

Exploring and Discovering the Self Art Therapy–Based Activity

Chun-Chieh Catherine Chen¹

Abstract

For immigrant students, the cultural values and norms at home and at school can vary widely. Under these conditions, it is difficult to participate in school activities because of insecurity or the fear of offending or angering others, which in turn compromises self-esteem and academic expectations. This research focused on how therapeutic art activities can help immigrant students enhance their self-identity. Therapeutic art activities can be regarded as a decolonizing medium because they are not structured based on mainstream educational or curricular frameworks. Traditional art classes may also ask students to draw from their imaginations; however, from the art therapy perspective, students' inner worlds of images, feelings, thoughts, and ideas are always of primary importance to the learning experience. In this research, art therapy–based activity was practiced as an effective tool for helping college students cope with troubling feelings and negotiate difficult experiences.

Introduction

Population migration has become pervasive, and in an increasingly ethnically diverse country like the United States, it is important to understand the roles that people's ethnicities and self-identities play in their lives. Some studies show that immigrant children's self-identity has an important influence on their self-esteem and academic expectations as they migrate to other countries (Hernandez, 1999; Stirling, 2011). Furthermore, self-identity also relates to one's ability to deal with racism and discrimination. From an educational perspective, self-identity may affect immigrant children's self-efficacy in school since their social and cultural beliefs at home might be very different from schools. In an increasingly ethnically diverse country like the United States, it is important to understand the role that individuals' ethnic and personal identities play in their lives. In fact, immigrant children must deal with stressors and life pressures more than American Whites (Brunick, 1999). Thus, it is important for children and youths to establish positive self-identification in order to enhance their self-efficacy in the classroom. However, not only immigrant children will need to create a solid self-identity; all American children and youth, regardless of ethnic background also need to recognize and be aware of their identifications. Establishing self-image will in turn allow students to gain confidence. In this case, they are able to perform better in school. It is important to help children and teenagers develop positive self-images. This research analyzes the differences between immigrant and American college students by interpreting how they self-identify. Through the self-identification development process, students' self-efficacy can be enhanced.

Rationale and Objective

Background and Importance of Self-Identity

According to Hernandez (1999), self-concept issues are persistent among immigrant children and youths. For immigrant children, the cultural values and norms at home and at school can be very different. In fact, their cultural beliefs and backgrounds may actually conflict with those of their schools.

¹ The University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona 85721, USA.

Under these conditions, it is difficult for children to participate in school activities because they may feel insecure or be afraid of offending or angering others (Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1991). From an academic perspective, the struggles with self-identity may affect immigrant children's self-efficacy in school. Educators should assist immigrant children and teenagers to create venues for expressing their feelings and thoughts. By doing so, immigrant children and youths will be able to enhance their performance in school. Based on my teaching experience, I have observed that Asian and Middle Eastern immigrant students are usually not comfortable and/or confident enough to share their ideas. In this case, I have to encourage them to talk, share, and articulate their thoughts during class discussions. What I have discovered is that if students do not feel fully comfortable in a learning environment, they will not be able to learn effectively. Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons (1992) assert that self-efficacy fosters motivation, thus promoting engagement in learning activities that lead to increased proficiency in educational skills. Similarly, Covington (1984) argues that the lower academic performance of some minority youths stems from their lower self-esteem. In order to improve students' academic performance, school intervention programs must pay more attention to boosting the self-esteem of minority students (Hernandez, 1999). Therefore, as an art educator and a researcher, I am eager to help these immigrant students overcome their self-identity issues.

Why Use Art Therapy? How Can It Be Considered a Decolonizing Medium?

In general, traditional art classes focus on the product or the work: how to fabricate a product or simulate a particular technique. Parents and administrators usually demand demonstrable achievements and finished work (Kramer, 2000). In this sense, art education students tend to work to the rubric or criteria that are set by their teachers; the quality of the end result is what is important. In contrast, art therapy focuses on the process of exploring the world and, in the act of creation, discovering a sense of self and supporting the definition of a true self. The development of self goes back to the mirroring process; all marks created by the child are an affirmation of self. While art therapy may involve learning skills or art techniques, the emphasis is generally on developing and expressing images that come from inside the person rather than those he or she sees in the outside world. Malchiodi (2006) claims that in most art therapy sessions, the focus is on individuals' inner experiences; their feelings, perceptions, and imaginations. Kramer (2000) comments that art therapy emphasizes the art process rather than the completed artworks. Although traditional art classes may also ask students to paint or draw from their imaginations, in art therapy, students' inner worlds of images, feelings, thoughts, and ideas are always of primary importance to the experience. Through the art therapy-based activity process, the child explores cause and effect through play and explores uniqueness and difference. From this play emerges creativity. More importantly, in this kind of art therapy-based activity, students are able to engage in art activities in a stress-free environment. They do not need to worry about whether their artwork is good enough to meet expected standards. Thus, art therapy-based activities can be regarded as a decolonizing medium because this kind of activity is not structured based on mainstream educational or curricular frameworks.

Theoretical Tenets

The Concept of Art Therapy

Art therapy is an effective tool that can be used to help children cope with troubling feelings and to master a difficult experience (Ruben, 1999). It combines art and psychology in a specialized way that uses the power of the creative process as a vehicle for healing, communication, self-expression, and personal growth. Art therapy can help open pathways into underdeveloped areas of the brain and provide an avenue for nonverbal expression. When a student creates art, he or she is communicating on a symbolic level. This process, in turn, can foster the development of more direct communication and even the reorganization of thought processes (Bentivegna, 1983). Moreover, art therapy can be particularly effective with children because they often do not have the adult capabilities to verbally articulate their emotions, perceptions, or beliefs, and they often can more comfortably convey ideas in ways other than talking (Malchiodi, 1999).

Art Activity as Therapy

Under art, activities can be regarded as a venue, a medium, and a method for students to create self-reflection. Through various art activities, students will obtain ample opportunities to explore and discover their inner worlds. "Inner world" in this research is defined as students' thoughts, desires, imaginations, ideas, impressions, and reflections.

In order to allow students who have emotional issues or identification conflicts to achieve holistic cognitive development and effective learning, art educators should be encouraged to implement art therapy–based curricula. To do so, not only will students be able to establish and heighten their self-efficacy naturally, but they also will obtain an outlet to release stress or negative emotions. Thus, I have designed a series of art therapy–based lesson plans to help students elevate their self-identification and self-esteem. By implementing this curriculum, I will encourage my students to be aware of how their self-identifications, life experiences, and perspectives are expressed and reflected in their art.

Art Educators and Therapeutic Activities

In recent years, people have gradually realized that not only can art therapy be helpful for people with developmental disabilities, but it can also provide people in general with a venue to release stress. In fact, while art therapy can be beneficial to people of all ages, it is especially useful for children and adolescents (Malchiodi, 2010). Art is a natural form of communication for children because it is easier for them to express themselves visually than verbally. Art making has also been shown to enhance cognitive abilities, improve social skills, and encourage self-esteem in school-age children. Students with emotional or psychological issues need adapted art curricula and nonconventional teaching approaches (Bush, 1997). Given their educational and professional experience, art educators are uniquely qualified to implement therapeutic art activities into their classes. How, then, could art therapy activities help students experience effective learning, better social interactions, strong self-identification, and self-efficacy? Bush (1997) claimed that art therapy activities are especially effective in encouraging flexibility of self-expression because they can play with various kinds of art materials. Through studying art-making processes and the results, researchers have been able to draw inferences regarding students' affects and behaviors. This is because students' artwork reveals their thoughts and interactions with friends and families in their everyday lives.

Searching for Answers

This research focuses on understanding the underlying meaning and interpretation of self-identity from the perspective of immigrant students. Specifically, this study examines the different ways college students use visual collage as a medium to express their self-identities. The research seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What does the term “colonization” mean to you?
2. In what ways do these immigrant students feel like they have been colonized since living in the United States?
3. What factors cause these immigrant students to feel like they are being colonized?
4. How do college students express their concepts of self-identity by utilizing and composing visual elements?
5. What are the artistic differences (aesthetic expression forms) of students' presenting positive and negative emotions in visual collages?
6. How does self-identity change through the discussion and art-making processes?

In order to help me answer these questions, the immigrant students in ARE130: Exploring Art and Visual Culture will be the participants. The immigrant students in this study have immigrated to the U.S. with their families. These participants are from African, Brazilian, and Mexican cultural backgrounds. Inspired by a psychological projective personality or cognitive test, Draw-a-Person test (DAP, DAP test, or Good enough–Harris Draw-a-Person test) is used to evaluate children and adolescents for a variety of purposes. Students were asked to create visual collages to express their ideas of self-identity. After taking photos for this topic, they needed to write a poem or paragraph to articulate the meanings of their photos. Students from different cultural backgrounds used different ways of communicating their ideas of identity. This allowed me to better understand their self-concepts by learning meanings of the visual elements in their artwork. As Sefton and Windle (2011) claim, if people want to present academic ideas, text-based presentations may be an effective method. However, to communicate more complex meanings, written text is considered too simple, predictable, and noncyclical. This is where art-based communication becomes particularly relevant.

Art Therapy–Based Activities—Seeing Yourself

An art therapy-based activity was implemented in the discussion section of ARE 130, a course that introduces students to various perspectives of art, such as the diverse forms of expressing art, mainstream and alternative visual cultures, and underlying meanings of visual elements in art. In this context, my art therapy–based activity could expand and strengthen how students perceive their own cultural and social identity.

Class title: ARE130: Exploring Art and Visual Culture

Unit title: Self-Identification and Expression

Participants: ARE130 discussion section students

Age/grade level: 18–25 years old; freshmen and juniors

Length of time: In school, 50-minute classes (two weeks)

Art activity: Visual collage and identity expression

Activity goal: Through this self-identity activity, students will be able to discover their inner worlds. (“Inner world,” in this art activity, is considered the students’ thoughts, desires, imaginations, ideas, impressions, and reflections.) This activity will elevate students’ awareness of diverse social and cultural identities, helping them respect cultural differences that they are exposed to.

Activity Process

The first week: Recognizing the Concept of Identity

1. Students will need to think about the following concepts based on their own interpretations: *identity*, *social identity*, *hegemony*, *colonization*. (The teacher will provide students with definitions and meanings for these terms if needed.)
2. Students will verbally describe and discuss these concepts with the whole class. The teacher will facilitate discussion.
3. Students will be asked to reflect on and construct their own interpretations of their self-identities; then, based on their ideas, they will each create a visual collage.
4. In order to express their ideas of self-identity, they will collect visual images that can help them construct their perspectives in the visual collages.

The Second Week: Understanding Otherness

5. Students will be encouraged to share their ideas by presenting their collages.
6. In order to provide useful information for the questions in this study, students will need to describe their viewpoints based upon the questions below:
 - A. While living in the United States, have you ever felt “colonized”?
 - B. As noncitizens, what factors cause this feeling of being colonized?
 - C. How did you choose and compose the visual elements in your collage to present your idea of self-identification?
 - D. Do you think you are presenting a positive or negative concept of self-identification in your collage?
 - E. What did you learn from making this visual collage?

Findings

Self-Identification and Colonization

When having students define the term *colonization*, they directly connect this term with the idea of civil war and the slavery issue in the United States. Therefore, I suggested students consider circumstances around their life experiences and share examples; most of them talked about health care, tuition, and issues about bullying in schools. These immigrant students agree that Western culture is dominant in schools, from the administrative to the student level. For instance, policies are made by white Americans, and schools’ presidents are usually white Americans. Moreover, white American students hold more leadership roles at school as compared to immigrant students. These are just a few of the situations in which students connected ‘colonization’ to their own life experiences. In terms of colonization, some students commented that they do not feel being restricted or colonized when they are at home. However, sometimes, they have that kind of feeling while studying at school. Julia², an African student in my class, mentioned, “Often times, my classmates think that I do not know what they are talking about, because I am not familiar with American culture” (see figure 1). Tiffany, a Brazilian student, commented that she thinks the school administrators always take control and set the rules. She said, “Sometimes I think the policies are not fair enough. For instance, some scholarships or grants set unreasonable requirements for immigrant or noncitizen students. Basically, I feel that we do not have equal opportunities as American white students” (see figure 2).

² Julia is a pseudonym name of the participant in this research.

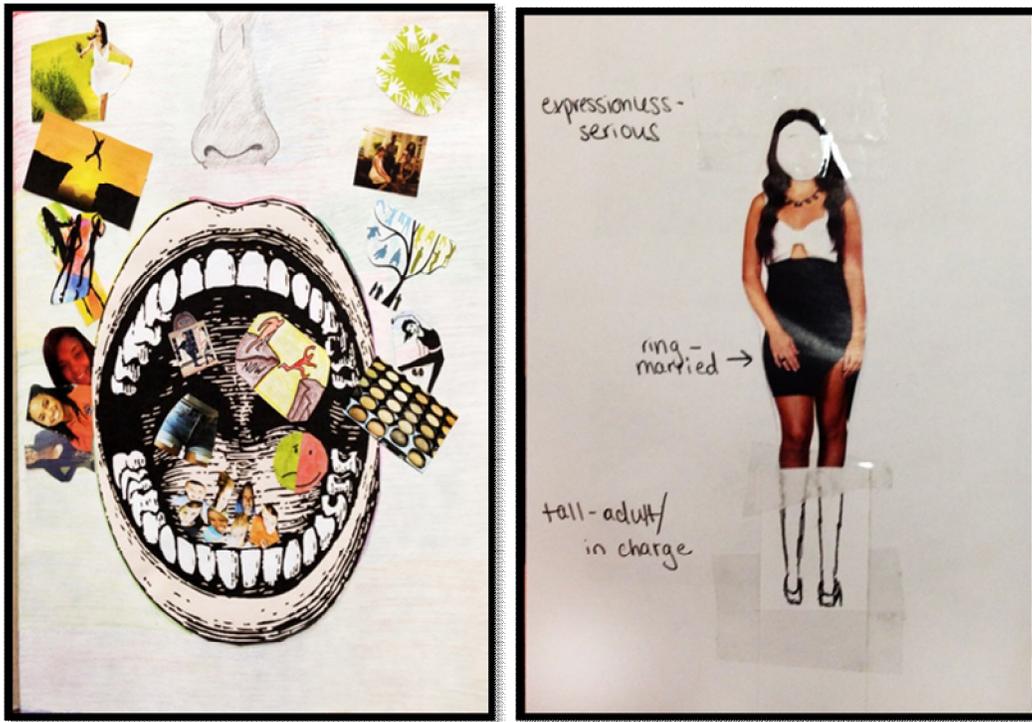


Figure 1: "I have something to say" Created by Julia. Figure 2: "Social value" Created by Tiffany

In discussing self-identification based on colonization, Susan³, a Mexican student, stated that when she first arrived in the United States, she adjusted some of her habits and preferences in order to fit into mainstream American culture. After she made these changes, she felt more comfortable with participating in social events because she appeared to have more in common with her American friends. In Susan's visual collage (figure 3), she expresses her desire for the freedom to be herself. The people in the bottom of her collage indicate the mainstream culture, and some of those people are pointing at her, which implies that she is sometimes forced to do things she does not agree with or like to do.

³ Susan is a pseudonym name of the participant in this research.



Figure 3: "Freedom" created by Susan Figure 4: "Coma" created by Alex

In students' visual collages, they expressed their interpretations of *self-identity and colonization*. Although they chose a variety of different ways to construct their collage, I found their concepts are consistent with their perception of *self-identity and colonization*. The students in this research agree with two major factors resulting in feeling being colonized. First, needing to follow and to fit into the mainstream/whiteness culture makes them feel uncomfortable. Second, in some group projects, their ideas will be taken as minor considerations. The students usually connect and reflect the concepts of self-identity and colonization with their everyday lives. Most of their thoughts relate to and take place in school, not at home. In this condition, I assume that the school may be a crucial environment that imposes feelings of being colonized on those immigrant students.

Implication of Losing Self-Identity

In Julia's visual collage (figure 1), she presents a large portion of a mouth to indicate the desire of letting others hear her voice (ideas and stances). She mentioned, "I put my photos behind the big mouth, I want to imply that I am hiding my thoughts." Moreover, in the center of the mouth, there is a person trying to jump from one cliff to another. She said that she always attempts to alleviate tension among peers. She also drew a face that appears to have both happy and sad emotions. This represents that she is happy while staying with her family, yet she sometimes feels unhappy when studying in school. Through talking with Julia about her artwork, it was clear that she possess a confident personality. However, since living in the United States, she has gradually lost confidence in herself. Similarly, both Tiffany and Alex⁴ covered the faces in their artworks. This is a vivid and strong way to show the loss of self-identity. Perhaps the mainstream culture, social values, or judgments makes them resist presenting themselves. In particular, in Alex's artwork, he put the visual images of Superman and Spiderman on his body in order to reveal that he lives in a world that is under the Western hegemony. Furthermore, he named the artwork "Coma" to express the idea of in-between. He commented that he has tried hard to adjust himself in order to fit himself in the mainstream culture and gain better friendships with white American students.

Social Judgment and Mainstream Culture in a Positive or Negative Viewpoint

⁴ Alex is a pseudonym name of the participant in this research.

In terms of emotional expression, Julia and Susan created more positive visual collages than Tiffany and Alex. In Julia's artwork, she still shows a component of her happiness in life. She strives to overcome difficulties. Likewise, although Susan's artwork represents an idea of social judgment, she sees this issue in a positive way. Susan thinks she can fly away and find a solution to achieve a happy life. Moreover, both of them mention that they will find solutions or alternatives to deal with these situations. Julia said, "Since it is my first year in the university, I will learn to fit into this environment after all." Susan believes that if she does not think about this social identity issue, then she will not have to struggle between her beliefs and Western norms. In contrast with Julia and Susan's artworks, Stephen and Alex's visual collages emphasize a pessimistic view regarding social justice and one's ability to challenge the dominant authority or power structure. During the discussion, Alex spoke negatively of social justice. He believes that it is the wealthy that are in positions to make decisions and that they have the power and authority to control political and educational policies. The school system is no exception; where students who are from wealthy families usually can earn respect. Oftentimes, wealthy students have advantages over other students because they could afford to go to the best schools and have a privileged upbringing. According to Alex, when working a group project with American students, they often vote. He said, "Well, this is the reality. Whether you like it or not, you have to accept and live with it." By the same token, Tiffany does not like to dress like many girls do on campus, with super-short shorts or revealing tops. However, she feels that she has to change her clothing style in some ways in order to "fit in" and create a venue for making friends.

Meaningful Information from This Art Activity

In terms of psychological or emotional changes, students who participated in this research study felt that this art activity was a good way for them to talk about their thoughts and feelings. However, they did not believe that conditions would change. These students believe that the Western hegemony strongly exists in our world and that it is impossible to be deconstructed. Although the students felt comfortable expressing their ideas of self-identification and social identity by creating this visual collage, in public or with their peers, they still tend to hide their self-identification. In addition, these students often remarked that when they earn respect from peers, they are more likely to obtain self-esteem. They suggest that self-esteem firmly depends on the way peers see you.

Authentic Reflection after Engagement

How did this Engagement affect my Understanding of my own Identity as an art Educator?

After implementing this art therapy-based activity, as an art teacher and researcher, I should ask myself, how did this engagement affect my understanding of my own identity as an art educator? By using this activity to answer this question, I realized that the most important thing in teaching for a teacher is to assist students to think, to reflect, and to generate their unique interpretation and understanding of their experiences. Furthermore, as art educators, we are individuals dedicated to the artistic development of students who do not necessarily practice as artists (Thornton, 2011). In my class, I always tell my students that "the meaning of creating art is more important than the outcome." In this art activity, I consider myself as a medium, a bridge, and a catalyst to assist students to elevate their self-identification. In order to appropriately help students to think about their culture and identity issues, I need to clarify my viewpoints of multiculturalism and social justice topics such as gender, race, and class issues. Teachers can influence students' thoughts and behaviors a great deal. McDermott (2002) argues that a teacher's professional identity is important and powerful in motivating his or her students. In this sense, I usually possess a neutral stance so that students will more likely present authentic ideas.

More importantly, I believe that if art teachers want to teach social and/or cultural identity issues, they must have solid self-identification and perspectives of those issues. In this way, the art teacher will be able to assist students to gain positive self-identity and self-awareness; otherwise, they might confuse students in discussing these critical issues. This art activity allowed me to realize the importance of teacher's self-identity. I am inspired by Palmer's (1997) idea of teachers' self-identity. He argues that: "in fact, knowing my students and my subject depends heavily on self-knowledge. When I do not know myself, I cannot know who my students are... When I do not know myself, I cannot know my subject—not at the deepest levels of embodied, personal meaning. I will know it only abstractly, from a distance, a congeries of concept as far removed from the world as I am from personal truth" (p. 14). By the same token, as teachers, knowing themselves helps them present themselves in ways that enhance teaching and learning. It motivates "interpersonal dynamics of a classroom into proper perspective" (Lipka & Brinoapt, 1999, p. 211).

Thus, only when teachers have a firm command of the class contents and a strong sense of self-awareness will they be able to sufficiently provide students with critical and experiential learning. How did this Engagement affect my Understanding of my Investment or Disinvestment in the Issues I Tackled? This is a crucial question for me to consider. Since I practiced these art therapy–based activities in exploring students’ self-identification, I have had to pay more attention to students’ emotional and behavioral changes during the discussion sections. I need to continually be aware of the nuances between their ideas of self-identification, social, and cultural issues. Moreover, I also have to recognize and sympathize with their thoughts. By doing so, I will be able to encourage students to feel comfortable in sharing their more personal or sensitive feelings. When I asked my students if I could take photos of them while engaged in discussions, most of them did not want to be shown in the photos. Their reaction is an implication and reflection of the feelings of self-identity in their inner worlds. By carefully observing and interacting with the students, I was better able to distinguish their comfort zones in participating in art therapy-based activities such as these..

What were your Concerns and Fears in Connecting Theory to Practice?

According to Graham and Zwirn (2010), art can be a pathway to the exploration of personal and/or cultural narratives. Art is a body of evolving knowledge that is about something meaningful and unique, not just techniques to be learned. However, in terms of having a diverse student population, sometimes, teachers may not be able to reach the goal they originally planned or wished. Thus, when implementing art therapy–based concepts in these therapeutic activities, I was not sure if I would be able to collect the information and data that I was expecting to acquire. Furthermore, there are differences between education-based art activities and art therapy–based ones. The former aims at teaching techniques and creating quality artwork, which is the end result, the products. The latter focuses on people’s inner experiences, such as their feelings, perceptions, and imaginations. In art therapy–based activity, teachers will not expect that every student has to complete his/her artwork. Experiencing the process and interpreting its meaning is the crucial part of this kind of art activity. In this sense, I was concerned that if the students did not complete their collages, then their artworks might not provide me with sufficient information. Fortunately, I arranged a discussion activity for students to share their ideas so I could collect more completed information from them.

How do you see this Process Affecting where you seek your Curricular and Pedagogical Resources as an Art and Visual Culture Educator? In the two-week art activities, students are able to visualize their thoughts and express and respond to things that might excite or frustrate them in their lives. In fact, these art-making processes allow both the teacher and the students to clarify and discuss the meanings and issues in their artwork. Moreover, observing students’ artwork allows me to carefully examine how students feel and what their ideas mean before, after, or within the art-making processes. Although students were initially resistant, they eventually became enthusiastic about this art activity and began to see the power of making meaningful art. Furthermore, their artwork was reflective, allowing for growth and progress in their learning experiences as well as general understanding of art. From an art and visual culture education perspective, this art activity is beneficial for both teachers and students. In discussions, the teacher and the students examined and discussed the artwork many times. Through the processes, students’ artworks moved them to deeper responses and interpretations. The outcome or product of the art provides the teacher and the students with a forum to share diverse ideas. It also offers a platform to integrate experiences and visual symbols. In this environment, students will be able to translate their experiences into a visual form by using art as a medium.

How do you see this Process Affecting where you seek your Resources and Inspirations as a Researcher? Through participation in this two-week art activity unit, students embark on what can become a lifelong journey of exploring their unique characteristics, respecting otherness, and contributing to the world around them. More importantly, the impact of the art can play a vital role in both the teacher and the students’ lives. In particular, being an art educator and also a researcher, I am able to understand students’ deeper or more intimate feelings. Likewise, students learn to appreciate social and cultural differences in their lives. Teaching social issues through art is essential for fostering achievement and growth throughout people’s lives. It provides new and important spaces for learning.. By engaging in this critical thinking art-making process, researchers might be able to collect valuable research findings, unexpected ideas, and groundbreaking data and analysis. Therefore, not only can a creative and critical thinking art-making process benefit educators by providing unique social and cultural ideas, but it can also allow students to experience diverse cultural perspectives and learn a sense of otherness. Certainly, the processes of these art activities offer researchers a number of different frameworks to explore.

Conclusion

This photo collage project, designed and implemented in the discussion section in ARE130, provides immigrant students a nonconventional space to express their concerns and feelings. Since self-identity or social identities have been considered sensitive issues, this photo collage project can serve as a safe platform for students to represent their ideas of self-identity without stress and uncomfortable feelings. Regarding self-identity, the students in my study tended to present meanings of self-identity by re-creating visual images from their life experiences. In terms of artistic expression, the visual elements in these collages provide viewers with in-depth meanings. Some of the meanings of self-identity in the collages might be considered uncertain. For instance, regarding the layout of the collages, Julia and Tiffany left more blank space in their artworks. It may indicate the current situation of their social relationships. Julia mentioned in the discussion that it seems that her opinions usually are unimportant to her friends. In contrast to Julia and Tiffany, the elements in Susan and Alex's collages are more specific and related to some current issues in their lives. This might reveal their desire to change. In the final analysis, I infer and conclude that the students' artworks do depict and reflect their feelings and ideas of self-identity in this research. In addition, the visual symbols that the students chose to create and represent in their pictures connect to their cognition of self-identification. According to Malchiodi (1998), children's art absolutely provides them a potential and creative method to communicate with professionals in school or in clinical settings. Based on Malchiodi's point of view, not only can this art project allow me to understand my students' thoughts, but assist me in discussing sensitive social identity issue with my students.

From an educational viewpoint, this project offered me numerous opportunities to engage in discussions and interactions with my students; these activities offer me opportunities to provide them diverse concepts related to social identity issues. More importantly, this interactive art-making project gives an art educator and the students a great platform to construct ideas and knowledge together. As an art educator, I expect myself to plan and design more art activities in order to allow students to discuss sensitive, but important issues. As a result, students will be able to gain diverse knowledge and to practice critical thinking without painful or uncomfortable feelings. By creating a personal photo collage, students became more comfortable thinking about and discussing issues involving "self-identity" and cultural background. Through this photo collage project, students will be more comfortable with expressing and talking about the ideas of self-identity. Zimmerman (2000) mentioned that students' beliefs about their academic capabilities play an essential role in their achievements, and it also relates to self-esteem and self-efficacy. Children's beliefs about their academic capabilities connect with their self-efficacy. In fact, academic performance relates to self-identity, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. Bandura and Zimmerman asserted that self-efficacy fosters motivation, thus promoting engagement in learning activities that lead to increased proficiency in educational skills (as cited in Hernandez, 1999). In terms of educational applications, art educators can design specific topics of art activities in order to enhance students' self-identity and self-efficacy. Not only will this allow students to elevate their self-identity, but it will also boost students' academic performance.

References

- Bentivegna, S. (1983). The use of art with an autistic child in residential care. *American Journal of Art Therapy*, 22, 51–56.
- Bush, J. (1997). The handbook of school art therapy: introducing art therapy into a school system. pp. 42–29.
- Covington, M. V. (1984). The motive of self-worth. In: Ames, R. E., & Ames, C. (eds), *Motivation in education: Student motivation* (Vol. 1, pp. 77–113). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Graham, M. A., & Zwirn, S. (2010). How being a teaching artist can influence K–12 art education. *Studies in Art Education*, 51(3), 219–232. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Hernandez, D. J. (1999). Psychological well-being and educational achievement among immigrant youth. In *Children of immigrants: Health, adjustment, and public assistance*. Washington DC: National Academies.
- Kramer, E. (2000). Exploration of definition. In *Art as Therapy* (pp. 33–36). Philadelphia, PA: Athenaeum Press.
- Lipka, R. & Brinthaup, T. (Ed.). (1999). *The role of self in teacher development*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Malchiodi K. (1999). *Medical art therapy with children*. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publications.
- Malchiodi, C. A. (1998). Ethical considerations and children's drawing. In *Understanding children's drawing* (pp. 219–234). New York, NY: The Guilford.
- Malchiodi, C. (2006). *Art therapy sourcebook*. Columbus, NY: McGraw Hill Professional.
- Malchiodi, C. (2010). *Art therapy in schools*, International Art Therapy Organization & Art Therapy Alliance. ATR-BC.
- McDermott, M. (2002). Collaging pre-service teacher identity. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 29(4), 53–68.
- Palmer, P. J. (1997). The heart of a teacher: Identity and integrity in teaching. *Change*, 29(6), 14–22.
- Phelan, P. K., Davidson, A. L., & Cao, H. T. (1991). Students' multiple worlds: Negotiating the boundaries of family, peer and school cultures. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 22(3), 224–250.
- Ruben, J. (1999). *Medical art therapy with children*. In: Malchiodi K (Ed). London, United Kingdom: Basic Kingsley Publications.
- Sefton, T., & Windle, S. (2011). Mediating the message of action research. *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 7(2), 83–98.
- Stirling, E. (2011). Collaboration, education, frustration: Integrating art therapy into the school setting. In *Art therapy research in practice*. Oxford, UK: Peter Lang AG.
- Thornton, A. (2011). Being an artist teacher: A liberating identity? *International Journal of Art and Design Education*, 30, 31–36.
- Zimmerman, B. J., Bandura, A., & Martinez-Pons, M. (1992). Self-motivation for academic attainment: The role of self-efficacy beliefs and personal goal setting. *American Educational Research Journal*, 29, 663–676.
- Zimmerman, B. J. (2000). Self-efficacy: An essential motive to learn. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25, 82–91.