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How Gender Based Differences in Drawings of Preschoolers Can Help to Inform Preschool Visual Art Curriculum

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HOW GENDER BASED DIFFERENCES IN DRAWINGS OF PRESCHOOLERS CAN HELP TO INFORM PRESCHOOL VISUAL ART CURRICULUM

by

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The purpose of this classroom-based study was to explore the gender based differences in the free drawings of students at Beginnings Preschool. The researcher explored these patterns and their implications for the field of art education. Through the collection of free drawings created over the course of six, 15-minute sessions, the researcher studied patterns relating to students’ choice of content, use of color, and use of space within their drawings. Audio recordings of sessions and in-process photographs of student work provided supplemental data. Through an analysis of the data, the researcher found certain gender based patterns in preschool students’ choice of subject, use of color, and use of space. The work of male students tended to involve more adventure and conflict, whereas the work of female students tended to depict tranquil outdoor scenes or people living harmoniously. Drawings by male students were more likely to have a limited color palette and female students were more likely to use the bottom of the page as a ground line. Although gender based patterns were found, there were always several drawings by both males and females that did not fit the patterns. The researcher concludes by making recommendations for art educators based on the findings from this study and designed a unit plan that serves as an example of how to put those recommendations into practice.
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I would like to thank my facilitators for providing me with guidance and feedback throughout this program. I am also grateful for the opportunity I had to connect with so many other art educators through this program, especially during the Summer Studios course in Boston. Good luck to all of my fellow classmates as you strive to bring meaningful visual art encounters to students and continue exploring your roles as artist-teachers.
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Chapter One: Introduction

Gender identities and their prescribed characteristics affect children from a young age. From looking at the artwork of preschool children, one can already see clear differences in the qualities of those who identify as girls versus those who identify as boys. A study by Boyatzis and Eades (1999) showed that “gender differences in artistic production and preference emerge in the preschool years, earlier than previously reported” (p. 627). By becoming aware of these differences and what they tell us about gender roles, art educators can work towards optimizing art education practice, so all students can truly reap the benefits of meaningful art making.

After a year of teaching art at the preschool level, this researcher had seen drawings produced by students in multiple contexts. These contexts included the “art center”, wherein unprompted drawing or “free drawing” takes place, and the more structured setting of art class. In both contexts, the researcher noticed patterns in the style and content of students based on gender identity.

Upon witnessing these patterns in students’ drawings, the researcher became interested in investigating how precisely student artwork at the preschool level conforms along gender lines. Additionally, what are the distinct features of drawings that fall on these gender lines? As a teacher who also happens to be a female and an artist, the researcher needs to be aware of how her own disposition potentially impacts students. Could she be unknowingly reinforcing gender stereotypes or be favoring one gender based style over another? Through this study, the researcher explored the ways in which she can be more mindful and aware of her impact on students’ gender identities as an art educator who interacts with and ultimately impacts students on a daily basis.
This study focused on identifying gender based differences in the drawings of students, ages four and five, at Beginnings Preschool, a private preschool in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. A total of seventeen students participated in this study. Free drawings by students were analyzed for patterns in themes and content based on students’ gender. This analysis was compared to prior studies on gender based preferences in drawings of children (Boyatzis & Ball, 2001; Colbert, 1996; Flannery & Watson, 1995; Loeb, 1979; Reeves & Boyette, 1983; Tuman, 1999). Through a classroom-based study and content analysis of prior research, possible implications for early childhood art curriculum were explored.

Research Goals

The ultimate goals of this study were to reveal existing gender based patterns in the artwork of preschoolers, to help inform early childhood art curriculum, and ultimately to improve art education practice. Collins & Sandell (1984) as cited in Tuman (1999) explain:

If gendered content informs artistic style, art educators may question how masculine and feminine artistic styles are valued in art. Although this is an issue that has been argued within high art institutions, it has been grossly overlooked in the school art curriculum. (p. 57)

By becoming aware of existing gender based tendencies in art making, art educators can move forward in such a way that all students are acknowledged and appreciated, while also being challenged to explore and extend beyond typical boundaries of gender.

Research Questions

The following questions motivated this study: How have preschoolers already been affected by gender norms? How do preschoolers reveal gender identity through art? How can art education impact gender identity? The guiding question for this classroom-based study is:
What are the gender based differences in the drawings of preschool students at Beginnings Preschool and how can this information help to inform early childhood art curriculum?

**Conceptual Framework**

This study was classroom-based and was conducted in the context of Beginnings Preschool, wherein the free drawings of students ranging from four to five years old were documented and analyzed. Most of the 17 participating students engaged in three, fifteen-minute sessions during which they were prompted to free draw. The resulting artwork, along with audio recordings and in-process photographs of these sessions, served as data for this study. Existing research on gender based drawing differences was also explored and compared to these data findings.

Collected images of students’ drawings were analyzed based on the following characteristics: use of color; type of content (themes, subject matter); and use of space (organization of content within drawing). This data was then compared to existing research. The conversations taking place between students were also noted and analyzed for the impact they had on students’ decisions during the art making process. Lastly, the resulting analysis of student artwork and conversations were reflected upon they relate to early childhood art curriculum and the educators role therein.

The researcher’s interest in this topic evolved from experiences teaching art at the preschool level. In this context she noticed patterns in the themes of artwork based on gender. By examining these patterns, one can see how gender plays a role in the forming of a child’s identity at a young age. Through this investigation, this researcher became more aware of these patterns in order to gain insight into how art teachers can be more mindful of their role in the formation of students’ gender identities.
Theoretical Framework

This study is based on two main ideas: gender is a social construct, and art teachers can play a role in extending and challenging students’ thinking.

Gender is so pervasive that in our society we assume it is bred into our genes. Most people find it hard to believe that gender is constantly created and re-created out of human interaction, out of social life, and is the texture and order of that social life. Yet gender, like culture, is a human production that depends on everyone constantly ‘doing gender’. (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Lorber, 2001, p. 54)

Because gender is socially dependent the role of a teacher inevitably impacts students’ development of gender identity. It is insufficient to merely reinforce existing stereotypes when one is in a position of influence. “Teachers … enrich children’s learning experiences by working to extend children’s ideas and respond to their questions, engaging them in conversation, and challenging their thinking” (Bredekamp, 1987, as cited in Colbert, 1996, p. 62).

Significance of the Study

This study, through an investigation of how gender is revealed through drawings of preschool students, provides insight into how students identify with prescribed gender norms. Through this knowledge, educators can make conscious decisions regarding the messages they send about gender through curriculum and daily interactions. “The people who surround the child and with whom the child interacts regularly are the teachers of gender identity and gender role” (Davidson & Gordon, 1979, as cited in Reeves & Boyette, 1983, p. 322). Students’ notions of identity are not static; rather, the formation of identity is a constant process. Even if gender based patterns exist at a young age, educators do not have to continually reinforce existing stereotypes. In fact, educators should be challenging pre-existing notions of gender. “As teachers
of young children, we must be aware of the potential for art in even the youngest child, and the
potential that art has for developing and defining the self in the child” (Bleiker, 1999, p. 52).
Gender identity makes up a large part of students’ ideas of self. Students should have the
opportunity to explore their true identity through art, regardless of how much this aligns with
existing gender norms.

**Limitations of the Study**

Several factors limited this study. Firstly, the sample size of study participants was small
and representative of one demographic, that being a predominantly white, middle class body of
students living in an urban environment. Also, the gender breakdown of student participants is
not balanced—the ratio of females to males was almost 2:1. This inevitably affected the dynamic
of the classroom and the proportion of male drawings to female drawings that made up the data
for this study. Additionally, the short time frame of the study limited the amount of data
collected and the extensiveness of the analysis.

**Conclusion**

In summary, this chapter has explained the main goals of this study and the questions that
guided this research. Additionally, the theoretical framework and potential limitations of this
study were discussed. Chapter Two will further explain the methods of research this study
utilized and will include a review of prior literature relating to the art work of children and
gender identity.
Definition of Terms

**free drawing:** a form of visual art wherein basic materials are used to create any type of image the artist chooses.

**gender:** the fact of being male or female, especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences, not differences in biology (Oxford Advanced learner’s Dictionary)

Chapter Two: Literature Review
In the artwork of preschoolers, one can often see clear distinctions between the work of females and the work of males. As young as these students are they have already picked up on certain gender norms and have applied them to one of their most creative activities. In light of this, art educators must question the role they play in the process of guiding students in discerning what is and is not appropriate for them to create, especially regarding gender expectations. This classroom-based study examined exactly what gender based patterns exist in the drawings of preschoolers and explored how this information might help to inform the field of art education.

**Conceptual Framework**

It was this researcher’s observations of her preschool students that led her to engage in this study on gender based distinctions in art-making. Realizing students have been affected by certain stereotypes at this young age made her question how art education might play a role in broadening the scope of what students deem acceptable to draw, regardless of gender.

Having been a preschool art teacher for over a year, this researcher had the opportunity to carry out a classroom-based study on the gender based patterns in the drawings of her own students. By studying and categorizing certain features of students’ free drawings, the researcher gained knowledge of how students’ artwork is currently affected by gender norms and how art educators can move forward in light of this knowledge. Figure 2.1 shows the conceptual framework for this research, wherein the interconnectedness of the researcher’s experience, research questions, goals, and methods, is displayed.
Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework for study. This figure illustrates the connections between researcher’s experience, goals, research questions, and methods for this study.

**Research Questions**
What are the gender-based differences in the drawings of preschool students at Beginnings Preschool and how can this information help to inform an early childhood art curriculum?

What gender-based patterns do I notice in the content of unprompted student artwork at Beginnings Preschool?

How can this information inform preschool art curriculum, specifically the art projects that are prompted by an art teacher?

**Goals**
To find patterns in the drawing preferences of preschoolers and see how this relates to gender

To apply this knowledge to a preschool art curriculum that is mindful of gender preferences without stereotyping the needs of students based on gender

**Methods**
Theoretical study of previous research completed on this topic

Classroom-based study on students' drawing preferences ("free-drawings" will be collected and reviewed over a one month period)

**Experiences**
Teaching preschoolers and noticing patterns in the themes of artwork based on gender

Interest in how to apply knowledge of these patterns to a mindful curriculum for preschool art education
Review of the Literature

This classroom-based study is grounded in a body of literature composed of three connected areas of study: studies on gender and the art work of children, artistic development and gender awareness in preschool students, and exploring gender identity through art education.

Gender and the art work of grade school students

This study adds to the body of prior research on gender based distinctions in the artwork of students. Most existing research, however, focuses on the artwork of students in primary or middle school. Even though the subjects in these studies were at different developmental stages, these studies reveal patterns in students’ art-making tendencies that lined up with this researcher’s observations of gender based distinctions in the artwork of her preschool students.

It is the thematic content in students’ drawings that has often been noted as representing distinct gendered differences. For instance, Flannery and Watson (1995) found that “[b]oys’ thematic choices appear to be more supernatural, outside everyday experience, whereas girls' thematic choices appear to be more realistic and within everyday experience” (p. 115). This correlates with the researcher’s observations of the different themes within her students’ artwork. Another study by Tuman (1999) concluded that girls’ artwork contains “more humanistic and social content” whereas boys’ artwork communicates more “aggression and adventure” (p. 40). This also aligns with the researcher’s prior observations of student work. For example, she noticed that males are captivated by fighting scenes from media influences like Star Wars, and these scenes made their way into drawings of males students. Females in the same class, she observed, rarely if ever seemed to depict elaborate fighting scenes, choosing instead to draw tranquil domestic scenes or friendly interactions between people and animals. These observations of students’ thematic choices were part of the motivation to conduct this study.
Along the same lines, Feinburg (1997) studied students’ responses to “fighting” and “helping” and made conclusions that are comparable to those of Flannery and Watson (1995) and Tuman (1999) about the gender based content in children’s artwork. The resulting drawings showed that even if given the same prompt, students will interpret specific concepts differently based on their own gendered experiences.

Lastly, Reeves and Boyette (1983), who explore gender based differences in artwork from a sociological perspective, conclude that distinctions in artwork point to how boys and girls “experience different social-psychological worlds” (p. 331). This points to why the art work of young children is so valuable—it provides a window to knowledge about children that may not otherwise be expressed so clearly. This researcher had seen patterns similar to those found in existing literature, however, this study specifically examined exactly how consistent and obvious gender based differences are in students’ drawings created in the context of Beginnings Preschool.

In addition to these observations of children’s’ drawings, the researcher noticed the influence her students had on each other through conversation as they created art together. Although students have many influences in their lives, peers deeply and regularly impact the formation of gender identity. Drawing on the research of Boyatzis and Albertini (2001), who studied peer interactions during the art-making process, this researcher recorded influential student interactions as part of this study to determine the potential impact of peers on the gendered art-making tendencies of preschoolers.
Artistic development and gender awareness in preschool students

Students at the preschool level are at an important transition in artistic development. Students are crossing over from experiencing art as a purely kinesthetic activity to using art as a medium to express symbols for what is meaningful in their worlds. Both Piaget and Lowenfeild, as cited in Cohen and Gainer (1995), describe a child at this level as one who “draws what he knows not what he sees” (p. 30). Children, therefore, are now equipped to communicate and express experience through drawing, providing others with a view into their experience of the world.

Because children at the preschool level are able to draw symbolically, insight on a multitude of issues can be gained by observing what these young children choose to draw. Researchers including Boyatzis and Eades (1999) found that even drawings created by children in the pre-representational stage of artistic development were found to have gender distinctions (p. 634). If such distinctions occur in pre-representational drawings, the insight gained through the symbolic, representational drawings of slightly older children is likely to be even greater.

One of the ways gender is often expressed and categorized is through color. Picariello, Greenberg, and Pillemer (1990) completed a study that revealed in young children an awareness of sex-based color stereotyping; for example, pink implying femininity and blue implying masculinity (p. 1453). Being aware of these sex-based color stereotypes is one thing, but choosing to limit one’s color palette accordingly may not necessarily follow. Rather than focuses on which particular colors students use, this study analyzed students’ level of color use and investigated its connection to gender lines within this classroom.
Exploring gender identity through art education

Other literature that informs and connects with this study surrounds the topics of gender in society and the forming of identity through art education. The concept of gender within this study draws from Lorber (2001), who describes how, “As a social institution gender is one of the major ways that human beings organize their lives” (p. 55). She also discusses the ways in which perpetuated notions of gender play a role in continual societal inequality (Lorber, 2001, pp. 61-69). Art education should strive to empower students to be individuals yet a lack of mindfulness in interactions and curricular choices on the part of a teacher can lead to perpetuation of disempowerment for some students.

This potentially negative impact of gender-role stereotyping points to how essential a quality art education can be as it can guide children through perceiving and expressing their experiences through art. Bleiker (1999) defends the importance of art as a pathway to self-discovery for young children (p. 52). Children at the preschool level are still trying on different roles, so art teachers ultimately take part in the process of encouraging certain behaviors and discouraging others. Being mindful of why certain behaviors are encouraged or discouraged is essential, especially at a point where children are finding themselves and testing out these ideas in art work. After studying students’ free drawings, this researcher drew from the work of Colbert (1996) in making suggestions for an art education that is non-sexist; one that will ultimately encourage students to express themselves how they choose, regardless of gender.

Conclusion

Theoretical Understandings

The literature review for this study displays the prevalence of gender stereotypes in the artwork of children and an affirmation for art education as an avenue towards the discovery and
expression of self, of which gender is a large component. Ultimately, students may not feel free to express themselves fully through art as long as they are reduced by gender expectations.

**Tacit Understandings**

This researcher believes there are improvements to be made in art education as long as distinct gender based discrepancies exist in children’s art work. After working with preschoolers and seeing how gender norms are often pushed on them, this researcher decided to look more closely at how these gender norms make their way into these students’ artwork. By taking a closer look at gender based patterns in the artwork of preschoolers, this researcher explored how ingrained these tendencies are and how art educators can move forward in such a way as to promote an art room environment where students are free to explore identity through art without being restricted by society’s perimeters of gender.

Chapter Three will include an in-depth look at the methodology of this study, including methods of data collection and analysis.
Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter will discuss the methodology of this study. Aspects of the methodology to be discussed include the design of the study, the methods that were used to conduct this research, the ways in which data was collected, and lastly, the process through which this data was analyzed. These methods were connected to the research question so that meaningful insight could be gained regarding gender and the art work of students at Beginnings Preschool.

Design of Study

This was a classroom-based study wherein the free drawings of 17 preschool students served as data to explore gender based patterns in drawings of children at the preschool level. The resulting data and analysis yielded important information that can inform the field of art education. The site of the study was Beginnings Preschool, a primarily white and middle class private preschool located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. A total of seventeen students from this school, ages four and five, participated in this study. Seven of the participants were male and eleven participants were female. Conducting a classroom-based study at Beginnings Preschool allowed the researcher to collect data that was first-hand and relevant to the research question guiding this study. In addition to student drawings, photographs and audio recordings of the free drawing process served as data. This allowed the researcher to gain information on the process students underwent while free drawing in addition to the information gained from viewing the final products alone. This chapter will further discuss research methods, data collection methods, and the process of data analysis used in this study.
Research Methods

The primary research method that was utilized for this study was content-analysis. Content-analysis was conducted on several data sources including images of student free drawings, photographs of students’ in-process drawings, and audio recordings of students during the free drawing process. An analysis of student drawings was completed through use of a Drawing Analysis Chart that included pre-determined qualities of drawings (see Appendix B, Table B.1). Photographs of students’ in-process drawings were analyzed for any significant changes that might have taken place in the process of drawing. The audio recordings allowed the researcher to capture any significant conversations that took place in the process of free drawing. These recordings were analyzed for instances where students influenced each other in their artistic choice-making or when they engaged in interesting conversation about each other’s work. The recorded conversations provided insight into how peers at the preschool level influence each other and how this may be related to gender based patterns in their artwork.

Data Collection

Data for this study was collected over the course of six, fifteen-minute, free drawing sessions. In each session, students were prompted to free draw with crayons on white, 8 ½ by 11”, drawing paper. Because they are familiar with the concept of free drawing, students required little guidance beyond this simple prompt. The researcher avoided discussing examples of possibilities for subject matter and content in order to prevent altering data. After the prompt was given, a timer was set for fifteen minutes. Students were allowed to finish before fifteen minutes was complete. This allowed the data to represent what students chose to draw rather than what they felt obligated to draw. However, after fifteen minutes was up, students were not given additional time to work. The number of students participating in each session ranged from seven
to ten and most students ultimately participated in a total of three sessions. Each session was varied in the ratio of male to female participants. Session One, Two, and Four had male to female ratios that reflected the ratio of the student body at Beginnings Preschool, wherein females make up the majority. Session 5 had a male majority, Session 6 was made up entirely of female participants, and Session 4 was balanced. Ideally, all sessions would have included a balance of male and female participants, but due to logistical constraints, this was not possible. Each session was audio recorded in order to capture student conversations in the process of free drawing. The audio recording also allowed the researcher to compare her own prompting and student interactions between the different sessions to check for consistency and in turn, validity. Additionally, the researcher took photographs of in-progress drawings as students worked. These in-process photographs, audio recordings of drawing sessions, and images of completed free drawings composed the body of data for this study.

By using multiple methods of data collection, this researcher was able to gain more meaningful data and maximize knowledge gained from these study sessions. Maxwell (2013) explains that “a second purpose for using multiple methods is to gain information about different aspects of the phenomena that you are studying or about different phenomena” (p. 102). By collecting data through multiple methods during different stages of the free drawing process, this researcher gained information about various aspects of students’ free drawing processes.

**Data Analysis**

After data was collected through six free drawings sessions, data was analyzed for specific information pertaining to the topic of gender based patterns in free drawing, and the related peer-influence of preschool students during the free drawing process.
Analysis of free drawings

The drawings resulting from each of the six free drawing sessions were analyzed by two individuals. This researcher analyzed the drawings from the perspective of an art educator. A second analysis was completed by a scholar of women’s studies and cultural studies. The combination of these separate but related perspectives, allowed for a more extensive analysis of this data.

Each drawing was given an identification number that indicates the session during which the drawing was completed. Additionally, the back of each drawing was labeled with an “m” or “f” signaling on the sex of the student who created it. The researcher designated each student participant with a number/letter code in order to maintain students’ anonymity. Drawings were analyzed for the following qualities; color, theme/subject matter, and use of space (organization of content within drawing). All of this information was recorded in an analysis chart (see Appendix B, Table B.1). After all drawings were analyzed, the researcher searched for patterns in these qualities of drawings that might correlate with students’ gender identities. This involved coding for similarities and differences in drawings categorized by gender.

Analysis of in-process photographs

Photographs of in-process drawings served as supplemental data on the drawing process and provided information on students’ drawing styles and the transformation of drawings over the course of free drawing sessions. Notes were taken on these in-process photographs, and, when applicable, these notes were compared to notes on the Drawing Analysis Chart (Appendix B, Table B.1) for the same drawings. This allowed the researcher to track significant changes of qualities in a drawing through the free drawing process.
Analysis of audio recordings

Audio recordings of free drawing sessions were analyzed for content related to peer-influence in the free drawing process. Instances in free drawing sessions when students had conversations about one another’s art-making decisions, whether complementary or critical, were transcribed and discussed for possible insight on the impact of peers in the free drawing process of preschoolers.

Conclusion

Conducting a classroom-based study in the context of Beginnings Preschool allowed the researcher to gain first-hand knowledge of potential gender based patterns in the free drawings of preschool students. By photographing and audio recording a series of small group free drawing sessions and analyzing the resulting free drawings, this researcher obtained concrete data on both the process and the product of preschool students’ free drawing experiences in a social context. This, in turn, provided insight into how students are socially influenced in the drawing process and whether or not the resulting drawings display gender based distinctions. Having students’ free drawings analyzed by a second analyst, from the perspective of women’s and cultural studies, provided additional insight. The researcher designed a visual art unit for preschool students that puts the insight gained through this research into practice (see Appendix A). Chapter Four will discuss the results of the study.
Chapter Four: Results of the Study

Significance of the Study

This chapter will discuss the findings of this study as they connect with the question of what gender based patterns exist in the drawings of students at Beginnings Preschool. Multiple elements of students’ free drawings were analyzed and findings from this analysis, along with supplementary data from in-process photographs and audio recordings, showed that there are indeed certain gender based patterns that occur in the drawings created by students in the context of Beginnings Preschool. These findings affirm many previous studies that explored the effect of gender on art work by students in early and middle childhood. By completing this study, this researcher gained a deeper understanding of her own students’ gender identification as it is revealed through artwork. This new knowledge affirmed some of the researcher’s prior conclusions regarding gender and the role of art making in the context of early childhood education, and will inform future curricular decisions accordingly.

Bias and Validity

Several conditions of this study may have affected the validity of the findings. One of the most significant threats to the validity of this study was the small sample size of students and the imbalance in the male to female ratio of students. This ultimately resulted in more data being collected on female students than male students. Although the data collected did not equally represent male and female students, it did reflect the male to female student ratio of the student body at Beginnings Preschool. Therefore, this aspect of the study led to some findings more specific to students at Beginnings Preschool rather than representative of all students at the preschool level.
Another factor that potentially limits findings of this study to being solely representative of Beginnings Preschool is the element of prior knowledge of students. The researcher was aware of the fact that her prior teaching and curricular decisions had ultimately impacted the way students think about and create art. Gender based patterns in the free drawings of students may have already been heightened or diminished according to students’ past education. Nonetheless, the findings of this study were valuable for the specificity of the exploration in this particular setting.

With those factors in mind, the researcher ensured that within each study session, she did not alter data by interfering with the free drawing process. A minimal prompt was given in the beginning of each session and minimal interaction took place between the researcher and the subjects during the session. At times, the researcher inquired about a student’s picture if she felt this knowledge was pertinent to the study. By conducting study sessions in the manner, the researcher reduced the potential impact of her bias in order to maintain the validity of the study.

**Analysis of the Data**

Through the collection of various sources of data, the researcher was able to analyze and make discoveries about the free drawing process of preschool students and the gender based patterns that occur during this process. The analysis of student free drawings, audio transcripts during the free drawing process, and in-process photographs, each yielded findings that have the potential to improve preschool art education curriculum.

**Analysis of Free Drawings.**

Completed free drawings created by study participants served as the primary data for this study. A total of 49 free drawings were created by students in small groups during six, fifteen minute, free drawing sessions over the course of six days. Prior to the start of each study session,
students were prompted to free draw, and were told that once the timer went off the teacher 
would collect all of the drawings for several weeks. After the initial Drawing Analysis Chart 
(Appendix B, Table B.1) was completed for each of the 49 free drawings, additional charts were 
created to organize the data in the categories of color, theme/subject, and organization of space. 
This allowed the researcher to organize free drawing data both for the work of individual 
students across multiple sessions and for the small groups of students participating in each of the 
six free drawing sessions.

**Analysis of Content in Free Drawings.**

After free drawings were collected, the researcher made lists of the subject matter of each 
drawing according to the session during which they were completed. After this, a chart was made 
(see Appendix B, Table B.2) in order to display individual students’ content choices across the 
sessions in which they participated. Some of the descriptions of content in the chart were aided 
by the student artists themselves describing their drawings to the researcher. Another chart (see 
Appendix B, Table B.3) shows the breakdown of subject matter across all sessions. Through this 
examination, the researcher was able to explore possible causes of students’ choices regarding 
subject matter in free drawings.

**Analysis of Color in Free Drawings.**

Another aspect of the free drawings that was analyzed was the element of color, in 
particular, how colorful the free drawings were. This was determined by classifying each 
drawing according to the number of colors used (see Appendix B, Table B.4). The first category 
was for drawings that had one or two different colors in them. It seemed these students were not 
primarily concerned with color as an element of their free drawings. The second category was for 
drawings that included three or four different colors. For these students, it seemed that although
they gave some thought to color, it was not the top priority. The third and final category was for
drawings that included five or more different colors. These students seemed to greatly value
color as a component of their art work. After each free drawing was classified in one of these
three categories, the researcher looked for trends among the categories.

**Analysis of Use of Space in Free Drawings.**

Finally, the use of space, or organization of content, within students’ drawings was
analyzed. Free drawings were divided into three categories. The first category was for drawings
wherein the bottom of the page was used as an obvious ground line within the system of the
drawing (See Figure 4.1 for an example of this type of drawing).

**Figure 4.1 Example of Free Drawing with Bottom of Page as Ground Line**

![Example of Free Drawing with Bottom of Page as Ground Line](image)

The second category for use of space was for those drawings where the main form or object was
intentionally centered on the page (See Figure 4.2 for an example of this type of drawing).
Figure 4.2 Example of Free Drawing with Subject Intentionally Centered on Page

The third category was composed of drawings where the objects or forms within the drawing seemed to be floating on the page. In these drawings, the artist did not seem concerned with their use of space or composing a whole scene (See Figure 4.3 for an example of this type of drawing).

Figure 4.3 Example of Free Drawing with Floating Subject Matter
After all free drawings were organized according to these categories, the percentages of each category were graphed according to gender (see Appendix B, Table B.5). The researcher explored these results for meaning.

**Analysis of Audio Transcripts.**

Audio recordings of the free drawing sessions provided supplementary data to the final free drawings themselves. Although there was a certain level of chaos captured in the recordings, with many students talking over one another, the transcripts created from the series of recordings revealed certain patterns in the conversations of preschool students in the process of free drawing.

**Analysis of Photographs of In-Process Free Drawings.**

The photographs of in-process free drawings, taken by the researcher, were useful in multiple ways. Firstly, some of these photographs provided evidence of peer influence in students’ choices of free drawing content. Secondly, these in-process photographs allowed the researcher to see drawings in multiple stages of development. These images served as secondary data and were ultimately useful in supplementing data in the analysis of completed free drawings.

**Secondary Analysis of Data.**

A second analysis of the completed free drawings was conducted by Phillip Drake, a friend of the researcher’s with a background in cultural studies and women’s studies. This analysis was conducted on completed drawings as the sole source of data. After completing the Drawing Analysis Chart (see Appendix B, Table B.1) as a starting point, he speculated on the
patterns he saw regarding gender and the process of peer influence. His findings can be read in the “Results” section.

Results

Themes and Subject Matter in Free Drawings.

When looking at students’ free drawings, the researcher saw clear distinctions between the thematic content chosen by male versus female students. There were some themes that both male and female students took an interest in, such as rainbows and family. However, by looking at the range of content in subject matter, one can see that there are many subjects solely chosen by males and others by females, respectively. The themes solely used by males included “Star Wars”, rockets, and drawings that seem to be from the viewpoint of outer-space. The overarching theme of these subjects seems to be action and adventure. The subjects drawn only by females included drawings of home/domesticity and family or friends, drawn happily standing together on the page. Drawings of nature, such as outdoor scenes with rainbows and flowers, were not solely drawn by females but females did create the overwhelming majority of these types of pictures. If action and adventure describe the drawings of many of the boys, stability, peace, and order, seem to be the overarching theme of many of the females’ drawings. While most drawings with people in them created by boys showed fighting scenes, drawings with people in them created by female participants showed the people smiling, standing side by side, or holding hands. These choices in thematic content point to distinctions in the priorities and interests of boys versus girls. Other findings were made concerning gender and the choice of subject matter of individual students.

Of interest to the researcher was the idea that some students repeatedly depicted similar themes or subject matter in their free drawings during every session, even though each of the six
sessions was conducted on a different day. Analysis of individuals’ choice of content across all sessions they participated in revealed that certain students had a tendency to draw similar subject matter during every free drawing session, while others varied their subject matter each session. Of all 17 student participants, four drew the same basic subject matter for all three sessions. Three of these students were male, composing 50% of male participants and one was female, composing 9% of female participants. Two of these male students (students “M5” and “M6”) repeatedly depicted battle scenes from “Star Wars”. The free drawings of student “M6” are shown in Figure 4.4. Although the scenes and scenarios varied, the same basic cast of characters was depicted in each free drawing. The other male student (M2) drew geographical diagrams of earth, labeling two locations on the planet— South Korea and the U.S. (an attempt to label these points was made on some drawings, with a “C.S.” for South Korea a “U. C.” for the United States.) These drawings (see Figure 4.5) seem to signify an important aspect of this student’s identity; that of being connected to two different national identities. The work of the female student (F4) depicted various compositions of a similar outdoor scene (see Figure 4.6). These drawings each included a sun in a corner and a rainbow, although her second drawing depicts a “mixed up world” where the sky is orange and the rainbow is “squiggly”. Although this adaptation of the basic elements of her outdoor scene signals an effort to make an original drawing, this level of variation is similar to the three boys’ slight variations of basic motifs.

These images illustrate a pattern of males being highly absorbed in particular subject matters, as displayed in their free drawings, while females tend to be less enthralled by one single topic or theme. Admittedly, the small sample of males may point to a higher number of subject absorption than would be present in another context. Nonetheless, it is of significance that three times more males than females displayed this tendency in their free drawings.
Figure 4.4 Three Free Drawings with the Same Theme by student “M6”

**Student Session 2 Free Drawing**
(Luke Skywalker on a Harpoon and Snow Troopers)

**Session 4 Free Drawing**
(Battle Scene with Obi-Wan Kenobi, Darth Maul, and guards)

**Session 5 Free Drawing**
(Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader fighting)
Figure 4.5 Three Free Drawings with the Same Theme by student “M2”

Student Session 2 Free Drawing
(South Korea and United States on earth with two suns)

Session 3 Free Drawing
(South Korea and United States on Earth with two suns)

Session 5 Free Drawing
(South Korea and United States on earth)
Figure 4.6 Three Free Drawings with the Same Theme by Student “F4”

Student Session 1 Free Drawing
(Outdoor scene with rainbow)

Session 3 Free Drawing
(“Mixed-up world”)

Session 6 Free Drawing
(Outdoor scene with rainbow and flowers)
Analysis of free drawing content also revealed the power of peer influence within sessions. For example, during session one, 70% of free drawings depicted rainbows as the primary subject. Although rainbows appeared as subject matter in subsequent sessions, drawn by 25% of students in session four and almost 29% of students in session six, free drawings with the subject of rainbows never composed the majority of free drawings outside the context of study session one. This signals the presence of peer influence within the small group of students participating in that specific session.

A less extreme example of the same phenomenon occurred during session two, wherein 50% of student drawings depicted scenes from the story “Little Red Riding Hood”. Students’ decisions to depict this subject matter were inevitably related to the literacy lesson of the same day, where variations of the story of “Little Red Riding Hood” had been discussed. Nonetheless, peer influence, as in session one, played a role in the number of free drawings depicting the same subject matter in session two.

While in some sessions a high level of group influence was present, there were other sessions where students were influenced by the person sitting next to them. In the all-female session, most females seemed to pair off and create very similar free drawings within each pairing, whether they were intentionally copying one another or not. Figures 4.7 through 4.9 show examples of this type of pairing off and the section on in-process photographs will further discuss this occurrence.
Figure 4.7 Free Drawings of Rainbows with Obvious Peer Influence

Figure 4.8 Free Drawings of Friends and Family with Obvious Similarities
Use of Color in Free Drawings.

Several conclusions were drawn from the researcher’s analysis of students’ color use. Firstly, the vast majority of free drawings, that is, 70% of the free drawings, included five or more colors. From this information, one can conclude that most students at this preschool enjoy incorporating many different colors into their artwork. Additionally, this data displays a gender based pattern in color-use. In the category of drawings with one to two colors, all of the artists were male. In the category of drawings with three to four colors, 80% of the drawings were created by male students. Thus, of all of the drawings with four or less colors, 86% were created by male students and only 14% were created by female students. This shows a gender based pattern regarding use of color in the art work of preschoolers. Namely, female preschoolers value
color as an element of art more than male preschoolers, as indicated by quantity of colors used in free drawings.

This finding may also relate to the artistic development of students, as the way color functions for the young artist evolves as they develop. According to Kerlavage (1998), children in the mark-making stage of development (ages 2-4) tend to use colors based on their own preferences, and it’s not until they reach the symbol-making stage (ages 7-9) that color comes to represent the realistic colors of objects in the world (p. 43). Many of these students have begun assigning symbolic colors to certain forms (i.e. making a sun yellow), but perhaps those students who used a limited color palette are still focusing solely on the forms of the objects they are representing and will consider the element of color more in the future. At this point the researcher would not conclude that the students who used more colors in free drawings were more developmentally advanced than those who used a limited color palette, as the use of color in many colorful drawings superseded students’ efforts to depict forms. Instead, students’ level of color use seemed to be more of a priority statement rather than a demonstration of artistic skill.

**Use of Space in Free Drawings.**

Analysis of students’ use of space in free drawings revealed that almost half of the free drawings were classified under the category of drawings that used the bottom of the page as a ground line. Of the 24 drawings in this category, 18 had been created by females. In other words, 62% of females opted to use the bottom of the page as the ground line in their drawings. A distant second place for drawings by females was the category of drawings wherein forms and objects float on the page. Of all free drawings by females, 31% used this type of space organization. Lastly, 10% of drawings by females had content that seemed to be intentionally
centered on the page. The use of the bottom of the page as a ground line was by far the most popular type of spatial organization amongst females. Using the space on the page this way also tends to result in drawings that are more frontal, or seemingly closer and more personal, from the perspective of the viewer. As with other factors of free drawings, peer influence may have played a large part in this trend.

Within the drawings of boys at the preschool level, on the other hand, it was just as likely that content was centered on the page or floating without a sense of gravity as it was to be grounded at the bottom of the page. One might interpret this as evidence of females conforming to a particular norm, whereas males in this context make their own decisions about how to approach a drawing. This also may be a symptom of the type of peer influence that occurs when friends sit next to one another during a drawing session. Using space on a page in this manner might also connect with the gender based pattern of subject matter choice, as the more frontal and personal composition resulting from this use of space connects with the interpersonal subject matter that is more common with females than males. The analysis of the audio-transcript of the free drawing sessions will further explore the role of peer influence in choice-making during these preschoolers’ art making experiences.

**Audio Transcripts.**

Most striking in the conversations of students was the level of social interaction throughout the free drawing process. Although some students were content to work quietly and privately on their drawings, most students seemed to be constantly sharing about the vision for and status of their drawings with both peers and the teacher. For example, at the start of session one, a male student exclaimed, “I’m going to draw a rainbow!” To this exclamation, a female student responded, “Me too!” A similar exchange occurred in session two, when a female student
said, “I’m going to draw the basket of Little Red Riding Hood!” and another female student said, “Me too!” These types of public declarations are undoubtedly responsible for the instances when several students would draw the same subject matter within a given session.

In addition to the enthusiastic verbalizing of plans for their drawings, topics surrounding gender did arise from time to time. In session two, after one male declared he was drawing “Star Wars”, a female responded, “I’m not drawing Star Wars; I’m drawing Little Red Riding Hood!” In session 3, a male declared, “This is ‘Return of the Jedi!’”, to which a female rolled her eyes and sarcastically responded, “Of course it is!” One female, in session two, posed the question, “Why do all the boys like Star Wars?” and in a chorus, several female participants chimed in with, “Yeah, we don’t like Star Wars!” These sorts of statements make clear that preschoolers have an understanding that certain interests are gender designated. With this understanding established, it is difficult to know whether or not a female student would have independently chosen a theme deemed to be masculine if not for the desire to conform to a female group.

A final finding made clear through the audio recordings of sessions involved the timing of students’ completion of free drawings across the six sessions. Although each session was a maximum of 15 minutes, the time at which all students completed their drawings varied greatly across sessions. It was during the final session, session six, that the researcher noticed a trend in the timing of students’ completion of free drawings. Session 6 was the only all-female free drawing session and it was also the first session wherein all students were still in the middle of drawing when the 15 minute time frame was up. It seemed these female students would have continued drawing for at least another few minutes if not for the time limit. This led the researcher to look back at prior sessions and examine the time it took within each session for all students to finish in relation to the male to female ratio. An interesting correlation was
discovered; the higher the male to female ratio was within a given session, the shorter amount of time it took for all students to finish their free drawings. It seemed that the sooner one or two students finished in the beginning, the more pressure the other students felt to finish quickly. On the other hand, when the majority of students were continuing to take their time, students did not feel as much pressure to finish their own drawings quickly. This is yet another way in which preschool students are influenced by peers. Although there was a gender based tendency of males to finish free drawings quickly, most students were influenced by how quickly the majority of their peers finished, and decided how much longer to continue drawing accordingly.

**Photographs of In-Process Free Drawings.**

Photographs of in-process drawings revealed that, in some sessions, students sitting next to each other created free drawings with uncanny resemblances to each other. Figure 4.7 shows two, in-process free drawings, each with a sun and a rainbow. Figure 4.8 shows another pair of very similar free drawings, both with a similar layout, depicting a row of people standing together. Lastly, Figure 4.9 shows two drawings with different layouts but with very similar stylized drawings of people. These similarities do not seem to be coincidences, rather, they are direct results of students pairing off and bonding over the creation of similar free drawings.

Another role in-process photographs played in the data analysis was to capture drawings in multiple stages of a drawing’s development. Some free drawings took on a new form by the end of the drawing session, making it difficult to decipher the original subject matter of the free drawing. Figure 4.10 shows the course of one free drawing over time and illustrates how an image created in the beginning of a session can become virtually undetectable by the end. This allowed the researcher to see the original content in a drawing, even if an image had become entirely hidden by another layer of crayon by the end of the session.
Figure 4.10 Example of the evolution of a free drawing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Stage 1" /></td>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Stage 2" /></td>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Stage 3" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondary Analysis

This section includes the analysis conducted by the researcher’s friend, from the perspective of cultural and women’s studies:

It is apparent already that there are some general distinctions between the young male and female artists. The differences between genders are not in the technical elements of the work, e.g., line, shade, space, color, but rather in the subject matter and how it relates to their social life. The girls were more likely to draw people they knew (often family), but were even more likely to share thematic elements and subjects. If one girl drew a rainbow the odds of other girls drawing a rainbow increased, and it became apparent that this was not how the project started in their individual minds. A number of young female artists began working on a different image, and then flipped their papers over to join the collective, leaving aborted artwork on the “back.” This could indicate that girls are
socialized to attend to the needs of group cohesion, or to be more talkative (and hence share ideas more), or both as these two patterns would co-develop.

The young male artists, on the other hand, generally used their art more typographically. As a whole their art was more cenophilic, or having an abundance of white space remaining, with simple lines representing their own internal fantasies. Their art was less a time for socializing with others, and more a time for working through ideas. Boys would tend to draw similar objects in every session such as a circle with small symbols representing the US and Korea, or figures from science fiction movies. There is a solitary nature to this sort of art, and it may be a case of gender socialization.

It is important to recognize that the gender differences are not the most important element in the students art work. For example there was far more diversity in how the girls created their shared scenes than there were similarities. Gender socialization, if it has an impact on artists this young, is probably more impactful on the art-making process than on style and aesthetics. (P. Drake, personal communication, July 21, 2013)

**Conclusion**

The data gathered by the researcher over the course of six free drawing sessions provided insight into the free drawing process of preschoolers at Beginnings Preschool. The audio recordings, in-process photographs, and final free drawings produced evidence pointing to the high level of peer influence that occurs in this context. This peer influence ultimately connects with how gender norms are perpetuated amongst peers at the preschool level.

Gender based patterns appeared in multiple aspects of free drawings created through the course of this study. The most obvious pattern dealt with choice of subject matter of boys versus
girls and the very social aspect of art making for many students, but for female students in particular. Other patterns, though slightly less apparent, existed in students’ use of color and space. The next chapter will further explore the significance of these findings and how they might inform a preschool visual art curriculum.
Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter discusses how the findings of this study on gender based patterns in the free drawings of preschoolers personally impacted the researcher and how they might inform current visual art curriculum and pedagogy. A unit plan, designed by the researcher in light of the findings of this study, will also be discussed. Finally, the researcher will make recommendations for how knowledge from this study can be put into practice in the context of visual art education.

Personal Impact of the Study

The findings from this study indicate that there are certain gender based patterns in the artwork of children at the preschool level. These findings confirmed the researcher’s prior suspicion that there are often differences in the way males and females at the preschool level create art.

Through the course of the study, the researcher witnessed many exchanges between students that ultimately influenced the choices those students made. Part of the reason why gender patterns exist in the artwork of these students is related to these exchanges. Even so, a large part of why gender patterns exist must relate to broader society and culture. It would be impossible to fully prevent society’s expectations of gender from reaching and influencing these students. However, the influence that an art teacher has can be exercised in such a way that students have a space where they are not obligated to follow all gender norms. Many males may always prefer to depict scenes of conflict in their artwork and many females may always prefer drawing tranquil scenes. That being said, an art teacher should use his or her influence to affirm those who do not follow the norms.

For every gender based pattern discovered in this study, there was a minority of students who made decisions that did not follow the trend. For whatever reason, these students, both male and female, chose to go their own way. With affirmation for their artistic decisions, these
students will be more likely to maintain their individuality and the genuine expression of their voices through visual art.

One of the findings from this study dealt with the role art plays for individual students. For many males in the study, the art making process involved playing out internal fantasies on the page, whereas for many girls, the art making process involved cooperatively sharing interests and experiences and recording those on the page. On a small scale, these differences reflect the diversity of the wider world of art. It is important for students at this young age to be exposed to the various roles that the visual arts play for different people and different cultures. There is no one “right” way to experience and participate in the visual arts. By sharing with students the many roles and purposes of visual art, students will be less critical of peers whose work may differ from their own and will feel more confident in exploring different avenues for their own artistic expression.

Besides providing a voice that affirms students’ choices rather than passively reinforcing gender stereotypes, the art teacher has the important role of defining what is valuable in the art world for students. Many teachers inadvertently limit students’ notion of art to that which is 2-dimensional and on a canvas. By merely acknowledging artists that don’t fit the typical mold, teachers can broaden the scope of potential outlets of creative expression for students.

Rationale for the Unit

There are many possibilities for curricula that extend beyond traditional boundaries of visual art and allow for individual students’ artistic expression. Creating a classroom environment without gender bias involves monitoring daily interactions with students and between students, but also being mindful of curricular choices. Art teachers can begin by exploring folk arts and the work of outsider artists just as often as “high art”, and by representing
male and female artists equally. Colbert (1996) explains the importance of the inclusion of more traditional crafts, the art forms that have often been the domain of women, historically, in the art curriculum. Additionally, she explains the importance of the inclusion of a balance of male and female artists in a child’s art education (p. 61). With this in mind, the researcher designed a unit plan that would include the study of both male and female artists whose medium, story quilts, often hold meaningful narratives and are part of a long creative tradition. This unit plan can be found in Appendix A.

**Recommendations**

If this study were to be conducted again, it would be beneficial to have a larger number of participants and to have an equal ratio of males to females in the body of participants. It would also be interesting to complete a more long-term study wherein drawings of students would be collected over the course of a year, as this would allow for monitoring of how peer influence affects students over time. Studying and comparing students from other socio-economic backgrounds and school contexts would also provide important data on this topic. Such extensions of this study would strengthen and deepen some of the understandings gained from this classroom based research.

This study might be shared with others in order to share insight and begin a dialogue regarding gender norms and art education. The researcher will discuss this study with other professionals in the field of art education, and the study could potentially gain a wider audience through publication in an academic journal.
Conclusion

In summary, this classroom-based study explored the gender based patterns in free drawings in the context of Beginnings Preschool. The study revealed that there are significant gender based patterns in students’ choice of subject matter in their art work and minor patterns regarding use of space and color. The art making process is one of a very social nature for preschoolers, and this is especially true for female students, where even individual drawings seemed to be part of a collaborative process. Students are certainly aware of certain gender expectations.

No single strategy is being prescribed in order to counter the messages that often dichotomize students and the artwork they create according to gender. However, art educators are challenged to be mindful of the messages they communicate through daily interactions and curricular choices, especially at the preschool level, when students are still forming notions of self and gender identity, and behaving accordingly. Ideally, this study will promote discussion and mindfulness in art educators so that students in the present and future may benefit from an art education where genuine artistic expression is truly promoted and embraced, regardless of one’s gender.
GENDER BASED DIFFERENCES IN DRAWINGS OF PRESCHOOLERS

References


Appendix A

Unit Plan

Name: Priscilla Hopkins

Grade: Pre-Kindergarten

*Quilts: An Art Form for More than just Keeping Warm*

**Unit Rationale:**

Through the study of the traditional craft of quilt making, students will be exposed to the importance of these art forms that are considered to be both functional objects and fine art. Students will discover that quilts can function as canvases and can both be used to tell stories and to serve as surfaces for material and visual exploration. Studying the quilt making heritage of this country also allows students to discover artists that are often underrepresented in the fine art world, for example, women and African American artists.

**Descriptive Title:**

The exploration of story quilts as a medium will allow students to encounter an art form that can both serve a daily function and tell a meaningful story. Students will learn that many household objects used to be created by the hands of people who used them, and many still are. Although students will not go through the process of making actual quilts, they will borrow from the aesthetic of quilts to see how patterns can be combined with narrative drawings for a beautiful effect.

**Goals:**

**Students should:**

**Understand:**

- That there are various purposes for creating works of visual art (NVAS 5.a)
- How people's experiences influence the development of specific art works (NVAS 5.b)
Know:

- Visual arts have both a history and specific relationships to various cultures (NVAS 4.a)
- How to use visual structures and functions of art to communicate ideas (NVAS 2.c)

Be able to:

- Use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories (NVAS 1.d)
- Select and use subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning (NVAS 3.b)

Instructional Concepts:

For students in the early symbol making stage of artistic development, “the story in the painting holds greater importance than expressive or design qualities of the work” (Kerlavage, 1996, p.43). Students will not only be able to tell a story from the work of other artists, they will also be able to tell their own stories through art making. According to Olson (1996), “all art encompasses a story, in one way or another” (p. 168). Although not all of the quilts used as exemplars in this unit will depict obvious narratives, students will be encouraged to find stories in even the non-objective quilts. By studying the stories both within quilts and the stories behind the creation of quilts, students will develop understanding of the powerful role of story-telling that art plays in the past and present. Ultimately, students will decide how to tell their own stories through quilt-inspired studio processes.

Lessons:

Lesson One: Exploring Story Quilts

Length of lesson: One 30-minute class period

The teacher will introduce students to quilts by multiple artists, both male and female. These artists include Faith Ringgold, Michael James, and many quilters from the community of Gees Bend, Alabama. The teacher will lead the following interactive exercise with students: Small reproductions of a variety of quilts will be spread out on the table. The teacher will ask a range of questions such as, “Can you find a quilt with a family on it?”; “Can you find a quilt with many different shapes on it?”; “Can you find a quilt...
that is shaped like a square?” Students will then search for the corresponding images before them and hold up an appropriate image as quickly as they can. The teacher will then review students’ responses and will ask about the reasoning behind students’ decisions, when appropriate. Afterwards, students will be asked to pick out their favorite quilt from the table and take turns sharing why they are drawn to that particular quilt.

**Lesson Two: Making a Collaborative Story Quilt**

**Length of Lesson:** one thirty-minute class period

The teacher will begin this lesson with a review of the prior lesson by asking students what they remember. After it has been established that quilts and quilters are the topic of study, the teacher will ask students to tell a story based on a particular quilt. After hearing from multiple students on multiple different quilts, the teacher will ask students to share what kind of story they might like to tell through quilt-making. After several ideas have been shared, the teacher will describe the “Story Quilt” project. For this project, each student will create their own square that tells a story of their choosing. Eventually, each of these squares will be connected to form a large class quilt. The teacher will demonstrate the process of designing a “Story Quilt” using fabric markers on 6 x 6” pieces of canvas. Several ways of mark-making will be demonstrated and several exemplars will be shared with students. Teacher will distribute materials and students will be given the remainder of class time to work.

**Lesson Three: Quilts Collages**

**Length of Lesson:** two 30-minute class periods

The teacher will review the prior lesson and will introduce this lesson wherein students will create their own quilts inspired by those made in Gee’s Bend, Alabama. The teacher will put several images of quilts on the table and ask students to describe the different shapes and colors that they see. Next, the teacher will demonstrate how students will make their own “Quilt Collages” inspired by the quilts of Gee’s Bend. The teacher will demonstrate several ways to create a composition with the pre-cut felt and construction
paper shapes and will show examples of patterns, symmetry, and overlapping. These shapes will be collaged onto 9 x 12” construction paper. The teacher will then distribute materials and students will have the remainder of this class as well as all of the next class to work.

**Materials and Resources:**

**Resources:**

- Post card images of quilts by Faith Ringgold including: *Tar Beach; The Dinner Quilt, and The Sunflower Quilting Bee at Arles*
- Post card images of quilts by Michael James, including: *Metamorphosis and The Terminus of One Path*
- *The Quilts of Gee’s Bend* Post card box
- Exemplars of completed “Story Quilts” and “Quilt Collages”

**Materials:**

- 6 x 6” canvas squares (one per student=30 total)
- 9 x 11” construction paper (one per student= 30 total)
- Fabric markers
- Glue
- Pre-cut felt and construction paper shapes (enough for 30 students to use in composition)

**Assessment:**

Students will be assessed based on their participation in class discussion and during studio projects. All students are expected to create two projects within this unit; one “Story Quilt” and one “Quilt Collage”.

The teacher will provide feedback to students throughout the process.

**References:**


Table B.1. *Drawing Analysis Chart*. This chart was used for content-analysis of student free drawings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drawing ID</th>
<th>Student Gender (m/f)</th>
<th>Notes on Color</th>
<th>Notes on Theme/Subject Matter</th>
<th>Use of space (organization of content in drawing)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table B.2. Free Drawing Content Chart for Individual Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Gender and ID number</th>
<th>Subject of 1\textsuperscript{st} drawing</th>
<th>Subject of 2\textsuperscript{nd} drawing</th>
<th>Subject of 3\textsuperscript{rd} drawing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1</td>
<td>People (possibly family) and a rainbow</td>
<td>People (possibly family), earth, house, rocket, all floating on page.</td>
<td>Rainbow (with non-traditional colors) and what appear to be houses to the side (floating on page)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>Earth and suns with attempt to label Korea and Earth</td>
<td>Earth and suns with attempt to label Korea and Earth</td>
<td>“rocket “coming out on earth” (minimalist drawing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(4\textsuperscript{th} drawing) Earth with Korea and U.S. labeled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F1</td>
<td>Flowers, rainbow, grass, sun…(nature)</td>
<td>Gigantic heart consumes who page, colorful lines echo curves of heart for remaining space on page</td>
<td>People (friends and family?) smiling side-by-side on green grass, flowers on either side and sun in upper right-hand corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2</td>
<td>Rainbow and flowers and grass</td>
<td>“house”, geometric brown patterns with steps inside</td>
<td>Rainbow, heart, another rainbow coming out of upper right-hand corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M3</td>
<td>Manic line-work “tornado”</td>
<td>“rocket”, curvy lines of varying angles come together to form this invention</td>
<td>“transformer” with “magic wheels that can go into outer-space”-invention similar to previous drawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F3</td>
<td>Family (Dad, Ella, Mom), sun and sky</td>
<td>Rainbow in center of page, triangles at bottom of each side</td>
<td>Big Rainbow with sun in upper-left-hand corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F4</td>
<td>Rainbow, sun, grass…(nature)</td>
<td>“Mixed-up world”…swirly rainbow, orange sky, green and pink sun in bottom right corner, blue rainbow, polka dots and hearts floating</td>
<td>Rainbow, flowers, grass, clouds, sun in upper right-hand corner (nature)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M4</td>
<td>Colorful border with picture of person and house inside (Little Red Riding Hood without the riding hood?)</td>
<td>Two people fighting, faces have zig-zagged mouths…red lines on each side serve as the border of the picture</td>
<td>Rainbow borders with large “trap” in center of page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F5</td>
<td>rainbow</td>
<td>Little red riding hood, ladder and strawberry (floating on page)</td>
<td>Two little heart-shaped flowers floating on white page…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F6</td>
<td>Rainbow and flower (floating on page)</td>
<td>House (floating on page), other side has balloon with smiley</td>
<td>House and car on road…other side has car and manic lines all over the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Elements</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F7</td>
<td>“Little Red Riding Hood” and sky, trees, and butterfly</td>
<td>Face: Picture of girl (little red Little Red Riding Hood?) surrounding boy colorful borders</td>
<td>Place (the road): House, car, fish tank with fish. (all floating on page)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F8</td>
<td>House with bright colors and stairs</td>
<td>Face: n/a</td>
<td>Place (the road): n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F9</td>
<td>Geometric, colorful pattern, square-looking flower and dust clouds on either side</td>
<td>Face: Manic swirly lines, some round and geometric forms floating in the cloud of lines (seems related to prior drawing, but more manic)</td>
<td>Place (the road): People smiling side by side on the green grass (bottom of page), flowers on either side, pink/red sun in upper right-hand corner and blue sky (very similar to Darby’s from this session)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F10</td>
<td>Rainbow, round and colorful forms (boulders?)</td>
<td>Face: Picture of self, surrounded by rows of color and blue sky</td>
<td>Place (the road): n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F11</td>
<td>Little Red Riding Hood, mother, and trees</td>
<td>Face: House with rainbow over top, family inside of house, grass in front (domesticity)</td>
<td>Place (the road): Two figures (she and her mom) inside house/aquarium, fish tank inside. (More probably would have been drawn if time allowed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M5</td>
<td>Star Wars battle scene</td>
<td>Face: Scene from star wars that becomes consumed by red crayon</td>
<td>Place (the road): Star wars battle scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M6</td>
<td>Battle Scene from star wars</td>
<td>Face: Star wars battle scene (new scene and composition)</td>
<td>Place (the road): Star wars battle scene (another new scene and composition)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table B.3. *Free Drawing Subject Matter Across All Sessions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Free Drawing Subject Matter in Order of Popularity</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(out of the total 49 drawings made during 6 sessions)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainbow/s</td>
<td>15 (12 females, 3 males)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star Wars Battle Scenes</td>
<td>7 (all males)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houses</td>
<td>6 (all females)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Little Red Riding Hood”</td>
<td>4 (3 females, 1 male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People (friends/family together)</td>
<td>4 (all females)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical drawing of Earth (with south Korea and U.S. labeled)</td>
<td>3 (all by the same male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockets (some of them leaving earth)</td>
<td>3 (males)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformer</td>
<td>1 (male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geometric patterned creation</td>
<td>2 (both by same female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heart</td>
<td>1 (female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tornado</td>
<td>1 (male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flowers</td>
<td>1 (female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal parts rocket, people, houses</td>
<td>1 (male)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table B.4. Use of Color in Free Drawings

![Bar chart showing the use of color in free drawings by gender. Males and females were asked to draw using 1 or 2 colors, 3 or 4 colors, or 5 or more colors, with females showing a higher use of more colors.](chart1.png)

Figure B.5. Use of Space in Free Drawings

![Bar chart showing the use of space in free drawings by gender. Males and females were asked to draw objects at the bottom of the page, intentionally centered on the page, or floating on the page, with males showing a higher use of objects floating on the page.](chart2.png)