ABSTRACT

Author: Megan-Leigh Larsen

Title: "I'M NOT TRYING TO BE LIKE PICASSO": USING CTI TO STUDY HOW INDIVIDUALS EXPRESS CONFIDENCE IN THEIR IDENTITY AS ARTISTS

Thesis Advisor: Sara Baker

Department: Department of Communication, Media, and Screen Studies and Honors College

Year: 2018

Identity is present in everything that people do and so intricately inherent to who a person is and how a person operates. A person's identity is complex and not readily understood. The Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) is used to study how individuals express confidence in their identity as artists. Interpersonal communication is how individuals participate in society and share experiences. Confidence is a key part of an individual's identity and this theory serves as part of a framework for examining different aspects of an individual's identity. This qualitative study aims at better understanding an artist's identity. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 artists to discover experiences of the artist and their confidence level. Participants were asked to complete a survey to measure their confidence level during the interview. The stories told by the participants of this study are used to understand their identity. The cases of participants' stories are organized by the overarching themes found. Three major themes were found in this study. The first is (1) early expressions of artistic identity. Artists often had an early encounter with art and began to be interested in creating their own. The second theme found is that (2) anyone can be an artist. This simple statement shows the opinion of participants in this study when defining who an artist is. The third and final major theme found is (3) artists communicating confidence. Artists noted that interacting with others played a crucial role in communicating about their art and creating more art. The findings and research presented in this study contribute to important insight into how artists communicate. These artists' stories provide insight into a significant population of the workforce who claim artist as their profession.