

## Collaging Pre-service Teacher Identity

By Morna McDermott

### Introduction

Aesthetic knowledge (is) dangerous knowledge.  
—Richard Carey, 1998, p. 303

I begin this article with the suggestion that aesthetic knowledge, when critically incorporated into educational inquiry and classroom practices, might elicit “dangerous knowledge” (Carey, 1998). According to Richard Carey, aesthetic knowledge and dangerous knowledge are one in the same in so far that both “open the knowledge process to the subjective qualities of lived experiences” (p. 303) allowing for alternative ways of thinking and knowing about the world and ourselves. Dangerous knowledge begins with a critical re-examination of identity representation, and uses aesthetics to rupture oppressive thinking that “expands beyond art worlds into life worlds” (p.303).

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Therefore, an exploration of dangerous styles of art and aesthetics that relate educational inquiry and practice to life worlds might become sites for transformation of self and pedagogy. Collage is one example of a dangerous style that encourages transformation through relational and emergent forms of meaning making. Such transformations, as Paulo Freire (1998) reminds us, are key to creating demo-

cratic and socially just schools. The key “is not to transfer knowledge but to create possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge” (p. 30).

One place to begin exploring possibilities for the development of dangerous knowledge is in pre-service teacher education classes, where theoretical models regarding how knowledge is produced, personal lived experiences, inquiry practices, and pedagogical ideals overlap like a collage, creating critical crossroads that spill outward into both schooling and scholarly communities.

I believe that collage art and collage processes provide meaningful ways for pre-service teacher educators/researchers to cull dangerous knowledges about their students that can inform their inquiry and how they prepare their students to become critical and effective teachers. Collage invites conversations regarding relationships between socially just classroom practices, identity representation, and arts-informed work within pre-service teacher education classes.

In her study that interrogates White pre-service teacher identity, Mullen (1999) reminds us, “identity is like a cultural collage, variously arranged and glued together” (p. 150). By reflecting on their own collages, pre-service educators are undergoing self-examination, critically deconstructing complex and shifting layers of their own beliefs and experiences. Furthermore, “the incorporation, merging, and blurring of cultural identities illustrates the postmodern educator at work in a rapidly changing cultural landscape” (p. 177), where previously unseen relationships may emerge, transforming existing static and fixed roles reflected in dominant educational practices.

The extent to which pre-service teachers can artistically and critically examine conceptions of “self” as racially, socially, and culturally constructed texts in turn has a ripple effect on the pedagogies which they will incorporate into their classrooms. If we envision classrooms to become democratic sites for educational transformation, we must also consider how our approaches to pre-service teacher education can explore “the struggles and rewards of engaging pre-service teachers as they construct and critique their own cultural self-identities” (Mullen, 1999, p. 151).

### **“Layering” a Foundation**

This article is constructed by overlapping several different “layers” of inter-connecting processes, bringing together the fields of arts-informed inquiry, pre-service teacher education, and the possibilities/dilemmas faced by pre-service teachers in their future K-12 classroom practices. The relationships between these different layers are created primarily by three aesthetically oriented concepts: emergence, relationality, and transformation.

The first “layer” of this article, “Collage and Critical Aesthetics,” explores the connections between collage art and the values of critical aesthetics in educational research. Overlapping these premises is a second “layer” entitled “Emergence, Relationality, and Transformation,” where I suggest that collage promotes the aims

of critical aesthetics and that the collage elements of emergence, relationality, and transformation are key processes in the formation of dangerous knowledge.

The third “layer” of this essay, “Collage and Teacher Perceptions” outlines the arts-informed premises of a study focused on the production of dangerous knowledge. The fourth “layer” draws from selected pieces of that study, as an example of how emergence, relationality and transformation affect the identity and pedagogy of four pre-service educators. Following the re-presentation of this study, I construct a fifth “layer” that considers the visions and biases revealed in and through arts-informed modes of expression.

Finally, I contend that the creation of collages is a beneficial practice in pre-service teacher education courses, where students explore the relationships between self, personal experiences, and pedagogy. The reader should note that these layers do not move from top to bottom in hierarchical fashion, but rather fold into and out from each other, tearing seams in some places and creating non-linear connections in others. As a collage of words and ideas, there is no single or fixed way to “read” the composition of the text or to interpret the various layers as they assemble themselves into a “whole.”

### **Collage and Critical Aesthetics**

Collage art was made popular in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, marked by the works of Pablo Picasso and Marcel Duchamp (Davis & Butler-Kisber, 1999). As Western culture began an ideological shift from modernist thinking towards postmodern approaches to life and art, collage represented “a cacophony ripping up the syntax of social life” (Marcus, 1989, p. 164). In a postmodern world, like in collage itself, “words and pictures would begin to link up . . . as graffiti” (p. 164) blended with street noise, and shouting voices to produce new possibilities, what Guy Debord called “constructed situations”(in Marcus, p. 164).

Bricolage, a particular form of collage that deals with “making due with the materials at hand” (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p. 86), embodies the processes and aims of critical aesthetics. As collage artists, bricoleurs typically appropriate, or remove objects such as magazine images; scraps and objects culled from daily life, and any other conceivable form of mass media from their previous contexts and through gradual additions, re-assemble them into various re-combinations producing a visual effect that confounds linear or unitary readings of the completed product.

By working within the limits of what happens to be available at the moment, bricolage artists construct multi-media compositions from various unrelated sources and contexts, essentially “juxtapos(ing) unrelated, incongruous elements in order to liberate understanding from the mystifications of straight-line thinking” (Paley, 1995, p. 8). Describing the work of Guy Debord, Marcus (1989) explains how he cut scores of paragraphs, sentences, or single words from magazines, newspapers and books. He continues, “Here and there were photographs, advertisements, plans

of buildings . . . scattered and smeared across paper” (p. 163) and then covered in colored lines, paints drippings, and hand-written text.

Although bricolage might technically be considered a sub-category of collage, for my own purposes in this essay and within a pre-service teacher collage study I will be presenting here, the two terms collage and bricolage will be used interchangeably. The collage process can elicit social awareness and collaborative action that lives in and through us. In addition, when examined critically, collage reveals hidden relationships between dominant and marginalized cultures, language, and personal experience, where “images can be read as text (and) text can figure as image” (Paley, 1995, p. 7).

Bricolage, and collage art in general, also suggests that nothing is “new” and all things are related. In this sense, bricolage appears to be the style of choice in dialoguing about collage as practice and metaphor in aesthetically critical education and inquiry. Collage leads the formation of “critical consciousness” (Carey, 1998). Rupturing the status quo and producing alternative constructed situations enables us to interrogate about “the controlling structures and official assumptions” (p. 303) where we might be able to expose oppressive practices that serve the interests of dominant ideologies. In other words, the multiple juxtapositions of images and meanings produced by collage creates “cracks” (Mullen, 1999) in dominant narratives reproduced by traditional schooling practices in favor of artistic practices which, “stress community over self-interest” (Carey, 1998, p. 11).

In educational inquiry, collage also has the effect of rupturing, reflecting, and refracting relationships between aesthetic modes of knowing, language, and meaning making. The applications of collage to research are not new. Collage, as a critical and aesthetic mode of inquiry, draws largely from the works of other arts-informed inquirers conducted in recent years (Block, 1992; Davis & Butler-Kisber, 1999; Diamond & Mullen, 1999; Finley, 1998; Mullen, 1999; Paley, 1995). As Finley (1998) points out “the analogy of researcher as *bricoleur* (sic) enjoys enduring popularity, beginning . . . with Levi-Strauss’s [1966, p.17] use of the term” (p. 14).

Davis and Butler-Kisber (1999) consider how collage suspends linear thinking for both the artist and the viewer, enabling more ephemeral qualities such as feelings and experiences to be articulated through the medium. Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) explain that collage/bricolage reveals a complex and dense collage of images and interpretations of the researcher. Block (1992) argues that what makes collage artists of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century a significant metaphor for curriculum is that such artists “recognized that meaning (is) derived from engagement with the world” (p. 338). Educators and educational researchers as collagists might see how collage art “offer(s) us a model of curriculum as it produces knowledge in the active consumption of the everyday materials the world makes available” (p. 339).

Furthermore, arts-informed inquiry looks towards the arts not only as a form of individual expression, but also as a key instrument in confronting current and historically significant issues of race, gender, democracy, and social inequality

(Mullen, 1999; Munro, 1998; Paley, 1995; Finley, 1998). The use of collage as a form of identity representation reveals shifting social and cultural aspects of pre-service educators' constructed identities and produces a place where "the imagination is open, and the defensive posture relaxed, new textures, colors, and layers can be crafted" (Mullen, 1999, p. 177).

### **Relationality, Emergence, and Transformation**

I suggest that collage provides avenues for educators and researchers to explore three key aesthetic terms: relationality, emergence, and transformation, as means to help us "see, hear, and experience the world more clearly" (Purpel in Shapiro, 1999, p.27) and to illuminate "what we are doing and what we might achieve" (p.27).

#### ***Emergence***

The experience of creating collage brings to the foreground spaces and places that shape pre-service teacher identities. Possible places include, but are not excluded to, K-12 classrooms and university classrooms that educate students to become teachers. Space moves beyond the concrete notion of "location." It includes mental and emotional realms where we recall, remember, reflect, and imagine. Inquiry, like learning in general, takes place simultaneously within individuals, in their relationships with others, and within their lived experiences outside the classroom.

In general, emergence refers to something "other" (rather than something "new") rising up from or out of previous forms or contexts into something unexpected. Rather than fixing ourselves into place we might consider that, "education has more to do with meandering: with getting lost" (Block, 1992, p. 326). When pre-service teachers' self-knowledge and pedagogical awareness emerge ideally they "make living knowledge" and thus "become bold enough to question the authority of the quantitative paradigm as the exclusive knowledge-production methodology" (Carey, 1998, p. 185).

Emergence implies that often we cannot truly "see" what are actually looking for, and that by stumbling about in the unknown, and through "chance" encounters, sometimes we discover things we couldn't have hitherto even imagined.

#### ***Relationality***

In collage, relationships become part of the "text" where, as Carey (1998) states, "connectedness plays a prominent role" (p. 287). Inquiry evolves into an art form that aims to uncover and speak to "tacit" forms of knowledge (Courtney, 1997), which draw upon things in relationship to each other, where "we understand one thing in terms of another, through their similarities" (p. 40). Through a collage of autobiographies, pre-service educators and researchers might see the connections between themselves and others, and between the past and the future. Individual pieces within a collage are inter-subjective, and can be re-arranged, creating

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alternative possibilities and fostering multiple interpretations through an ongoing search for illuminations.

Unlike the technical approaches of standardized tests and curricula that legitimate knowledge through quantitative means, an emphasis on emergence and relationships subverts static and oppressive practices in favor of more kaleidoscopic modes of engagement. Emergent patterns woven together through interrelationships suggest that rather than occurring isolation, creative thought and products are collaborative efforts, between people, between materials, and the infinite number of correspondences across time and place. It is through collective and emergent changes that transformation is made possible.

#### ***Transformation***

Tracing our minds eye over the ruptures in our seemingly seamless existence, we collage the various elements of our being into a different “order”- things collaged into recombinant texts or relationships that produce alternative compositions and meanings. Transformation occurs through emergent and relational interactions between artist and material, between process and product, and between individuals as they share and exchange knowledges with one another. For example, critically aesthetic practices provide “glimpses into how art can be connected to individual and social groups” (Carey, 1998, p. 61). Collaged perspectives of pedagogy and inquiry might reveal cultural and intellectual biases that reproduce dominant and often exclusionary belief systems at the expense of under-represented students. In elucidating the power of students and teachers (Block, 1992) we can “make possible changes in relations, and as a result of this transformation, changes in identity” (p. 336).

The history of education in the United States might be understood “as the reproduction of socially sanctioned knowledge . . . (that) represents dominant attitudes and behaviors” (Nieto, 1999, p 3). Because “pre-service programs often serve as a mechanism for reproducing negative and racist attitudes and beliefs” which are “later translated into teaching approaches that continue to create inequitable education” (p. 31), a “collaged” approach to arts-informed inquiry *as* practice lends itself to the aims of anti-racist education multicultural education reform, “help(ing) us understand how educational programming needs to be restructured to honor their cultural identity issues and development” (Mullen, 1999, p. 183).

### **Collage and Teacher Perceptions**

In 1999, I conducted a study that focused on collage and critical arts-informed inquiry in order to consider three basic ideas: (1) How constructing collages could be useful or meaningful to pre-service teachers’ understanding(s) of teaching and learning, (2) How a collage activity or one similar to it might be applied in teachers’

classroom curricula and activities, and, (3) Implications of this study for using artistic methods of analyzing and representing research data.

In order to explore these three considerations, four pre-service teachers from a local Midwest university participating in a course on integrating the arts into the classroom used collage as a self-reflective process that related their pedagogies and perceptions of themselves as teachers. Using various combinations of visual and written materials and artistic techniques, these four pre-service teacher participants, called Jessica, Thor, Angela, and Jill,<sup>1</sup> made collages out of various two and three-dimensional materials including construction paper, Styrofoam, paint, magazines, and photographs.

This project was an assignment that all students were required to complete for the course. Throughout the semester, students had been addressing concerns regarding the relationship between creativity, social justice, and education. They had also engaged in a series of other artistic projects that produced alternative and innovative associations between knowledge construction, curriculum development, multiculturalism, and traditional schooling practices.

The four study participants, who were all between the ages of 20 and 24, were selected by random sample. The names of potential participants (a total of 40 students volunteered to participate) were correlated with numbers 1-40. Four of those numbers were then randomly selected. The aim of selecting four participants randomly was to emphasize the idea that the collage process could be informative and useful to all, not just those students already more “artistically inclined” or who appeared to have produced collages of higher “artistic quality.” The notion of qualifying their collages for this study by some “inherent” evaluation of quality raised concerns for me as a researcher and how this term “colonizes art, forcing it to stand up to standards that are culturally alien to its creators” (Highwater, 1994, p. 258).

Using the data that emerged from these collage projects, which include post-collage essays, and transcribed follow-up interviews, I focus on aesthetic qualities that are relational, emergent and transformative. The collages are collective, or relational, in the sense that they reflect “democratic” representations of our classrooms. Participants’ artworks are emergent in that they draw from the ongoing lived experiences of the communities in which the art is being created. Finally, transformation takes place through dialogue and interaction between artistic processes and the life processes where the concerns of a community are negotiated.

Although ideas of the other three participants are represented here, I will focus more specifically on the collage work and thoughts of one participant named Jessica. I suggest that Jessica’s artwork and words exhibit what I feel are the most direct and salient example of the power of arts-informed inquiry and arts-education to help transform the socio-political landscape of schools.



### **Something from “Nothing”: Jessica’s Critical Transformation**

Jessica’s particular case study best exemplifies the connections between bricolage/collage and democratic classroom practices. Through her collage, Jessica expresses her own feelings regarding race and culture within predominantly Eurocentric school models. For her, art is a way for under-represented students to see themselves and to be seen in academic curricula where they have been traditionally marginalized. During one interview with me she reflected:

We need to talk about how diverse our culture is and the importance of cultures that aren’t discussed as much as others in history books. That’s going to be a challenge for me too because I am going to want to talk about the little caption in the corner, you know? Making sure they see themselves represented somehow and especially through the arts.

The students and their life experiences, especially those students typically marginalized through standard schooling practices, become the material being represented, collaged together into a transformative curriculum.

Jessica based her collage technique on the style and aims of artist Jorge Rosano, whose work had recently been exhibited in a small museum in Lincoln, Nebraska. Working only with scraps of paper, scissors, and glue Jorge Rosano “. . . utilizes the traditional folk art form of ‘papel picado’ to create a unique art form . . . and to narrate history or a particular event that many times speak of the continuity of life” (Museo de las Americas: Notitos, 1996, p. 3). Layering colorful cut-outs made from construction paper on top of one another, Rosano renders a composition that symbolically depicts the ideals, values, and concerns of his own life and that of his culture.

Working out of this ideal in education, the teacher and students too become bricoleur artists, composing, recycling, layering, and synthesizing their own narrative histories of schooling. Jessica reflects, “Mr. Rosano’s artwork is inspiring to me because it makes me realize that art is everywhere and can be made from anything.” Similarly Jessica envisions a pedagogy that incorporates curricula built out of the voices and values of her students.

Jessica’s identification with her Hispanic heritage played a large role in constructing her own philosophy as a teacher and in how she will relate with her future students. She explains the “need to talk about how diverse our culture is and the importance of cultures that aren’t discussed as much as others, especially in history books.” The connections between this belief and her own cultural identity were revealed in part through her choice to model Jorge Rosano’s ideals, and in her own experiences as a cultural minority raised in a large urban setting.

Jessica grew up in a large near-by industrial city with her mother, brother, and sister, and she shared about how her own schooling experiences where the arts were minimized or non-existent affected her pedagogical outlook. Examining the



relationships between equality, privilege, and availability of resources, Jessica taps into the power of the arts to critically transform socially, racially, and economically marginalized students and schools into sites of change.

### *Emergence*

Through the artistic process, Jessica's own values, as they reflect or resist traditional Western schooling practices emerged. Emergence is also represented in the unplanned series of events beginning when Jessica went to Nebraska and was able to see Jorge Rosano's work even before she had been made aware of this collage assignment.

Playing with the metaphor of "paper scraps" culled from daily life, alternative pedagogical theories and practices emerge from the students themselves, where working with "nothing" can become a form of resistance against a system that has everything. Through aesthetic engagements with others, the collage work of both Jorge Rosano and Jessica alert us to social conditions and schooling inequalities. According to Jessica:

As he (Jorge Rosano) was growing up his family income was very limited . . . his art was developed based upon what he and his family could afford . . . I could show students what they can do with paper . . . I think some of my students will relate to that kind of thing.

Combining her desire to represent her heritage with elements of formal composition, Jessica explains how she used various objects, images, and colors in her collage (Figure 1) to serve as metaphors for her own beliefs about teaching, and the role her personal identity plays in the on-going formation of her teacher-self:

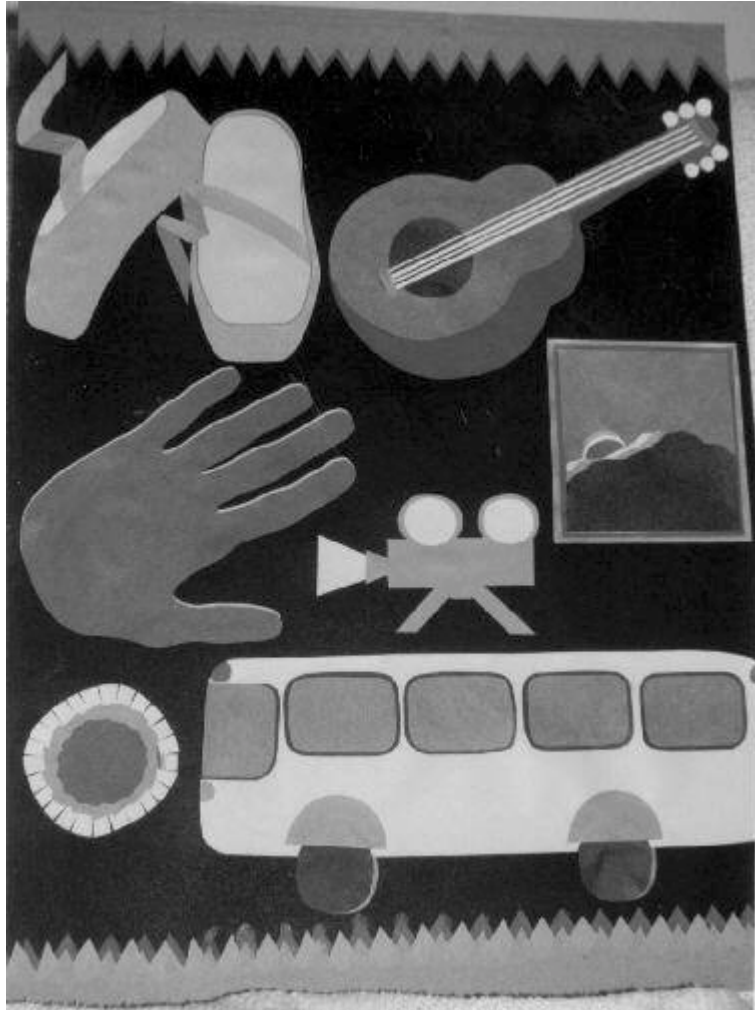
I knew I wanted a classical guitar/banjo . . . My hand to represents hands-on activities . . . The sun represented a new day, a new beginning, that there's always time to start over if something didn't work the previous day . . . chose red and green because I was going to do the Mexican flag, which is red, white, and green, but I didn't put white. I put orange just because it was more complementary.

Another participant, Thor, too commented on how the boundaries between himself and others began to blur in his collage process and more fluid constructions of self emerged, grounded in relationships rather than isolation:

I picked out key words that related to people who had touched me . . . my fifth grade teacher was one of those so I was trying to look at things that she had but then it turned into *me*. I was finding things about me . . .

### *Relationality*

Gablik's (1995) suggestion that "through dialogue, self-contained individualism is transformed into flexible interfaces with the audience" parallels study participants' observations about how their collages were transformed through



*Figure 1*

interactions with other students, disrupting the modernist myth of the “lone artist” who works away from the concerns of society. The third participant, Angela, recollected how her three roommates, none of whom are education majors would walk past her as she created her collage (Figure 2):

They like to talk about their experiences in school to me, and say, ‘Oh, I remember in third grade when this happened,’ and it would trigger something like, ‘Oh, that would be a cool way to do [my collage].’

The relationships shown in Jessica’s collage suggest art as a socially centered



Figure 2

enterprise that “involves a significant shift from objects to relationships” (Gablik, 1995, p. 7). Collage is something, as Jessica said, “that kids could relate to,” especially for those students with little or no formal artistic experiences or access to materials. Just as these participants used non-traditional materials for their collages, so might their students be empowered through uses of alternative media and sources to express their interests and concerns. No longer seen as “empty vessels,” students become the co-constructors (or bricoleurs) of knowledge and meanings, in ways that relate to their own lives. From a critical perspective, collage provides students with an avenue to situate their own identities within their classroom community and produce sites of student agency.

From relational and playful approaches to inquiry and practice emerge visions of “things as if they could be otherwise” (Greene, 1995). In the shift away from

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objects towards relationships, learning emerges from interactions, rather than fixed approaches, pre-planned lessons or bodies of knowledge. Thor argues:

With teaching you're getting away from the textbooks . . . you want to teach them many methods and many things . . . Students need more than one way to figure something out because they don't all learn the same way.

#### ***Transformation***

Emergence and relationality suggest other ways of knowing about ourselves and the world that allow self to become part of the process, and permit seemingly random or disconnected experiences to become part of and transform our educational discourses. Just as Jessica observed in art, "There are communication lines but not the normal way we would think." Transformation is about change from within, working with what one has at hand, and re-thinking long held assumptions and beliefs.

Jessica discussed how the use of collage in her classroom might help her transform her classroom using a student-centered curriculum; one that incorporates her own students' lives, experiences, and communities:

Where I live there's a pretty decent amount of Hispanic students and it is actually pretty diverse. I hope students would find themselves somehow represented in the curriculum and then express themselves in any creative way they know how, and then find something they like about attending school.

Drawing on the negative schooling experiences of her siblings, Jessica considered how:

(T)hey were just expected to do what everyone else could do . . . Everyone had to perform the same requirements and do the same homework . . . I believe that they never knew what they were capable of. All they knew is what they couldn't do.

Jessica's experiences reflect theories of "resistance" (Nieto, 2000) that suggest students deliberately resist White middle-class values, which in effect can either become "counter-productive to the interests of the students" or "can lead to a critical awareness of structural inequality" (p. 246).

"Children who are not in the dominant group" Nieto (2000) argues, "have a hard time finding themselves or their communities in the curriculum." She adds that, "when they do see themselves, it is often through the lens of the dominant group" (p. 97). I am reminded again of Jessica's aim to "make sure students see themselves represented somehow and especially through the arts" as a way of recognizing those cultures "that aren't discussed as much in history books." Jessica's words suggest that artistic endeavors in the classroom need to go beyond making snowflakes and bulletin boards towards bringing under-represented issues and values into the center, and promoting dialogues about oppression and power within schooling communities.

## **Visions and Biases**

Collage encourages pre-service teachers to think outside the mode of a positivistic paradigm that perceives knowledge as fixed, isolated, and linear in favor of more emergent and relational meanings. Angela reflected that, “by being forced to represent (her) philosophies and influences through a collage” she was able to find “new connections and question some of (her) pre-existing ideas.” However, the process of constructing one’s identity through collage also might reveal hidden biases embedded within notions of “self” that are influenced by mainstream socio-political ideologies. Although Jessica’s collage reveals how marginalized cultures or individuals might be brought to the foreground, collage might also reproduce practices, beliefs, aesthetics and values that reflect privileged positions of dominant ideology as a universally accepted way of understanding the world.

Visual languages, like written and spoken forms of communication, cannot necessarily “climb out” of the meaning-making structures from which they are produced. While subjectivity in inquiry may be empowering, it may also ironically re-produce potentially oppressive practices. The use of aesthetics and art by themselves do not automatically lead towards “liberation” from taken-for-granted and potentially exclusionary practices. For instance, because “a dominant narrative,” according to Gablik (1995), is reproduced as a universal and “race-free” narrative, it invisibly impresses upon “Other” cultures fixed values that determine social constructions of truth and meaning through language. Under the pretense of being progressive and “universal,” dominant Western values of art and schooling entrap our subjective experiences “by other kinds of logic, or regimens, that are more subtly introduced into the subjects own mind through modern society” (Shusterman in Gablik, 1995, p. 7).

Aesthetic representations of self problematize discourses, raising issues about how Euroamerican narratives reproduce repressive artistic practices, in which certain sensibilities are rendered “universal” forms of visual language. However, with this awareness, collage might incite “teacher educators [to] function in critical ways [that] strengthen educational reform efforts by facilitating personal and cultural forms of student identity development” (Mullen, 1999, p. 154). Although an in-depth examination of the roles between race, class, and gender in the construction of identity extends beyond the original scope of the study here, the experiences expressed by the participants suggest that, as a process, collage is an effective tool for examining pre-service teacher beliefs and philosophies.

In keeping with the challenges faced by separating a dominant cultural norm from the “Other,” collage as a way of thinking, disrupts the “knower/known” dichotomies (Bowers, 1995) between self and other, inner and outer self, personal and professional beliefs. Rather than an “either/or” proposition, collage embodies a relational mindset where boundaries are blurred and we can begin to play in the space of “both.” The “both/and” proposition enables pre-service teachers to claim

their own self-identity grounded in culture, race, class and gender, while the emergent, relational, and transformative elements of collage making encourage them to also “assume new, heterogeneous, and inclusive forms” (Mullen, 1999, p. 151) of identity creation as well.

### **Layering Future Possibilities**

The notion of “layering” is intended to invoke collage-like images of the various ways that the qualities of relationality, emergence, and transformation inter-relate with each other, and might help pre-service teacher educators and K-12 educators to re-imagine their classroom practices. As Angela at one point reflected, “(This work) made me realize that I have so much more to learn—to find out-(things) that I don’t know and that I need to experiment with.” The same might be said of our community space called the classroom.

The aesthetic qualities of emergence, relationality, and transformation encourage methods of teaching and inquiry that are “multimodal, nonlinear, and multidimensional” (Coles & Knowles, 2000, p. 63). These qualities might translate into artistic approaches to inquiry and education that incorporate voices of historically marginalized student populations and foster a sense of community necessary to transform student-teacher interactions.

Carey (1998) argues that the role of inquiry should not just be for the “academic” community but should also have a place in K-12 classrooms and teachers’ daily lives. Inquiry within pre-service education classrooms empowers beginning educators to deconstruct deeply entrenched myths and imagine alternative futures. As Freire (1998) reminds us, “there is no such thing as teaching without research and research without teaching” (p. 35). The critical aesthetics of collage art can affect inquiry practices in teacher education, and hence, pre-service teachers beliefs and practices that follow them into their own classrooms.

Critical aesthetics and dangerous knowledge invite us to use the often-silenced voices of our students as the materials for collaging alternative pedagogies that overlap with shared social realities and inequalities brought into school communities. “In creating cultural categories,” Hyde (1998) proposes, “we give shape to this world, and whoever manages to change the categories thus changes the shape” (p. 98). In examining relationality, emergence, and transformation through the lens of critical aesthetics we might produce dangerous knowledge that challenges these cultural categories. By connecting various layers of their own identities pre-service educators transform their own future classrooms into sites of democracy and social empowerment. As Angela concluded, reflecting on her own teaching, “I need to explore my own beliefs and experiences and I don’t think would have known this otherwise. I need to keep looking.”

## Note

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of confidentiality, the names of the four study participants were replaced by pseudonyms they selected themselves.

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