

Self-Transformations and Extensions of the Human Body

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Introduction:

Adolescence is a difficult time when students are exploring their own interests and identities. Adolescents are prone to trying on different identities. However, they are doing so through a stereotypical filter, a *looking glass* of consumer culture, where identity is constructed based on societal norms (Richards, 2007). Erikson believed that in Adolescence, “Identity, or a sense of sameness and continuity must be searched for” (Erikson, n.d.). Furthermore, it must be “searched for through sustained individual effort” (Erikson, n.d.). In a modern society Erickson’s theory remained consistent because there were traditional sources of identity such as social class, religion, trade unions, etc. (Strinati, 2004). However, youth’s identities are now multi-faceted, fragmented, and fluctuating (Weber, 2008). Identity has been eroded and has challenged Erikson’s theory on Identity (Strinati, 2004). Strinati (2004) claims that in postmodernism “since there are no dependable alternatives popular culture and the mass media come to serve as the only frame of reference available for the construction of collective and personal identities” (221). It is important that youth have the opportunity to deconstruct popular culture texts in order to empower them in their identity formation. Youth are constructing their identities with no stability due to the fragmentation. Instead of focusing on Erikson’s sameness I propose that adolescents focus on *otherness* in regards to identities.

Self-Transformations and Extensions of the Body

Adolescence is for most young people a time of transition; therefore, it is an appropriate time for youth to explore self-transformations (Weber, 2008). McLuhan states that any medium is an extension of the human body (Agel, 1996). McLuhan’s

medium encompasses any object and/or technology that allows the human body to accomplish something that it previously could not. For instance, Walia, a fifteen-year-old girl, speaks of her cell phone, “I love my phone. I love it enough to risk my life for it” (Weber, 2008, p. 32). In this sense, her phone has become an extension of her body. She feels that she can neither live nor communicate without it. McLuhan also states the medium itself is the message and the medium is the message is a metaphor for metamorphosis (Gordon, Hamaji, & Albert, 2007).

There are many types of extensions of the body that will be discussed throughout the Unit. But one extension in particular is clothing. Clothing is something that every adolescent identifies with whether that be negative or positive experience. According to McLuhan, clothing is an extension of skin (Agel, 1996). Clothing can conceal identity and/or reconstruct the body. Lady Gaga is an example of both. She conceals her identity by trying on multiple identities and costumes. Her clothing and costumes are elaborate extensions of her body, mainly designed by Alexander McQueen. Lady Gaga might be closer to understanding her identity since she is not afraid to play and reconstruct her body. Through her performance of male, female, and *other* she is the quintessential example of postmodern identities.

In this Unit the students will be challenged to take on new identities and extensions of themselves. Through this playful yet critical curriculum they will develop a fluctuating image of self and in turn be more open to differences and *otherness* (Richards, 2007). The students will also be prompted to consider transformations and extensions as machines and animals. According to Haraway (1991), the posthuman identity arises at the “crossroads” of the human and the nonhuman, of the

machine and the organic, of the self and the other” (p. 267). Since, students will be developing an understanding of diverse identities, the curriculum could counteract stereotyping and bullying that is prevalent during adolescence.

Gender Identities

Gender will be explored in-depth in this Unit. Gender is not biological; we are not born with it. Gender is a human production that depends on everyone constantly *doing gender* (Lorber, 1994). Therefore, everyone does gender without even considering what they are doing or why are doing it; it is the norm. Gender only leads to stereotypes. When an adolescent goes against gender stereotypes this can become a shameful, hurtful, and/or harmful experience. In one of the lessons, the students will deconstruct images by photomontage/ collage artist Hannah Hoch. Hoch combines male, female, and *other* parts in her artworks. The *other* in the works are from popular culture at the time of production and technologies. Hoch’s work sets up an opportunity to discuss the social construction of gender and extensions of the body. There is gender ambiguity in her figures. Furthermore, the combination of male and female parts leads to multiple interpretations and narratives in which the students could engage in a critical discourse.

One question that will be raised is why girls are often willing to take on male identities whereas boys are not (Marsh & Milliard, 2000). Boys are shamed and embarrassed for taking on sensitive, vulnerable roles. Marsh and Milliard (2000) suggest that “If the assertive female is othered in children’s popular culture, then so too is the sensitive male” (p.34). This Unit will encourage students to think of disassembling gender literally and figuratively in order to reassemble extensions of themselves

as non-gendered. This Unit will explore overcoming repression and will give students a more comprehensive view of the human experience and existence.

Digital Production

Digital media allows for the trying on of multiple identities (Weber, 2008) New technologies allow for people to portray themselves as something or someone they are not. This can be cautionary for youth because most take everything they see and read on the Internet as factual. It is important for students to become media literate and to become prosumers rather than consumers (Weber, 2008). Therefore, throughout this Unit students will be producing artwork through new technologies such as Blogger and iMovie.

New technologies give students the ability to construct their own identities. It not only gives them the ability but also empowers them to construct their own identities through multi-mediums. Technologies are crucial tools recrafting our bodies and enforcing meaning (Haraway, 1991). The students will be deconstructing various youth constructed blogs in order to remix them and design their own blogs. Blogs are mediated spaces where youth can continually revisit, alter, post, and respond to comments. Interestingly, “Like youth identities, new technologies keep changing, converging, morphing-seemingly always in flux, and like youth identities, young ‘people’s own digital productions facilitate a blending of media, genres, experimentations, modifications and reiterations” (Weber, 2008, p. 27). Unlike Erickson’s Identity theory of sameness and continuity, youth teach each other, borrow images or ideas from each other and in a sense co-construct identities” (Weber,

2008, p. 32). Therefore, adolescent identities are not homogenous (Weber, 2008) Through digital production, youth are able to gain an awareness of how they represent themselves and project images of themselves onto the world. Weber (2008) affirms that as technologies become more integrated they are likely to be taken for granted or even invisible in regards to identity construction (p. 44). Weber (2008) goes on to state, “That’s why it is so important to examine and reflect on them now” (p. 44). Therefore, youth need to be aware that technologies are extensions and tools that can be used for their identity construction before they are no longer distinguishable. Also, if we do not equip youth with the tools they need to construct their identities and futures this will lead to the what McLuhan termed the “Age of Anxiety” which means the result of trying to do today’s job with yesterdays tool’s- with yesterdays concepts” (Agel, 1996, p. 2).

Conclusion:

Throughout this Unit, the students will explore self-transformations, extensions of the body, postmodern identities, and gender identities/ stereotypes. They will develop a fluctuating sense of self and reflect on the positivity and possibilities of *otherness* and differences. Through the use of new technologies students will become prosumers rather than consumers where they will be in charge of forming and experimenting with their identities. Digital production will empower adolescents to continuously evolve as new technologies emerge. The issues, content, and production of this Unit will prevent students from becoming stagnant in the construction of their identities. By deconstructing gender students can openly try on any identities

regardless of gender stereotypes. Overall, students should have the opportunity to embrace the concept of *otherness* in order to be productive, tolerant members of society.

References

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Curriculum Unit Theme: *Self-Transformations and Extensions of the Human Body*

Teacher: Kim Truesdale

Grade Level: 8th

State Visual Art Goals: VA8-1.2, VA8-1.3, VA8-2.1, VA8-5.2, VA8-3.3, VA8-5.4, VA8-6.1, VA8-6.3, VA8-6.4

State Media Arts Goals (if any): MA8-1.2, MA8-1.3, MA8-2.1, MA8-2.2, MA8-2.4, MA8-3.5, MA8-4.1

State Language Arts Goals (if any):

General goals for the curriculum (describe in 2-5 sentences):

In this unit, students will explore how any medium can be an extension of the human body. The students will understand that postmodern identities are multi-faceted and always fluctuating. Through digital production, the students will gain an awareness of being able to construct their own identities. Technologies as crucial tools recrafting our bodies and enforcing meaning will be explored. The students will be challenged to take on new identities and/or extensions of themselves. Thus, they will develop a fluctuating image of self and in turn be more open to differences and *otherness*. Gender stereotypes and identities will be discussed in order to question why girls are often willing to take on male identities whereas boys are not.

Lesson Title (name each lesson to reflect a general unit theme)	Visual Exemplars (list specific images and artists, TV shows, and/or books that you plan to use for each lesson)	Motivation / Dialogue (list basic issues and questions to be explored during classroom dialogue and any other motivational strategies that you plan to use for each lesson)	Media / Process (list artistic processes that your students will engage in during each lesson)	Concepts and/or Design Principles to be learned during each lesson	Closure/ Assessment (list an assessment strategy used for each lesson)
Lesson 1 What is Your Extension/ Extensions? Class Periods: 1	Examples of Extensions of the Body: -iPad commercial -Nintendo 3DS commercial - Nintendo 3DS AR card tattoo commercial	-Issues: -Marshal McLuhan's theory of any medium as an extension of the human body -Discuss different types of extensions Discussion Questions: -What do you feel that you cannot live without? -What types of extensions can you think of? Popular culture examples?	-Class discussion day - Students will be placed into groups of 3-4 to discuss and brainstorm what they consider their extension/ extensions to be.	-Students will deconstruct commercials by considering the target audience, what is being communicated, and how does this exemplify extensions. <u>Vocabulary:</u> Medium Technologies Popular culture	-Was the student able to come up with ideas for extensions? -Did the students understand the possibilities for extensions of the body? -Did the student contribute to class discussion?

<p>Lesson 2 Blogging as an Extension of the Body</p> <p>Class Periods: Ongoing throughout the Unit</p>	<p>-Examples of youth constructed website/blogs: www.rookiemag.com</p> <p>http://hiimdavidd.blogspot.com</p> <p>http://iamexactlywhereiamsuposedtobe.blogspot.com</p> <p>http://www.alwaysabbynoel.blogspot.com</p>	<p>-Issues:</p> <p>-Postmodern identities being multi-faceted and always in flux</p> <p>-How various youth present themselves through their blog</p> <p>-Youth empowerment through digital production</p> <p>-Discussion Questions:</p> <p>-What content and/or design elements do you respond to from this blog?</p> <p>-Describe how design elements enhance or detract from the intended message.</p> <p>-How could this blog be more effective?</p> <p>-What might you do differently?</p> <p>-How can you express yourself through blogging?</p> <p>Is blogging an extension of you?</p> <p>Are blogs gendered?</p>	<p>-Students will construct an individual blog on Blogger.</p> <p>-Students will choose a template, layout, and text on Blogger.</p> <p>- Students will post a written response to the discussion they had in Lesson 1 in regards to What is your Extension/Extensions?</p> <p>-Students will use the blog throughout the Unit to show images of their work in progress, finished works, and to post their thoughts.</p>	<p>-Students will analyze how Blogger can be used as a space to construct their identities and take on new identities</p> <p>-Students will use elements and principles of design to construct their blogs</p> <p><u>Vocabulary:</u> Constructed Mediated spaces Postmodern Identities Postmodern identities Gender</p>	<p>-Is the student able to understand that they have the ability to construct their own identities?</p> <p>-Is the blog design appropriate to the content?</p> <p>-Is the blog easy to read and navigate?</p> <p>-Is the design youthful and relevant to the individual student?</p>
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<p>Lesson 3 Fantasy Extensions of the Body</p> <p><i>Class Periods:</i> 1</p>	<p>Faith Wilding drawings, <i>Untitled</i> (1995), Armo(u)r---Armo(u)r</p> <p>(example of fantasy extensions)</p>	<p>Issues:</p> <p>-Fantasy extensions of the body</p> <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <p>-If you could have any objects and/or technologies extended from your body what would they be?</p> <p>What would there purpose be?</p> <p>What do your extension/ extensions enable you do to?</p> <p>Do you exist in another realm? For example, in a video game.</p> <p>Does your extension have to be “human”? What about animal or machine?</p> <p>-Consider inventing your own extension. It does not have to be something already invented.</p>	<p>-Students will draw three 9x12 in drawings with pencil.</p>	<p>-Students will identify how technologies (any medium) are tools that recraft our bodies and enforce meaning.</p> <p><u>Vocabualary-</u></p> <p>Line</p> <p>Movement</p> <p>Mass</p> <p>Hatching</p> <p>Shading</p>	<p>-Students will take photographs of their finished drawings and write a reflection in order to post on their blog.</p> <p>-Did the student contribute to class discussion?</p>
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<p>Lesson 4 Disassembled and Reassembled Bodies Class Periods: 4</p>	<p>Hannah Hoch collages, <i>Self-Portrait, Tamer</i> Alexander McQueen 4 images of costumes/fashion design Lady Gaga (example of gender identities, trying on different identities, and performance art) -Lady Gaga at MTV Awards</p>	<p>Issues: -Social construction of gender stereotypes and identities -Gender stereotypes and identities Discussion Questions: -What are some examples of gender stereotypes? -Why are girls often willing to take on male identities? -Why are boys not as willing to take on female identities? -What do you think about Lady Gaga taking on a male identity? How did she perform as a male? -How do you feel about performing outside of your gender? -If gender is constructed why does it matter anyway? -What narratives take place between the male, female, and other parts in Hoch's work? -How do you view your identities?</p>	<p>-Students will disassemble and reassemble magazine images into a collage of their fantasy self-transformation/extension.</p>	<p>Students will understand that they are able to construct their own identities and try on multiple identities regardless of their <i>gender</i>.</p> <p><u>Vocabulary:</u> Performance art Gender Collage Postmodern identities Composition Overlapping</p>	<p>-Students will take photographs of their finished collage and write a reflection in order to post on their blog.</p> <p>-Did the student contribute to class discussion? -Is the collage well crafted? -Does the collage communicate the student's fantasy self-transformation/extension?</p>
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<p>Lesson 5 Disassembled and Reassembled Bodies: Take Two</p> <p>Class Periods: 3</p>	<p>Kiki Smith, <i>A Gathering, Woman, Daisy Chain</i>, and Book of her work</p> <p>Michael Richards, <i>Tar Baby vs. St. Sebastian</i></p> <p>Yinka Shonibare, <i>Water, Spacewalk, Food Faerie</i></p>	<p>Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Toys being constructed based on gender -Gender stereotypes/identities -Remixing <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -How do the artists interpret body extensions differently? Are any of the pieces political, social, biological? -What kind of ideas do you have for assembling and building yourself in 3-D? 	<p>-Students will work from a wooden human mini mannequin (non-gendered) to build their self-transformations and extensions off of.</p> <p>-Students will use found objects, paper, cardboard, paint, glue, tape, plaster, etc. to create their sculpture.</p>	<p>Students will understand that toys are gendered and that they can play with any toys they please.</p> <p>Students will</p> <p><u>Vocabulary:</u> Assemblage</p>	<p>-Students will take photographs of their assemblages and write a reflection in order to post on their blog.</p>
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<p>Lesson 6 Stop-Motion Self-Transformations</p> <p>Class Periods: 7</p>	<p>Roger Wieland stop-motion animations, Moleskine commercials</p> <p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpnKykDQreY&feature=autoplay&list=PLCAEC896B77900447&playnext=2</p>	<p>Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Youth empowerment through digital production -Performing identities <p>Discussion Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Do you find it empowering to perform through your fantasy extension? -Has this assemblage become an extension of you? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Students will choose to work individually or collaboratively with their assemblage. -Students will write a script, use/create props, and construct scenes. -Students will photograph each scene with a digital camera. -Students will upload and edit their stop-motions in iMovie. 	<p>Students will learn how to play and perform through their assembled self.</p> <p>Students will experiment with different camera angles and lighting.</p> <p><u>Vocabulary:</u> Stop-motion animation Frame per second Composition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Students will be provided with a rubric. -Criteria as follows: are scenes and photographs well crafted, does the animation flow, are text, transitions, and music effective, and is the extension/extensions clear in the script. -Students will write a final blog post about their discoveries through the stop-motion lesson/ Unit.
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<p>Lesson 7 Extensions of the Body Critique Class Periods: 4</p>		<p>Day 1: Critique drawings and collages, and sculptures Day 2 and 3: Critique stop-motion animations Day 4: Critique finalized blogs Discussion Questions: What did you discover through the process of this Unit? Do you feel open to trying on other identities? What about trying on gender identities? Do you better understand how objects and technologies are extensions of our bodies? How so?</p>	<p>-Students will participate in a class critique.</p>	<p>Students will learn about the construction of their work and their extensions through peer feedback.</p>	<p>-Did the students contribute to the critique? -Did the students communicate the ideas, techniques, and thoughts about their artwork and that of their classmates?</p>
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Lesson # 4

Title: *Disassembled and Reassembled Bodies*

Grade: 8th

Teacher: Kim Truesdale

Length: 4 days (50 minute classes)

State visual art goals: VA8-2.1, VA8-2.2, VA8-3.1, VA8-3.2

State media arts goals (if any): MA8-2.2, MA8-2.4,

State language arts goals (if any):

Objectives:

1. Students will discuss the social construction of gender and gender identities/ stereotypes.
2. Students will disassemble and reassemble magazine images into a collage of their fantasy self-transformation/ extension.
3. Students will discuss how and why Hannah Hoch uses male and female body parts to create figures.
4. Students will question how Lady Gaga challenges gender through extensions and performance art.

Concepts and vocabulary:

Postmodern identities- fragmented, multi-faceted, and fluctuating

Gender- refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

Postmodern identities

Stereotypes- qualities assigned to groups of people related to their race, nationality and sexual orientation, etc.

Collage- composition of materials and objects pasted over a surface, often with unifying lines and color.

Performance art- is a performance presented to an audience, traditionally interdisciplinary. It can be either scripted or unscripted, live or via media, and it can involve time, space, the performer's body or presence.

Overlapping- To lie or extend over and cover part of.

Composition- arrangements of the elements and principles in a work of art.

Teacher materials:

Computer

-Powerpoint showing Hannah Hoch artworks and images of Alexander McQueen and Lady Gaga

Hannah Hoch, *Self-Portrait, Tamer*,

Hannah Hoch Book

Lady Gaga, MTV Movie Award images

Alexander McQueen designs

Student materials:

Magazines

Scissors

Paper

Construction Paper

Glue Sticks

Glue

Tape (Scotch, Masking Tape)

Procedures (detailed step-by-step description including dialogue):

Day 1

Introduction/ Discussion/Closure (50 minutes)

-Teacher will begin class with discussion questions.

Does anyone know what gender means?

What about stereotypes? What are some examples of gender stereotypes?

Why do you think boys are not as willing to take on female identities? Why are girls more willing to take on male identities?

-Teacher will discuss the social construction of gender.

If you could take on any identities regardless of gender what would they be?

-Students will view a Powerpoint of Hannah Hoch's and Lady Gaga's work.

What do you think about Lady Gaga taking on a male identity/ role? How did she perform as a male?

-What narratives take place between the male, female, and other parts in Hoch's work?

-Teacher will discuss postmodern identities.

-How do you view your identities?

Consider what your fantasy extension would be. Would it be male, female, other, animal, or machine? Or would it be a combination?

-Students will be dismissed.

Day 2

Introduction (5 minutes)

-Teacher will demonstrate various collage techniques.

Production (40 minutes)

-Students will enter the classroom and be provided with magazines.

-Students will find, tear, and cut images from magazines.

Closure (5 minutes)

-Students will place their cutouts in a folder.

-Students will place their folders and materials in the appropriate area.

-Students will be dismissed.

Day 3

Production (45 minutes)

-Students will be provided with construction paper, glue, tape, scissors, and other materials needed for production.

-Students will cut, tear, and assemble images and papers to create an effective collage/ composition demonstrating their fantasy extension/extensions.

Closure (5 minutes)

-Students will place their collage on the drying rack.

-Students will place their materials in the appropriate bin.

-Students will be dismissed.

Day 4

Production (30 minutes)

-Students will be provided with construction paper, glue, tape, scissors, and other materials needed for production.

-Students will cut, tear, and assemble images and papers to create an effective collage/ composition demonstrating their fantasy extension/extensions.

-Students will complete their collages.

Assessment/Closure (20 minutes)

-Students will take photographs of their finished collage and upload the images onto their blog.

-Students will reflect about the lesson in a written blog post to upload on their blog.

- Teacher will assess if the collage is well-crafted and communicates the student's self-transformation/ extension.
- Students will be dismissed.

Learning center/ back up activity (if any):