right thigh). His feet are lime green and go in the opposite direction of his body. He horizontally spreads out both of his mitt-like hands. The background consists of a green baseline; a blue skyline; figures laughing in the distance; randomly placed black strokes; the peace symbol; the word “love”; and menacing birds flying in the distance.

Sixty-eight percent of these participants correctly identified their skin pigmentation or race in their drawings. Conversely, 21% of participants (one female and two males) depicted themselves with non-categorical skin tones, such as yellow and green. Moreover, 10% of the participants (one male and one female) incorrectly identified their race as Caucasian.

All participants’ figures were less than eight-heads in height. Forty-seven percent of the self-portraits were non-categorical, head-shots. The other 52% of self-portraits were only three or four heads in height. On another note, 47% of participants drew themselves with “big heads.” Furthermore, all female participants and 75% of male participants exuded happiness as conveyed by upturned U-shaped lines. Ten percent of male participants showed sadness in
their self-portraits while 5% of male participants conveyed fear or shock as depicted by elongated, ovular-shaped mouths and wide, rapidly stroked eyes.

Neither female (see Appendix G) nor male (see Appendix H) participants utilized the tadpole form, a circle combined with one or more lines in order to represent a human figure, which is pictured below in figure 2:

![Figure 2. Tadpole Drawing (Roland, 2006).](image)

Both male and female participants included a wide range of limbs in their pictures. Thirty-six percent of participants incorporated no limbs in their pictorial representations. Five percent of participants included only one limb in their pictures while 10% of students included two limbs in their pictures. Forty-seven percent of students integrated four limbs into their self-portraits, as described in figure 3 below:
Figure 3. Variation of Limbs in Children’s Self-Portraits.

26% (20% male and 80% female) used a hat or bow. Only females, 10% of the sample, used adult-taught stick figures in their drawings. Additionally, 15% of participants used the cutaway technique in their drawing. Forty-two percent of participants, one male and seven females, used cultural icons, such as peace symbols, hearts, and smiley faces, in their drawings, which are broken down by gender and occurrence in Figure 4 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Icon</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hearts</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace Symbols</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smiley Face</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4. Number of Occurrences of Cultural Icons by Gender.

Twenty-six percent of participants used a baseline in their illustrations, and 42% of the sample used geometric foundations in their portrait construction. However, 75% of the participants who did so were male. Thirty-six percent of participants (four females and two) used some form of language in their
representations. Fifty percent of this subset, however, was left-handed. In general, females used more pro-social language such as love, justice, god, and hope. Males used a combination of pro-social and personal language, such as love, hello, and the participating school’s name, which ties in to the student’s personal identity. None of the participants used elaborate or excessive detail, as seen in figure 5, in their depictions.

Figure 5. Elaborate Costume Drawing (Roland, 2006).
CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the variation in self-worth of Caucasian, African, and Hispanic children living in Southern Appalachia, particularly East Tennessee, using typical school media, such as crayons, markers, and pencils. The study, in particular, attempted to disprove Angelo S. Bolea, Donald W. Felker, and Margaret D. Barnes’ claim that Negro children display higher levels of self-esteem in their self-portraits than their Hispanic and Caucasian counterparts (1971).

This study’s hypothesis was not supported, as the number of African American and Hispanic students was minuscule. However, a number of non-generalizable phenomena came to light as a result of this study. First and foremost, girls exhibited higher levels of self-esteem in their portraits, which is unlike Bolea, Felker, and Barnes’ finding that males have higher levels of self-worth (1971). Female’s self-portraits, in general, tended to be more relationship based and prosocial utilizing abstract terms such as love, justice, and peace. Furthermore, females were more likely to use positive symbolism. Females literally surround themselves with hearts, which are seen as “the seat of the soul and the center of courage and intellect” (American Experience, 2012). They also
used six times as many peace symbols as their male counter parts. Males used less prosocial pictorial devices and tended to focus on their own thoughts and feelings. Three-quarters of the males' drawings tended to be depressive, focusing on peer torment, ominous feelings, sickness, and blood.

Secondly, this research supported Claire Brechet, René Baldy, and Delphine Picard’s claim that 90% of children recognize happiness by age 6 and that 70% of children recognize fear and sadness by age 8 (2009). Roughly 90% of this sample displayed emotional happiness. It is feasible, however, that at the tender ages of 7 and 8, they do not know how to strike the notes of anger, fear, disgust, and sadness on their emotional keyboards. It is also likely that students know how to pictorially display these emotions but do not because they crave verbal, adult admiration or positive reinforcement.

Thirdly, this research did not support Claire Brechet, René Baldy, and Delphine Picard’s claim that underachieving children, those who scored 80% or lower on math and reading assessments, elongate their figures and overachieving children stunt theirs (1980). The participants in this study varied in tier placement or academic achievement levels, as illustrated in figure 6 below.
Nevertheless, all participants drew themselves three to four heads high. In addition, this study also found that forty-seven percent of students associate self-portraits with frontal, face shots.

Fourthly, this research established that males (63%) utilize more geometric forms in their representations. Inversely, this study found that females are more likely to utilize stick figures in their illustrations. It also found that females (27%) are more likely to use hats in their drawings. Previous research asserts that this pictorial device is utilized to create figural balance. Females (10%) are also more likely to employ the cutaway or x-ray technique in their drawings.

Fifthly, this research determined that language is more likely to be used in the self-portraits of females, especially those who are left-handed. This may be due to the fact that the frontal lobe and corpus callosum develop earlier in females than in males. Furthermore, left-handers may be more likely to use language because Broca’s and Wernicke’s areas, which aid in speech production
and comprehension, are located on the right side of the brain, which is cross-laterally utilized by left-handed individuals (Holder, 2005).

This research also indicates that 47% of children, from 7-9 years of age, are likely to omit the body’s outer extremities, such as noses and ears. Furthermore, this research suggests that limb inclusion varies greatly from child to child. This limbless-limb phenomenon may be explained by Gestalt psychology that claims that the whole is more important than the parts (Cooke, 1996). In other words, the face is the central focus of the self-portrait, the door into the psyche or soul.

Finally, this research suggests that a majority of students (90%) are able to correctly reflect their ethnicity in their self-portraits. However, one must take this with causation as the realm of ethnicity is changing and mixed families are becoming the norm. A child who incorrectly identifies his or her race may come from such a family; therefore, he or she may not identify himself as Caucasian, Hispanic, Oriental, or African. Furthermore, typical school media, such as markers, limit the ability to accurately depict one’s flesh tone, as there is no tan colored marker or mix of yellow and peach.

A number of limitations inhibited this study. As mentioned earlier, the small pool of participants (N=19), especially non-white students (N=5) limited the ability to generalize the results to the entire population or even the school population.
Moreover, these students underwent a rigorous nine-week course on self-portraits, prior to when the researcher began the study, which may explain the students’ intense abstractions. Exposure to the portraits of masters, who act as the Vygotskian “More Knowledgeable Other”, may have increased the zone of proximal development or “the gap between a learner's current…level of development determined by independent problem solving and the learner’s emerging or potential level of development, as depicted in figure 7.

Figure 7. Zone of Proximal Development. (Galloway, 2007).

This scaffolding may have allowed participants to progress past Piaget’s Concrete Operational Stage, where children can logically ponder about objects and events, as well as, solve problems of number, volume, and weight, into Piaget’s Formal Operational Stage. In this stage, which is usually achieved at 11
years of age, children can reason hypothetically and abstractly, as seen in portraits 3, 5, 8, 13, 15, 17, and 19 (Atherton, 2011).

Furthermore, the researcher’s lesson may have prompted students to incorporate words or objects of love (people, sports, etc.) into their drawings. During the anticipatory set of this lesson, the event at the beginning of instruction that effectively engages students’ attention and focuses their thoughts on the learning objectives, the researcher pointed out to participants that the artists in the children’s book, Just Like Me: Stories and Self-Portraits by Fourteen Artists, employed such methods to express themselves. While verbal memory subsists for only four to five seconds, it is possible that this information was encoded into short-term memory, which can hold 3-7 bits of information (McLeod, 2007).

The time of research, Halloween, may have been a limiting factor, as Halloween elements can be found in many of the males’ self-portraits. Student fourteen’s head resembles a pumpkin with a steam-like protrusion or hat. His facial features, a triangular-shaped nose and jagged, black smile, are reminiscent of a jack-o-lantern. In addition, student nineteen’s scythe-like hand may have been a cultural reference to the grim reaper rather than a sign of emotional disturbance.

A single portrait is a snap-shot of a day not of a person. Therefore, the ability to acquire only one self-portrait per child is a great limitation. In order to accurately assess a child’s sense of self-worth, the researcher would need the
child to complete one to two self-portraits per week over the course of six months to one year.

The social, open school environment may have also influenced prosocial behaviorism in female drawings. In fact, David G. Armstrong (1975) found that children in open schools were significantly better in social adjustment and leadership skills than their self-contained school peers, who were significantly more withdrawn. Therefore, future research could investigate whether closed or open classroom environments play a hand in pictorial socialism, exhibited in this study by cultural icons, such as hearts and peace symbols, as well as, pro-social abstractions, such as a flower of love blooming from one’s chest.

Researchers could also delve into special education research, particularly the area of Autism. According to a University of California study, 40% of Autistic children prefer geometric or repetitive, linear forms, such as Thomas the Train (Simpson, 2010). Therefore, it would be interesting to see if repetition and linearization are the main duo in Autistic children’s artistic tool belt.

Researchers could also explore cultural assimilation and integration by having immigrant children create a self-portrait portfolio. Upon arriving in the United States, one might expect these children to include cultural symbols, as well as, their native language in their self-portraits. One would also expect immigrant children’s self-portraits to reflect the gender roles of their parent county. In addition, immigrant children’s self-portraits would most likely reflect a collectivistic culture. In other words, students would most likely incorporate a
majority of family members into their own self-portraits. As children absorb American culture, one would expect immigrants’ self-portraits to become more individualized. The researcher might expect to see traditional iconography gradually be replaced with American icons or universal cultural symbols. Furthermore, he or she might expect English to slowly replace the child’s native language in his or her portrait.

This study supports the cliché that “a picture is worth a thousand words.” Self-portraits can call one’s attention to inner and outer classroom conflicts. Take for example, Student 19, who depicts himself with a set of six, orange eyes keeping a tab on his laughing peers. This may be an indication that bullying prevention programs need to be initiated at this school. Student 13 sketches himself with a balloon like-head and a long, oval mouth agape with fear. This drawing can be explained in multiple ways. Perhaps, this student has low academic self-efficacy. He or she could literally be foreign or alien. Life circumstances, such as transience, abuse, or even the birth a new sibling, could be causing the student to have high levels of fear, displayed through pictorial means. The self-portrait is not a highly reliable or valid assessment tool. Teachers should be careful before jumping to conclusions, especially when looking at one or two drawing from the same child. However, when students create self-portraits in school, they become more open to sharing their thoughts and feelings, as well, as more likely to use abstract thinking. When self-portraits are employed in the classroom, they act as a mirror, reflecting the students’ internal emotions and beliefs.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX
Consent Form

Human Participant Consent Form

1. The purpose of this study is to determine whether African American and Hispanic students pictorially display lower levels of self-worth that Caucasian students. Participants in this study will be required to create a self-portrait.

2. One second grade and two first grade classrooms will be recruited to participate.

3. The duration of the experiment will be from October 2012 through November 2012.

4. The experiment will teach a modified concept development lesson about self-portraits. The researcher will then ask each student to construct his or her own self-portrait using typical classroom media (crayons, markers, pencils, etc.). The self-portrait will then be analyzed for the following elements: race alignment; gender role conformity; figural height, figural emotion; embedment of cultural icons; and use of stick figures, baselines, cutaways.

5. There will be no added risk or harm inflicted from those posed in a typical classroom setting in participating in this study.

6. All information will be kept confidential. During the study, data will be stored in a locked cabinet. Upon the study’s completion, all identifying information will be destroyed.

7. Any questions will be answered after completion of the study.

8. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and at any time if a participant feels threatened or would like to withdrawal from the study, participants can with no penalty or loss of benefits. All identifying information will be destroyed upon the study’s completion.

9. For questions about the research, contact the principal investigator:

       Cherese Cobb

       Maryville College Student

       Maryville College

       Box 2177

       502 East Lamar Alexander Park
Maryville, TN 37804
cherese.cobb@my.maryvillecollege.edu
865-237-2459

10. Your child has rights as a volunteer. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. If your child does not take part, he or she will receive no penalty. Your child may stop participating at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about your rights as a research volunteer, call or write:

Dr. Alesia Orren
Education Department
502 East Lamar Alexander Parkway
Maryville, TN 37804
alesia.orren@maryvillecollege.edu
865-981-8029

I have read and understood the information above. I give my child, ____________________________, permission to take part in this study. The researchers have answered my questions to my satisfaction. I understand that a copy of this form is available upon my request.

Parent’s Signature: _____________________________ Date: ___________
APPENDIX B
Name of Student: ____________________ Identification Number: __________

Age: ______ Grade: ______ Sex: ___________ Handedness: ______________

____Caucasian    ____African American    ____Hispanic    ____Other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observational Categories</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Non-Categorical Color (Pink, Blue, etc.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex of Figure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Alignment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conforms to Traditional Gender Roles</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figural Height</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Display</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tadpole Form</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Limbs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8 or more</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hat to Balance Figure</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stick Figure Form</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of X-Ray Drawings</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Cultural Icons</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Specific Icon: _____________________________</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Baseline</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborate Detail or Costumes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>This trait should appear in 3rd to 4th grade. If it appears in grades K-2, the student has most likely had intensive artistic training.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For K-2 use only:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Principal Researcher: Cherese Cobb  
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Alesia Orren  
Division: Education  
Title: “Man in the Mirror: A Study on How Self Portraits Reflect Self-Esteem”  
Protocol#: 18-09-12-01  
Approval Status: Approved

October 1, 2012

Dear Ms. Cobb:

The Maryville College Institutional Review Board (IRB) has carefully considered your proposal referenced above. The proposed procedures afford reasonable protection to the human participants involved and therefore you are granted approval for the study.

Your approval is effective October 1, 2012 and will expire one year from this date. Thereafter, continued approval is contingent upon submission of a progress report that must be reviewed and approved prior to the expiration date.

Approval is contingent upon your agreement to obtain informed consent from your participants, to abide by the protocol summarized in the approved IRB application, and to keep appropriate records concerning your participants.

You are required to submit to the Maryville College IRB for review any changes in procedures involving human participants prior to the implementation of such changes.

If you have any questions concerning this approval or regulations governing human participant activities, please contact Dr. Crystal Colter, Chair of the Maryville College IRB, by e-mail at crystal.colter@maryvillecollege.edu or by phone at 865.981.8269.

Sincerely,

Dr. Geoff Mitchell  
Institutional Review Board
APPENDIX D
September 14, 2012

Dear Principal:

My name is Cherese Cobb, and I am currently working on my senior thesis research at Maryville College. The Maryville College Institutional Review Board has approved this research project. I am writing to request permission from you as well. My thesis involves analysis of children’s self-portraits. I would like to teach a lesson that involves self-portrait construction with my corresponding teacher. In addition, I would like to have each student describe the meaning behind his or her self-portrait, which I will evaluate independently (using height, facial expressions, and drawing stages).

My thesis advisor, Dr. Alesia Orren (865-216-2597) will be supervising me in this process. With your permission, I would like to conduct this study during the fall term (most likely in late September and early October).

Thank you for your consideration of my request. Please let me know at your convenience whether you will approve my observation by calling (865-216-2597) or e-mailing my advisor (alesia.orren@maryvillecollege.edu), Dr. Alesia Orren. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at the number below.

Sincerely,

Cherese R. Cobb

Address:
471 Cove Circle
Maryville, TN 37801

Phone Number:
865-237-2459 (Cell)

Email Address:
cherese.cobb@my.maryvillecollege.edu
APPENDIX E
Name: Cherese Cobb

Grade Level: 1st, 2nd

Unit Topic: Art

Lesson Topic: Self-Portraits

Length of Lesson: 45 minutes

Tennessee State Standards:

Standard #1: Select and apply subject matter and ideas in the student’s own art.

Standard #2: Summarize subject matter and ideas in the student’s own art.

Standard #3: Recognize the characteristics and merits of others’ work as guided by the teacher.

Materials:

Computer Paper (1 piece per student)
Wide-rule Paper (1 piece per student)
Crayons
Markers
Colored Pencils
Number 2 Pencils
White board
Expo Marker

Self-Portrait examples from *Just Like Me: Stories and Self-Portraits by Fourteen Artists* by Harriet Rohmer

**Objectives:**

TSWBAT verbally brainstorm the attributes of a self-portrait.
TSWBAT create a self-portrait using typical classroom media, i.e. crayons, markers, colored pencils, etc.

TSWBAT explain the content of their self-portrait.

**Set/Focus:** (Put the word self-portrait on the board)

ABK/RRL/IA- Ask students to raise their hands if they have ever drawn a picture of themselves. Go around the classroom and have each student name/describe something they included in their pictures (Write these on the board).

*LL* - Today, we are going to create self-portraits.

**Instruction** (Fill out the name, gender, race, and handedness prior to instructional implementation)

1. Show examples from *Just Like Me: Stories and Self-Portraits by Fourteen Artists*.
2. Add traits (i.e. self-portraits can tell stories; include words; include items/people that we love; show our feelings/character; and be comical) found in artists’ stories to students brainstorming list.
3. Have students create their own self-portraits, using any media of their choosing, i.e. crayons, markers, pencils, or colored pencils.

**Closure:**
Have students share their self-portrait with the class, explaining the meaning behind it in one sentence "I feel…” (Record on the Drawing Checklist). **Follow up with students whose self-portraits display unusual characteristics

**Modifications:**

- Use proximity to ensure that students are on task.
APPENDIX F
Student 5

Student 6

Student 7

Student 8
Student 12

Student 13

Student 14

Student 15
REFERENCES


