

Professor DeSpain

English 200

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Reflection #2: Visual Analysis Strategies

In the New York Times article, “One Drop, but Many Views on Race” by Maurice Berger provides a visual analysis of portraits of African American people who identify themselves as black and were produced by Noelle Theard and a group of other photographers who worked with the book *(1)ne Drop: Shifting the Lens on Race* by Dr. Yaya Blay. As I read the article and viewed the corresponding portraits, I noticed the overall constant thread of embracing blackness as an identity and even intersectional identity. The core focus of Maurice Berger’s article was on the identity of blackness and how differently the people in the portraits looked but displayed the same identity. Although Berger does not take the time to go into the organization and stylistic features of the portraits, the visual analysis strategies that are the most prominent pertaining to the portraits are viewing for genre and viewing for rhetorical context.

In the article and gallery of portraits, Berger highlighted the visual analysis strategy of viewing for genre. When viewing for genre you look at what the photo’s communicating value is culturally, historically, or emotionally. Along with what is emphasized, exaggerated, or intensified within the photo. As explained by Berger, the portraits displayed all the different kinds of people who identified as black ranging from varying ancestral backgrounds that make them appear more unique in their features. The saturated colors that are intensified within the portrait draw attention to the person being photographed and celebrates the idea of black culture and the different ways in which it is perceived. This genre of portraits would be embracing the identity of blackness amongst all who identify as such.

In the article and gallery of portraits, Beger accentuated the visual strategy of viewing for rhetorical context. When viewing for rhetorical context you look at what the work's purpose is to inform, persuade, or motivate to action. Along with, what is the photo's meaning of attraction, gratification, motivation, and or confrontation. Beger took the time to have a full understand of the book and the photographers involved in producing the portraits to understand the motivation and gratification of being identified as black. This gallery also confronts the closeminded idea that black people must retain a specific skin color or have an enslaved ancestral history to identify as black. The intentionality of the selected individuals of this portrait testifies against that idea and proclaim the gratification of black identity and how attractive it truly appears to be.