

ART AS A FORM OF EMPOWERMENT FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL ADOLESCENTS

BY

KIMBERLEE KENNEDY

A CAPSTONE PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS OF THE
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ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS
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Kimberlee Kennedy

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Chair: Elizabeth M. Delacruz

Member: Michelle Tillander

Major: Art Education

Abstract

The purpose of my study was to examine what happened when I made changes to my own instructional strategies by encouraging students to make decisions and engage self-regulating strategies within my art classroom. I am particularly interested in fostering student empowerment. In order to create an empowering art environment, I implemented a modified *Backward Design Curriculum Model*, one that was merged with a *Choice-Based Model*, (also known as Teaching for Artistic Behaviors) in order to design a curriculum unit in which students were asked to take active roles in the decision making process involved in their art making. During this time, I took the role of facilitator instead of the authority-figure or decision maker. I also required my students to use self-regulating skills of goal setting and project planning.

My study examines how these approaches (Backward Design, Choice-Based Art Education, and students' self regulatory strategies) foster empowerment in students. Utilizing an

action research approach that included observations of classroom activities, weekly journaling, taking and analyzing photographs of student work, analysis of written reflections from my students and myself, and informal interviews with students, I have both fine-tuned and studied strategies for organizing and facilitating these three approaches in my curriculum. My project consists of my curriculum and my documentation of my student work available at <http://kimberleeart.wix.com/choice-based-art-ed>. My capstone paper accompanies this project and shares the background for and findings from this study.

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Research suggests that the early adolescent years mark the beginning of a downward spiral for some individuals, a spiral that leads some adolescents to academic failure and school dropout. Eccles et al., 1993, p. 90

When I was a middle school student, I became very disinterested and unmotivated. The classrooms were typically teacher driven while the concepts were rushed. I struggled at every turn. My parents and teachers decided to have me tested for a learning disability. I observed that the learning disabled classroom's work was not as rigid. When the counselor tested me, I tried to fail the test because I wanted an easy way out. My new label, attention deficit disorder, was a sign of my accomplishment in failing the test, but it was the death of my learning confidence. Later, through my experiences in high school art, I was able to overcome my diagnosis. My newfound attitude regarding art had soon transcended into other areas of academics. During my final years of high school, I was able to maintain a B average. Although, I make no claims that art will similarly provide my students with equally positive benefits, and I have no personal knowledge about my students' own personal difficulties in school, I believe that a self regulated art approach will demonstrate to students that art can be an area of success for them as it has been for me.

Statement of the Problem

Initially my primary goal was to study how my curriculum strategies could possibly empower adolescence in the art classroom. I learned however, that there are many reasons why middle school years can adversely affect adolescent empowerment. I felt that I needed a greater

awareness of why so many students struggle during these years before I could study curricular strategies used for empowerment in the art classroom.

Purpose or Goals of the Study

The purpose of this study was to learn how I could adjust my current instructional practices in art education to respond to the difficulties adolescents face in middle school. My approach was to design a curriculum unit to encourage students to become more invested in their own learning in the art room. The product of this study was a website where I have included my curriculum and instructional materials at <http://kimberleeart.wix.com/choice-based-art-ed>. Here, other art teachers can see my strategies and possibly empower their own art students.

The goals for this study included the following:

1. I will use the *Backward Design Curriculum Model* (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) fused with the *Choice Based Curriculum Model* (defined by TAB) to design a curriculum unit in which students are able to take active roles in the decision making process while I take the role of facilitator instead of decision maker. The *Backward Design Curriculum Model* is designed to have teachers first focus on what they desire for students to learn. Wiggins & McTighe (2005) explain,

Teachers must think a great deal, first, about the specific learnings sought, and the evidence of such learnings, before thinking about we, as the teacher, will do to provide teaching and learning activities... The challenge is to focus first on the desired learnings from which appropriate teaching will logically follow. (p. 14)¹

¹"The framework outlined in *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) offers a three-stage, backward design process to assist teachers in centering their curriculum and assessments on big ideas, essential questions, and authentic performances" (McTighe & Thomas, 2003, p. 55).

2. I will have students use self-regulating skills by planning out their projects and setting goals for their project's completion. Zimmerman(2002), describes goal setting as one form of self regulating strategies students should use. I will ask students to conceptualize, research, plan, and create a work of art demonstrating their power as a middle school student.

Research Questions

The following questions guided my investigation. They were as follows:

1. How can art making and student self-regulating strategies in the middle school art room, empower the adolescent learner? This question allowed me to look critically at how I created a safe environment for students to take charge of their own learning, and in doing so, take more risks. The *Choice Based Art Curricular Approach* also helped me to establish this environment for my students. The *Choice Based Art Curricular Approach* was developed in Massachusetts, and through courses and research at Massachusetts College of Art.

2. What kinds of behaviors were observed when my middle school art students were allowed to make empowering decisions based on a modified *Choice Based Art Curricular Approach* (defined by TAB)? This question guided me to observe students' engagement throughout the project. "Researchers suggest that the process of youth and adults working together can provide optimal conditions for youth empowerment and positive youth development" (Wong, Zimmerman, &Parker,2010, p. 108). I wanted to allow my students to have more control over their choices in art so it may empower them. I wanted to know how I could establish a framework where students were making decisions that met my expectations.

3. In what ways did the self-regulating strategy of student goal setting in art empower students to create their desired outcomes regarding the project's completion and appearance? This question helped me to understand the importance of goal setting may have on art related

projects. The literature (Zimmerman, 2002) stated that self-regulated skills such as goal setting were important. I wanted to see how this could affect art students and their projects. I also wanted to know how I could teach students to develop attainable goals. I wanted my students to be able to assess the outcome of their goals at the end of their art projects by describing themselves as powerful in a work of art. Attainable goals had to be addressed prior to starting the project.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

For many adolescents, middle school is the point in development when one desires independence and to develop ways to express, define, and empower themselves. Eccles et al. (1993) states, "Early adolescent development is characterized by increases in desire for autonomy and self-determination, peer orientation, and self-focus and self-consciousness" (p.94). This study demonstrated how art can address adolescents' desire for autonomy and self-determination, peer orientation, and self-focus and self-consciousness through the research and discovery of the enduring idea of human power. This study is particularly significant because art education is a method of expression and it can communicate ideas and thinking. Before empowerment in the arts can occur, I feel a safe sociological environment and the use of self-regulating strategies must also be established.

Adolescents are also immersed in a visual world. They are surrounded by images in media and entertainment. If my study is concerned with student decisions in art, the visual side of adolescent life was significant. Hetland, Winner, Vennema, Sheridan, & Perkins (2007) explain, "Students must be given the opportunity to think like artists. The arts are another way of knowing the world" (p. 1). Students in the study were drawn to ideas expressed in media and advertising. When I asked my students in the past to express themselves through images of their

choice, they often used symbols such as the Nike swoosh to define themselves. This study looked closely at how students regarded images in the media to be powerful.

Assumptions

I assumed that students would want to set goals and be autonomous during the study. I also assumed that the participants would answer my interview questions truthfully. Furthermore, I assumed the participants would make a sincere effort to complete the necessary tasks throughout the study. I assumed this because the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants will be preserved.

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to examine literature on adolescent development, sociological environment, participation and decision-making, and self-regulating strategies to fully understand empowerment in a middle school art classroom. My goal is to be informed by studies concerning the active participation of adolescents as it is related to the idea of empowerment.² Facilitating student empowerment in middle school is not an easy task due to the nature of middle school life. Adolescents face numerous challenges as they transition from elementary school. Many adolescents in junior high school find themselves in a confusing adjustment and transitional period in their lives. Eccles et al. (1993) suggest, "Concurrent timing of the junior high school transition and pubertal development accounts for the declines in the school-related measures and self-esteem" (p. 91). Due to this fact, many students disengage with the school environment showing little to absolutely no effort. Eccles et al. (1993) argued, "The

²Published literature on adolescent development, sociological environment, participation, and self-regulatory strategies were selected using the University of Florida's George A Smathers Libraries and the One Search engine in November of 2012.

motivational declines noted in middle-school students are often the result of a poor fit between the students' psychological needs and the educational environments in middle schools" (p.92).

Adolescence and Empowerment

This review will explore the idea of empowerment specific to adolescence. Adolescence for this review uses the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition, which states that adolescence is a stage of development prior to maturity. The terms *adolescence* and *adolescents* throughout the review will be used to refer to middle school students. Typically, these students are between the ages of twelve to fourteen years of age. I will also discuss the concept of *participation* during adolescence. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines participation as to have a part or share in something.

Empowerment is defined as one's ability to gain control over their lives (Braithwaite, 2000; Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004). Braithwaite, specifically sites control over personal, social, and political forces in order to improve life situations (p.193). Empowerment is a multidimensional term. It can be established through many different avenues. "It has been used synonymously with such measures as coping skills, mutual support, social support systems, personal efficacy and competence, locus of control, self-esteem, and self sufficiency. Individual empowerment is positively correlated with self-efficacy, positive self-esteem, and self-concept or personal competence" (Braithwaite, 2000, p. 193). In my review of studies relevant to my project, empowerment was found to be established through strong teacher relationships, active participation, and teaching/learning strategies used to ensure achievement.

The Nature of Middle School

Studies suggest that the nature of middle school and the timing of adolescent development can negatively impact student performance. Adolescents experience many changes

during their middle school years. Wigfield (2005) observes, "These changes can have a significant impact on a variety of developmental outcomes, including academic achievement, self-concept development, and achievement motivation" (p. 112). Eccles et al. (1993) notes that, "The early adolescent years mark the beginning of a downward spiral for some individuals, a spiral that leads some adolescents to academic failure and school dropout" (p. 90).

The nature of middle school is quite often difficult for students that transition from elementary to the middle school. Commonly at the middle school level, teachers are specialized in their content areas and teach a large number of students throughout the day. Eccles et al. (1993) observes that, "Junior high school classrooms, as compared with elementary school classrooms, are characterized by less personal and positive teacher–student relationships" (p. 93). Teacher relationships are important to establish as adolescents pull away from their parents. As Eccles et al. find, "There is a temporary increase in family conflict, particularly over issues related to autonomy and control, during the early adolescent years" (Eccles et al., 1993, p. 91). Wigfield (2005) further notes that, "Relations with teachers and counselors can become a very important source of support to many early adolescents, particularly because their relations with their parents often become more distant during this time period" (p.116). Although it is true for all ages, clearly, students at this phase in their life need to feel accepted and safe in the classroom.

A Safe Environment

The fact that safe, accepting, and welcoming environment is essential for student participation to occur seems self-evident. What is not so evident are the means by which teachers should take an active role in creating a safe environment. Wong, Zimmerman, and Parker (2010) explain, "Adults possess the authority to create safe environments and youth-centered conditions

where young people feel welcomed and, therefore, are willing to share their views" (p. 106). This environment should be welcoming as well as encourage students to share their views openly.

"Children must therefore be able to express their views without fear of rebuke or reprisal" (Lundy, 2004, p. 933). Eccles et al. (1993) agrees, " Adolescents need a reasonably safe... environment that provides a zone of comfort as well as challenging new opportunities for growth" (p.94). Strong relationships with teachers and peers can also make an environment feel safe.

Teachers and Peer Relationships. Studies of adolescents in the classroom stress the impact of teacher and peer relationships on the overall feeling of safety in a classroom environment. Cummings (2010) explains, "Art educators must understand the role of the classroom environment and socialization on students' learning, and must take steps in developing classroom environments that promote care and acceptance" (p. 65). Patrick, Ryan, and Kaplan (2007) elaborate, "Feelings of support, caring, and encouragement from peers facilitate participation in academic tasks by increasing confidence and ameliorating distracting anxieties" (p. 84). Although peer relations are important, quite often the transition from elementary to middle school can harm these relationships. Wigfield (2005) explains,

Unfortunately, the middle school transition often disrupts early adolescents' friendships, as they go to a new school and may not have much contact with their friends from elementary school, and as children from the same elementary school often are split into many different classes and groups in middle school. (p. 116).

The nature of middle school also affects teacher relationships with students. Although relationships with peers were valuable to the overall environment, teacher relationships seemed to carry particular significance. Eccles et al. (1993) explains, "Junior high school classrooms, as

compared with elementary school classrooms, are characterized by less personal and positive teacher–student relationships" (p. 93). This was thought to be an effect of departmentalized teaching and large student loads. This makes it difficult for teachers and students to form close relationships. Wigfield (2005) also explains the negative side of spending less time with students in middle school,

The explanations frequently given for such negative changes are the differences in the amount of time that elementary and middle school teachers spend with their students and the number of students that middle school teachers teach. Middle school teachers only see students one period per day, making it more difficult to get to know them, and also teach many more students (p.116)

"Caring relationships, however, are not a priority in the hierarchy of curricular and policy concerns in our schools" (Noblit, 1995, p. 680). Therefore, middle school teachers need to be aware of these factors and make a conscious effort to build relationships with students. Bondy, Ross (2008) suggest a simple set of strategies "Day-to-day interactions are important ... a smile, a hand on the shoulder, and the use of a student's name" (p.55).

Self-Regulation: Ability to Reflect, Motivate, and Set Goals

"There is a large body of research showing that students who have been trained in self-regulation processes during learning such as goal setting, self-monitoring, and self-reflection processes display high levels of motivation and achievement" (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 539). Students that use self-regulatory strategies reflect on their performance and are motivated to achieve. Cleary & Zimmerman (2004) explain the power of reflection and self-evaluation, "Self-evaluation allows a person to judge how well he or she performs by systematically

comparing one's performance with specific mastery criteria, with earlier levels of one's behavior, or against the performance of others" (p. 539). Zimmerman (2002) also explains, "These learners monitor their behavior in terms of their goals and self-reflect on their increasing effectiveness. This enhances their self-satisfaction and motivation to continue to improve their methods of learning" (p. 66).

Self-regulating students monitor and reflect their learning by setting goals in a mindful manner. "Self-regulation involves learners who proactively direct their behavior or strategies to achieve self-set goals. They also rely on affective, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral feedback to modify or adjust their strategies and behaviors when unable to initially attain their goals" (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 538). Although goal setting and self-regulatory skills are important, teachers rarely ask students to reflect on their performances. Zimmerman (2002) explains, "Few teachers encourage students to establish specific goals for their academic work or teach explicit study strategies. Also students are rarely asked to self-evaluate their work or estimate their competence on new tasks. Teachers seldom assess students' beliefs about learning" (p.69).

Many middle school students lack self-regulatory strategies but are able to learn the necessary skills. Zimmerman (2002) explains, "Recent research shows that self-regulatory processes are teachable and can lead to increases in students' motivation and achievement" (p. 69). One way teachers can teach self-regulatory strategies is through goal setting and creating a plan for achieving goals. Also, students can self record their own performance outcomes. "In an era when these essential qualities for life-long learning are distressingly absent in many students, teaching self-regulated learning processes is especially relevant" (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 70)

Voice and Decision-Making in Developing Self-Regulation Skills

Within the last decade, a child's voice and the opportunities afforded her/him to make decisions has been a global concern. Graham & Fitzgerald (2011) state, "Encouraging children's participation, should both be considered as a basic right, and as a precondition for promotion of health and well being" (p. 447). "A development which is often attributed to the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child" (Lundy, 2007, p. 927). The United Nations established Article 12, which gave children the right to make decisions and it communicated the importance of children having opportunity to have a voice. Adolescents need to feel as if they have a voice and are able to make decisions in the classroom. Stuart (2002) explains, "The adolescent's values, explorations and declarations must be listened to, acknowledged, constructively criticized and debated, and encouraged if he is to develop and attend to the evolving voice of universal principles within himself" (as cited in Kohlberg, 1984).

Art is a central place for students to communicate their voice. Hope (1994) states, "It is essential to engage students in activities where power from art is used to shape their opinions" (p. 8). The nature of middle school can however affect the possibilities for students to make decisions in the classroom. Eccles et al. (1993) also explains, "Junior high school classrooms, as compared with elementary school classrooms, are characterized by a greater emphasis on teacher control and discipline, and fewer opportunities for student decision making, choice, and self-management" (p. 93).

An optimal learning environment is one that allows students to make decisions while the teacher assists in the decision making process. "A field examining the empowerment and wellness potential of youth–adult partnerships is emerging (as cited in Jennings et al. 2006). "Researchers suggest that the process of youth and adults working together can provide optimal

conditions for youth empowerment and positive youth development" (Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker 2010, p. 108). Stuart (2002) also explains,

Educators who seek the opinions of students, who promote learning that deals with issues of relevance to students' present lives, who remove the fear of humiliation and failure for expressions of divergent thinking, and who display respect for the opinions of all children and adults in the school strengthen the child's confidence to voice opinions. (p.255)

If students are able to make decisions, they will become naturally more interested in what they are learning. "The benefits of interest extended beyond comprehension too. When interested in a topic, students are likely to earn higher grades and test more successfully" (Hunter & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003, p. 28)

Choice Based Art Education

Choice based art education is a pedagogy that offers students choices in the art classroom. Douglas and Gaspardi (2010) explain, "Choice-based art education provides both philosophy and practical structure for instruction to be given in the context of work chosen by students" (p. 1). Students become the artist and are challenged to create art that reflects their ideas and interests. "This concept supports multiple modes of learning and teaching for diverse needs of students" (TAB, 2011). It allows students to work from their strengths and draw from prior experiences.

A choice based art classroom is structured very different from most art classrooms. Traditionally art classrooms are instructed in a whole group setting where all students are asked to complete the same project. "The teacher designs the lesson, gathers the supplies, gives motivational demonstrations and examples, and then coaches students to be able to make the preconceived end product" (Douglas & Gaspardi, 2010, p. 1). In a choice based classroom

however, students are free to express themselves in different ways and work at their own speed. The studio is arranged in centers for exploration, inquiry, and learning. "These centers function as mini art studios, complete with instructional information, menus, resources, materials and tools" (TAB, 2011). Students move throughout the centers to create works of art. Students can work independently or within a group. Hathaway (2008) explains, "Students can persist with one project over many weeks or a variety of activities during a single class period" (p. 36).

The choice based classroom starts with a short mini lesson and demonstration of a new material or technique. "The lesson addresses concerns of interest or importance for the whole class, but is kept short to allow maximum studio work time" (Hathaway, 2008, p. 36). After the mini lesson, students may move onto their center of choice or stay behind with the instructor to elaborate more on information provided during the mini lesson. At the end of class, students are asked to discuss and reflect the work being done in class. Hathaway (2008) explains, "This is the time to highlight the day's work and to celebrate innovation, craftsmanship and ideas" (p. 37). Students then leave a choice based classroom with a greater understanding of what other students' strengths are and learn from peers.

Why is This Relevant?

This literature review provided me with the in depth knowledge regarding adolescent development, sociological environment, participation, and self-regulatory strategies. It was interesting to see how everything was correlated. Each element had an effect on the other. For instance, students that had strong relationships with their teachers would participate more. These students would also establish basic self-regulatory strategies to please the teacher. However, the aspects can negatively affect the other. A disconnected student is less likely to participate or use self-regulatory strategies.

Methodology

The methodology for my study followed the qualitative action research method. Patton (2002) explains, "Action research aims at solving specific problems within a program, organization, or community" (p. 221). May's (1993) definition further informs my methodology, "Action research is always field-based, in situ, lending itself to ethnographic methods such as keeping field notes or journals, participant observation, interviewing, engaging in dialogue, audio taping, and collecting and analyzing documents and student work" (p. 118). The goals of my study were to increase my students' participation in art, while possibly empowering them. To understand more about student participation, I established a modified *Choice Based Art Curriculum* fused with the *Backward Design Curricular* model and studied how my students reacted in order to improve my own curriculum.

The sampling for my research followed the critical case sampling. Patton (2002) describes critical case sampling as, "The existence of a critical case is a statement to the effect that "if it happens there, it will happen anywhere," or vice versa, "if it doesn't happen there, it won't happen any-where" (p. 236). I chose two of my art classes to yield the information I needed for my research. I generalized that if my instructional strategies increase participation in these classes, then it would most likely work in other art classes or classrooms. Through qualitative action research and critical case sampling, I collected and analyzed evidence, and discovered findings to answer my research questions.

My method was to study the effects of my instructional strategies used during a lesson on power symbolism and the effects of allowing students to make more decisions in art. The project was a three-part project. For the first part of the project, students learned about power symbolism through researching artists and their works. The instruction here was based on the *Backward*

Design Curricular Model. Then students were asked to discuss and plan how they would express themselves as powerful in their own artwork. For the final part of the lesson, students developed goals for their art regarding its appearance and a time of completion. I observed how these strategies affected students' and the project's outcome.

Participants

The students in this study were in the seventh and eighth grade and were between the ages of twelve to fourteen. I asked the students in two of my drawing art classes to volunteer and participate in the study. The first drawing class had 25 students enrolled. In this class 20 students had participated in the study. Thirteen students were female and six were male. The second drawing class also had 25 students enrolled. In this class 21 students had participated in the study. Eleven were female and ten were male. There were a total of thirty-one eighth graders and ten seventh graders that participated in the study. Forty-six percent of the entire middle school population qualified for free and reduced lunch (a measure of poverty or at risk). More than 95% of the entire middle school population was Caucasian. I received IRB approval for this study through the University of Florida (See Appendix). I have also obtained written permission from my school principal in order to conduct research with the participants. As required by the UF IRB office, the parents consented for their children to participate in this study, and students agreed to participate through their assent.

Research Site

Farmington is a mid-western town in St. Francois County located 60 miles south of St. Louis in the Lead Belt region in Missouri in the United States. As of the 2010 U.S. Census, the population was 16,240. Farmington is both rural and an agricultural region. The area is home to several wineries and farmlands. The research took place in the public Farmington Middle

School. During the time of the study, the school serviced 607 students. It is the only public middle school within the district. The research was conducted inside the art classroom within this building.

Data Collection and Instrumentation

Data collection included a mix of interviewing, observation, and student journal analysis. The practice consisted of naturalistic inquiry, qualitative data, and content analysis. Interviews were conducted with students after class. Patton (2002) explains the goal of interviewing, "Qualitative researchers seek to understand the perceptions, feeling, and knowledge of people is through in-depth, intensive interviewing" (p. 21). I conducted in-depth interviews with participants to find out how they viewed the choice based art classroom and what experiences they were having. May (1993) explains why this is important, "Teachers try to become more conscious of what they are thinking and feeling as they plan for and engage in practice, and pay closer attention to what students say and do in class in an effort to understand what sense students are making of their learning" (p. 118). Toward the end of my study, additional in-depth interviews were conducted to determine if student behaviors had changed and how students viewed our modified *Choice Based Curriculum* approach.

I also observed classroom activities, collected data about student participation and conversations, and student reactions. These observations were kept in my journal and mainly descriptive. Patton (2002) explains the value of descriptive data, "The data must be sufficiently descriptive such that the reader can understand what occurred and how it occurred. The observer's notes become the eyes, ears, and perceptual senses for the reader" (p. 23). My data collected through observations was to simply describe what had occurred in my art room. It

described students, activities, interactions, and the setting. My descriptions also included direct quotations from the participants.

The data in this study was collected within two drawing classes. The classes are held every other day during a fifty-minute period. The study was conducted over a five-week period. The data was collected inside my own middle school art classroom. I also analyzed student work through photographs I had taken.

Data Analysis Procedures

My data analysis procedures were to follow the methods of inductive analysis. Patton (2002) explains, "Inductive analysis involves discovering patterns, themes, and categories in one's data" (p. 453). These patterns, themes, or categories emerged from observations throughout the investigation. Patton (2002) further explains this process, "Data is content analyzed to identify the patterns of experiences participants bring to the program, what patterns characterize their participation in the program, and what patterns of change are reported by and observed in the participants" (p. 250). Once I had identified the patterns, I placed the patterns into meaningful categories and themes.

The first step of my analysis was to develop a coding scheme. I did this by reading through my descriptive field notes and interviews, and organizing the data into topics. These topics were wrote in shorthand on the margins of the data that I collected. After coding was done, I looked for notable themes throughout the data. "Once the themes were constructed, using either participant generated constructions or analyst-generated constructions, it was sometimes useful to cross classify different dimensions to generate new insights about how the data could be organized" (Patton, 2002, p. 468). After the data had been coded, analyzed, and categorized, I interpreted emergent findings in relation to my research questions. This step also involved

interpreting the beliefs and the behaviors of my participants along with the programs' outcomes and impact.

Limitations

The limitations of this study restricted my area of study regarding what I was able to study in a limited time frame, and with a limited population (Midwest, middle school age, small town, Caucasian, mixed income). Areas outside my scope of study also include adolescents empowered through their community, physical environment, and personal motivation.

Findings

My study's purpose was to introduce a modified *Choice Based Art Curriculum* fused with a *Backward Design Curricular Model* (Wiggins &McTighe, 1998) into my middle school art classroom and observe how choices and the self-regulating strategy of student goal setting could empower the adolescent learner. I first established the concept of power as a big idea for my curriculum unit, using the *Backward Design Curricular Model*. I then observed how choices affected student behaviors and the overall outcome of the artwork. The following six sections detail my process of setting up my curriculum, what the students did, what my findings were, and discussions, recommendations and conclusions I made about the study.

The Process

Developing and getting the necessary approval for my study was the primary goal before implementing the curriculum. I informed my administration and received approval to begin the development for my unit. I also presented all the information to the IRB board at the University of Florida. After approval from the board, I discussed the study with my students' parents by phone and prepared them for the IRB forms that they would be receiving. Once I received and collected all the necessary IRB forms (see Appendix), I began to implement my curriculum.

To create my unit based on the *Backward Design Model*, I first had to decide on an empowering idea. While researching for an empowering idea, I came across the artist, Laylah Ali, whose art concerns power. I thought that if my study's goal was to empower my students, then the topic of human power in art would be an interesting combination. Hope (1994) states, "It is essential to engage students in activities where power from art is used to shape their opinions" (p. 8). However, developing the unit was very difficult. Much of what I saw in Laylah Ali's work concerned the negative side of human power. I wanted my students to remain positive, but I was unsure how to go about doing so. I noticed that some of her pen and ink drawings could be perceived as positive depictions of power. Then I thought what if students developed a piece of art that displayed their own power. It was complicated to find other artists and works that demonstrated human power. After watching the PBS's (Public Broadcasting Station) Art21 video on Laylah Ali, I noticed that her work had several different examples of power symbolism. Her characters had distinctive characteristics of power in their facial expressions, hand gestures, and clothing. I then began to search for other artists' work that had those same characteristics. I decided on the artists Diego Velázquez, George Littlechild, Faith Ringgold, Howard Miller, Norman Rockwell, and Shepard Fairey.

To establish the Choice Based aspect of the curriculum for my study, I had to organize the art room so that the materials were easily accessible for the different art media. I put supplies for each center in containers so students could easily find their art materials. I also made *menus* (a strategy suggested by *Choice-Based* advocates) so students could use them to examine resource artists, find art examples, and refer to steps they could use to establish their designs and plans. This type of *Choice Based Art Curriculum* is known as "modified choice" defined by TAB *Continuum of Choice-Based Learning and Teaching* website. It is defined as modified choice

because I chose the content (theme) of the students' work and limited their choices to certain materials.

The Students

The first week of the curriculum was designed to have students identify and make predictions about powerful people. Using the *Backward Design Approach*, the essential questions for this part of the unit were: (1) What subconscious impressions can people get from people of power; (2) Why do people in power adorn themselves; and (3) How are people of power distinguished? To answer these questions, students worked in groups, searched through magazines, and created posters within their groups to display people they thought had power and people they thought did not display power. The students then individually drew rough sketches of people that displayed power, and they identified characteristics of power in their work. The second and third week of the curriculum were designed to have students explore how human power was expressed in art. They were to make connections between iconic symbols of power and observe how body language, color, and text in art can affect the perception of power. The essential questions for this part of the unit were: (1) What techniques are used to create different types of art that portray powerful people; and (2) Why are artists concerned with power? To answer these questions, students researched and read information (see: <http://kimberleeart.wix.com/choice-based-art-ed>) about the artists. Students viewed several video clips regarding the artists and their works. Students also reflected and discussed the artists' works in their journals.



Figure 1. Students predicting about human by drawing power smilies.

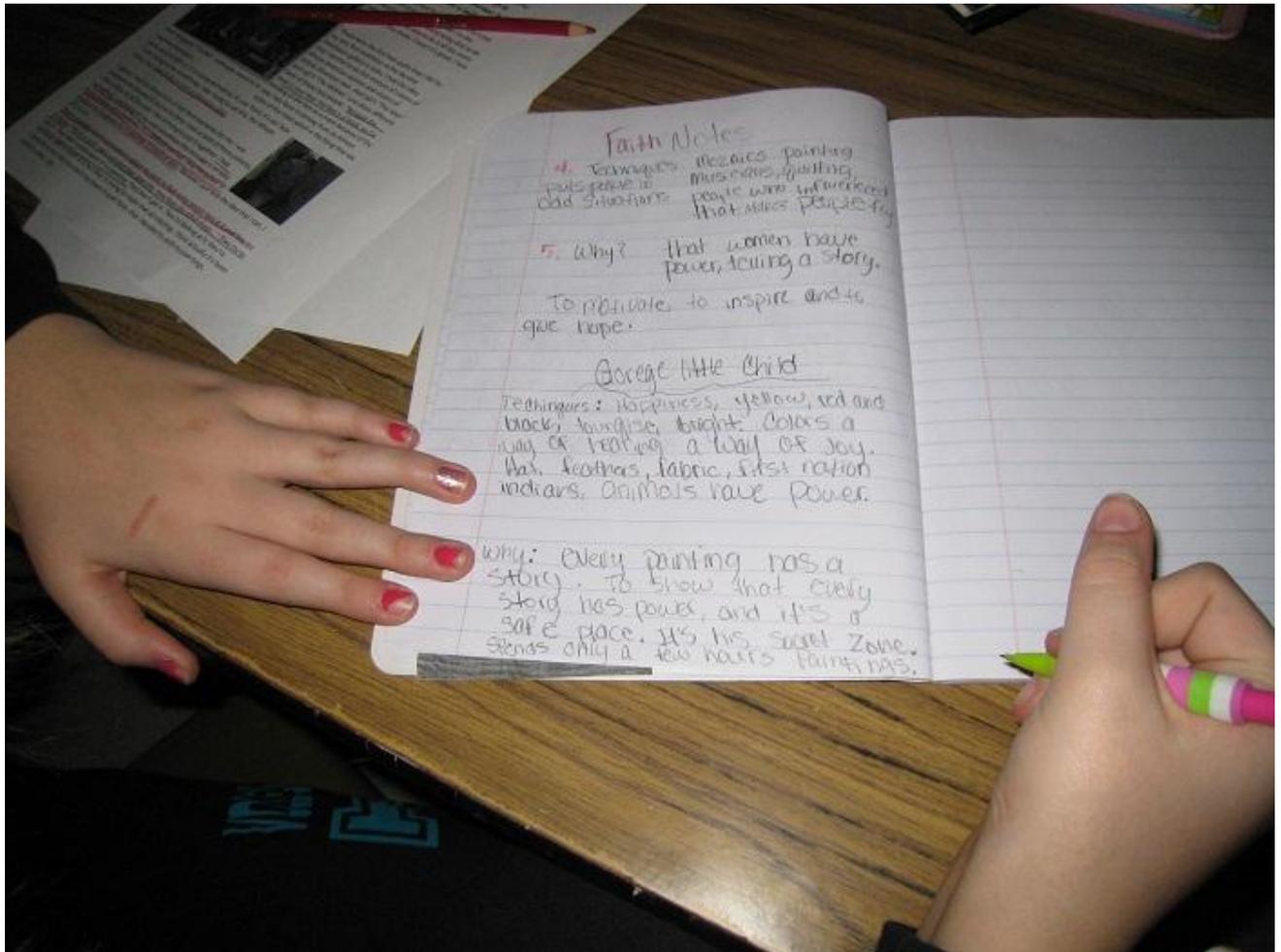


Figure 2. Student journals about Faith Ringgold and George Littlechild.

At the end of third week, students viewed a dry erase animation video that I created about my own power as an adolescent. This video was used to transition students into thinking about their own power and to reflect on being more powerful themselves. The essential questions for this part of the unit were: (1) In what admirable ways do middle school students have power? (2) What do middle school students have the power to change? (3) What gives you your power? (4) What will you change in order to have more power? After each of these questions were explored, students used their responses to create a work of art that represented their own power. The work had to have two or more of the power symbols students learned about in class. They had a choice

between the media of paint, pen and ink, colored pencil, and collage. Students were asked to do a pencil drawing that demonstrated their ideas for their work. This part of the curriculum unit is still underway as I complete this paper. More information regarding the students' progress and artwork is found on my website: <http://kimberleeart.wix.com/choice-based-art-ed>.

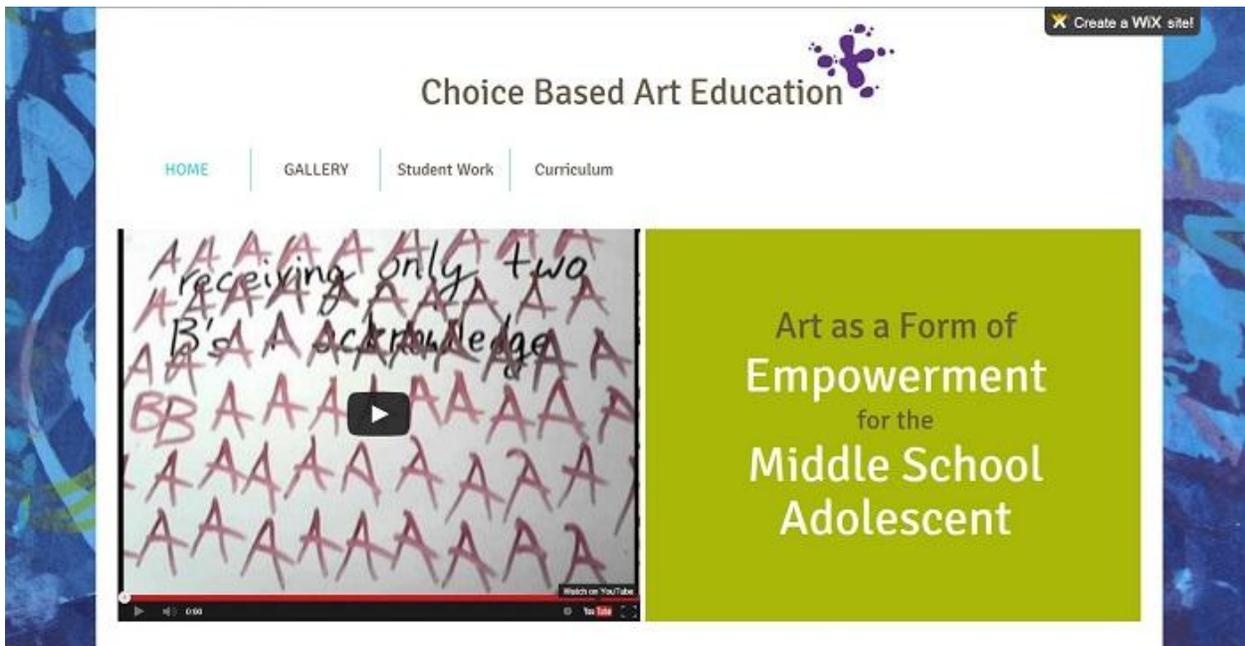


Figure 3. Image illustrates my Choice Based Website.

My Findings

Throughout the beginning of my curriculum unit, I found a common theme in the students' choices and descriptions of power. Most students thought of power and described power in a materialistic way. During class and group discussions, I heard students say, "He is rich, so he has power," or "She has nice clothes that display her power." Most of the images that students chose to demonstrate human power were photographs of famous people in the entertainment industry or adults that were well dressed. When I prompted students to explain why they thought of power in terms of money, clothes, houses, and cars, the responses I received

were insightful. One student replied by saying, "I think students think that way from our own experiences at school and other things. When you see a popular person, they always have brands like North Face, Nike, and other big brands." Another said, "That is what we were taught. It's what's advertised. It's what we want." Other students attributed this to television. They said, "Students use these terms to think of power because it's what they normally see on T.V. When a commercial comes on for something, it's usually a celebrity talking about it. When we think of power, we automatically think of rich people." While another explained it as, "Students think of it like that because that's all they have ever known, like seen on T.V." It was clear to me the majority of my students thought that advertising and media had influenced what they thought about powerful people.

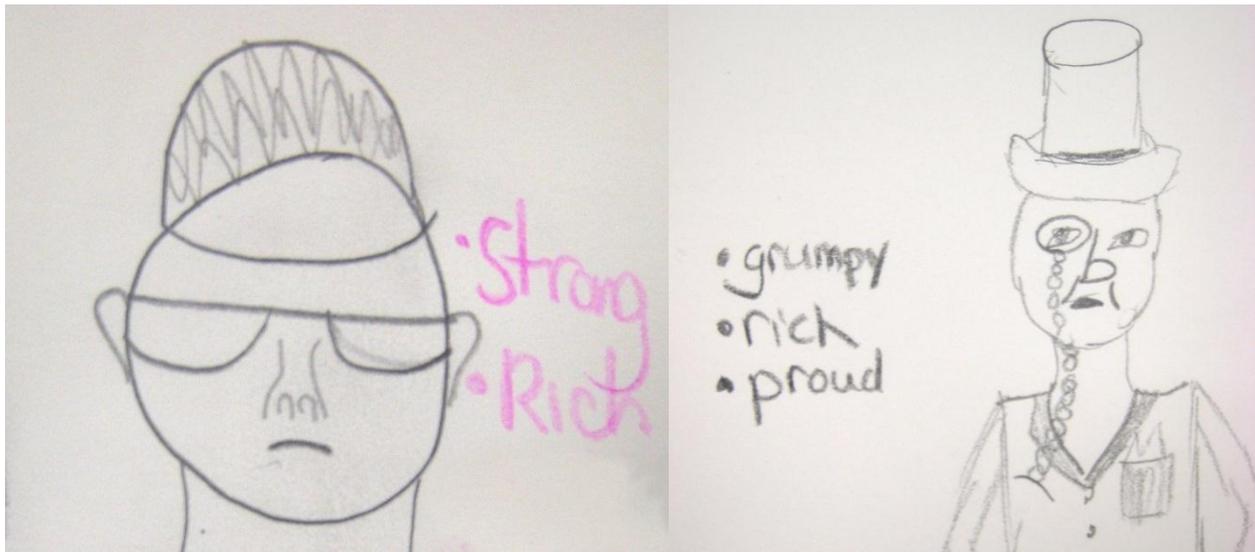


Figure 4. Images illustrate how students had a materialistic view of human power.

I was hoping that my students' artwork would have more depth and character rather than merely conveying materialistic depictions of power. I wanted them to see other aspects of power and factors that could contribute to one's personal power, for instance: confidence, honesty, empathy, humility, caring for others, authority, etc.

In order to help students refine their views about power, I thought that my life story might help them shift their focus to themselves. It was not my intention in the beginning of this project to share my life story. My intention was for students to see themselves as powerful. One night at home, I just felt the drive to include it into the lesson. I wanted students to know that I have been there (where they are now), that life is sometimes hard, and they have the power to get through it by working hard. Before the viewing of the video, I asked students to look for and identify fifteen examples of power in the video I was about to show them. I told them that we would play a game after trying to find the fifteen examples. I never told them beforehand that the video was about my past. I'm a firm believer in letting my students find their own meaning and understanding without telling them what I want them to know. Students were very quiet throughout the movie. I only got a few glances in my direction when the video said, "Learn from Mrs. Kennedy." Both classes in the study were very quiet when I turned the lights on. Then I announced, "That was my story and how I became who I am today." Then to lighten the mood, I had them work diligently in groups to find the fifteen examples of power. The data that I received from that day was very significant to my study and to me as an educator. I discovered that I might have influenced their work in art but also their work ethic in the future. Braithwaite (2000) defines empowerment as, "In a very general sense, the term refers to one's capacity to acquire understanding and control over personal, social, and political forces in order to improve life situations " (p. 193).

My informal interviews with students were significant to this piece of the study. One response that I received from a student regarding their work ethic was, "I will, next year, pay more attention in class and not talk as much as I always do." Another student explained, "You inspired me to always try my best in my work." While someone else responded, "What I took

from your video is that I should not give up when things get hard and that I am capable of more. I should push myself to be better." That same student also said, "I don't always behave as best as I should. I talk a lot and don't get the best grades. By seeing your video, inspires me to push more to get better grades because if you can go through all that, I can raise a C to an A." I also found that the video had changed my students' views about power, which was my intention. One student explained, "I learned that everyone has power even if you're rich or poor." Whereas another student said, "Everybody can have power and everyone has a purpose in life. We may just not know it." One student spoke about the power to change, "My power is to be able to change myself. If I feel like I do something wrong, that I have the power to change that and not do it again."

After studying the data, I wanted to be sure that there was no coercion in the questioning. I found that all my questions were very general. The questions I asked were: What did you learn from the lesson today? What do you feel is your power? How does this lesson relate to your life? Although my intention was to empower my students through their choices, my life story video and the lesson on power seemed to have more of an immediate outcome.

There was one particular girl that had shown considerable impact from my story and the lesson. She is currently enrolled in two different art classes this semester and I have had her several times in the past. She also comes to my room whenever her work is done in other classes. Some days, she arrives in a good mood but most days she looks sad. She seldom sits up straight and rarely smiles. Her face usually displays some type of grimace. After the day that her class saw the video of my story, she came to me during her lunch hour. She presented me with her rough draft drawing on power. She says, "Because of you, I'm starting to believe that dreams really come true. I never used to believe in those things." Her work displayed herself in a light

completely opposite from her work in the past. She says in her journal, "I will be happier. I will have more faith and hope. I will believe in myself." I believe that this student was empowered by the lesson. Braithwaite (2000) explains this phenomenon, "Individual empowerment is positively correlated with self-efficacy, positive self-esteem, and self-concept or personal competence" (p. 193). My student began the work for her design before the rest of her classmates. She also decided to buy her own canvas and began painting at home. Regarding her art, she states, "I want my work to show I believe in myself and try harder that the impossible is possible." Her thought processes and imagery far exceeded my expectations.

The final activity of the study was to create a work of art displaying the student's power as an adolescent. Students were allowed to choose from four different medias. Their choices were painting, pen and ink, colored pencil, and collage. A large number of students chose to paint or use colored pencil. The images they used to describe their powers most often related to areas they currently excel in. Most students used sports to describe their powers. Although they added depth to their pieces by adding academics, art, music, friends or family. The majority of the students drew themselves in a powerful pose displaying their hand in a clenched fist or with both hands on their hips. One student developed her idea from researching the artist Faith Ringgold. Ringgold illustrates characters flying over buildings. By flying over the building, the character is claiming the building to become more powerful over it. The student drew herself flying over a softball field, claiming it so that she can have more power over her sport. One interesting thing about this piece was how the student wrote power. The top of the page read P - W - R and at the bottom of the page, rested the O and E. If one would visually raise the O and E it would spell POWER. At first, this was not clear to me. I asked her what the letters represented. She said, "It spells power. I did that because power is not something easily found." I told her that

I thought she was brilliant and I loved her idea. Another student drew herself cheering at a boys' basketball game. At first glance, I thought the piece lacked depth. When I asked her to describe how her piece displayed her power, she said, "The game is tied, which means hope for the future. The team's seats on the sidelines are all empty. This demonstrates how I feel that everyone should be included in the game. Finally, the microphone and music notes display my power to sing." I was amazed at the amount of thought this student had put into the imagery in her work. These descriptions above only begin to describe the work that came out of this study since students were allowed the freedom to express their powers how they chose. Refer to my website to see all the students' finished works <http://kimberleeart.wix.com/choice-based-art-ed>.

In the data that I collected, students responded to the choices by saying that it gave them more power and freedom. A couple of these responses were, "I like having more choices in art because it gives me more freedom," and "Having choices gives me freedom and gives me power over what I want." Also another student responded by saying, "Having more choices lets us have more power." I observed that students were more attentive to their work than I had seen in the past. I saw students that were known as talkers to work for longer periods of time without talking. Students that often did not complete tasks were working attentively in class every day. Students also supported these observations. One student stated, "My art work is better because I would rather do something I like to do than something I don't." This student said, "Choices make me work a lot harder. If I enjoy the project, then I want it to look good. If I don't enjoy it, I probably won't try near as hard." Another stated, "Choices gives us the feeling of freedom. If we feel like we're being controlled, we won't work as hard." The possible empowerment that I witnessed was that students worked more attentively than in the past. Cleary & Zimmerman (2004) similarly observe, "Middle-school students can be empowered to exert greater control

over their learning so that they become more proactive, self motivated learners" (p. 538). One question that I still hope to answer is whether that drive came from the choices part of the curriculum or the lesson on power. I would assume that both had a considerable effect.

Discussion

My goal for this study was to modify my current instructional practices so that students were able to take active roles in the decision making process. I will continue to adjust my instructional practices to allow students more choices in the future. In the past, I always had students create the same art project using the same media. I did this because that was how I was taught in art. It was also because lessons were easily managed while students were creating. I now see the importance of allowing more choices in art. Students in this study worked harder and they preferred having more choices. I now see the benefits of allowing choices. It offers students more opportunities to think about their own creativity rather than forcing them to create what I want.

One aspect of the study I did not expect was that the students would be empowered by a single lesson and my story about power more so than the choices they were allowed to make. Although the choices allowed them the freedom they so often seek, I felt that they attached more to the reality of my story and struggles that I encountered at their age. My students learned that I related to their life and the struggles they face every day. They experienced firsthand the empathy that I have for their situation in life.

Sharing my story was very difficult. Although I have shared it with a few colleagues, I kept the knowledge of my past a secret from most. I kept it from others not because I was worried about their opinions, but because it would mean that I would have to admit to myself that I had struggled, that I don't have to prove to myself anymore, and that I am smart and fully

aware of my intelligence. Through the work completed in this study and sharing my life story, I am now confident in what I have become.

I fully expected students to have their projects completed when I created the plan for this study. Although, I had to take the lesson in a different direction by adding my life story, I also added other artists to the lesson, which took a bit more time. Since the study was intended to take place in short length of time, I could not force my students to work at a pace that was not conducive to their own thought processes. Further outcomes of this study and the students' finished work are available on my website: <http://kimberleeart.wix.com/choice-based-art-ed>.

Throughout the study several things went well in this curriculum unit and my study of it. I thought that the lesson's transition from my students' materialistic ideas of power to deeper understandings of power had a considerable affect on the students' work and their ideas of power. The activities where I had students work together and move around the room had aided in their engagement and motivation to learn the material. I also felt that allowing my students more choices had a positive effect on the work. Having students use self-regulating strategies by planning out their projects and setting goals helped to put the project into the hands of the students. Students took ownership of their projects and this aided in the development of the study.

If I were to do the study over, there would be several things that I would change. For one, I would have students read less. Although, I feel that reading is important in art, I had numerous materials for students to read. Students did not seem to enjoy this aspect of the study. I still would have them read the material, however I would limit the reading to the key ideas I wanted students to understand. I also would have students move around more to work with other

students. When I had students work in pairs and switch every few minutes, the engagement was higher than normal.

Recommendations

Before I started the study, I had previously implemented a full *Choice Based Art Curriculum* unit. My study involved a modified *Choice Based Curriculum*, where I chose the concept that the students would learn and express in their art. Though I do not have much experience with this type of curriculum, I did find some aspects of the full *Choice Based Curriculum* problematic. The thing that I observed in the *Choice Based Model* was that most of the students' art lacked focus. They would change centers quite regularly. The work that came from those weeks of art making lacked depth. In my modified *Choice Based curriculum* study, students were expected to establish a goal for the project's completion and a plan for their work. If I were to recommend one thing to other art teachers planning to implement a *Choice Based Curriculum*, it would be to also have students develop their ideas by creating a plan for each project. Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker (2010) confirm this finding, "Young people, may have plenty of creative ideas for programming, but may lack expertise on how to develop and implement a strategic plan" (p. 110). I would also recommend having students set a goal for when the project would be completed. I felt that in the study, students' work displayed power, which had more meaning and depth than before. Students were empowered to create and to complete the work that they had started.

I believe empowerment can come from many different directions as my research and the literature indicated. The literature that I read on adolescents expressed the importance of adolescent participation. I found in the literature that adolescents responded to having more choices. Wong, Zimmerman and Parker (2010) explain, "Shared control between youth and

adults provides a social arrangement that is ideal for positive youth development." (p. 109). My study confirmed this claim. I saw the positive effect first hand by allowing my students more choices in art. Students in my study reported to me that they had more control over their work. I had observed students working harder than I had seen in the past. Moreover, this study will affect how I will create curricula in the future. I will continue to offer my middle school students more choices. I would recommend to other art teachers to also allow more choices in art and observe how their students respond.

With allowing students more choices, I would also recommend that art teachers relate more to their students on a personal level. Some students may view teachers as being unreal, remote, or without their own daily worries or faults. So often I hear students say that it was weird and uncomfortable to see a teacher in public. Do teachers seem so unreal that students assume they don't have to buy groceries like the rest of the world? Why is it that students don't relate to most teachers? I feel it is because most teachers are mission oriented. It could also be that teachers rarely relax and don't speak with students on their (the students') level about things that matter to students. "When students perceive support..., they tend to also feel confident about their academic skills" (Patrick, Ryan, & Kaplan, 2007, p.85). If teachers intentionally tried to relate more with students on a personal level (while still maintaining appropriate boundaries and professionalism), they may empower their students in unpredictable ways. I know that my students now see me in a different light. They see me as a fellow classmate that was made fun of, failed, and still overcame the odds. They now see me as a human with faults and flaws and a past riddled with insecurities.

Conclusion

I believe that learning about the concept of power was significant to the empowerment students demonstrated in this study. Prior to the study, I predicted that a student choice approach would empower middle school students. Choices were important to my students but not as important as discovering that they were more powerful than they had previously thought. Before students were aware of their powers, the majority of them thought of power in a materialistic way. Students are now more aware of their powers. Students are now saying things like, "It gives me power," or "It gives me power over what I want." I believe my findings apply to the field of art education in a major way.

In conclusion, art is a special subject that can communicate the essential concept of power. In art, students learn to imagine, interpret, and reflect. Art should be a place where students can imagine their powers, interpret their powers, and reflect on their powers. Therefore, the inner power of students can become the outer power displayed in a work of art and possibly within their future realities.

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Appendix

UF Institutional Review Board
UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA

PO Box 112250
Gainesville, FL 32611-2250
352-392-0433 (Phone)
352-392-9234 (Fax)
irb2@ufl.edu

February 14, 2013

TO: Kimberlee Kennedy
[REDACTED]

FROM: Ira S. Fischler, PhD; Chair *ISF*
University of Florida
Institutional Review Board 02

SUBJECT: Approval of Protocol #2013-U-0146

TITLE: Choice Based Art Learning

SPONSOR: None

I am pleased to advise you that the University of Florida Institutional Review Board has recommended approval of this protocol. Based on its review, the UFIRB determined that this research presents no more than minimal risk to participants. Your protocol was approved as an expedited study under category 7: *Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.* Given your protocol, it is essential that you obtain signed documentation of informed consent from the parent or legal guardian of each participant. When it is feasible, you should obtain signatures from both parents. Enclosed is the dated, IRB-approved informed consent to be used when recruiting participants for the research.

It is essential that the parents/guardians of your minor participants sign a copy of your approved informed consent that bears the IRB approval stamp and expiration date.

If you wish to make any changes to this protocol, ***including the need to increase the number of participants authorized***, you must disclose your plans before you implement them so that the Board can assess their impact on your protocol. In addition, you must report to the Board any unexpected complications that affect your participants.

This approval is valid through **February 3, 2014**. If you have not completed the study prior to this date, please telephone our office (392-0433), and we will discuss the renewal process with you. Additionally, should you complete the study on or before the expiration date, please submit the study closure report to our office. The form can be located at http://ib.ufl.edu/irb02/Continuing_Review.html. It is important that you keep your Department Chair informed about the status of this research protocol.

ISF:dl

Department of Art Education
PO Box 12345
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32600-0000

Parental Consent

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a graduate student in the Department of Art Education at the University of Florida, conducting research on my own instructional practices to pilot test my curriculum. The purpose of my study is to design a curriculum unit to encourage students to become more invested in their own learning in the art room. The results of my study may help other art teachers use my instructional strategies to possibly empower art students. These results may not directly help your child today, but may benefit future students. With your permission, I would like to ask your child to volunteer for this research.

The students in this study will take active roles in the decision making process while I take the role facilitator instead of the decision maker. Participants of this study will be asked to conceptualize, research, plan, and create a work of art of their own choosing. With your permission, your child will be interviewed by myself, surveyed, and observed during the learning process. Your child's work may also be photographed, however, their identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Photographs of students will be taken from angles from which students will not be recognizable. Selected photographs will be used on a website in accordance with School District policies, or until the participant or parent requests their removal, at which time they will be removed from the website and destroyed. Participation or non-participation in this study will not affect the student's grades or placement in any programs. Non-participants within the class of this study, will receive the exact same instruction without receiving consequence.

You and your child have the right to withdraw consent for your child's participation at any time even after the course is over without consequence. There are no known risks or immediate benefits to the participants. No compensation is offered for participation. Group results of this study will be available in May upon request. If you have any questions about this research protocol, please contact me at [redacted] or my faculty supervisor, Elizabeth Delacruz by email, at [redacted]. Questions or concerns about your child's rights as research participant may be directed to the IRB02 office, University of Florida, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611, (352) 392-0433.

Kimberlee Kennedy

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily give my consent for my child, _____, to participate in Kimberlee Kennedy's study of adolescent art empowerment. I have received a copy of this description.

Parent / Guardian Date

2nd Parent / Witness Date

Approved by
University of Florida
Institutional Review Board 02
Protocol # 2013-U-0146
For Use Through 02/03/2014

**Department of Art Education
PO Box 12345
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32600-0000**

Accent Script

Hello John Smith. I am working on my masters degree in Art Education at the University of Florida. I am trying to learn how student choices affect how students think, learn, and behave in art. I will be observing several students in art at Farmington Middle School. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to research, plan, write in journal, and create a work of art of your own choosing. We will spend about two weeks working in a groups with other students and we will spend another one week working on tasks individually. Students in your class will receive the same art lesson as students that choose not to participate in study. There are no known risks to participation, and most students actually enjoy the activities. You do not have to be in this study if you don't want to and you can quit the study at any time. Other than the myself, no one will know your answers, including your other teachers or your classmates. If you don't like your responses or art work, if you ask, your answers will not be used in the study. I also want you to know that whatever you decide, this will not affect your grades in class. Your [parent / guardian] said it would be OK for you to participate. Would you be willing to participate in this study?

Approved by
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Author Biography

From an early age, art has been my passion. My earliest memory is painting on ceramics in the basement of my mother's house. We would paint and fire ceramics in our own home. I can remember spending most of my childhood creating and being motivated by my mother's creativity. This love of art has stayed with me and developed as I've grown.

Throughout my early education, I struggled, but the subject of art was always a pleasure. During high school, I became more sure of myself as my confidence grew with my newfound abilities in art. During this time, I was inspired by an influential art teacher. She took notice of my talent and pushed me to further my art education in college.

After high school, I studied graphic design for a year at the Denver, Colorado Institute of Art. I was passionate and valued the experience. After moving back to Missouri, I wanted to continue my education, so I attended Mineral Area College near my home. During my experiences at the Institute of Art and Mineral Area College, I completed many college level art courses. I extremely enjoyed every art class. I found the courses in art history particularly interesting, and I still desire to learn more about the artists who lived before me. I am particularly interested in Picasso and his political paintings. Picasso's *Guernica* is one particular painting that I studied and found interesting. Even though every art course was challenging, I felt rewarded, as I had grown in my understanding of the discipline.

After my course work at Mineral Area College, I was stuck at a crossroad. I desired to be an art teacher more than anything. However, I questioned whether I would be able to acquire a job in the area where I live. Living in a small town, there were not many opportunities for art teachers. I spoke with advisers, teachers, and relatives about my future. Finally, I decided to attend Central Methodist University to receive my bachelor's degree in elementary education.

Upon graduation, I took the certification exam for art. I passed the exam that certified me to teach art in kindergarten through twelfth grade. As I had feared, I was unable to find a job as an art teacher after graduation, but I was blessed with an opportunity to teach elementary education in a fourth grade classroom.

I worked as an elementary fourth grade teacher for four years. I took pleasure in the job. In my classroom, I worked at creating a community conducive to reaching the learning styles of every child. I was able to create this environment through my background in art and the integration of art in all subject matter. I was very successful as a fourth grade teacher. On standardized tests, my student's performance ranked as one of the highest in Missouri. Our school received gold ribbon and blue ribbon status.

Now that I teach art for my district, I feel privileged to teach my passion. I enjoy art and being creative. It is a way for me to convey myself and capture the way I see the world. I particularly enjoy drawing and trying to capture detail. I love to be meticulous about every shade, line, and texture. I particularly enjoy portraiture work and using friends and family members as the subject matter. I enjoy visiting art museums, art galleries, and exhibitions. My love for art burns deep and drives me to inspire, create, and motivate.