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Art Majors' Perceptions of Their Self-Concept, Academic Self-Efficacy, and Social Identity

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Art Majors Perceptions of their Self-Concept,

Academic Self-Efficacy, and Social Identity

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BY

Sara E. Triplett

THESIS

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Art Majors' Perceptions of their Self-Concept, Academic Self-Efficacy, and Social

Identity

Sara Triplett

Eastern Illinois University

Abstract

This study utilized a qualitative approach was used to provide insight into students' perspectives on their self-concept, academic self-efficacy, and social identity in relation to their majors at a mid-size Midwestern university. Two undergraduate students majoring in 2D Studio Art and three undergraduate students majoring in Theater Performance were interviewed. Through individual interviews several themes emerged such as: 1) using art to have a meaningful impact on the audience, communicating a message, and clarifying their understanding of the world was important; 2) clear professional support strengthened art majors' self-efficacy; and 3) peer groups play a large part in art majors' identity. This study recommended future Student Affairs professionals should offer academic support for non-art related courses minimizing negative self-concept and self-efficacy experiences. It is also recommended faculty and professional support for students majoring in Studio Art, Theater Performance, or any other art major be consistent and apparent. Future goals and knowledge of an intended path is important for professional development and networking in a highly competitive field.

Key words: Art Majors, Studio Art, Theater Performance, Self-concept, Self-efficacy, Social Identity.

DEDICATION

The arts became my place in this world. Through dance and music, I was able to grow and learn and over the years these opportunities have given me amazing experiences I will have for the rest of my life. Martha Graham once said, "great dancers are not great because of their technique, they are great because of their passion". This is dedicated to everyone who has that passion.

This work is dedicated to the art majors, theater majors, and dance majors of the past, present, and future. May you find your place under the sun to communicate with every audience in more ways than one. I hope your impact if felt near and far and your creations come from the heart.

To the students that are like me, that want to work professionally in the art field one day and are paving their own path. You will get there with hard work, dedication, and the internal motivation to continue. It will not be easy but it will be rewarding. Keep on moving! To my future students, we may not know each other just yet, but I am excited to cross your path. I am here for you through successes and challenges, and everything in between. You can make it through and you will, I cannot wait to see you shine bright one day. These words are for you.

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With love, support, and encouragement from a few people, I was able to complete this journey. I could not imagine doing it without all of you!

Thank you to my thesis advisor, Dr. Richard Roberts for your guidance through this process. You continually challenged me and fueled my competitive side to complete my goal of finishing before my birthday. You were understanding when times were difficult and supportive when I needed that extra push to just get to the next part. I cannot thank you enough for all you have done. Thank you to my thesis committee, Dr. Angela Yoder and Allison Frees-Williams. I am so thankful for your input, your time, and support as I completed my thesis. Knowing I was that much closer to making you proud helped me continue when I did not think I could. I will never be able to express my gratitude enough to you both and Dr. Roberts. Thank you!

Thank you to my parents for everything. Without you I would not have discovered my love for music, art, and dance. Your support throughout my life has provided me with the love and understanding I take into my every day, there are so many moments I think about what you would say and I know I am on the right path. I hope I make you proud now and in the future, I love you!

Thank you to my best friends for being there when I did not think I could continue for another minute. You kept me from giving up when times were rough, when I wanted to quit anything and everything, and when I needed a necessary break from endless reading and writing. Ashley, Bree, Megan, and Yazmin and everyone in the Cohort I cannot begin to express what your support has meant to me the last two years, someday I will return the favor. Thank you!

Thank you to the College Student Affairs and Counseling and Student Development department. I appreciate your support throughout the program, thank you for helping me grow professionally and personally.

Finally, thank you to the Studio Art and Theater Performance majors that allowed me to ask about their lives, their minds, and their work. You shared your beautiful words with me, which in turn I hope to share with the world. You are your art, and your art is groundbreaking. I sincerely hope for the best for you all, I cannot wait to see you excel in the future.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The percentage of first-time, full-time freshman enrolled in a 4-year institution intending to declare a science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) major in 1995 was 32.4% (STEM Education Data, 2014). By 2012, the percentage was 39.2% (STEM Education Data, 2014). Since 1972, a third or more students have planned on majoring in science and engineering, with the most notable increase beginning in 2008 for both men and women (STEM Education Data, 2014). More men are likely to major in a STEM field than women; forty seven percent of men majored in STEM in 2011 (STEM Education Data, 2014). In the last decade, science and engineering degrees increased in all STEM fields, apart from computer sciences, and in 2011 more than 550,000 bachelor's degrees were awarded to students majoring in science, technology, engineering, and math (Science and Engineering Indicators, 2014).

The future of STEM in the United States is expanding greatly. In 2015, President Barak Obama created the Committee on STEM Education (CoSTEM) to increase the number of qualified teachers and students in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, n.d.). CoSTEM is comprised of 13 agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education and the goal is to increase ability in science and math and vary the quality of learning opportunities for students (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, n.d.). There is collaboration with NASA, the National Park Service, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services to administer federal programs to increase STEM content and initiatives in low-income schools across the United States (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, n.d.). In

recent years, there has been a strong push for female representation in STEM. Approximately 50.5% of all female students received their bachelor's degree in 2012 (STEM Education Data, 2014), yet only 17.9% received a bachelor's degree in the computer science, 19.3% in engineering, 39% in the physical sciences, and 43.1% in mathematics (National Girls Collaborative Project, 2016).

In contrast to the growth of STEM related majors, in the 2009 American Community Survey (ACS), of the 56,000,000-people surveyed with bachelor's degrees, approximately 22% had one in arts, humanities, and other; less than 1% had bachelor's degrees in the visual and performing arts (Siebens & Ryan, 2012). In a study conducted in 2005, 93% of Americans believed that art education was creating a more well-rounded education for children, (Ruppert, 2006) while only 54% rated the importance of art education as a ten on a one-to-ten importance scale (Ruppert, 2006). Per a survey by the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP), 41% of respondents held a Bachelor of Fine Art (BFA) degree combined for 2011, 2012, and 2013 (SNAAPShot, 2014) and 29% of participants majored in fine or studio art (SNAAPShot, 2014). While many Americans believe art education is important, the number of students majoring in the field is still relatively small.

While STEM degrees are on the rise, fine art major numbers remain stagnant. In 2014, fine art majors faced an unemployment rate of approximately 20% (Cascone, 2014). Career growth is slow, but the competition within specializations is high (Visual and Performing Arts, n.d); students majoring in art can find careers in museums, fashion design, business, graphic design, or are self-employed (Visual and Performing Arts, n.d.).

STEM and art majors are both specialized areas and affect students on many levels. One such area affected is their self-concept. Self-concept has been investigated as it applies to a broad student population (Bem, 1967; Burelson et al., 2005, Marsh & Martin, 2011; Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976), however, the self-concept of students designated as art majors has not been thoroughly studied. In this context, STEM majors are supported at both a national and a university level, while the number of art majors remain stagnant and are largely unsupported. Therefore, an investigation of the self-concept of art majors is needed to understand art majors holistically.

Purpose of the Study

The self-concept of art majors as it relates to the decision to choose art as a major is the focus of this research. Developing a thorough understanding of this specific subset of students could help potential art majors better understand contextual factors related to art as a profession and help faculty and advisors enhance their teaching and support. Art and Theater students focus primarily on practice, creativity, and lessons with faculty to further their own aesthetic (Yorke, Orr, & Blair, 2014). A deeper understanding of self-conceptions through family, peers, and other academic departments on campus will help art majors across the board. "Students pass through a series of portals on their learning journeys" (Moffat & McKim, 2014, p. 47). Understanding each student's journey is essential to their support and development.

Therefore, the purpose of the study was to explore art students' perceptions of their self-concept, academic self-efficacy, and social identity in relation to their majors. Findings from this study can help improve the understanding of students within art departments, their perception on a campus not based in the arts, and help traditional

midsized institutions to recruit and retain more art based major students. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) majors and programs have seen a growth in recent years, with performing arts, music, and studio arts remaining stagnant on college campuses (Brown, Brown, Reardon, & Merrill, 2011). Understanding the self-concept of students within an art degree field will help further inform administrators, faculty, and staff on the needs of the students within the field.

Research Question

Due to the shifting perceptions of student abilities and personalities, I sought to increase the knowledge and understanding of art majors' perceptions of their self-concept, academic self-efficacy, and social identity. The overarching question was: what factors are perceived as influential to their self-concept, academic self-efficacy, and social identity? This will be addressed by answering the following research questions:

RQ 1. What do art majors identify as influences on their self-concept as a student?

RQ 2. What do art majors identify as influences on their academic self-efficacy as a student?

RQ 3. What do art majors identify as influences on their social identity as a student?

RQ 4. What barriers are perceived to hinder art majors' healthy development of self-concept, academic self-efficacy, and social identity?

Significance of the Study

With the most recent growth in STEM programs on universities (Brown et al., 2011), and the defunding of many art, design, and music courses in high schools across the United States, an outlet for student expression is waning (Sandmire, Rankin, Gorham,

Eggleston, Lodge, Kuns, & Grimm, 2016). That student expression is important to reduce anxiety and promote wellbeing (Sandmire et al., 2016). This study sought to find answers to questions regarding choice, decision making, and self-perception by combining the themes and explaining their relationship with self-concept and academics. This is significant because of the ever-changing student populations and campus climates on a typical Midwestern campus.

Limitations of the Study

Some factors may limit the scope of this study. These factors include the sample size to gain full understanding of the perception of art majors. The research site is not a performance or studio art heavy institution, so finding art students who did not change their major multiple times was difficult. While student pathways may change, accounting for changes within the decision-making process helped to further understand students.

Another limit for this study will be the transferability to other institutions, due to the research sites predominately rural community. The study may not impact larger, urban institutions in the same ways (Fraenkel, 2015). Generalizing to similar institutions with similar student populations would be possible using the study (Fraenkel, 2015). Larger or urban universities may have an increased art population, or be a predominately performance or studio art campus. While it is assumed the research and study will represent students' own experiences, selecting purposeful participants that represent the group will be necessary in addressing generalizability and transferability for this study (Krefting, 1990).

Researcher bias can be another limitation within the proposed study. Coming from a performance based entertainment company as well as an arts heavy background, I

have had personal experience in family, peer, and academic pressures as it applies to employment and academic history. I have experienced friends being told to "pick a real major" when studying theater or dance, and have also been told that "my degree is real" in comparison to those who have a performance or studio art degree. To prepare for and limit the effects of researcher bias I intend to ask non-leading questions, as to not influence any particular response and follow interviews with member checks for accuracy.

Definition of Terms

Art major. Students decided upon all majors within the Art Department on the [research site] campus including: Bachelor of Arts in Art, Bachelor of Fine Art in Art, Art Education, Art History, Community Arts, Studio Art, Bachelor of Art in Music, Bachelor of Music, and Theater Art ([research site] Majors and Minors, n.d.). All will be used synonymously with the phrase "art major" as well as individually.

Performance art. A nontraditional art form that typically features a live presentation to an audience or onlookers and draws on such arts as acting, poetry, music, dance, or painting (Full definition of performance art, n.d.).

Self-concept. A person's self-perceptions that are formed through experience with and interpretations of one's environment; with an emphasized importance on social influence and self-attributions (Marsh & Martin, 2011).

Self-efficacy. The perceived confidence in completing a specific task (Betz & Hackett, 1981; Bong & Clark, 1999; Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005).

Self-perception. An individual's ability to respond differentially to their own behavior and its controlling variables, as a product of social interaction (Bem, 1967).

Social identity. Meanings people attach to roles they play in society (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

Social interaction. Operationally, social interaction will be used as the group in which art majors interact with while on a midsized, Midwestern university.

Stereotype. An individual's set of beliefs about the characteristics or attributes of a group (Judd & Park, 1993).

Studio art. Also called fine art, studio art is traditionally enjoyed visually; photography, ceramics, paintings, drawings, or sculptures (Fine Arts and Studio Arts, n.d.).

Summary

The study examined art majors' perceived self-concept, academic self-efficacy, and social identity. By investigating self-concept, self-efficacy, social groups, and stereotypes, future researchers will be able to look at a traditional four-year institution and understand a specific population group. A review of literature has been done to further the underlying conceptual and theoretical framework previously conducted. A qualitative interview was completed to further knowledge on the perceived self-concept, academic self-efficacy, and social identity of art majors.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This section explores self-concept, self-efficacy, social identity, and theoretical concepts associated with self-belief and social comparison. While there is not specific literature describing self-concept as it relates to art majors, repeated themes occurred regarding domain specific self-concept, self-efficacy, and social identity standards. Many resources offer background knowledge necessary for context for the study.

Self-concept

Self-concept, roughly defined, is how individuals see themselves as a product of how others perceive them (Bem, 1967; Bong & Clark, 1999; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Nagengast & Marsh, 2011; Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976). Individuals' self-perceptions are reinforced by others' evaluations that in turn impact cognitive and affective responses to experiences and environments (Bong & Clark, 1999). Cognitive and affective responses are incorporated into the entire knowledge pool individuals pull conceptions from on an ongoing basis this knowledge pool is considered the working self-concept (Andersen & Chen, 2002).

The idea of a self-concept hierarchy as defined by Shavelson et al., (1976) is described by several researchers (Ahmed & Bruinsma, 2006; Bong & Clark, 1999; Brunner et al., 2010; Marsh & Craven, 2006; Wu & Watkins, 2009), and includes two aspects within self-concept hierarchical designs: content and structure. Content of self-concept is the individual conception; structure is the organizational, hierarchical ordering (Wu & Watkins, 2009). Figure 2.1 (Marsh & Shavelson, 1985) shows the Shavelson et al., (1976) hierarchical model: self-concept sits at the apex of a simple hierarchy with

academic and non-academic sectors. Those sections can be continuously divided into subject areas, social groups, physical attractiveness, and so on; all of which contribute to an individuals' perception of others' opinions and how the individual sees his or her self (Bong & Clark, 1999; Marsh & Craven, 2006; Shavelson et al., 1976). In recent years, however, researchers have found a limited correlation between specific academic domains within the hierarchical order which demonstrates a strong separation between subject areas (Brunner et al., 2010). The separation of academic domains is significant because individuals may have a higher self-concept in math as opposed to verbal skills.

Figure 2.1. The Shavelson model of General Self-concept
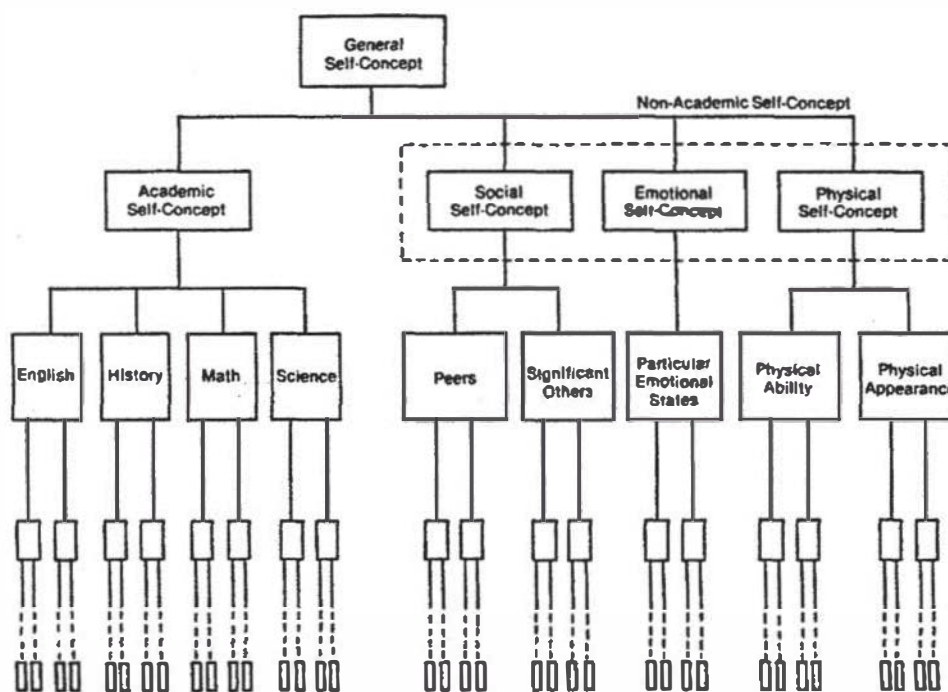
*Figure 2.1.* Shavelson's hierarchical model of the general self-concept. It is separated into academic and non-academic sectors, each then sub-divided into domains that can be further divided into every aspect of an individual.

Since the development of self-concept hierarchy as described by Shavelson et al. (1976) studies have tried reorganizing the structure and content to account for subject

specific academic self-concept (Brunner et al., 2010). The Nested Marsh/Shavelson (NMS) model maintains general self-concept at the apex of the hierarchy, then branches into subject specific domains for mathematics, science, and verbal to recognize the complexity of individuals and subject-specific domains within self-concept (Brunner et al., 2010). The NMS model of self-concept allows for global self-concept (or self-esteem) to be separated into specific domains; Figure 2.2 further clarifies the separation of specific domains (Brunner et al., 2010; Marsh et al., 2014).

Figure 2.2. The Nested Marsh/Shavelson Model of academic domains
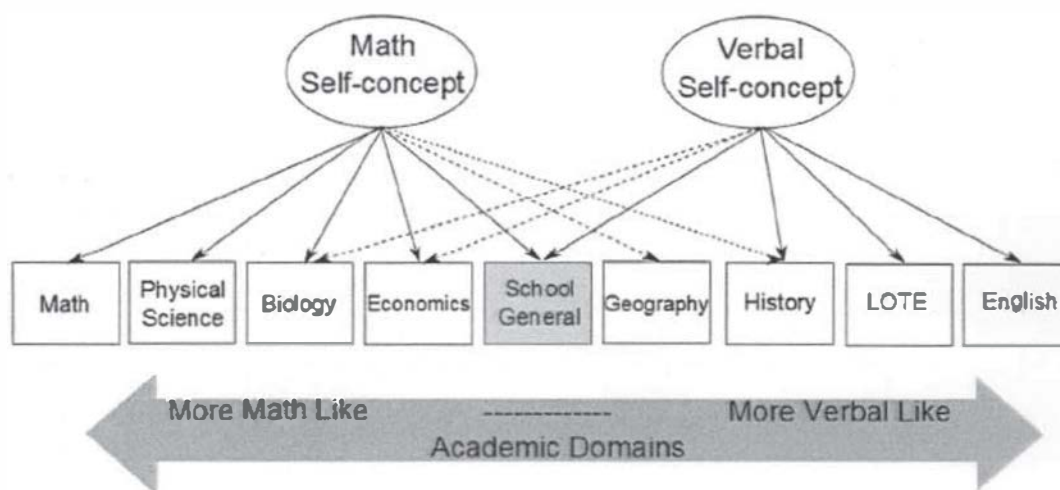
Figure 2.2. The NMS hierarchical separation of specific academic domains. The NMS model separates academic self-concept into subject specific domains through a division of math and verbal self-concepts.

The ambiguity of operational definitions has created complex differences within self-concept research. While several researchers maintain the definition posited by Shavelson et al., (1976), others have expanded the definition in recent years to include a collection of beliefs based on past experiences and social perceptions of what is important to the individual (Weiten, Dunn, & Hammer, 2012). Overall, it is a consistent belief that self-concept is not a monolithic idea; self-concept involves multiple

experiences and beliefs (Marsh & Craven, 2006; Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006). These beliefs include self-schemas, or possible selves (PSs).

Possible selves are the conceptions individuals want to, or fear to be (Erikson, 2007; Markus & Nurius, 1986); individuals may want to be more outgoing or fear becoming an alcoholic like certain family members. PSs are not always conceptions in current time, but can be positive or negative images of the self in the future (Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006). They are important to self-concept and can affect multiple cognitive structures of the individual (Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006; Vignoles et al., 2008). PSs are readily accessible cognitive structures that exert assimilative effects on targets when the target is ambiguous and relevant (Green & Sedikides, 2001).

Bem (1967) suggested self-concept was a byproduct of cognitive dissonance. He believed when studying cognitive dissonance, the attitude statements used in previous work [studying self-perception and self-concept] were interpersonal judgements made by the same participants; the observer and the observed being the same individual (Bem, 1967; Pajares, 1996). Based on internal and external judgements, individuals determine their self-worth and increase or decrease individual self-concept (Pajares, 1996). Positive, or increased, self-concepts are the desired outcome for multiple areas of psychological development as they impact academic achievement, motivation, and personal lives (Bem, 1967; Marsh & Craven, 2006; Marsh & Martin, 2011; Shavelson et al., 1976).

Academic self-concept (ASC), or mental representations of individuals' abilities in academic domains or subjects (Brunner et al., 2010) can affect achievements and motivation (Marsh & Martin, 2011). Shavelson, Hubner, and Stanton (1976) explained

how educational shifts of cognitive outcomes improve self-concept. Cognitive shifts can come in the form of grades or positive feedback. The change in feedback can increase self-concept (Shavelson et al., 1976). This increased self-concept becomes its own variable in academic achievement (Guay, Marsh, & Boivin, 2003; Shavelson et al., 1976). There are two main components of academic self-concept research: how academic self-concepts are related to corresponding measures, and the network between academic self-concept and other constructs (Brunner et al., 2010). Researchers believe that academic self-concept is directly related to academic achievement, and both (academic self-concept and academic achievement) are mutually reinforcing (Bem, 1967; Guay, Marsh, & Boivin, 2003; Hay & Ashman, 2003; Marsh & Craven, 1997; Marsh & Martin, 2011; Shavelson et al., 1976).

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is the perceived confidence in completing a specific task (Betz & Hackett, 1981; Bong & Clark, 1999; Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005). Efficacy is an individuals' judgement on capacity of mastery of skill (Bong & Clark, 1999; Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005; Tierney & Farmer, 2002). It is considered an important part of an individuals' self-concept and confidence (Pajares, 1996). While some researchers use self-concept and self-efficacy interchangeably, self-efficacy is task specific (Pajares, 1996). Efficacy judgements focus on specific abilities that are necessary to create self-concepts (Pajares, 1996). Self-efficacy judgements are less context dependent. Therefore, efficacy judgements do not depend on experience and environment.

Self-efficacy is determined by the ability to complete a task. It can be domain specific and must be tailored by the individual to be accurately measured (Pajares, 1996; Tierney & Farmer, 2002). While a specific domain may require a set of skills for completion, it is possible for individuals to perform a task but lack the skills necessary to complete it (Tierney & Farmer, 2002). Self-efficacy may be high for some tasks, while actual efficacy is lower or vice versa. This can affect overall efficacious confidence in completing the task and the specificity of consistent measurement of the individual's self-efficacy (Pajares, 1996).

Self-concept and self-efficacy are similar in regard to composition, comparison frames, and generalization. Efficacy can be a component in academic motivation and self-concept, but may be indistinguishable with regards to ability perceptions (Bong & Clark, 1999; Pajares, 1996). Comparison frames impact positive and negative self-concept, while efficacy focuses on the success or failure of previously completed tasks (Bong & Clark, 1999). Generalizability, or the ability of efficacious beliefs to transfer to other areas, allows for increased practical ability in accomplishing other future tasks (Pajares, 1996).

Academic self-efficacy (ASE) is the individual's belief in ability to perform a specific academic task (Raufelder & Ringeisen, 2016). Future-oriented perceptions impact task specific confidence which can enhance ASE. Researchers suggest enhancing ASE decreases anxiety associated with academic performance by mastering the task through repeated success and support (Pajares, 1996; Raufelder & Ringeisen, 2016). This repeated success and support increases the practical ability to complete future tasks in similar, and other, areas (Pajares, 1996).

Social Identity

Social identity is the individual sense of belonging to a social group based on certain defining characteristics of the self-concept (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Social identity has been defined as the meanings people attach to roles they play in society (Stryker & Burke, 2000). It is the bridge between collective groups and individuals, and creates a common culture among participants (Hogg & Ridgeway, 2003; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Social identity can be secure, insecure, autonomous, or comparative and can impact groups through feelings of cohesion or conflict and favoritism (Amiot & Aubin, 2013).

The identity standard within a person is the set of culturally prescribed meanings held by the individual that define identity in each situation (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Identity control theory states, within any self-regulating system, inputs are continually monitored and compared to references through a comparator (Anderson & Mounts, 2012). A regulated cycle of negative feedback determines discrepancies in references regarding identities and social feedback (Anderson & Mounts, 2012; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Identity control theory and the identity standard "function like a thermostat, ensuring no more than a small amount of discrepancy between an individual's identity and others' perceptions of it" (Anderson & Mounts, p. 92). Using the identity standard and inputs from experiences, the comparator mechanism compares discrepancies against any known self-perceptions and adjusts outputs accordingly (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Anderson and Mounts (2012) stated if the identity standard of an individual and self-perception are at an equal level they enter a monitoring state, or a stable identity standard.

If there is a discrepancy between the identity standard and their self-concept, people experience a discrepancy and can enter a state of exploration, defense, or change. Exploration could be investigating other possible social groups or self-concept changes but not actually change their social identity. People could defend their social identity by maintaining their self-concept and identity standard. An individual could change their social identity by adopting a new social group and environment. These discrepancies can be from intergroup comparisons, motivation, changes, or social behaviors (Amiot & Aubin, 2013; Anderson & Mounts, 2012). An individual in defense, exploration, or change may alter his or her self-perception, cognition, and behaviors to appease a larger social group (Amiot & Aubin, 2013; Anderson & Mounts, 2012; Burleson et al., 2005).

Individuals define themselves in relation to others and social environment (Wood, 1989). Social group taxonomy and stereotypes play into intergroup comparisons and social behaviors. Stereotypes and taxonomies describe the differences among groups by clarifying and establishing a set of beliefs about characteristics or attributes of a specific group (Judd & Park, 1993). Individuals are classified into taxonomies due to varying reasons (Dugan, 2013). Academic involvement is a primary measure for researchers who investigate taxonomy in depth. Dugan (2013) found students who fell into the "Identity and Expression Leaders" taxonomy "become more comfortable with their social identity [when] the group experience begins to be seen as a platform for educating and sensitizing others on campus regarding their respective population" (p. 240). Identity and Expression Leaders were comprised of cultural students, programming students, students who showed strong leadership qualities, and arts students. Identity and Expression

leaders are an extension of the Affinity Group Affiliates. The Affinity Group Affiliates were comprised of art students, religious students, and cultural students (Dugan, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

Family Influence

Family influence on career decision-making has been studied and assessed since the 1950s. Vocational theorists (Carter and Orfanidis, 1976; McKelvie and Friedland, 1978; Roe, 1956) have attempted to define families, their framework, and the effects on career decision-making (Bratcher, 1982). Per the Family Systems Theory approach, the family is considered one unit that develops operating principles that allow for consistency and predictability passed through generations (Bratcher, 1982). The family, as defined by Goldenberg and Goldenberg (1982) is the natural social system with its own properties, an evolved set of rules, communications, roles, structures, ways to negotiate, and problem solving (Bratcher, 1982); these structures establish roles within society and can guide characteristics (Bratcher, 1982). The implications of Family Systems Theory come from separating from family structures and rules (Bratcher, 1982). Flexible family boundaries and separation allows for more autonomy (Bratcher, 1982). The further the separation, the more a person can resist imposed rules and form their own opinions on career choice (Bratcher, 1982). Recently researchers have focused on the direct influence of parents on career choice, and believe parents to be the most influential (Chope, 2005). However, it is becoming increasingly difficult to define family due to complex structures and parenting styles (Chope, 2005). Because of this, family influence has less of an impact but is still an integral part of career development.

Expectancy Theory

Expectancy theory, developed by Vroom (1964), explains the motivation of individuals to work at a certain level, using choices through forms of voluntary activity controlled by the individual (Behling & Starke, 1973). According to the theory "the force acting on an individual to work at a specific level of effort is a function of the algebraic sum of the products of: (a) the desirabilities of the outcomes (valences) of working at that level, and (b) the subjective probabilities (expectancies) that those outcomes will follow from working at that level" (Behling & Starke, 1973, p. 373). The force to work at a certain level is affected by desirability and the outcomes associated with working at that level. Satisfaction impacts the objectivity from working at a set level, and working at the set level impacts desirability and expectancy outcomes (Behling & Starke, 1973).

Vroom's (1964) motivation within expectancy theory has three components: (1) effort leads to an intended performance, (2) instrumentality of performance achieves a certain result, and (3) the result is desirable to the individual (Boundless, 2016). Variables within the theory are valence, expectancy, and instrumentality; these variables fit within the three components (effort, instrumentality, and result) (Boundless, 2016). Valence is the value placed on the outcomes of a performance based on needs (Boundless, 2016). Effort will result in a desired performance (Boundless, 2016). Instrumentality is the belief that if the performance outcome is met, there will be a desirable outcome (Boundless, 2016). Expectancy theory can help predict behavior and performance within a working environment. Individuals enter a career field with set expectancies and outcomes of working in a specific area (Boundless, 2016).

Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory (SCT) was first developed by Bandura in 1959 (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005). Beginning with a shift from observing behaviors to looking at cognitive functions, Bandura observed aggression and social learning. In recent years, SCT has developed into self-efficacy expectations (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005). Per SCT, motivation and action are regulated by an anticipatory control mechanism. This anticipatory control mechanism influences behavior (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005).

Social cognitive theory encompasses multiple constructs: self-efficacy, self-concept, gender, identity, career development, motivation, agency, and personality (Andersen & Chen, 2002; Bandura, 1989; Bandura, 2001; Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). SCT has been applied to areas that influence behavior and social modeling. Social modeling is when individuals create new behavior patterns by going beyond what they have seen or heard (Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005). An understanding of SCT, specifically self-efficacy, will help increase the background knowledge of the proposed populations' tasks, behaviors, and actions.

Social Comparison Theory

The big-fish-little-pond effect (BFLPS) predicts achievement by using social comparison frames (Burelson, Leach, & Harrington, 2005; Nagengast & Marsh, 2011). Highly successful students in regular academic settings have little trouble comparing themselves positively to those who may not experience the same amount of success. If those same successful students enter an advanced program, they may not experience the

same positive comparison to their peers, instead he or she may experience a negative contrast effect (Burleson et al., 2005, Nagengast & Marsh, 2011).

There are two types of social comparisons: upward and downward; the BFLPS exemplifies an upward social comparison. A downward comparison is when people compare themselves to someone who is perceived as less competent or proficient (Social-Comparison Theory: Upward vs. Downward, n.d.). The shift of comparison targets is also known as contrast effect (Cheng & Lam, 2007; Nagengast & Marsh, 2011). Upward and downward social comparisons can create an inferiority complex, especially if there is no way for an individual to increase his or her academic knowledge through a program. Social comparison can create a negative self-concept and affect performance (Bandura & Jourdan, 1991; Burleson et al., 2005). The changes in self-concept can cause a period of exploration, defense, or change based on experiences and what is previously known of the self-concept (Amiot & Aubin, 2013; Anderson & Mounts, 2012; Burleson et al., 2005).

Social comparison is often described with three underlying concepts: self-evaluation, self-improvement, and self-enhancement. Social comparisons focus on evaluation. Self-evaluating individuals look to those of similar and dissimilar dimensions to impact comparisons. Then, individuals consider surrounding dimension items under evaluation to form a concrete comparison (Collins, 1996; Wood, 1989). Self-improvement prompts social comparison for things such as learning a specific task when younger. Self-enhancement can be achieved through upward or downward social comparisons. An upward comparison can create an enhancement when the individual evaluates oneself against someone of higher ability, he or she may learn from the other if

found similar and create an enhancement (Wood, 1989). The same effect can be produced from a downward comparison; by comparing oneself with someone seen as less fortunate (Wood, 1989). In western cultures, there is a push for achievement. Students evaluate their abilities and feel a constant pressure to improve past their competitor (Wood, 1989). While objective feedback does not solely effect improvement or provide information to get ahead in competition, combing evaluation and improvement overrides self-esteem to produce or facilitate goals (Collins, 1996). Social comparisons within identity and social groups helped gauge and explore the social interactions of the population to deepen the understanding of their self-concept through peers.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Design of the Study

The researcher studied art majors' perceptions of their self-concept, academic self-efficacy, and social identity. This phenomenological study will provide the researcher with information regarding participant experiences. The researcher utilized a qualitative approach for data collection and analysis. As stated by Fraenkel (2015), qualitative research examines the holistic study where situations and experiences make sense of their lives within a natural setting. Qualitative research will explore art majors' experiences in relation to their families, peers, and academics, thus allowing for a more descriptive and holistic view of the phenomena. Since the research questions developed for this study are experience driven, interviews were conducted to record and analyze art majors.

The study used interviews of participants in person as well as observations to questions and their responses. The interview included demographic questions as well as open and closed ended questions as they pertain to the research question. Questions helped explain art major students' self-concept, their academic self-efficacy, and their social identity within a midsized, rural Midwestern University.

Participants

Participants in this study are art majors at a traditional four-year, midsized, Midwestern university. This midsized university has a total student population of 7415 including undergraduate, graduate, and specialty study students, with 51 different program areas (At a Glance, n.d.). The research site student demographics are 69.5% White, 18.5% African American, 5.4% Hispanic, 2.4% unknown, 0.8% Asian, and 3.1%

other (How Diverse, n. d.), 60% female students, 40% male students (US World News, 2017). Five students within the art department were selected using convenience sampling, from the overall student population to best represent the major as much as possible. Interview participants were asked a series of questions to fully develop and understand their experiences. While it would be beneficial to contact and interview all students within the art major department, time and availability did not make it a feasible option.

Research Site

The research site is a midsized, Midwestern university located in the rural Midwest with 7415 students currently enrolled (At a Glance, n.d.). The researcher met with participants in a comfortable, yet neutral location within the university Student Union and Fine Art building as to not influence any specific responses from informants.

Instrumentation

Phenomenological qualitative interview questions were answered within a set time frame, face-to-face with the researcher (Fraenkel, 2015). Questions included demographic background information (e.g. age, home location, student classification, major, and minor) as well as the response from family and peers when deciding upon an art major (e.g. What was your family or social group response to your decision to major in art?). Interviews were planned and performed in a neutral location as to provide comfort for the participant as well as to prevent any specific response to interview questions. Each interview was recorded using multiple devices set up by the researcher as to prevent any incorrect information once each interview is completed.

Researcher as the instrument. As an employee of an entertainment based company, I conducted this research to find the connection between art major students and traditional four-year institutions, their family and peer pressure, as well as their academic self-concept; all of which affect a student's self-perception. My experience, as having attended a traditional four-year institution as well, is that most students believe their degree in art is "not real" or have been told by prominent family members that "they need to pick a real major." By connecting art majors to their self-perception as it is formed by family, peer, and academic influence as well as investigating their academic self-efficacy as it pertains to art, I can discover a more well-rounded understanding of those with whom I work currently as well as potential students in future scholastic settings.

Data Collection

In person interviews, roughly one hour in length, were conducted approximately one month into the fall semester of 2017 to avoid intense testing or project dates. Interviews will be recorded to check for accuracy during analysis. The researcher transcribed the recorded interviews no more than three weeks after completion and kept notes in tandem with the recordings.

Treatment of Data

Data has been stored in a password protected computer, and kept for three years as designated by Institutional Review Board (IRB) standards. Participant identity will remain confidential; identifiers will be eliminated and replaced with numbers to signify participants.

Data Analysis

Interview responses were recorded and inputted to Microsoft Word for analysis of content. The analysis consisted of categorizing and connecting strategies; looking for common themes and differences among responses and coding those responses and themes to best represent interviewee responses (Maxwell, 2013).

Summary

Through individual interviews, the researcher intended to gain an understanding of art major's perceived self-concept, academic self-efficacy, and their social identity. The researcher also intended on developing an understanding of familial, peer, and academic perceptions of the participant.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The purpose of this study was to the examine the perceptions of art majors' self-concept, academic self-efficacy, and social identity and how those perceptions have been shaped by their experiences. Five one-on-one interviews were completed, lasting between 35 to 60 minutes, by the researcher. Three Theater and two Studio Art majors were interviewed. The sixth participant withdrew from the research study. The participants were between the ages of 20 to 23, and all have 60 or more credit hours completed and are within the final year of their education. Of the five participants, two identified as male, one identified as female, one identified as transgender, and one preferred not to disclose their identity but did disclose their preferred pronouns of they and their. From these interviews, the researcher identified several themes pertaining to their self-concept, their academic successes and challenges, their social-identity, and barriers perceived to hinder the development of self-concept, self-efficacy, and social-identity. These themes were used to answer the overarching research question and subsequent directed research questions.

RQ 1: What do art majors identify as influences on their self-concept as a student?

Participants were asked questions pertaining to perceived influences on their self-concept and the ways art majors construct meaning about being an art major. In particular they were asked what does it mean to be an art or theater major. Although the answers varied as widely as the participants, some common themes emerged. All participants mentioned their passion to create meaningful impact, communication through art, and clarify the world.

Creating meaningful impact. Meaningful impact on audiences and the world was a common theme discussed. Whether the impact is seen as positive or negative, participants expressed the desire to create a dialogue between their art and their audience in some way. Participant A stated:

> It is important for me to be an art [theater] major, the easiest way to say it is you benefit society in a way that nobody can. As a theater major my goal is to pick shows that really impact people, because that is one of the biggest reasons that theater exists, you want to impact people in a positive and, or negative way.

When asked to clarify the benefit of society theater has, he stated:

> I think all art forms can benefit or impact society in any way. When people come and see a show, they are psychologically involved so they are with you the entire time. They are there, they are connecting to somebody for some reason, it makes people feel less alone in the world because they can connect to somebody else that is having the same issues as they are and that is important.

Participant C not only hopes to impact the world, but he also hopes to be impacted through each show he performs in. "I guess one of the things I love about acting the most is the new things that you learn when you are in a show." What is learned through each show or art piece increases the knowledge base for emotions and what can be communicated through art.

Communication through art. The meaningful impact of their art led naturally to the idea of communication between the audience for Participant A; and was echoed by the other participants specifically, Participant D said:

I think being an art major is like being any other major, only you are learning to

communicate through imagery. Things you can touch and see, rather than just

writing. You must understand the human experience a little bit so that you

understand how to put elements and principles together to create something that

provokes emotion and thoughts in others.

He went on to say that by focusing on the human experience, it allows him to put more

emotion into his pieces. "You understand what thoughts and ideas provoke what

emotions in people." Participant D went on to say all artists have this same passion for

art, "we all have the same desire to create." When asked what he hopes people take away

from his work, he said "I want them to take a step back and look at how we treat others

and how we treat ourselves; how we view ourselves and how we view others; just kind of

rethinking our morals."

Participant B's desire to create art was "selfish" because the artist does not do it

for anyone but themselves. "You are not doing it to get a job, you are not doing it to

make your parents happy that is for sure, you are doing it because you have this craving

to create things that cannot be relinquished." What she hopes to communicate through

her art comes from people, and figure drawing. "I feel like in order for me to

communicate what I want to through my art is through figures. I think everybody can

related [sic] to it in some way."

Clarify the world. Most participants hinted at an underlying message of

communicating with the audience to clarify the world in some way. Participant E credits

their passion for theater coming from a place of clarification. "Theater is something I'm

passionate about and I think it comes from wanting to understand more of the world and

helping clarify pieces of the world that don't make sense for other people." They went on to say, due to the collaboration and ability to do anything within theater, they are able to learn more about the world as a whole.

RQ 2: What do art majors identify as influences on their academic self-efficacy as a student?

Professional affirmation. When asked what led [participants] to major in Theater or Studio Art, the participants identified professional and family influence. Half of the participants mentioned a professor or teacher from their past that encouraged them to select their major. Participant A said

> The reason I came here, I knew one of the professors, he was my drama coach my first two years of high school and then he came here. He asked to just give Eastern a look, and so I did. Because it was so small I met all of the faculty, the first day I came and they were just great... it felt welcoming so that's why I chose to come to [research site].

Participants B, D, and E echoed Participant A's faculty influence. Participant B said "my professors, more so to choose my major in Studio Art. I was in Art Education I was still on the border on changing it my sophomore year." She went further to describe how professionals within the field helped her come to her final decision to change to Studio Art:

> I was talking to one of my favorite professors, like I knew if I needed to talk to someone I would talk to him, then I talked to my other favorite professor because they both have different views so talking to them both on something actually gives me a broader sense of what I need to think about. I talked to [Professor 1],

and he said 'honestly if you don't think you can be a teacher then don't do it. If

you have this gut feeling that it's not the right thing to do, don't do it, and if you

feel like you have something to say with your art declare a studio art major.'

Participant B went on to say:

> [Professor 2] told me 'look if this is what you want to do I'm not going to tell you
>
> it's going to be easy, but if you think it's worth it then you should do it. I have no
>
> regrets in it, that one split second I thought about doing something else, but no, if
>
> you have faith in yourself then that's all you really need.'

Participant D stated

> I have always loved art, I always thought of it as something a part of me, as a
>
> hobby. I was going to go into theater and music, because that was more like what
>
> I focused on in high school, I was in choir, band, and theater. Over the summer I
>
> went to visit one of my art teachers, she inspired me so much and she asked me
>
> why I wasn't going into art. I said it never occurred to me, and I said, 'I have
>
> always had this desire to create that I never thought of it as work or school' and
>
> she said that is why I should go into art. That is why I went into art, I didn't
>
> always know I wanted to be an artist.

Participant E also credits faculty influence in their decision to change their major from

Athletic Training to Theater.

> It is scary to pursue something in the arts because it is a very competitive world
>
> out there. I went to talk to someone and they told me to audition, so I did, I did
>
> not get cast but they asked me if I wanted to work backstage, I just want to be
>
> involved. After that [show] I thought this was a mess, it was a total disaster, and

this is exactly what I want to do with my life, this is the most fun I have ever had. I talked to one of the professors who had worked on the show and I changed my major.

Participant C's influence and professional affirmation came from family members working in the arts and entertainment:

If I had to select one person it would probably be my uncle who works with [name] just because it seemed like it was not something that I realized was such an interesting thing until I was a little older, but once I started watching some of the movies that he had been in and directed or watched some of the things he did on a daily basis I was like 'that's kind of awesome and like that's something that I could see myself doing.'

Family involvement and reaction. Professional affirmation can confirm decisions to major in Studio Art or Theater, family also seems to impact that decision as well. When asked if families were involved, or not involved, in the participant's decision to major in Studio Art or Theater, all participants spoke about their families supporting their decisions. Participant D said "they've always been supportive, before my art teacher said something my mom mentioned majoring in art, I just said it was a hobby." Fear for the future, however, was also common throughout most of the conversations. Participant A said "my family is really supportive, it's really helpful. When I first became a Theater major, told [parents] I wanted to be a Theater major, they told me to reconsider and be a Business major with a Theater minor." When asked to clarify his major and minors, he went on to say:

I'm a double major, that was my argument. I said 'what if I do a Theater major and a Business minor' and they told me to switch it. I told them no, so they told me to be a Theater major and a Business major. I was like 'fine, we'll compromise here' and I've thanked them a lot, it's helpful to have both sides because the older I get the more I realize that you can't get by right away with a Theater degree. I think it's going to be beneficial having this Business degree.

Parental worry, while still supporting their artist, was common among the other participants. Participant B stated:

They were not entirely too unhappy about it, they were just a little worried. When I entered college, I declared an art education major, and then I decided I did not want to be a teacher. My mother wanted me to be a Pharmacist or something, she just wanted me to not struggle like the rest of my family had struggled. Me having this opportunity to pursue higher education, they wanted me to be set off well once I graduate rather that be struggling to pay the bills with my art. I am a Senior now so obviously they have just accepted it, they are not mad at me, they just worry.

Participant C discussed familial support due to the opportunities he has been given as a Theater major.

My parents and siblings have been very supportive of most things that I've tried to do. They were a little weary of me, which most art majors would understand of choosing theater as the main thing that I want to do with the rest of my life. Once they saw some of the opportunities I have gotten from it, which included some

paid opportunities, they realized that if I work at [theater], this is something I can do with my life.

Participant E, having changed their major from Athletic Training to Theater had a somewhat different experience telling their mother.

I was running with her and told her I changed my major to Theater, and she was like 'I'm not surprised,' which was super reassuring at first, but then the second thing she said was 'okay but you need to pick up a minor and think of a back-up plan because I do not want you to be risking everything and not have a thing to fall back on.' It was good because she was not surprised but then it was like without saying as much but 'I don't know if you will make it in the industry so have a back-up plan.'

Academic support and success. Participants were asked what academic support or flexibility have you faced throughout your college experience; as well as what, if anything, has contributed to your academic success? Again, credit was given to professionals working within the Studio Art and Theater departments. Participant A discussed the challenge and support from professors, by using constructive criticism and reminders to stay grounded through successes. The growth Participant A has had within his four years, is evident but his professor reminds him to "stay grounded and don't get too ego-headed. A lot of people look up to me in this department, she's like 'don't let that get to your head' and I'm like you're right, I won't."

Participant D explained why he gives credit to his Life Drawing professor for his academic success within Studio Art.

In Life Drawing 1, I was totally inward, I didn't talk to anyone. And then [professor] asked me to model for this drawing class. The reason that was a big deal is because I'm transgender, taking off your clothes when your body doesn't match what you're feeling is a big thing. When I started modeling I started to realize that bodies are bodies, they don't have to be cages they can be artwork. Once I got past that I branched out socially in the art department and from there it just kind of took off. Once you start communicating with other artists, bouncing ideas off each other, and having these in-depth discussions about art history, where we are now in the art world, and what's going on in the art community it affects your art work in a positive way.

Internal factors have also contributed to the academic success of participants. Participant E mentioned part of what drives her to do well is her Presidential Honors Scholarship, but also credits her competitive side.

I guess I've always been driven, I'm a Cross Country runner, I'm a competitive person. For the Cross Country team we have a competition amongst all of the athletic teams on campus, whichever team has the highest Grade Point Average gets a reward, it is accountability for the team.

RQ 3: What do art majors identify as influences on their social identity as a student?

Participants were asked questions pertaining to their family identity and social identity; as well as social reactions to their major selection. Answers for most participants sounded secure in their identities with various explanations.

Family identity. When asked how do you identify within your family and friends, a common initial sentiment was used. Three out of five participants said, "I'm just [name]." Participant A initiated his answer with saying:

> It depends who you ask in my family. People I am close to, I am just [name], I am usually the one that will crack the dad jokes and I consider myself the life of the party [laughing]. If you ask people who are not around as often then I am the theater kid.

Participant A continued talking about how his extended family identifies him:

> I like to talk about [theater] but usually I keep the conversation into how people are doing or cracking dad jokes. I feel like now that I'm a senior the spotlight has king of hit me because any time I am around (extended family) they ask, 'oh you're a senior now, what are you going to do?' I am thankful they care but I always try to not be the only person in the room.

He finished this statement by saying "I feel like when I am home that is what people are talking about. Usually I'm just seen as [name] but when we get to big family gatherings it's a lot of 'oh Theater how are you?'."

Participant B was similar, "I identify as me honestly, just me." But just as Participant A's extended family identified him closely related to his major, B noticed a similar sentiment.

> As I've gotten older I've noticed the drastic difference between artists and people who aren't artists. I think we think just a little differently than the public does. But as far as my friends, my family I'm not like oh I'm an artist and you're not, I'm so different."

Along the same lines as A and B, Participant D used a similar phrase when asked how he identifies within his family and friends. "Just as [name] is what I do. That's what my mom has said to people when she's trying to describe me, [name] is just [name]. It's hard to define the words."

Participants C and E identified themselves in terms of family order and societal labels. Participant C used labels as "nerdy," "young," and "fun" to describe himself within his family and friends.

> I guess I identify at least in my family, for a long time I always identified as kind
>
> of the nerdy one and the youngest one because I am the youngest sibling. I
>
> always looked up to my brother and sister and went off what they did for most of
>
> my younger years.

Participant E noted their birth order when asked about their family identity as well. "I am the oldest in my family, I feel like I have to set a good example for them, I feel like I have to be there for as much as I can."

Social identity. Aside from being asked about the Participant's identification within their family and friends, they were also asked how they thought of themselves within their social groups as well. While 3 out of the 5 participants used the phrase "I'm just me" when asked how they identify within their family and friends, further explanation from most included societal labels and descriptors. Words and phrases like "nerd", "weird", and "unrealistic" were common among 4 of the participants. Participant A spoke about his social group in high school compared to now: "I was friends with a lot of, in high school especially, I almost said nerd but I guess we weren't really nerds. But I was friends with all the people in music and in art." When pressed further about his

backtrack from the label nerd he said "we were just goofy, we were the smart ones, we were the top ten percent in our class. We weren't seen as one of those nerds, stereotypical nerds but nerds in our own way." Compared to his social groups today, Participant A stated that unlike his family he is not considered "the theater kid" and "I have a great bunch of friends… they're in the department too. That's how we became friends but that's not why we stayed friends."

When asked how Participant A thought of himself within his social group, he stated he thinks of himself as the "social butterfly" of his group. He keeps things light and lively with jokes and positivity. As a follow-up, it was asked if in certain social situations he tailors the conversation direction, like his does with his extended family he said:

> Actually yeah. In the Theater department, not really but in the Business
> department I hardly say anything. I'm the quiet one. If we're doing a group
> project or just hanging out, usually people will talk and I'll chip in a little bit.
> They'll ask me a question and then I'll start talking its weird. I didn't start
> noticing it till this last year. I guess that's my two different sides.

Participant B also touched on her extraverted side, "It depends on the social group, I think I'm definitely extraverted I get along with just about anyone as long as they're not a jerk. I think I'm very easy to talk to and I just go with the flow." As opposed to Participant A, B could not tell if she tailored her identity to different groups. "No, I notice that I've always stayed who I am. That's one thing that I don't do because I know people that do that, they act differently around different people." Similarly, Participant C said "If I had to choose something, I would say that I'm probably the weird

one or the funny one, because my other friends are much more realistic and technical than I am, and book smart. I'm just more happy-go-lucky, let's have a good time and be fun, just relax" when asked about his identification within his friend group. When he was asked how he thinks of himself within that group, when he uses the words "weird" and "fun" what he meant he became less happy-go-lucky and more reflective.

> I'm just the person in my friend group, someone who can help out when I want to and connect with everybody, especially when we're called the 'drama department,' we have a lot of drama. I like to think of myself as just doing whatever I can to be everybody's friend and mediating when I have to keep everybody a happy family.

He then clarified why he tries to mediate the drama within the Theater department,

> I know that everybody has a lot of issues and some people don't understand that. I guess I just kind of get it. I know that everybody goes through their own things, and everybody's having a rough time sometimes, you just have to be a friend whenever somebody needs it.

Participants D and E differed from the extraverted, openness of A, B, and C. Participant D said that while he is comfortable socially within the Art department, in other social groups he does not think he is comfortable due to the shyness he experienced in high school. He is still learning how to open up and branch out over time. Participant E also expressed shyness from a young age. "I have always been pretty shy and I have a crippling fear of embarrassment, that is hard to get over." D and E both spoke about the time it takes to open up to friends, but E put the need to open up and the feeling of connectedness among other actors as the nature of acting.

It feels like we have all been friends forever. Part of that is the nature of acting, because you have to be. It is you when you are out there, when you are acting you are revealing parts of yourself that don't normally get to come out of the woodwork. It's a very vulnerable thing to be up there, so the people you act with you end up very close with.

Social reaction. Participants were asked about the social reaction to their decision to decide on a major within the art department. Specifically, they were asked about their friend's reactions in high school and in college. Social reactions were similar to family reactions, all participants said their friends in high school were supportive of their decision, except for one Participant (B) noted an acquaintance who had studied music while in college told her not to major in Studio Art. She said she was told "I do not understand why you are studying art, you could just teach it to yourself." Her response to his statement was "you studied music, that is the same thing!"

RQ 4: What barriers are perceived to hinder art major's healthy development of self-concept, self-efficacy, and social identity?

Participants were asked what kind of barrier, if any at all, did you perceive about selecting their major within the art department, what academic challenges have you faced throughout your academic career, what are your future career goals as a studio art or theater major, and how do you see your degree fitting in, if at all, in your future career goals.

Doubt and worry. When asked about perceived barriers, common adjectives that were shared among participants were "worry," "struggle," and "support". The worry of staying in a field that is competitive and difficult to get a break in; as well as the struggle

to support their lives financially. All five mentioned issues with making it in art and if making it is worth the burnout. Participant A said, "you're always questioning if this is the right path." He went on to say, "my freshman year [I was] questioning if this is right, is this something that I am going to want to continue for the rest of my life, because it is going to be a lot of work." Participant C's worry were similar to A, he said "the idea that you are not good enough, and why would I select something that is so irregular and possibly not get paid for. All those worries that go into selecting something where you will always have to audition for a job, that's worrisome, but not enough that it would not make me want to still go for it." Participant D also spoke about the worry associated with what comes next:

> I worry about what I am going to do, but I always knew I wanted to teach so if I was going to major in theater I was going to be a theater teacher, so I was not worried about teaching. But when I switched from art education to Studio Art, that was a worry because a professor told me I might as well work for AT&T.

Participants B and D mentioned financial struggle and support as a barrier in their major selection decisions. Participant B spoke about her high school art teacher who told her not to study art; when asked if she ever asked him why he suggested not to she said, "he did not want to see me struggle because he thought I could do a lot more." She went on to agree with him, she does have other skills but her rationale for studying art was:

> I just felt like, if I was going to spend my time studying something it has to be something that I like because your late teenage years into your early twenties, you are never going to get those years back. Why would you want to spend them miserable and then get a job you are going to be miserable in.

Participant D also brought up financial struggle, "I get really nervous about whether I am going to make it, and able to support myself as a theater artist."

Art in the future. All participants were asked about their future career goals and if their chosen degree field will fit within those goals. The participants were persistent in their future goals and spoke about their perceived barriers as something to move past, rather than run from. Their ideas of doubt, worry, and struggle were coupled with the sense that they were going to make it in the art world somehow, even if that means working on their message and art on the side.

Future goals varied for participants; participants A, B, C, and E all included moving to a local, larger city in the area for some period before moving on to New York City, New York, or Los Angeles, California in almost a step wise process. When asked why they did not consider the larger move right away, Participants A and E mentioned family connections and a closeness to what they are familiar with. Participant B's future career goals included financial stability based on her art work alone. Participant C's goals surrounded around regular and consistent work that can support his future family. Participant D, however, wants to continue his education in hopes to become a college professor. "Well obviously I have to get my MFA (Master's of Fine Art) first. I graduate in December. Right now, I am going through that graduate school process, which is so daunting. After that I am going to be a professor."

All participants spoke about continuing their art after graduation. Whether that be through continued education or professional jobs. Participant A noted the anticipated move to a local larger city could include more experimental theater and new previews for Broadway shows. Experimental theater allows for a more diverse performance resume

and exemplifies a willingness to try new works. Participant E also discussed their desire to create and participate in new works after graduation. They want to create more works surrounding theater and athletics.

> I want to create more theater that combines athletics and theater. I think the biggest thing is I want to create more roles for athletic people and more overlap between sports and theater. Lin Manuel Miranda said, 'tell the stories only you can tell.' There is a story that I can tell.

Participants B and C were asked if they currently had a "back-up plan" if their chosen career field was not working in their favor. When Participant B was asked about her back-up plan after graduation, if she had one, she answered "no, I do not. Making money is never going to be a problem with me. I am very resourceful." When Participant C was asked about his back-up plan, he said:

> I considered teaching for a long time, I am still considering that. I do not have an Education major or double major but that would be one of my back-ups. I also write a lot. I am currently working on two different novels that I hope to publish one day. I do not know how successful that would be, but that is another back-up, and a lot of little things like that.

Overall, all participants spoke openly about what it means to them to be an art major, their family and friend reactions, their own identity, and what their future career goals include. While all spoke about their positive experiences thus far, they are all also prepared for the hard work that making it within the professional art community is. While none mentioned the idea of "paying your dues" within the entertainment industry,

the deeper understanding of the struggle to succeed associated with theater and art was

apparent.

CHAPTER V

Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of this study was designed to examine the experiences of art majors through the perceptions of their self-concept, academic self-efficacy, and social identity. By listening to their stories of family reactions and support, social group reactions and support, and the meaning attached to "being an art major," the researcher was able to explore experiences of art majors on a mid-sized, midwestern university. By researching these self-conceptions and experiences, the study examined a preliminary journey of Studio Art and Theater Performance majors to better increase the support needed and development for this specific student population.

Discussion

Self-concept. Self-concept can be defined as how individuals see themselves through others' perceptions of that individual (Bem, 1967; Bong & Clark, 1999; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003; Nagengast & Marsh, 2011). Participants were asked what it meant to them to be an art major. Through their answers three common themes emerged: meaningful impact, communication through art, and clarification of the world. All three combined themes hint at an audience's perception of what they create through art and the emotion tied to it. The emotional impact and importance that was stressed by all involved in the research was a clear piece that holds significance within the Shavelson et al., (1976) model of General Self-concept (Figure 2.1). Past research suggested self-concept could be divided through academic and non-academic sectors, while non-academic sectors continue to be divided into social, emotional, and physical self-concept.

According to Participant A "[theater] makes people feel less alone in the world because they can connect to somebody else". Social, emotional, and physical self-concept was also echoed by Participant D, "You must understand the human experience a little bit so that you understand how to put elements together to create something that provokes emotion and thoughts." Participants' self-concept has been influenced by audience members' perception of their creations through their art, this finding aligns with previous self-concept research.

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the perceived confidence in completing a specific task based on a judgement of mastery of skill (Betz & Hackett, 1981; Bong & Clark, 1999; Luszczynska & Schwarzer, 2005; Tierney & Farmer, 2002). These judgements are not dependent on experience and environment, but must be tailored to the individual separate from the context. Therefore, academic self-efficacy is the belief in an ability to perform a specific academic task (Raufelder & Ringeisen, 2016). Success and support can increase practical ability to complete a task associated with academic self-efficacy (Pajares, 1996).

Participants were asked questions concerning academic support, flexibility, or challenges they had experienced throughout their time on a mid-sized, midwestern university. While some mentioned difficulties associated with traditional academic courses and made statements like "I am terrible at math (Participant B)," or "my friends are much more realistic, technical, and book smart than I am (Participant C)" a complete understanding of their academic self-efficacy was not attained. What was discovered was the professional support necessary for art majors. Most responses noted support from faculty and those working within the profession as opposed to challenges in their

decisions to major within Studio Art or Theater Performance. "[the professor] said 'if you do not think you can be a teacher do not do it, if you think [majoring in Studio Art] is worth it then you should do it (Participant B)." To answer RQ 2 completely, a researcher would need to ask specific academic questions concerning traditional academics and art based classes; as well as how career choice would be affected by their self-efficacy and academics combined. By looking at career choice, goals, and interest as suggested by Hacket and Betz (1981) the loop of feedback may show an increase in efficacious and outcome domains.

Social identity. Social identity, or the individual sense of belonging to a group based on defining characteristics of the self-concept (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Stryker & Burke, 2000), of art majors is complex and varies greatly. The roles Studio Art and Theater Performance majors play in society affect their life as a student and as a collective group. Participants were asked questions regarding how they identify within their circle of family and friends; "I am just me," was the underlying answer. According to Stryker and Burke (2000), the identity standard within a person is a set of culturally prescribed meanings held by an individual that define identity in each situation. According to Participant A, that given situation depends on extended family and specific groups of friends. "If you ask people who are not around as often then I am the theater kid." In other settings, Participant A described situations in which he would have been considered nerdy in school. "We were just goofy, we were the smart ones. We were not seen as one of those nerds, stereotypical nerds but nerds in our own way."

Social groups play a large part in art majors identity. So much so, participants noted changes to their personality after becoming a part of their current social group. "As

I have gotten older I have noticed the drastic difference between artists and people who are not artists. I think we think a little differently than the public does" (Participant B). Multiple participants felt comfortable in their surroundings with others majoring in Studio Art or Theater Performance. Some participants have been able to break out of their shyness and their personal boundaries. "Part of that is the nature of acting, because you have to be. It is a very vulnerable thing to be up there, the people you act with you end up very close with (Participant E)."

Final thoughts. Overall, strong support from professionals is needed for those majoring in Studio Art and Theater Performance. Instead of asking students "what are you going to do with that?", those close to a student majoring in the arts should ask "what are your future goals within that field?" Advisors, faculty, and staff do not ask business majors what students are going to do with a business degree after graduation, but instead prepare students for the difficulties they could face. Focusing on the competition within a field that may come with inconsistent work to better prepare Studio Art and Theater Performance majors is essential for success.

When faced with the knowledge of their potential struggle, participants were still confident in their decisions to major in art but experienced self-concept discrepancies when told they needed a back-up plan or they should "go work at AT&T." It is deflating when a person turns to someone they know to be supportive, to be told there needs to be something else. Best intentions are notable and serious life discussions should be had, but career, audition, and creative experience speak volumes for those in Studio Art and Theater Performance.

Strong support is also reflected in social groups and identity. Building a strong base of contemporaries allows for students in Studio Art and Theater Performance the connections necessary to build their culture and their own identity standard. While they have experienced certain stereotypes in the past, participants' social groups are where they come into their own. When searching for participants, it was common to hear "I am trying to find people who are always in [the building] because if they are always there, they are really into art" as opposed to "it is their major" in a brush-off type statement. A tight-knit, social base of like-minded individuals is critical for success within the art department.

Recommendations for Student Affairs

Academic advising. In keeping consistent with participant answers, it is recommended that academic advisors take a closer look at traditional academic classes and general education requirements that art majors may take. With a better understanding of what students' perceived shortcomings are in academics, an academic advisor should be versed in educational resources and support services for those traditional academic courses. Offering and explaining resources and services available, such as tutoring and writing centers, before a student "fails" could help prevent conflicting self-concept or academic self-efficacy problems.

Career advising and development. All participants noted experiences with faculty and professionals working within Studio Art and Theater Performance that had positively affected their lives. These responses were sometimes paired with negative statements made by others close to the field and the question of "what will you do after?" Therefore, it is recommended faculty and professional support for students majoring in

Studio Art, Theater Performance, or any other art major be consistent and apparent. Future goals and knowledge of an intended path is important for professional development and networking, but asking "what are you going to do with that?" can decrease confidence in the ability to pursue a career within this highly competitive field and sends a negative image regarding the credibility of art as a career path.

Recommendations for Future Research

Expand the scope of participants. This researcher interviewed and examined the experiences of two Studio Art and three Theater Performance majors. To better understand art majors, expanding the scope of participants is recommended for further study. By including majors such as dance, ceramics, photography, and graphic design future research may be able to develop a broader perception of art majors' self-concept, academic self-efficacy, and social identity. The low number of participants limited the data that could be extrapolated from each participant's experience. Coupled with the recommendation to increase the number of participants, it is also recommended to conduct multiple interviews across the participants' undergraduate experience. By conducting a longitudinal study across the participants entire undergraduate career, a researcher would be able to create a more well-rounded picture of self-concept, academic self-efficacy, and social identity.

Multiple research sites. This study was conducted at a mid-sized, midwestern university with a limited base for participants. It is recommended for future research to use multiple sites to create an expansive picture of Studio Art and Theater Performance majors. By looking at multiple institutions, including performing art focused universities, future research could look at a larger participant base and investigate if university

location and type influences participants' self-concept, academic self-efficacy, and social identity.

Gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. It is unknown, from this limited sample, how gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity contribute to the participants' self-concept and social identity. Because of this limited knowledge, it is recommended to include these important factors in future research. With an increased understanding of how gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity play into participants lives, a future researcher would be able to understand their overall identity better.

Lines of questioning. While a deeper understanding of academic self-efficacy was sought for this study, the interview questions used did not provide much information on the topic. It is recommended that future researchers wanting to explore art majors' academic self-efficacy thoroughly examine the interview questions concerning academics. Dividing questions by subject area may help to answer the questions and experiences associated with academic self-efficacy.

Conclusion

Art majors, specifically Studio Art and Theater Performance majors, are a specific population of students that have not be thoroughly explored. Without asking these students about their experiences, one could only assume what it was like for them at a mid-sized midwestern university. The only way to continue learning about their experiences is by asking about their stories and listening intently. Their inherent creative nature that is expressed through their art brings out emotions and conversations between artists and audiences. This conversation connects the viewers in many ways, some that the artists hope for and sometimes the opposite. My personal experiences connected to

this topic were very different than many experiences of the participants, the artists involved voiced their experiences tied to their self-concept, academic self-efficacy, and social identity. To better understand and support a holistic student, people must know those students wholly. The small pieces of these participants is now known.

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Appendix A

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

The Self-Concept of Art Major's: Their perceptions through family, peers, and academics

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Sara Triplett and Dr. Richard Roberts (faculty sponsor) from the Counseling and Student Development department at Eastern Illinois University.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding to participate.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a student with a designated major within the art department.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to understand the self-concept of art majors; their academic self-efficacy, family influence, and social identity.

- **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher that will last approximately one hour. During the interview, you will be asked questions about your experiences as an art major on a mid-sized, Midwestern university, your family influence, and your social group and identity. Your interview will be audio recorded and stored on the researcher's computer.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts participating in this study.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

Participants will have the opportunity to speak openly about their views and experiences as a designated art major on mid-sized, Midwestern university campus. Another benefit in this study is gaining a new perspective on the self-concept of art majors at a traditional four-year institution. The results of this study are intended to lead to future research on art majors and their self-concepts, academic self-efficacy, family influence, and social identity.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by deleting all interviewee identifiers, audio and transcriptions will be kept for the required three years, and then will be deleted and shredded as required by law.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled.
There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer at any time.

- **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Sara Triplett, Principle Investigator
402-689-2760
setriplett@eiu.edu

Dr. Richard Roberts, Faculty Advisor
217-581-2400
rlroberts@eiu.edu

- **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the

University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____
Printed Name of Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   Date

Appendix **B**

Email to Potential Participants

Hello,

You are invited to participate in a study of art majors and their perceptions about their academic self-efficacy, family influence, and social identity. You have been invited to participate in this study because you have been identified as a student within the art department, and maintain junior or senior status (60 or more credit hours). This study is being conducted by Sara Triplett, a graduate student in the College Student Affairs program, and is being advised by Dr. Richard Roberts of the Counseling and Student Development department.

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you are interested in participating, please contact Sara Triplett at setriplett@eiu.edu or 402-689-2760 to schedule an interview time. Interviews will last for approximately 1 hour.

Any questions about this study should be directed to Sara Triplett. Thank you for considering to participate in this study.

Thank you for your time,
Sara Triplett
402-689-2760

<div align="center">**Interview Protocol**</div>

Introductory Questions:

Welcome and thank the participant. Ensure that the participant is comfortable. Provide the participant with informed consent. Explain the informed consent and answer any questions as necessary.

Do I have your permission to take audio and video recording of this interview?

Family and Peer Questions

1. What does it mean to you to be an art major?
2. How was your family involved, or not involved, in your decision to major in art?
3. What was your family's reaction when you decided on an art major?
4. What were your friends' reactions?
5. What kind of barrier, if any at all, did you perceive?
6. How do you identify within your family and friends?

Academic Questions

7. What led you to choose a major in the art department?
8. What academic support or flexibility have you faced throughout your college experience?
9. What, if anything, has contributed to your academic success?
10. How do you think of yourself within your social group or groups?
11. What are your future career goals as a fine art, theater, or dance major?
12. How do you see your degree fitting in, if at all, in your future career goals?

I will ask any additional questions to expand on topics or statements made by the interviewee.