CONVERSATION IN-BETWEEN IDENTITIES: A REFLECTIVE JOURNEY OF BECOMING AN ART TEACHER

A Thesis in
Art Education

by
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Abstract

Through a series of personal accounts surrounding my life experience, this study explores how I became the art teacher I am today and how that journey has influenced my beliefs of art education. In short, I am researching the intersection of my own identities as I faced each of them in context. From this journey, I make the case that investigating multiple identities is crucial because of the lack of emphasis on reflecting about personal experience in Taiwanese preservice education. I use autoethnography as a methodology that allows me to illustrate a framework for the identity formation of the preservice teacher.
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It is my earnest hope that my thesis will be useful for future research by the many educators everywhere who tirelessly strive for continuous improvement in the field of art education. May my efforts help to inspire many of the preservice art teachers’ goals and dreams in teaching. My thanks to every person who has helped to lead me to the completion of this thesis.

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Prelude

The London Experience

“The sky is really blue and the air is so fresh!” I whooped and showed a grin on my face. It was a lovable place during the summer of London, and I began to run on the pavement with my brother while my father was left behind towing our heavy luggage. My father was a second year PhD student during that time and went back to Taiwan in August to bring my younger brother (David) and I to London. My mother and my youngest brother (John) were already there waiting for us. They came here a month ago to see my father and traveled in England. However, my parents made a great decision of bringing the whole family here to receive a better education. For us, it was exciting and delighting yet unnerving since we did not even know a word of English; this decision was made spontaneously without any prior planning. We were reunited in a foreign context, and had many extraordinary experiences—especially attending the common schools of London.

For me, although I tried to remember all the happy experiences in London, life in a foreign country was, and still is as I’m now a graduate student in the US, a combination of ups and downs. Breathing the foreign air choked me at times and energized me as well. I understood that life and study in a foreign country is exciting, but I had to face the difficulties of language and my identity as a foreigner. As I became a 6th through 8th grader (equivalent to a 5th through 7th grader in the US), I was aware and reminded by everyone in schooling of my ethnicity as an Asian. I was totally an outsider at school during the first few months who was not always welcomed by peers and some of the teachers. We moved around areas of London several times, attended many schools, finally settling down in Wimbledon, where I went to a third middle school. However, I was rejected by students and teachers and was even bullied by some of the naughty boys. I was lonely and my desire to learn was extinguished further by each shot of exclusion.

Luckily, it was not long before I went to Wimbledon Chase Middle School, the fourth school I attended where I found a completely contrasting milieu of students and teachers. I frequently heard virtuous and kind speech directed toward me, and had student monitors open the doors for me as I entered school buildings. Principal Hardy (I can still recall his name and appearance clearly), a handsome and erudite gentleman, was able to interpret the
meanings of my Chinese name from the first time we met. It was my second year and I was still unable to communicate well or learn as quickly as native students. Nevertheless, it happened to be the first time in my life that a principal of the school showed my art project during assembly in front of every student and praised my effort. Undoubtedly, he was an influential figure that helped me recover my confidence in schooling.

After the approval and praise from the principal, teachers and classmates also recognized my talents in art. It was at this time that I earnestly began adapting myself to the learning demands of each subject even with continuing language difficulties. I tried hard to compare the differences of schooling between Taiwan and England to find out a better approach adjusting myself to English schooling.

I found clear contrasts between the two settings: Firstly, Taiwanese schooling uses government mandated textbooks whereas English schooling uses books chosen by school board members. As a result, Taiwanese schooling is more controlling and teachers are the knowledge transferors while students are receivers staying on their assigned seats separated from one another. On the other hand, teachers in England are more congenial to students as they facilitate their learning. They may sometimes collaborate while students are given the mobility to leave their seats or cluster into small learning groups working together with the tables combined. Because of the great differences of schooling conventions, I could clearly recall the first time that I found resources for school projects in a library rather than the rote-memorization of the contents of textbooks when I was in Wimbledon Chase. It was a time when I started to learn how to do research based on my interests through resources that I could find outside schooling. I realized that I could indulge in a series of library books for hours and weeks without a sense of boredom. Through the clear contrasts I found between the two settings, I felt having the opportunity to learn in this school was like a paradise for me. I was eager to engage in my own interests in learning without receiving the undesired pressures from the teacher and the fierce competition I experienced in Taiwanese schools.

Identity Crisis

It was in April after my second year in London and we decided to go back to Taiwan while my father concentrated on his dissertation during the last year of his PhD program. We left London at a time when all kinds of flowers were in full blossom in parks and in our front
and backyards. My parents tried their best to give us better impressions of Taiwan; however, it was suffocating the moment we got off the plane. I was surrounded by the steamy air while the intensity of the heat made me sweat instantly; I felt like an outsider again even though I was stepping onto the land where I was raised. This strange encounter produced a great contrast to my nostalgic memories about Taiwan that had been beautifully written in my memory. It was an uneasy transition and was followed by the awkward situation as I attended a 6th grade class for two months.

Who am I? I faced an identity plight that my cross-cultural experience had thrown me into. What am I? I felt as if I was a peacock a few steps away from that classroom which resembled a big cage. I was like the animals in a zoo that lost track of where they belong, and they didn’t even have an environment built for them that could recall who they were. The peculiarity of their features only broke the bridging connections to the context they lived. As a result, sense of self died and was substituted by the alternative identity that people wished to see from them. They displayed the beautifully grown feathers fabricated by the designer of the nature and drawn over with splendid colors. I was the victim who felt my different experiences of England were as if the patterns of myth drawn on the feathers. People’s curiosity had inevitably increased discomfort and loneliness in me.

My sense of self was assassinated by people’s perception of those feathers I put on, forcing me to inflect my identity in a way that I felt uncomfortable with. I was trying to perform better in school and live up to the expectations of others even though I did not enjoy it at all. I attended a private Catholic school where most students graduated and entered better senior high education programs. I felt that I might have to tussle with the ways of learning after going back to Taiwan; however, without a chance to negotiate, I was told to rote-memorize textbook contents in this school. It had thrown me into the vortex of interest/identity destruction, as a student, an outsider, a nobody, and yet still a knowledge receiver passively accepting what I had been taught. I strived to learn skills of memorizing and successfully received an honor at the top of my class during the end of first year. Even as I was biting the poisonous cookie that weakened my passion in learning, I did not consider transferring to other schools and thought there was nothing to do to make a change. I had inevitably become a machine made for accepting the knowledge crammed into my mind, and was unable to take it anymore in my third year. I was aware that my role as a student gave me
nothing but conflict and confusion. I lost my way in the maelstrom of an identity crisis evidenced by the unappealing grades I received continuously in the last year of schooling.

Searching For My Sense of Self

In my second year of junior high we moved to a new house where we had a five-foot fish tank in our living room. I enjoyed raising many species of tropical fish and became their guardian; I knew how to take care of them after thorough observation over time. My fish were growing, maturing, mating and breeding their next generation, a source of strength and pleasure for me that led to my awareness of something important. On the other hand, I once faced the disaster of their illness and had to surrender myself to my futility of attempting to save their lives. My failure to find solutions for the most emergent task in front of me led me to realize what was missing in schooling. I struggled with this failure while the consciousness of my selfhood arose.

Disasters

A disaster ruined my pure mind,
Like a great flood
Filling my brain with streams,
Muddied and contaminated.

Endless checklists down poured,
Verifying the mud in my mind
But I do not care.

A disease swept across the remaining life,
Like whips of sharpened saws
And my heart was torn to shreds.

Glittering tails slapped the mud, exposed and wounded,
Until they waved drapeaux blanc.
I really do care.

Brain cells expiring small dribbles of regret.
No solutions to astir:
Nothing left.

Chong-hwa Chin
11-30-07

The practices of reflection helped me delve further into understanding what was lacking in my mind and in my life. I was not following my desires in learning and the subjects in school did not help me develop abilities to live well, not to mention helping other living beings on earth. I have aroused echoes to my memories in London where I discovered learning through the arts. I began to understand the nurturing effects of art learning upon my schooling life since then. At Wimbledon Chase, I drew illustrations for assignments such as new vocabularies, poems, stories, and knowledge of many subjects I learned. I also provided much help for my classroom teacher, assisting in making posters and teaching materials. Art had become my source of contentment, happiness, and self-confidence during my years in England, and I had enriched this interest by attending sketching and piano classes. However, those improvements had to discontinue because of heavy schoolwork since I entered the junior high school in Taiwan.

Those discontinuances formed the basis of an identity crisis for me. In the film of ‘The Matrix,’ Thomas Anderson (Keanu Reeves) is leading a double life by playing two roles: a hardworking computer programmer and a hacker, named Neo, who is guilty of many computer crimes. Neo’s dissatisfaction with his existence leads him to one day access Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne) via computer. Through his conversation with Morpheus, Neo discovers that intelligent machines that use human beings as a power supply fabricate everything in this world; the Matrix is actually a computer-generated dream world built by the machines to control human minds. While I was similar to the human beings caught up in the Matrix, I gained access to the reality outside of the illusion generated by the machine by immersing myself in learning through the arts. My dissatisfaction with school life in Taiwan
led me to treasure what I enjoyed in another context, where I was allowed to learn school subjects through drawings and visual aids.

Art and music classes were never absolutely necessary in the Taiwanese construct of education because they were regarded as entertaining, trivial, and redundant. They were always less important and substituted by tests and other courses during the semester. Although in direct contrast to the context I engaged in, I understood that art had been the savior of my school life ever since those earlier years in England. Its importance would influence my choice to pursue a higher education and possible career. With my mother’s support, I made a great decision when there were only two months left before the High School Joint Entrance Exam.

It was a dream goal for me during that time so I indulged myself in this thought as if I had never been so happy before. My mother helped me to plan an artistic future by suggesting that I enter the Artistic Talented Program (ATP) in my hometown, and I stepped forward without hesitation believing I was my mother’s Neo and she was my Morpheus. Nevertheless, our decision was contradicting to the expectations of my schoolteachers and education in Taiwan. My physics teacher had tried to prevent us from realizing this goal by expressing his concern. In his eyes, an art major is not the domain for learners to deserve a respectable job in Taiwan. His attitude toward my decision led me to be aware of a possible subservient future, and how other people disbeliefed what art could promote. I found schoolteachers were like the “agents” who shuttled about in the film Matrix, guarding the given role of each student and syllabus instilling properly.

For me, my life since then suggested that we had made the right decision. I saw my classmates desperately cramming Chinese, History, Geography, Mathematics, Physics, and English textbooks from grades 7 to 9, and having to attend school to take tests even on Saturdays and Sundays. They were living with a threat of the approaching exam and trying to memorize at least 36 textbooks by taking simulating exams. However, I skipped many tests and attended drawing classes. Although I was preparing for an extra joint test for entrance into the only high school with an affiliated ATP in my hometown, I had regained the confidence for my future life.

My skills in drawing progressed remarkably within two months and I luckily became one of the ATP students through my effort. The art teachers there tried to offer as much as they
possibly could for each individual student’s need. They were enthusiastic to be our mentor, adviser, observer, and tutor. This allowed me to enjoy the privilege of pursuing a promising and determined goal without hesitation. They also helped students in choosing future career path and suggested which college to attend through three-year’s close teacher-student relationship and observation. While there was a new college entrance policy similar to that of college application in the US, I managed to grab the chance with their guidance. As a result, I entered my desired Fine Arts program at Changhua University of Education two months before graduation.

Other than the five of my classmates and I who entered college through the same route, the remaining students ended up preparing for Joint College Entrance Exam both in art and academic subjects. As one of six classmates, I determined to draw my desired topics and engaged in extracurricular interests without following the training framed for exam. Thus, I held an individual art exhibition, took part in editing our school journal, and the graduating album—an ATP tradition in Taiwan that shows our art accomplishments within the three years of study.

Specifically, the graduating album had had a great influence on us as the six of us collaboratively created the project and invited our classmates to put their own thoughts on their one-page personal space. It inspired me of my future interests in teaching after I was empowered to self-direct, collaborate and mediate in-between the editing committee and our classmates. Mr. Lai, the founding teacher of our ATP program, gave us a major direction for working together. His attitude exposed to me my potential as being a student and encouraged me to play a mediating role among my classmates and the editing committee plus the cover designer and photographer. It was a time that I felt I had grown enough feathers; he fully fueled me and I was ready to fly.

“Hidden Bitterness”: Surfacing Conscious Awareness

As the graduating album set out to proceed, we agreed to name it “Hidden Bitterness,” after several group meetings and discussions with our classmates. It illustrated our accomplishments within the three years of study in high school ATP and had become a medium thrusting us into the unveiling of our thoughts about art and schooling. As a decision
made by the editing committee, our classmates took part in arranging their own thoughts on
their one-page personal space other than art works of their own choice. Through this space,
each of us had photos taken combined with a short sentence revealing ourselves.

“Hidden Bitterness” stands for the distresses we faced, yet which prevented us from
being seen or discovered by others. It had the potential of arousing echoes to different people
with different degrees according to their specific obstacles. “Hidden Bitterness” thus brought
about some interesting learning as individuals revealed themselves through metaphorical and
visual avenues. Using the album as a medium, we expressed deeply carved memory; painful
and distasteful memories that students would normally be discouraged from revealing. A
conscious awareness of my feelings about schooling had surfaced; as I became vulnerable to
my enmeshed self, I realized its potential for interpreting the interface between me and others
while being present to the bitterness other people revealed.

Here an example unraveled for me; there was a direct contrast between my schooling
life as one of the six “liberated” students as compared with the rest of the class. One of my
classmates included a picture of himself holding a piece of paper printed with the words
“The last 75 days” (Figure 1). It set apart what was happening during the last two months of
schooling among the rest. As I recalled this image, I also recalled the emotions of students
desperately trying to improve the skills in drawing and understanding of textbook contents
before the Joint College Entrance Exam.
An image of me sitting behind my fish tank (Figure 2) represents what I cared for most during that period of my life. In the presence of this picture I clearly recalled the richness of the aquatic world as a significant contrast to my schooling. It was also the scene of a severe disease that swept across my fish tank like a series of nightmares continuously reemerge. It seemed like a trivial case for many people, yet it was a blight and a die-off that wounded me so deeply that I thought the only hope in my life was gone until art came into existence again.
Maxine Greene has expounded on the surfacing awareness of our wounds as important to the development of sound teaching practices. Here I began to reveal the turbidity of my past identity crises through the “shock of awareness that accompanies many falls” (Greene, 1995, p. 78). In the following chapters, I will connect the story of my own identity crises with the larger social story of the crisis in the Taiwanese system of teacher preparation that inflicts wounds on so many of its students.
Chapter I: Problems Encountered

The Problems in Our Preservice Teacher Education Reform

Taiwanese students learn through our national standardized textbooks, remembering facts and trying to be more skillful and attuned at taking tests; they care about what teachers expect them to care about in the effort to become a more competent student in schooling. In my experience, most Taiwanese students spend their schooling career excluding their own desires in learning in order to strive for a better higher education. However, this is a bitter pill to swallow. Through interviews of ex-Taiwanese students, sociologist Dr. John Synott, a specialist in educational movements in Asia asserted the following:

“Examination hell in Taiwan continues to have negative impacts for students, whose education is narrowly focused on rote learning of content from textbooks. Ex-students express their view that their senior school years were times where they competed fiercely with each other, so friendships were impossible, and that they ‘lost their imaginations’ and did not develop any problem-solving skills in the type of system that Taiwan offered” (2002, p. 241).

The findings of Synott’s research reflected what I had suffered in my return to Taiwan after three years schooling in England. I was suffering from an identity crisis and the problematic educational context of Taiwan. This phenomenon had resulted in a massive demonstration against Ministry of Education held by groups of teachers and citizens on April 10th, 1994. As a result, several declarations proposed in the National Educational Conference in June, 1994 to lessen the pressure on our students from 1-12 grades. The different affiliated civil educational groups that united after the demonstration established an organization called the “410 Education Reform League” (ERL). They declared the following four demands in their push for change:

1) To have smaller sized schools and classes;
2) to increase the number of high schools and classes significantly;
3) to draft a “Basic Education Law”
4) to modernize education.

Up until now, Taiwanese educational reform initiatives have mainly been focused on comprehensive curriculum renewal and textbook deregulation rather than teacher education. Synott (2002) found that candidates for teaching posts in Taiwan “were screened for
appropriate attitudes as much as ability to orchestrate the rote-learning classes that typified schooling” (p.237). A prominent education reformer, Rao (1999), also pointed out Taiwanese schools and administrative units adding extra points toward teachers’ annual performance reports that would become a reference for their promotion in the institution they teach. This policy has become an attraction for teachers’ interest in in-service training; however, has resulted in pre/in-service teacher training in exchange for nominal rewards. Their trenchant critique revealed teachers in Taiwan accustomed to prompts and perks distributed from higher authorities rather than actively pursuing their own professional development.

Due to the problematic scheme of our teacher education, Rao (1999) has conducted profound research on teacher’s professional development in Taiwan. In *Grade 1-9 Integrated Curriculum Guidelines for Compulsory Education* which was issued by the Ministry of Education in 1998, Rao addressed the problem in our teacher training and generalized a new goal that counteracts Taiwanese teacher’s authoritative role in teaching. Rao’s ideology was centered on teachers as learners, to have more freedom in education, and to emphasize on teacher’s autonomy in the construction of curriculum. He urged that “the education reform now is not only curriculum reform, but also the entire reform of our anticipation on teacher’s role” (1999, p. 305). Thus, he suggested that teachers alter their attitude from the “executor of official curriculum” to “curriculum developer;” from “passive learner” to “active researcher;” from “joining in-service training” to “teacher’s own professional development;” and from “knowledge transferer” to “ability inducer” (1999, p. 307-312).

The need to reconfigure teacher’s role in educational reform can also be seen in several research efforts conducted in Taiwan (Jiang, 2003; Yang, 2001). These research efforts point out the difficulties teacher face as they transition their roles for teaching reform. Jiang (2003) asserted that:

…teachers were beginning to possess the control over (integrated) curriculum…but it seemed to be not as successful as expected. Past interventions (officially assigned curriculum standards and the regulated hours for each separated subjects) caused the loss of teacher’s abilities and self-confidence in teaching (in the trend of educational reform) (p.101).

Yang (2001) also found that:

Most teachers in schooling carry the belief of ‘you (the government) strive,
then I enjoy”; they thought they could ‘prevent from getting involved in the earthly world’. However, their indifference of the schooling environment resulted in a cruelty toward themselves. Therefore, all the disadvantageous causes will result in the conflict of their own identities while they practice in the above belief of teaching (p. 207).

Both of these resources (which I have translated from the original text in Mandarin) show that new curriculum guidelines opened spaces for our teachers’ autonomy in teaching; however, teachers did not possess the ability to move beyond the conventions of their prior trainings for becoming teaching professionals.

I am reminded of Lieberman & Miller (1992, p. 1051) in their address of approaches to teachers’ professional development. Lieberman & Miller distinguish “deficit training” in teacher education and its focus on enhanced techniques in teaching against the approach of “growth and practice,” an approach which suggests that teachers collaborate with colleagues and participate in his/her own renewal and the renewal of schools (Lieberman & Miller, 1992, p. 1051) has been less emphasized. Echoing critical theorist Paulo Freire’s (1998) argument, resisting the premise of teachers as “subject” and the student as “object” to be shaped by the teacher, Taiwanese teachers are certified in a difficult cycle of teacher training that continues to reproduce the teacher practices I am so reluctant to participate in. If we continue to “demean and dishearten the human resource called the teacher on whom so much depends” (Parker, 1998, p. 3), most teachers will not be able to develop a liberal and independently motivated mind-set either from teacher education or during their teaching practices in Taiwan. If emancipatory pedagogy requires not just the “transferring knowledge,” but that teachers “create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge” (Freire, 1998, p. 30), it is crucial that we should address the shortcomings of a Taiwanese teacher’s education if we are to “free” our education—outlined as a major goal in Taiwanese educational reform (Ministry of Education, 1995).
The Need to Emphasize Personal Experiences in Preservice Teacher Education

We are concurrently facing obstacles in educational reform of Taiwan. Our reform had been relying on more and more government mandated laws and rules without noticing a crucial domain that has been missing, I name this missing part as the “gap” in our teaching education reform. After taking 26 required credits and one year internship for my teacher certification, I understand the obstacles we are facing have been derived from our teacher education as vocational training rather than as emergent from our own personal pedagogical practices. The vocational training has given me knowledge and skills for teaching but not for me to deal with my role as a student passionate about practicing the arts, a daughter of my parents, and a cross-culturally schooled individual.

Current research in Taiwan had also indicated the need to fill-in this gap. The research conducted by Yang (2001) and Jiang (2003) both highlighted the importance and deficiency of the issue on identity formation process played in teacher’s teaching practices. For example, Yang (2001) focused on the conflicts of teacher’s roles in the beginning period of educational reform and wryly noted her research to be a monologue in the current literature. Jiang (2003) observed the difficulties teachers encountered in terms of their roles during transition of educational reform and found out that scarce resources could be found for reference. They both strived to voice their concern to make a difference in teacher education reform through their study.

Considering the above problems in Taiwanese teacher training, Yang (2001) claimed that teachers “lack the sense of freedom” to liberate their own roles because of influences from “conventional Chinese feudalist belief” (p.207). Thus, teachers’ innate drive to teach as professionals was submerged under the expectations of our government, a vestige of feudal subservience that inevitably inhibited “constructive responses to problems of identity formation in becoming a teacher” (Mayer, 1999).

In a recent international study, a group of university teachers concluded that teacher training remains “remote from the social construction of the personal identity of the teacher” (Fawns et. al., 2005, p. 17), arguing for the importance of person (self) in teacher education. Their research on early secondary teaching noted:

There is no simple transition in personal identity for many student teachers from being a student to being a teacher. Teachers in schools are not expected to
quietly lose or absorb themselves in their subject, as they were encouraged to do as students, but to simultaneously be attentive to the many dimensions in classroom experience and contingencies (p. 16).

This view indicates the importance of a continuous adaptation with the immediate problems of classroom teaching for teacher’s personal identity development. With regard to the field of art education, Hatfield, Montana, & Deffenbaugh (2006), three American art educators enrolled in the Pennsylvania State University graduate art education program have done research serving as in-depth study of eleven art educators’ roles. They probed into the experience of participants’ identities as teachers and artists in their preservice training and confirmed the problem that “identity conflict has long existed in art teachers but [is] muted in literatures of art education”. By interviews of art teachers, their research highlighted “[b]eing recognized as an artist and teacher was extremely empowering for those participants who were able to fuse the two roles together.” Evron-Cohen (2002) observed twenty-eight former art student teachers graduated from School of Art also found that having both identities (artist and art teacher) as almost always expected. Even though these latter two pieces of research both limit their focus to the interconnection between the identity of artist and art teacher, they are both in accord with the premise of my inquiry, namely that the formation and integration of a teacher’s multiple identities occurs throughout their lifetime experiences.

From the guidelines indicated by the above research, I seek to fill-in the gap I missed out to explore about my identity during the past and to accept the notion of emerging identities. I understand that a good teacher should be “forever on the way” (Greene, 1995, p. 1), generating all their identities for the knowledge of the learner. I also realized that my identity “has to be perceived as multiple” (Greene, 1995, p. 1) in order to feel content and comfortable for being a successful art teacher.

My journey in learning began prior to educational reform efforts in Taiwan and I later experienced only the half-baked teacher education reform measures attempted since Education Basic Law was passed and increased expenditures on all aspects of schooling in 1999. I was among one of my classmates who had to deal with the direct conflict between old and new concepts of teaching other than the difficulties of transferring my role of being a student to a teacher, yet, I did not put my effort probing into these difficulties. As researchers in Taiwan (Yang, 2003; Jiang, 2001) and the U.S. (Hatfield, Montana & Deffenbaugh, 2006;
Evron-Cohen, 2002) all addressed the need of identity management of (art) teachers, I understood the immediate need to reflect on my practices from now on.

Cockburn studied the relationship between collective identities and democracy, understanding of the self as “potentially very complex, shaped through many attachments” (1998, p. 212). My college also provided minor direction for me to grapple the difficulties of understanding my sense of self. Throughout this research on the effort to become an art teacher, I am engaging in a completely new realm of identity exploration by using autoethnography as research method introduced by my advisor, James H. Rolling. I aim to find out how much importance does personal experience play in preservice teacher education? Starting from my own life experiences, this research illuminates a journey inquiring into my identities as related to teaching identity. Within the context, I use autoethnography as methodology and tried to find out the framework for identity formation of the preservice teacher. As a goal, to provide a theoretical support towards teacher’s identity formation for the ongoing art teacher education reform in Taiwan.

Chapter II: Eliciting My Identities through Autoethnography

I have been considering the play of multiple identities in different contexts and cultures. I found that those identities alter frequently depending on the context. Britzman (1991, p. 29) noted that “[r]ole speaks to function whereas identity voices investments and commitments”, I can trace the play of my identity throughout my student teaching year back to the high school I graduated while I fulfilled many roles: a student teacher, an alumnus, a graphic
designer, an assistant staff and an assistant tutor of 11th grader ATP classroom. I understand that eliciting my identities does not mean to find out various duties that I fulfilled the function of these roles, but the commitment that I made to play out these roles for being a teacher. It is a personalized process reflecting who I am and who I have wanted to be both as a Taiwanese student practicing in Taiwan and studying in the West.

During the student teaching year I fulfilled the roles I played by teaching both common classrooms and ATP students, helped administrative works both in the ATP and many special events held in the high school, and spent several months in the consulting office to assist in miscellaneous duties that related to the future path of our students. I was sure about my role as an alumnus, but the temporary roles of student/teacher/designer/tutor/staff had been fluid aspects of my identities.

Rather than passively accepting a government-designated role solely as a product of vocational teacher training, I interwoven the roles involved in fulfilling the requirements of my internship for my belief in teaching. My identity as a teacher committed to designing my curriculum based on my role as an alumnus addressing the needs of students in this school; designing an open-ended questionnaire asking my students in ATP program to schedule a timeline and think about whom they wanted to be in the future, and what they would do to achieve that goal. I gave them feedback based on my original role as an alumnus, but also a student teacher who had been working in the consulting office for a while. Most of all, as a student teacher teaching a series of lessons in four art classrooms, I continuously see myself as an artist and displayed works in the school gallery, I also tried to incorporate my ideas of artmaking in curriculum making. From these practices, I questioned: How I could gain new knowledge as I played each role? How could each role support other roles I played? And how could the harvest of role-playing advance my curriculum making?

By looking at certain parts of my life experiences before, during, and after vocational teacher training, I understand that we are always playing multiple roles, but this multiplicity in identity does not always reflect what we wanted for our lives. We are often confronting a world far removed from our ideal life, a world that transgresses what we desire to be. Through my cross-cultural experiences I became aware of my identity as a Taiwanese, an Asian, a foreigner, an outsider, and a student who enjoyed art wholeheartedly. I was alert as to how my culture has formed my way of learning that confronted with the foreign context.
On the other hand, I was obviously uncomfortable with the way students learned as I went back to Taiwan after adapting myself to schooling of London.

I understand from my own life experience that we are confronting our sense of self so often that we become blind to these conflicts. I agree with Ellis & Bochner (2000) in their argument that “[o]ur personal identities seem largely contingent on how well we bridge the remembered past with the anticipated future” (p. 746). Thus, I engage myself in memory work eliciting my identities as a learner in art since my childhood.

Mulling over how my ideas in learning emerge and related to the social context in which I suffered, appreciated and matured, I could actualize Laurel Richardson’s (2001) assertion of “I write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something that I did not know before I wrote it.” Writing and re-writing helped me significantly in integrating my personal identity and uncovering my ideas for art education. Just as “interaction with old material creates something new, something previously not existing in experience” (Dewey, 1932/1980, p. 108), I dug out the past missing fragments of myself. My memory work deconstructs my general preservice training, allowing many other possible inputs consist of unexpected outcomes and do not follow a linear fashion as I disclosed.

As writings dropped on the surface of a pond containing the reservoir of my identities, new memories rippled one after another. Pieces of memory intersected as writings continued to disrupt and reintegrate my identities dropped in the pond. The pond had naturally combined my identities of a daughter, a student, a student teacher, an artist, a researcher, a Taiwanese, a foreigner, and an in/outsider existed on the longitude of past, present and future (see Figure 3).

From Figure 3, I unveiled the construct in which I found the integration of my own identities. In the figure, I am forever on the way searching for a social I from the pond that intermingles the past, present and future. As a Taiwanese, foreigner, student, daughter, artist, teacher, parent, and researcher on the longitude of past, present and future, my belief towards becoming a teacher is a social I that result from any track of integration in-between roles. In order to best play out who I wanted to be in a specific context, the social I could combine any of the roles in this pond. As a result, I could move in-between time constructs and all the possible identities and the social I eternally evolve.
Derived from postmodernist thought that inevitably leads us to focus on the “process” (Harvey, 1989), autoethnographic writing focuses on self-formation rather than the essentialized version of whom we are. Self is thus a verb rather than a noun, a fluid state that constantly forms and evolves with the context.

Regarding the interpretation of multiple I, postmodernist, Jacques Derrida (1978), proposed the notion of *deconstruction* that had profoundly influenced postmodern and poststructuralist theories, suggests the presence of ambiguity and reciprocity in-between the binary oppositions within a text. This implies a fluidity of self in the interstices between inside/outside, male/female, or subject/object. The meanings are flowing and reciprocal which causes ambiguity between the opposed texts as there are elements of the inside in the outside, of the male within the female, of the subject within the object. Curriculum theorist
Patrick Slattery (2001) claims that, “[p]ostmodernism views the self in terms of a multiplicity of ironic and conflicting interdependent voices that can only be understood contextually, ironically, relationally, and politically” (p. 374). Autoethnographic inquiry in the post-modern context, “is a methodology that questions the authenticity of the voice that tells of an essential self”, thus “it blurs discursive definitions and expands the possibilities for a reintegrative counterdiscourse to modern identity” (Rolling, 2004, p. 549).

Writing *Conversation In-Between Identities* is writing my postmodernity. It is contextualizing bits and pieces of memory and writing, not in order to “focus on the self per se but on the space between self and the practice engaged in” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15). I am providing a story of “existential struggle to move life forward” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 746) Thus the autoethnography I intend to generate is an example of striving against a societal structure, seeing myself as survivor, and displaying my “embodiment as a source of knowledge” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 749). Using autoethnography as a methodology, I seek a framework for the formation of the professional identity of the preservice teacher.

My understanding of autoethnography comes from reading autoethnographical articles, a two-way comparison through taking a qualitative research introduction course, and a continual engagement in reflexivity. As I gained some practical experiences from the qualitative course that included writing observation field notes and interviews, I began to question: “If I want to write a thesis engendered from my own life experiences, the field notes would be written words of my personal stories.” Traditional qualitative research methods suggest to “pick places where you are more or less a stranger” because “[p]eople who are intimately involved in a setting find it difficult to distance themselves both from personal concerns and from their commonsense understandings of what is going on” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006, 57), while autoethnographers value and are willing to mine the scenarios that contextualize them the most. A major goal of the autoethnographic researcher is to disembed content for inquiry from its embodiment within his or her own life history and life practices. The ethnographer attempts to promote “the level of articulated, documented description what insiders and participants feel but cannot describe and define” (Hammersley, 1992, cited in Bodgan & Biklen, 2006, p. 243), whereas the autoethnographer may choose to conduct “extensive interviews with one person for the purpose of collecting a first person narrative” (Helling, 1988, cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 2006, p. 63). While ethnographers
attempt to describe culture or aspects of culture (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006, p. 30), autoethnographers attempt to use “autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739).

This autoethnographic study interweaves self-narration with existing problems, theories, and concerns. It is my emic view—the insider’s perspective of reality—combined with etic views—the external, social scientific perspective on reality (Fetterman, 1998). My quest combines the identity problems I struggled with and my problem-solving process from my engagement in reflexivity. The comparisons and contrasts from my cross-cultural experiences, home and school, and what I gained in art and other subjects led me to put on a critical lens in taking a second look at Taiwanese education. This study is also interwoven with contemporary historical facts regarding Taiwan, educators’ concerns, pedagogy, and approaches in teaching. Within this process, there is contained a self-conscious inquiry on how I have come to be who I am and where I should go? I am also aware of my identities within the societal context. My experience will hopefully awaken the concerns of a larger group, those who sense the similar scenario in their lives, but have not yet found a way to articulate/document/prove the value that may be derived from their own experiences.

**Autoethnography for Educational Change**

Sifting through various qualitative methodologies for educational research, autoethnography has gradually taken on an intimate relationship with my study because of its idiosyncrasy. One of Stacy Holman Jones’ (2005) explanations of autoethnography in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* has been connected to the heart of my study by highlighting: “Autoethnography is—believing that words matter and writing toward the moment when the point of creating autoethnographic texts is to change the world” (p. 765). Thus engaging in this research became a political act where personal methods and practices seek to contest with state-authorized methods and practices. Since I am resisting the tradition of teacher training as vocational training in Taiwan, this form of writing allows me to examine my own untrained voices with the hope of (de)constructively criticizing Taiwanese schooling practices, the position of the teacher as sole authority in the classroom, and a skills-acquisition approach to artmaking.
As I became a student art teacher after college training, I was without prior role models to compare with, for instance, Karl Attard (2005) who studied herself as a new teacher using a new syllabus in a one-year teaching experience. In my case, I have been utilizing an identity integrating approach to teaching, with the belief that I could make a difference; I accomplished my preservice secondary art teacher training and received my teacher certification. Autoethnography creates the possibility for researchers to involve themselves in a political revelation of the context they live in. It has moved my work into the wave of alternative representations in which I provide the story of difficulties, occasional disappointments, and struggles (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 17) that otherwise might have been silenced before and during our educational reform.

Cole & Knowles (1995) noted that “[w]e engage in self-study work because we believe in its inherent value as a form of professional development” (cited in Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 17). Autoethnographers are in a process of personal growth as we practice in reflexivity. Meaning is constructed through a process that gradually weaves toward an understanding of what is required for being an art teacher in today’s Taiwan. It is not an approach with rules and strategies, but helps teachers deal with their own conflicts in our educational reform for the best interest of the learner. Moreover, my study not only discloses my self but seeks to provide contributions for related fields that look into identity formation for (art) teacher education reform. Seeking educational change through autoethnography, an accepted method of qualitative research, is thus “related to seeing all people as having the potential to change themselves and their immediate environment, as well as becoming agents to change in organizations in which they work” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006, p. 244).
The “Conversation”

Mediums for interpreting thoughts can take numerous forms, but many forms have been excluded from research in the past decades until qualitative researchers finally realize “how much life was squeezed out of human experience” (Norris, 1997, p. 89). John Dewey (1932/1980) maintained that “each medium says something that cannot be uttered as well or as completely in any other tongue” (p.106). Elliot Eisner (1997) also elaborated on the importance of forms for representation in educational research, suggesting stories, pictures, diagrams, maps, theater, and poetry are forms to shape experiences and are representations to enlarge our understandings.

Allender and Manke (2004), who specialized in self-study, argued for more attention to artifacts in teacher’s reflexive process. They argue that curriculum materials, paper evidence of teaching and learning activities, photographs and works of art “need to be taken into account in developing a theoretical framework for self-study research” (2004, p. 20). My art works, memories about learning, and paper evidence about myself thus become the data for this research. Through an ongoing analysis, I had kept open accessing new information until it reached saturation in claiming my thoughts. In reconstituting the remnants of memory through artifacts I became aware of the continual emergence of my identities. They reflect my desire to interact with the world through various kinds of conversation—a key metaphor that I will return to throughout this research. This conversation represents the “act” that Brogden (in press) mentions in her autoethnographical research method she terms “art-I/f/act-ology.” In Brogden’s assertion, “the I is positioned in the centre of our art and our acts, not as a solipsistic indulgence, but rather in recognition of teacher as mediator between art and act” (p.10). I consider that my acts would be the conversations that I engaged with people surrounded me throughout my life. With conversation as a metaphor:

I engaged in a conversation with everyone through my artwork,
I engaged in conversations with my mother through newspaper clip collection,
I engaged in a conversation with my students and encourage they engage in the practice of conversation through collaborative artmaking.

Most of all, if only I write, may I be able to bring up the above conversations.
I engage in a conversation with myself through writing.

My identity formation is the embodiment of Cockburn’s assertion that “(t)here is no thinkable specification of selfhood that does not have reference to other people” enacted at both intra- and inter-personal states of identity through “conversation” (Cockburn, 1998, p. 212). Fawns et al. (2005, p. 27) proposed that “conversation is not restricted to just words,” using the term “conversation” for the complex connection during the reflexive practice of professional personal identity formation.

Mary Manke illuminates photography and poetry as “signpost or streetlight” (Allender & Manke, 2004, p. 22) for evoking the self on the journey of self-study research. From the pictures she took and the text expressed, she evoked deeper consciousness through the saliency of colors, shapes, and distorted objects. I experimented with writing poetry for my memory work through a process similar to that suggested by Butler-Kisber (2005) as requiring:

…playing with the number of words, the word sequence, line breaks, pauses, breath-points, and emphasis to get at the essence of what is being recounted, and to create a rhythm and sound that reflect the voice of the speaker (p. 97).

Poetic exploration allowed me to inquire into each individual aspect of my identity as it “transcends the limits of language and evokes what cannot be articulated” (Eisner, 1997), and reveals to me “poignant memories and moments” (Butler-Kisber, 2005, p. 98) of the past. Although it has been relatively difficult for me in the early process of composing poetry in English by when English is my secondary language, it has been such an intriguing task that I am not put off by its difficulty. I have embarked on a reflexive odyssey of myself with poems that helped involve me intensely in the reflexive process in a way I had not previously expected.

In reference to Brogden’s theory of art·I/f·act·ology, if the “I” is positioned in between ART and ACT, or conversation, this thesis writing aims to further delineate the ACTS and ARTS that inform the professional identity on the way toward becoming an art teacher. The prelude of this thesis addresses the motivation of the ACTS and demonstrates a preview of art·I/f·act·ology bricolaging text and artifacts. In Chapter I: Problems Encountered, I address the problematic contexts that lack or devalue the ACT of conversation. In Chapter II:
Eliciting My Identities through autoethnography, I explain the features of autoethnographical research that would help to explore the “I.” In Chapter III: Exploring Subjectivity from Artifacts, I will demonstrate an application of art·I/f/act·ology that helps to reveal the “I” from a series of memory work and artifact analysis. An ongoing exploration will be specified in Chapter IV: (Re)Searching Childhood Identity from Otherness, in which I trace my sense of self from other “I.” After I have done what I set out to do in writing the thesis and showing all relevant evidence to support my position I will analyze the forms of “I” from the ART and ACT that I conducted in an undergraduate project show how it is relevant for every art teacher in training in Chapter V: In search of My Identities from Questionnaire through Imagery Time. As for Chapter VI: Finale, it comprises my theory of a Conversation In-Between Identities and Implications for Art Education. Overall, the final chapter embraces conclusions drawn from my work, a summary of the contributions my thesis has made, and prospects for future research.
Chapter III: Exploring Subjectivity through Artifacts

Digging into my past through artifacts became more and more intriguing as I gradually adjusted to different views about myself and my past through reflections. Exploring about myself was supposed to be easier than looking into other people’s lives, yet had evolved into a rigorous engagement of my personal growth. My exploration appeared to take the form of puzzle pieces, within which memories, flashbacks, and texts would collage, and I might try to complete this puzzle by assembling the missing pieces that match. However, I gradually came to believe there was a piece missing in this puzzle set while I put my full efforts into the exploration of my past. I’ll never have a chance to gain access to the whole picture unless I initiate in creating this missing piece. Through searching and researching I began to think critically over my secondary schooling in Taiwan, and had increased the understanding of my past. I found the missing part was the awareness of my subjectivity that have been penetrating into my artworks.

In a 2D design class in college, I learned basic skills in image merging by using Adobe Photoshop software and completed an image merging picture. Trying to dig into my beliefs and mind-set during that time I realized that I had been putting my emphasis on how many skills I had applied. It took me much time layering and finding connections in-between the pictures by using the software, yet, this work did not have a deeper meaning than the application of skills before I had scrupulously reflected on it.

My subjectivity was like the temperature of my body, the pace of my breath, and the color of my emotions penetrating within my art works, yet, I was unaware of the murmurs voiced from my heart. I began to realize how many subtleties of the context I engaged in had been always there without my notice. By examining an artwork I manipulated in the class, I attempt to explain my growth drawn from this journey.

Abandoning Certainty

It was in year 2002 that I took an elective course in our department to fulfill part of the requirements for graduation. The goal of this course was to learn techniques of 2D design by using Adobe Photoshop. I enjoy learning about all kinds of techniques and had started to gain more and more passion as I began to find out intriguing imaging effects the software could produce. Meanwhile, my instructor selected out my works and praised my application
of skills. Doing anything further than techniques seemed time-consuming and unnecessary. I was content by producing what appeared on the product and named one of the works ‘Reflection’ (Figure 4) as it evoked to me this meaning metaphorically. Yet, I suddenly realized that I prevented myself from reflecting on my own life experiences while giving its name.

![Image of Reflection, 2002. C-print, 29X21cm.](image)

As my 2D image merging work, ‘Reflection’ should have penetrated my subjectivity within adjusted color, saturation, brightness, and transparency. However, I was unaware of how this work would reflect who I am and what I believed. As a student who sought to perform better in Taiwanese schooling, I had put on masks during the past decade, intent on performing what’s drawn on the mask. I was afraid of abandoning certainty and gradually became used to eliminating alternative inner voices.

I realized that I was afraid of being different ever since the first time I received a warning by my schoolteacher in kindergarten. My physical desires to stand up and move, expressing emotions, and sharing perception were not allowed in classroom learning. I was afraid of being different, being a bad student, and discovering everything from the starting point of my own curiosity rather than the instructions I was given.
Looking backward into my life since elementary school, reflexivity was solely a marginal routine. My last chance toward revealing myself and emotions about schooling had inevitably removed by the schoolteachers, who have to grade my reflections. As a responsible student who cared mostly about grades rather than my inner needs for learning, I wrote my reflection basing on filling my schooling agenda with ways of improving each subject in the rote-memorizing context.

I prevented myself from taking off the mask even though I had the freedom to do so during my college years in Taiwan. The three-year high school ATP where I thought I can back on track again, however, did not prevent from developing skills for tests. I was a trainee of becoming a skillful artist who is able to draw realistically and pass the joint college entrance exam. I had thrown myself into a maelstrom of serious identity crisis in which I generated the conflicts in-between my body, mind and what I was informed to do. Since I am aware now, I cannot ignore it anymore.

Bricolage, the approach to which I applied in my image merging work, was “initially developed by the Dadaists and Surrealists as a method that juxtaposes unrelated, incongruous elements to liberate understandings from the mystifications of straight-line thinking” (Paley, 1995, p. 8). Yet my mindset conformed to the step-by-step instructions of the teacher, and I was finding ways imagining the result of this uncertainty all the time. Bricolage incorporates a sense of uncertainty and generates improvisatory meanings from artifacts ready to hand. In this vein, I began to realize my fear of uncertainties has hindered what had been always there for me to grasp. Undoubtedly, it was unlikely for me to conform to the picture appearing in my mind even though I tried.

I have been attempting to imagine the last version of my thesis whilst writing in the same style as I had done when making the artwork. However, I gave up predicting it as I began to understand the intrinsic trait of this form of writing that allows uncertainty to flourish just like the way of collaging pictures in Adobe Photoshop software. I thus noticed that I had to risk exposing myself to all the possible unpredictable outcomes and allow the answers to come to me—“ce qui m’est arrive” in the Derridian sense (Brogden, in press, p. 7).
Participating in self-study research through the method of art·I/f/act·ology, I see themes emerging and the evolution of greater complexity as they develop. It becomes more and more of a political act as I gradually realize the depth of my unconsciousness during my schooling in Taiwan. Bricolaging memories and artifacts inevitably has opened a new sphere for me to question the power/knowledge structure I experienced in the Taiwanese educational system.

I am trying to gain access to the real me as my inner voice emerge from spontaneous writings. I am juxtaposing facets of myself from different time and space into this thesis writing, in opposition to life experiences that “organize difference into hierarchy, or essentialized its energies into a cultural formula inflected by linearity” (Paley, 1995, p. 9). Since I am against the traditional systems of knowledge formation, juxtaposing fragments from different time and space into this thesis allows spheres of my past self and life culture gradually disclose by narration. Towards revealing the masks I put on, an emerging theme had led to a movie first viewed when I was in my elementary years.

Lu Bin Hua

I saw the film Lu Bin Hua sometime before my family and I went to England. It is a well-known film that later won a prize for children’s cinema (Kinderfilmfest) in the Berlin
International Film Festival in the year of 1990. It was a story of a young boy named Ming who is passionate about drawing but is plagued by schoolteachers who overlook his interest until a new art teacher, Mr. Kuo, came from the city to teach in this rural school.

Ming was considered as a misbehaving child in his teachers’ eyes and his poverty was counted against him as, a crucial reason for providing Ming little attention and poor opportunities in schooling. His mother passed away several years prior to Ming attending school and his father, a poor farmer in the tea tree field, was unable to take care of him. Further, the schoolteachers and classmates have been ignoring him while his sister, sacrificing her own benefits for what he lacked.

Mr. Kuo gradually discovered Ming’s talents and the conditions he suffered. Kuo encouraged Ming to draw and supported him by fighting against the dominant forces in schooling that failed to notice the talents of this young boy. Through his battles fighting other teachers who favor the mayor’s son and his realistic drawings—and anyone else who might be considered privileged, rich, or in authority—Kuo strived to convince others about the value of Ming’s imagination, and tried to reveal that good art that comes from imagination rather than merely duplicating the objects and colors everyone else sees. Kuo’s actions may be understood as the embrace of social imagination, care, and the repudiation of all those hegemonic forces in schooling that have continued to diminish the freedom and subjectivity of our children.

The story concludes as a tragedy. The opposing forces of the school’s administration and faculty are ultimately victorious over Kuo’s ideology of teaching and Kuo is left with no choice but to leave. He leaves with great regret but brings with him a work of art by Ming.
and enters it in an international children’s drawing competition. As a result, Ming wins the prize, yet dies after a severe disease and is able to draw no more.

Metaphorically expressed in this movie, imagination ceased and life ended. Ming gives up his fight against the disease not long after the departure of Mr. Kuo just as his talents and confidence were consumed by the failures of traditional schooling practices—just like the blight that consumed the fish in my fish tank so many years ago. From this movie, the nurturing I derive from art can allowed me to think critically about educational environment in past decades of Taiwan. The freedom to express our imaginations and subjectivities were elements for us to grow and improve as living beings, yet have been concurrently missing.

Reflecting on the 2D image merging and Lu Bin Hua, I realized that I have been unaware of my sense of self, the set of knowledge I received, and the influences of teachers I had under the educational system of Taiwan. I began to question the bits and pieces of my own life history. Those are the personal and emotional accounts that relate to the physical, political, and historical contexts I engaged in. I am trying to abandon certainty and question the roles that together constitute a student and a teacher, and I am also renewing my understanding of research.

Co-Constructing the Three States of a Bird

It was a warm afternoon while I was taking this undergraduate watercolor course. Our instructor asked us to reconstruct a photo that each of us had prepared and express it in three pieces of works respectively by using dots, lines, and facets. However, the beginning of this practice was confusing in that skills and realism were no longer important. I had to give up many of my more persistent habits in drawing, which was always more realistic. I could recall the high school student in me, in the artistic talented program, where our training was based on skills-acquisition and test-based courses; it instantly conflicted with what I should do during that time. I had to give up almost all the skills that were deeply rooted in me, and I felt painful at the beginning. It was like toppling a long line of well-arranged dominoes, toppling away from the range of my expectations.
At first I tried but still drew in a realistic way. I couldn’t give up my habit of arranging the dominoes standing on its edge in long lines. I was drawing according to what I saw, and realistically determined the space, colors, and three-dimensional relationships in-between objects. It was like arranging the dominoes side-by-side and any action would cause a domino effect thus I was reluctant to try. The instructor discovered the problem I faced and decided to co-construct the artwork with me.

After witnessing his strokes on my drawing I continued to follow his pace, rhythm, and expression through colors, lines, and shapes. This was one of those experiences which “permits us to give credence to alternative realities” (Greene, 1995, p. 3) in which I freed my original ways of thinking and found out the qualities and cultures I did not have from otherness.

The conflict in me suddenly transformed into joy, I understand that this would not proceed without my instructor’s interference. It was a dramatic change within me—where the conservative self suddenly released—and a new approach to artmaking was there opening for me (Figure 7).

Figure 7: The Three States of a Bird, 2000
Watercolor, 27x39 cm.
Chapter IV: (Re)Searching Childhood Identity from Otherness

I am eager to discover more about myself, and I wish to achieve this through writing. As Cockburn put it, the sense of self is shaped through many attachments and specified by referencing other people (1998, p. 212). After applying art·i·fi·act·o·logy by looking at my passion and interests in the arts in Chapter III, I am also revisiting a project that my mother and I collaborated on in the following pages. Through the discussion of a summer project, I try to explore more about personal experience in preservice teacher education, and to get back what I missed during my past identity formation. From this practice, I will also illustrate how autoethnography as a methodology helps to form the identity of the preservice teacher.

The Summer Breeze

*Warm breeze flew in the corridor,*
*Through the windows*
*And into our silence.*

*It brushed on my face,*
*Whispered at my ear,*
*And climbed on my shoulders.*
*Urging me away.*
*My mind floated with this impulse*
*And led nowhere but everywhere.*

*A feather-like sweep,*
*Tickling and sweet!*
*A soft melody,*
*Passed messages of liberty from*
*Vacuum-packed knowledge in the instructor.*
*Little notes climbed upon my textbook,*
*Turned page by page.*
*It carried my mind away.*
Follow me, the breeze said,
Follow me.

Listen to the whispers revolving in your universe.

Follow me, the breeze said,
Follow me,
Let's make marshmallows from the mist.

Chong-hwa Chin
4-3-07

Through the poem of *The Summer Breeze*, I composed a desire in me. The breeze is like random thoughts of an elementary kid while sitting silently, listening intently, and memorizing the contents of textbooks. My school teachers tried to mold me into a “well-behaved” student, yet this warm and soothing breeze continued to flow in my small universe and in the home setting as I voyage toward becoming an art teacher.

My mother had been a mediator between my school life and my own desires during my learning; she was well aware of school subjects were not entirely interesting to me. My mother created the breeze in me before I became a student whose curiosity eroded in school. In the rhythm and metaphors of this poem, she was the breeze who led me to my own wants in learning since my earliest attempts to understand this world. Being her first child, I enjoyed the privilege of immersing in her very best efforts invested into me. We love each other like teacher and student, mother and daughter, sisters, and close friends.

My mother enjoys teaching, she has been like a teacher who provided my alternative conduit to the world and I enjoy learning with her. Although she did not choose her career path toward becoming a teacher, the longest working experience she had was substitute teaching in elementary schools. As a mother-teacher, she taught me anything that interested me in my everyday life, and opened opportunities for me to practice ideas on my own after her instructions and observations. I have always believed she is a very good teacher, and I enjoyed learning with her. Nevertheless, the schooling in Taiwan was always largely different.
from the home education that I received. I loved to learn but I could not ignore everything happening in the context of where I lived. An unforgettable memory unveiled this character in me as I first entered kindergarten in Taiwan.

A rich knowledge was waiting for me to discover, but the school caged me in a confined space. Thus, things happened outside the classroom that seemed more interesting to me than classroom activities. One example was that I acted as if nobody was in charge of the classroom when I heard a band playing mourning songs on their march to a funeral parlor. I simply ran out of the classroom all the way through the playground alone, grasped the stainless steel fence and stared closely at the march. I observed the instruments they played, the ladies on the truck who sang and danced, the costumes they wore, and decorations on their cars and trucks. I did not want to go back until the band was out of my sight. Nevertheless, while I was in this state of mind, the world caught my attention and I was eager to learn, but nobody was offering me the chance to discover more. Typical Taiwanese classroom practices placed as barriers around my curiosity, isolated me from the real world, prevented me from being different, and expected me to behave according to schooling norms.

The Mother-Daughter Relationship and My Identity Formation

Analyzing my path of becoming an art teacher, I understand the personal experience of mother-daughter relationship has been critical as I negotiated in-between vocational teacher training and the informal pedagogy of my mother. By analyzing the role my mother played in my childhood and the home education she provided, I could discover more about my earlier identity formation that related to how I came to be the person I am today.

My mother was a fashion graphic design teacher before marriage, and a homemaker who later worked as a substitute teacher at various elementary schools after my brothers and I had grown up. She has been a fashion designer in a textile industry but gave up her career not long after I was born. She was emaciated day by day because of the challenging job, and the choice was made to instead stay home and spend all her energy raising my two younger brothers and I. As years went by, I gradually understood that we had become her career, and she continued to design beautiful patterns for our lives and insisted that we work toward an attractive future. Thinking about her role as a mother and the home setting she fabricated, I gradually found out answers for her contentment and happiness now. Perhaps raising a family
is the most precious career that one can ever have in his or her own life, and she had already possessed it since we born.

My mother is an easygoing person who always expresses herself in a nonjudgmental way. I believe the relationship she built with others in her whole life had been sustained by her particular personality. It should be true that “[n]othing nurtures relationship like acceptance” (Kelly, 2005, p. 160), marked by Matthew Kelly, who is a well-known contemporary psychotherapist. I found that whatever stories and events we tell her, she either patiently listens, encourages, laughs naively, or blames the people who let us down. She bears talent, courage, intellect, and insight for the benefit of others not only naturally fosters a reciprocal relationship with the people around her, but also allows them to become the self each of them feels most comfortable with.

From collaborative activities, my mother had formed a close relationship with me. Her interests in the arts such as design, art and craft, singing, and drawing were all influential in my childhood learning. Among them, reading hundreds of picture books she bought for me had become my choice of the most important learning I did everyday. The drawings in the storybooks were never decorations but something that would mean more than words could describe. I feel that I could find different stories every time I saw those pictures and I could skim though some of the same storybooks again and again to find out something new.

The education from my mother had played a crucial role in my journey toward becoming an art teacher. She had tried her best discovering what I liked and preferred to do, yet she also found that I cannot continue to develop my interests in Taiwanese schooling. Hence, my mother was always there helped and supported me as I tried to connect my own interests and the subjects I learned at school.

The Summer Assignment

I remembered it was a warm afternoon and I was trying to finish a school summer assignment as part of my daily routine. It wasn’t an interesting task at all until my mother began to involve herself in this process. As usual, she leaned over to me and earnestly looked at what I was doing; she understood that this assignment required me to collect newspaper clips by cutting them down and sticking them on my sketchbook. After this closer scrutiny she
began to suggest topics to collect, and how to arrange the pictures and short articles on the blank sketchbook that all engaged me in learning this summer pastime task. It naturally began its journey of our shared lifelong interest and played a significant role of our mother-daughter relationship.

My mother suggested I pick articles and pictures that attract me and the attraction could be anything that allows me to explore more about this world. She introduced this method by sharing what she found personally interesting to her. All at once my mother became a young child, a close friend, and a teacher who opens her own world to me and continuously checks my progress with endless patience.

The newspaper clipping assignment was affected by artistic practices my mother would go on to teach me. She showed to me how to draw columns around the newspaper clips on my sketchbook and I tried to do so after she demonstrated several examples.

She taught me to design patterns that would match the pictures and to use appropriate color combinations to make the pictures stand out. Although my mother gave me constructive criticisms on each work I completed, every single page of each arrangement was considered as a masterpiece before her eyes. I could not tell what is meaningful at the age of 7 when I was a 3rd grader, but I immersed myself in this process and treasured every page I have arranged, designed, and decorated with my drawings. I enjoyed learning from her and being appraised by her. Being able to engage in my own choice of learning is something that traditional Taiwanese teacher training, with its focus on skills-acquisition, not prepared to allow me to do. From the home context, inspired by the collaborative efforts my mother attempted to enter my world of learning, I felt everything she did made this school assignment more interesting than ever.

7 years after that moment (I was in the Artistic Talented Program in high school)

“Maaa~ I’m home~” “Oh~ I’m so hungry, it smells so good!”

I just arrived home while feeling my emptied stomach calling out to me that I should get something to eat right away. I carried my heavy schoolbag, feeling no more energy stored in me, yet hurried into my room and set my sight directly on the desk in search of—a pile of newspaper clips.

I remembered after one night studying, the desk was a mess, but here I see textbooks,
study guides and notebooks were set aside surrounded by newspaper clips on the center of my desk. I totally forgot my physical hunger but replaced by a hunger hunt for my favorite illustrators. The pictures were neatly cut from the supplement part of everyday newspaper; most of them illustrate beautiful stories, fictions, and contemporary literatures while others were engaging stories that my mother intended to share with me.

Over a period of time, a pattern of preference towards particular artists in my collection was shown by the recurrent appearance of their works. My mother, who has always been keen about checking my progress and engaging in my learning, helped me out significantly in assembling these collections. She has become my co-collector who knew my preferred illustrators. She also shared her interests with me by means of a conversation through the pictures, photographs, and illustrations she collected for me. Each time these clippings gave me hints of what she was trying to tell from her interests and had launched a conversation in-between our roles.

It seemed so natural when I found my mother began to keep her own collections of newspaper clips while I was in college two hours away from home. We were absorbing each other’s interests through this co-collective process and began to turn our focus towards other topics continuously. While I skew to favor photographs, advertisements, and other interesting pictures that could help me develop ideas in my artmaking as a fine arts majored student, my mother was engaged in her collections of recipes, sightseeing resorts, and animal pictures. It seemed like a never-ending process in which we grew together and continuously connected to this world through this interest.

I asked my mother about our shared newspaper clip collection as I was trying to have better idea about writing this memory. Without a moment to ponder, her response fascinated me. “This has been my own interest for a long time.” It led me realize that my mother had engaged me in her very own interests as we collaborated on the newspaper clip collection for so many years. Her influence on me would be the most desirable result that most good teacher would dream of—to engage their students in their own interests. My mother’s interests and her involvement in the life of her child launched a form of collaborative pedagogy where my imaginations, like the little boy Ming in Lu Bin Hua, took on a reality that was greater than realism.
My personal experience played a significant role towards becoming an art teacher before I entered the preservice teacher education program. As I continuously reflected on my ART and ACT (conversation) to observe the “I” formed in-between them, I was well aware that my identity of an art teacher did not solely arise from vocational training, but from my mother. The discovery from my reflections had challenged my previous understanding of teacher preparation. I believed all the vocational skills and knowledge for teaching are acquired at a teacher preparation institution. Arguably, personal experiences had played an essential part in my case before I was formally trained to teach.

Co-collecting newspaper clippings with my mother has been the most prolonged practice revisited over the past 20 years. We were both constantly generating new facets for each other to discover. These are the source for tracing my identity development which include evolving/declining, monochrome/vividness, and bitterness/sweetness relations in-between us. These interactions would help me to explain how multiple identities an individual could create while interacting with others.

Our identity formation conform to the concept of “social I”. From our mother-daughter interaction I came to realize the philosophy of understanding one another. For example, we may frequently thought we understood some part of this world, some people around us, and ourselves, yet we lose track of understanding them over a period of time. This case conforms to Matthew Kelly’s understanding of relationship, that it may be always impossible to know a person completely (2005, p. 32). As I refer to John Dewey’s notion of “discovery is never made, but always in the making” (1929), I found an answer to this matter.

The way to keep on track of who we are or to have close connections with people around us is through a continual discovery “in the making” of our identities. I believe it is crucial for our teacher education since Taiwanese trainings did not ever maintain a continual discovery of preservice teacher’s identity formation. Accordingly, our teachers significantly lack the ability of adapting themselves for variational constructs in teaching. In this case, to succeed meeting learners’ interests, challenges in teaching, and education reforms would become the eternal difficulty for our teachers.

From the lifelong collaboration with my mother, I have found the existence of her identity in me. Our collaborative approach had become a pedagogy that built my interests and engagement in learning. Certainly, I desire to collaborate with others in the same way.
Towards becoming an art teacher, I believe the collaborative pedagogy could enact the same role on others as it had on me. Yet, I could hardly recall forms of collaborations between school teachers and students in Taiwan. Art education is no exception. In view of this, I will discuss about such shortage and my solution toward solving this problem by analyzing one of my collaborative art project in college in the next chapter.

The Father-Daughter Relationship and My Identity Formation

Through autoethnographical writing, I noticed that my mother tried her best to teach me all the beauties the arts can enhance. She also helped me to build up the connections of art and my entire life for me to live well and become a happier learner. Her concepts profoundly influenced my commitment to art teaching and learning, and I believe transforming her pedagogy for classrooms evokes better results in teaching. Through the reflections I have became aware of my mother’s identity in me.

Digging further into this journey led me also found the importance of my father. I was unaware, yet my father’s identity was like those of blood cells constantly flow through my whole body. My father had an agreement with my mother long time ago since we were born. He seldom stayed at home because of his profession in the military, yet my mother has been carrying his belief and delivered toward our education.

My father grew up from a very strict home and school education that he will never duplicate on us. He started to recite Chinese classic literatures since the age of four due to my grandfather’s traditional belief of training for becoming a well educated individual. He became the most talented child in town since elementary school and was awarded in many fields of learning. However, stressing on apprenticing all of my grandfather’s knowledge through a rote-memorizing approach and strict home education resulted in his reluctance to study in his secondary education years. He was unwilling to study both at home and in school. Nobody could persuade him during that time until he finally wanted to learn out of his own desire during the last semester of senior high school. Through painstaking efforts he entered college at his own will. Owing to this, he held tight to his belief of home education that isn’t what most parents can do in Taiwan, and wanted us to chase for our own interests. It is significantly countering many parents in our country who force their children to learn in a certain promising field.
My father has been a soldier all his life. He made a choice of becoming a soldier to release the financial pressure of his family for good of his six younger siblings. From being a professional soldier as his lifelong career, he has been comparing his role to a chess piece whose next step is determined by the chess players. However, he considered pursuing knowledge allows him to gain self-determination. Painstakingly, he grabbed every chance for further education. He was a honored student graduated with a first prize from the R.O.C. Military Academy in Taiwan, and had received national scholarships for studying master’s and doctoral degrees in England. Doctoral persuasion allowed him to become a creator of knowledge. He was a doctoral student in computer science and created a computer programmed war game basing on the ideas of Chinese chess. Metaphorically, he was no longer a chess piece in that context, but a man who created the chess game. Although he had to go back to military service in Taiwan, his will led him to gain better control of his own life while climbing up the ladder steadily.

As my father’s daughter, what I found in me is his determination and will toward life. I did not ever feel close to him in our father-daughter relationship. Yet, he has always been a significant role model as I strived toward becoming an art teacher. My father struggled to be a well-rounded person who is morally, spiritually, and academically prosperous. He also tried hard to help his children and other people to attain such end by gathering all kinds of resources for their future success. My mother, my brothers and I all admire him and wish to acquire a better version of life inspired by him. Towards becoming an art teacher, I realized I’m also fulfilling one of his dreams. Engaging in military service was a choice made after my father was accepted by the Department of Fine Arts at National Taiwan Normal University. It has been one of the most wanted teacher institutions in Taiwan, yet had only been his application history. Art has been my father’s specialty and passion that concealed under his military uniform for three decades. As my father’s daughter, I admit the passion is still there, flowing in my blood, my mind and my soul. I’m filling the gap formed by his past self while I embraced his identity in me. Chess Piece is a poem I written representing my parents’ influence on me. I encourage readers to continue to affect their children and pupils in various ways, believing the faith can be delivered from writers to readers, from parents to children, and from teachers to students.
Chess Piece

A chess piece,
Born and carved as a chosen role,
Bounded by a character with regulated steps.
Decisions are made outside its body by
The chess players.

My father,
A chess piece on the military chessboard,
Strived to earn his free mind from
Knowing the unknown and the untold life.
Strived to foresee his designated future from
Assiduity and the pursuit of knowledge.
He is freed from knowing himself as a chess piece and
Understanding the path to freedom.
He is freed by encouraging his colleagues to follow his path and become
Freer chessmen.

My mother,
A chess piece on the home chessboard,
But the one that for goodness God missed out to carve!
A chess piece,
Moves in-between, up and down, back and forth,
She engages other pieces in playing a better game.
A soldier transformed into a father, a husband, and a child;
A student set free from endangered scenario of schooling.
She is a chesswoman who never had to strive for freedom, rather,
Strived for our freedom.

I am a chess piece
But I am reluctant to be one.
Coalesce my parents’ roles,
I have learned the tricks of change.
I am willing to be
A desired role in my dream weaved by my parents
To play chess on the stage of my life.
I am willing to accept
Their paths that highlighted the better in making their lives.

This is not a war game,
Neither a fairy tale!
In-between reality and imagination there is a space
For the chess piece to jump, leap, and fly.

Chong-hwa Chin
2-10-07
Chapter V: In Search of My Identities from Questionnaire through Imagery Time

I was intrigued by an artwork displayed outside the Museum of Contemporary Art in Taipei (capital city of Taiwan). This work named In The Name of Women was a project conducted by a German female artist, Bettina Flitner. From the brochure (figure 8) which I had kept since I visited the exhibition in 2001, I noticed that she is an artist but also a trained director and a self-taught photographer. As I have seen from the exhibition, there were larger than life-size outputted pictures in monochrome inscribed with several sentences. Those sentences were words filtered out from the persons who had the picture taken and interviewed by the artist. These pictures were originally displayed on the streets where Flitner interviewed women in Germany. Her attempt was to create a space for discussion on the streets and on media relating to the topics of: My Heart, My Enemy, and My Monument.

Bettina was mediating in-between multiple identities in order to complete this project. The way she conducted her project and interacted with other people have been inspiring to me. Moreover, her participants were engaged in acting and reflexivity when taking the photographs.
The artworks interpret the personal stories of the women interviewees and had initiated discussions from a large audience passing by the streets and on media. I believe this is an art piece that would have the similar effects of using art·I/f/act·ology in autoethnographical writings—seeing the self as a mediator in-between art and act. Her work revealed to me possible ways of challenging the role of the artist and inviting other people to participate in the process that would awake their consciousness about certain issues. As an undergraduate student majored in Fine Art at one of the three main secondary art teacher training institutions in Taiwan—Changhua University of Education, I had initiated an art project that has been crucial during my journey of becoming an art teacher.

By reflecting on the ART and the ACT of this project while I was mediating in-between multiple forms of I, I’m also interpreting the challenge that I had took on years ago believing I would change a certain undesirable situation I was facing during that period of my life.

The Obstacles

I was happy since I entered college. There were four domains of specialize in our department including fine art, art education, graphic design, and criticism. I enjoyed revealing this world from my views by testing on all kinds of materials and practicing in intensive meaning-making process, thus I chose fine art as my major out of the four areas of learning. The emphasis of our department has been shedding on contemporary art trainings. The program was absorbing and diverting. As a student, I believed artwork inspires and fulfills the world, and artmaking was important for me to interpret diverse facets of the context I engaged in.

From my learning I realized our trainings consist of critically revealing issues of our living context, knowledge of art histories, art education theories and practices, drawing, painting, printmaking, and etc... Moreover, I had to acquire all the required educational credits and one-year student teaching before I could become a certified secondary art teacher. During that period of my life, I set my goal of becoming an artist-art teacher, I desired to spread the seed of art and deliver my thoughts through my artworks.

Unfortunately, four years training in this interesting field let me understand the unpleasant reality of being an artist or art teacher in Taiwan. I could recall the scenes that
tell of the story being an undergraduate student visiting museums and galleries all over Taiwan.

As a student majoring in art, I understood that artists try to reveal what other people does not see and critically uncover the realities of this world in all kinds of forms. It should be interesting; yet, being an observer over my four year study I have realized contemporary artmaking are usually beyond the scope of our common audience, and had received very few attention and support from the public.

My finding came from my visits to museums and galleries in Taiwan as a student artist-art teacher. I have been always closely looked at the interpretations of the brochures, investigated the materials artists use and tried to find connections with what I feel about this world. However, my experience revealed to me what I do as an art-majored belongs solely to our group. I began to question my identity as a student-artist, who continuously practicing in such an interesting activity without inviting people to join me. I became aware that I have been bridging a wall between my artworks and the audiences as a learner in art.

I also realized the wall had formed in-between my family and I when they found it difficult to understand my artwork. It struck me that people who played supportive roles in my life could not enter the world of art I enjoyed. The encounter had stirred up ripples on my previous life in which I had to keep my interest in art at home. At the very stage when I finally majored in art and could indulge in my own interests, my work did not make a difference. I had become a minority in the Taiwanese context where I could hardly find supportive resources for my artistic practices. I have realized an invisible wall formed by the continual monologue in artmaking, which had made it harder for me to break the boundary and share this interest with the rest of the world. Even though I tried, I found it hard to share with my mother, who has been supportive to my interest all my life had begun to distance herself from understanding my contemporary artmaking. For me, the solution I had come up with for recovering my despair was to reconstruct our mother-daughter relationship as well as the relationship with others through artmaking.

The Project

Flitner’s work has been the signpost for me to design the artistic practice that would break the wall in-between artist and audience formed by contemporary artmaking. With this
impulse in me, I gave up the authority of making art and invited people to join the process of making. Reflecting upon what I was trying to pursue had reminded me of Dewey’s (1929) “discovery is never made”. I believe the wall formed between artists and their audience resulted from artists working alone. As indicated by Dewey, it is clear that the discovery lies “in the making” (Dewey, 1929), and that we have to invite people to join the process in the making in order to discover more about this world. Reflecting on the period of my life when I dedicated in my interest in artmaking, I had also recaptured the collaborative pedagogy of my mother, I understood I desired to conduct art as same as how we did in the past two decades.

Most artists in Taiwan are bound by their expected roles in ways similar to schoolteachers. Bettina’s work fascinated me because I saw a connection from the process of her making with my lifelong practices. Therefore, driven by the sharing of interests just like how I co-collected newspaper clips with my mother that had formed the dynamic outgrowths during the past two decades in our relationship, I conducted the project with my family members and some close friends in different occupations.

From the influences of my graduating project adviser, I was intrigued by Dadaism during my senior year in college. Dadaism had stimulated my mind and put me into the thoughts of criticizing and initiating change by challenging traditional definitions of art. I was also enthusiastic about public artists who tried to connect with people and this world through artmaking. They integrate process into the entity of artwork and allow participants to explore the meanings/issues/beliefs with the artist during collaborative practices. I therefore began to conduct the project of Questionnaire through Imagery Time, in which I encouraged my participants to participate in my thoughts as being an artist, to participate in a personal relationship with me, and to become collaborators.

Before I became engaged in such a project, a pilot study named One-Day Trip in Pa-Kua Mountain to Imagery Time was conducted at the nearby mountain resort close to my university. I initially aimed to raise the awareness as living beings on this world by interviewing people I randomly came across. To reach this goal, I picked time as a topic and delved into how people feel about time from their bodies rather than rely on watches or clocks that tell us of when to wake up, eat, go to class, and sleep. I therefore asked people to respond to me “What time do you think it is now?” Without them looking at the watch, they had to twist the needles of a clock I prepared for them and take a photo holding the clock
(figure 9-12). To find out their imagery time, each picture had included the actual time and the time they chose as shown on the clock. Having experimented on this form of artmaking, I was instantly touched by the glamour of inviting other people to reflect on their feelings about time and join the process of art. I could see that the time they chose, the outfit for their occupation, and the ways they hold the clock may reveal their identity in an interesting way. I was eager to delve further into this approach to artmaking.

Figure 9: The imagery time of a genitor, 2002.

Figure 10: The imagery time of a condominium guard
Questionnaire through Imagery Time was conducted in a more sophisticated pattern beginning with a concise questionnaire (see Appendix). As a result of this questionnaire, my participants would imagine a scene that represents their view of time from the role they played in their careers. An interview was conducted by me to probe their thoughts from their answers. Examples of the questions were like: “Why do you think six o’clock is your imagery time?” Or “Why do you want to choose this place to take this picture?” It was followed by taking a picture of them respectively. The picture indicates their imagery time from the costume they wear, posture, place they took the picture, and the time shown on the clock I had prepared for them. Differing from Flitner’s approach to arouse real discussions in the public, the collaborative artworks in this project were produced as monochrome photos (figure 13-16) that became a precious memory for both my participants and I to keep.
Figure 13: A College Law School Student (My Brother). Digital Image, 2002.

Figure 14: A Junior High School Teacher (My Aunt) and Her Younger Sister (My Mother) Digital Image, 2002.

Figure 15: A CEO in Insurance Company. Digital Image, 2002.

Figure 16: An Elementary School Teacher. Digital Image, 2002.
Implications for Practice

I was confused about activities I engaged in as a student experimenting on contemporary artmaking. How should I define myself – as an artist, photographer, or art teacher? Now I (re)search (search, re-search, and research) the questionnaire by using autoethnographical writing. The questionnaire served as an introduction to my project and led the participants to find a way of interpreting their thoughts about time. In my self-study, it became the artifact for my research - its form that combined artmaking, teaching and research allowed my participants and I merge what an artist, teacher, researcher and many other related professions do in their identity. Due to this reason, I am searching for my own and my participants’ identities that emerged while conducting this project.

To complete this artwork, I was an artist who concurrently accepted the roles of a researcher, teacher, photographer, director, and assistant to obtain the best result of our collaborations. Due to my transformation, my participants combined roles such as an interviewee, student, actor, and artist. I was moving in-between roles that simultaneously existed in me, and this was mimicked by my participants. There was no boundary in-between each identity, embodied in the term “fluid spaces”. Wilson (2004) described … “the line between art as practice and art as research flow back and forth, and in and out, each influencing and informing the other.” In my case, the relationship could be more complicated.

I noticed that the sharing of authorship and the new roles participants took on became intriguing factors for engaging in art. Just as my mother mentioned, “I never knew artmaking could be done in such an interesting way”. The project helped to reconstruct my childhood mother-daughter connection. This experience led me relate to the nature of human beings, who recurrently create connections with other people and the continual connection between human and society inevitably produces negotiations of our own identities. Therefore, I believe this personal experience could be relevant for every art teacher in training. Teachers can also try to find their multiple identities for teaching like how I did through my interactions with my participants. In the era of Taiwanese educational reform, it is a crucial concept in training to be flexible to adjusting ourselves for new advocacies.

Mayer (1999) found contradictions that appeared in-between preservice teacher’s espoused preferences and the organized and controlled environment. There are various
dominant models that are similar to the film *The Matrix* – like schools, institutions, governments, and even our families – that may cram us full of undesired knowledge, forcing each of us to play a designated role. I try hard to combine who I am and who I want to be toward becoming an art teacher. Yet, there were questions and tensions that surfaced while practicing in art and during my one year teacher’s certification internship. As I entered the high school where I graduated and asked one of my former art teachers to be my supervising instructor, I was immediately frustrated when I saw her teaching according to the standardized textbook. I also realized that there were assessments and classroom management protocols that are compulsory to employ. To fulfill my function as a teacher in the school while maintaining my own belief in teaching, I had to use various coping mechanisms.

Affirmation from my supervising teacher was central for me to fulfill my preferred pedagogy. On account of her flexibility and acceptance of my methods in teaching, the teacher that was supposed to be supervising me, taught herself to interpret standardized textbooks in a new way. Additionally, I taught four 11th grade classes without having to comply with too much classroom management protocols. I was able to take on the journey towards “becoming a teacher” rather than “being a teacher” addressed by Meyer (1999) as the difference between identity formation in becoming a teacher and vocational teacher training. Implications of her study underlined the former as more important for preventing teacher training becoming “irrelevant and survival”. Our education did not allow me to deal with my identity formation towards becoming a teacher. Our training produced teachers with skills to teach the prescribed contents written by our government. However, I had engaged in breaking the mold of a teacher – that taught what the government assigned them to teach, tested on the contents through a standardized testing system, and regulated their students to learn what they ought to learn in order to meet up with the institutional and societal expectations.

As I was student teaching, teaching who I am allowed me to unveil a new realm of pedagogy that I cherish. I was able to find out what was lacking among my students and what they wished to learn from me. I was also moving in-between identities to provide what students needed. For example, as an alumnus of the school, the students wished to see how I overcome difficulties in high school, became a college student, and graduated from college.
As an artist-teacher, the students wished to see my artworks and receive knowledge carried from my role as a teacher. Besides, I was performing my inherent identities while continually embrace possible identities as I gained more experience in the school.

The ideas drawn from my art practice implied that our education had undermined our ability to sense the true need of self, therefore, hindered the well-rounded development of our identities. We have also neglected preservice/inservice teachers’ access toward understanding themselves, which had made schools serve as governmental agencies rather than a place to learn about this world. To prevent students from becoming a part of this system, *Questionnaire through Imagery Time* was the artwork that could represent an engagement in breaking the inflexible, confined, and hegemonic division of our context.

From my lifelong practice in learning art, I believe art closely related to relationship building with this world and with other living beings. Looking at statements addressed in the past century, the function of art was promoted as artists tried to engage themselves in the far-reaching and exciting discovery about relationships with this world. Buermeyer had put it this way, understanding that artists expanded their sense of self from the discovery of “a wealth of relationships, harmonious and contrasts of color, linear rhythms, patterns of light and shadow, harmonious spatial intervals….,” (1929, p. 48). As a practitioner in art, I could see myself building relationship in-between people and art rather than solely expressions on paper and on canvas.

From the work of *Questionnaire through Imagery Time*, participants and I had collaboratively constructed the artwork and transferred our understandings of this world together. Our practice had embraced the communal nature and function of art that pertains to Gablik’s *connective aesthetics* (1995, p. 86) that aimed at dissolving the “mechanical division between self and world that has prevailed during the modern epoch.”

As to this concern, my art project appeared as an example for further interpretation of collaborative pedagogy in art. The new pedagogy I had come up due to teaching who I am has been a collaborative approach to learning art. As a student art teacher, my students have put in extra time for my coursework and enjoyed their meaning-making activity. I believe what they accomplished in my classroom had fueled up their visions as adolescents, and desires to trace their dreams via imaginative and constructive learning. Due to their accomplishments in learning and the explicit distinction of my approach from other art
classroom settings in Taiwan, I am interested in disclosing the classroom environment I set up and the courses I created toward the end of my self-study research as a reference for our art teachers.

**Collaboration in Art Education**

From my practice, I could relate to Gagne & Driscoll (1988) and Albers & Murphy (2000) who once mentioned, “if students can relate what is being taught to something that they already know or want to know, they will value the art lesson more than if the lessons are motivated by teacher interest alone.” The topics I chose to teach during my 2003 to 2004 internship in high school were in the sequence as follows: Theme of Love in the Eye of Western Artists; The Creation of Religion and Taiwanese Folk Culture, and Creating a Theme Community. From our teacher-student interactions, I believe that I caught my students’ interest in learning. As my students gained more and more interest in learning with me throughout the units, each following unit was able to expand from the former practices and explorations. As an individual who was journeying toward becoming an art teacher, I understood that the approach to teaching I employed was influenced by my mother. Teaching has been like sharing my interest with a larger audience and allowing them to become as intrigued in certain domain as I do. With this belief in mind, I desired to interact with my students like how my mother and I migrated with each other’s interest.

As an art teacher, I prevented my students from mastering art skills and memorizing textbook contents. I believe the above objectives had placed our students within the hierarchical system that disallowed students to access their true selves. Having gone through this system, I prevented myself from inflicting what I had suffered upon my students. The classroom learning I set up was significantly different from that of other teachers. I was glad to find out that students worked in groups harmoniously to accomplish artistic projects derived from their common interest. Within their collaboration, each person contributed their own effort to the team for the best result. I was a student teacher, but also transformed in-between a friend, alumnus of the school, an artist, and many other possibilities while teaching. I was a facilitator who gave suggestions and monitored the effort students put forth. I made assessments at several stages of the project-making that pertained to postmodernist beliefs for helping students to discover the interesting mutations that occur during this process. I found out that students would try to engage in each crucial stage of their project.
and be attentive to what was required to learn and accomplish tasks.

I tried my best to enhance students’ knowledge acquisition. I also realized that I paid a lot of attention to their role formation in such an institutional structure, making sure that students were maintaining their true selves and conducting their own interests while learning with me. Throughout my one-year teaching practices I found this approach fascinating in that my students had engaged in learning more than I had expected.

After I successfully implemented my courses, passed my teaching evaluation, received positive comments from teachers, and had attained my teacher certification, I started to question the teacher training that most art teachers received in Taiwan. Reflected on this journey, I understand my belief toward teaching was a monologue. Even though this approach allowed my students to enjoy learning, I am aware that there was no replica of this during my lifetime experience in Taiwanese schooling.

Looking at literatures in Art Education, I realized that educators failed to fully discuss the collaborative approach to art education. Even the few researchers that addressed the importance of collaboration for art learning had viewpoints that were different and not suitable for our time. Nonetheless, from the following accounts, I found the collaborative beliefs that are homologous with mine. From their specific viewpoints of collaborative learning and by observing the contemporary trend toward learning art, they all argued the necessity to let students collaborate in classroom settings.

Hagaman (1990) studied about *Philosophy for Children*, a program that applied collaborative practice for learning aesthetic concepts, had found this approach to learning reconstructed one’s own ideas and judgments through peer interactions. Teachers played the role of facilitator to keep classroom dialogue at an inquiry level in this program while students worked collaboratively in a problem-solving context. From her findings, it is argued that aesthetic concept can be learned collaboratively for developing critical skills. Moreover, it is noted that students’ dialogue and reflection that germinated during collaboration helped to promote the quality of learning.

Desai (2002) observed this issue from the development of contemporary artmaking. Her research implied the origin of collaborative artmaking related to the period when critical theory was linked to art after 70’s and 80’s. Many artists began to re-conceptualize artmaking and tried to make visible the ways social, economic, political and historical conditions
affected the daily lives of people. Accordingly, artists collaborated with people to complete artworks as to enhance the critical eyes toward revealing this world. Other than this, feminist movements since the 70’s also had a great impact on the way artists make art. Irwin (1999) claimed to promote a humane and feminist way of knowing after she collaborated with several artist-teachers in an art project. Her study had disclosed using collaborative artmaking for discovering the trinities of life which include unveiling “past, present, and future”, with the teachers’ “mind, body and soul,” from their “personal, professional and political lives”. Other than the findings, she suggested art teachers focus on “listening” during their teaching practices.

As to Irwin’s assertion, “listening” bears a deeper meaning than our preexisted understanding of receiving message from other people. It is considered to engage in a spiral route, co-contribute to what has been reached in artmaking with teaching, and allowing learning to evolve, enfold, and continuously circulate with people who engaged in (Irwin, 1999). Their findings were intriguing and exciting for me as I found a close connection with my specific way of teaching. I could see connections as I was moving in-between identities for the artmaking and educational context I engaged in.

By looking at the above resources, I realized the distinction of my approach lies in the development of interests and multiple identities as teachers implement collaborative artmaking in classrooms. From my experience, I believe as each of the new identities emerged from our interests, learning would become fascinating. Through the above understandings, my journey toward becoming an art teacher had generated the theory of teaching art collaboratively by means of transforming in-between identities.
Chapter VI: Finale

Conversation In-Between Identities

As a student of Taiwan, of my mother, and outside of the Taiwanese context, I was a learner who encountered an identity crisis. It was not resolved until I engaged in my thesis writing. Due to the identity problems I’ve encountered, I have developed the theory of Conversation In-Between Identities that would help to resolve the identity obstacles learners and teachers face in Taiwan. Within continual reflexivity, my thesis writing allowed me to form the theory toward becoming an art teacher. This theory connects with the thoughts proposed by Maxine Greene’s (1995) critical pedagogy, stressing on the multiplicity of teaching identity and teaching practice as professional development. However, the identities that inform a teacher’s practice are untold for the most part in the academic setting of Taiwan. Practicing the reflexivity inherent in my lifelong learning practice, I recognized the importance of using autoethnography for the exploration of a teacher’s multiple identities.

From the findings of my study, I suspect that learning to teach comes about through reflexivity on personal experiences. What counts most to the preservice teacher is not the teacher preparation courses they received in college, not the internship for becoming a certified teacher, but rather the personal experiences outside of the classroom since their childhood. The realm of this study sketched out the path of becoming a teacher I am most familiar with. It makes sense of my practice teaching the person I came to be, and of the self that has been invisible in the schooling of Taiwan. It had become the texts outside of the norm.

From my self-study I understand teachers must try to take on different identities for the context they teach rather than maintaining the role of a teacher formed by their vocational training. The research conducted by Mayer (1999) has also pointed out the journey towards becoming a teacher comprised of “complex and personalized process and involved building a teaching identity within multiple contexts” (Mayer, 1999). Using autoethnography as methodology throughout my research, I realized it helped me to find out and analyze my teaching identities from the personal experiences I’ve had. Therefore, I could generalize recommendations for the approach to teaching art as a learner who had consciously and extensively reflected on my practices.
I have taken on dealing with my identities by reflecting back and forth, in and out, over and over. Over a year, the discoveries from my study have helped me to free my mind and fill-in the gap formed during my past identity formation. The missing parts were like wounds that had formed scars on my body, yet I had become present to the injuries and begun to treat them one after another throughout my research. What I did was re-search my journey toward becoming an art teacher again and again in the past year, and tried to combine the memories together. My memory appeared as complicated puzzle pieces, not until I engaged in searching about myself did I find out several existing puzzles pieces within the larger one. Each set of the puzzles had taken me a lot of effort to complete and not all of them are necessarily to incorporate into my thesis. Gradually, I sensed some of the sets appeared as unrelated to my identity formation that I must discard whilst others have been crucial and have been embraced in this thesis writing.

There have been leaps and falls in each stage of my life, within falls gradually formed my belief towards teaching. These valuable encounters allowed me to gain more access towards knowing what I wanted for life. My engagement of a year digging about my identities had incorporated a close mother-daughter relationship, influences from art teachers, cross-cultural experience, learning in the arts, and a collaborative art project. I have engrossed in conversations with my multiple identities through autoethnographical writing. The awareness allowed me to find out what was lacking and to fill-in the gap formed in the past.

Autoethnographical writing had put me into scrutinizing all the normal/salient things that have been going on in my life. I was able to immerse in the past memories and jump out of such a setting through rewriting the cultural context and referencing related studies. I believe this process is comparable to seeing myself as an actor. I was playing different roles in real life situations, and these roles may influence and trouble one another. How would this process enhance the understandings of my existence? As a social being, I believe we need to continuously question ourselves how contexts cause our identities to emerge, and whether the identities express who we are. The screenplay of The Matrix also seems to reveal the above concept well. The plot challenges our thinking by implying that human beings are often treated as blank slates enslaved by the machine, and are often totally unaware of the programmed nature of their existence. The film encourages the viewers to jump out of the
predominant paradigm, and highlights the need to maintain a consciousness of the roles that we play in real world situations.

Arising from expected roles as teacher or teacher-to-be in Taiwan, and a starting point as one who was deficient of the ability to transform such roles and instigate new teaching reform, I have finally developed a theory that could serve as the framework for the identity formation of Taiwanese preservice art teachers. Using autoethnography as methodology from art·I/f/act·ological lens, I have become aware that I am able to transfer in-between past, present, future, and various identities as I reflect deeply on my past identity formation. My sense of self can evolve and eternally spin with the context without being bounded by a specific time range, certain roles, and the space I practice in. Launching conversations in-between all possible roles that one could play in his or her own career would become a solution for the flaws in Taiwanese education.

I have been fascinated by the movie of Patch Adams (1998) featured by Robin Williams. I believe the lifelong practice of Patch Adams may serve as a practical example of my theory: engaging in a conversation in-between identities as part of the professional development of the teacher. The film I am referencing presents Patch Adams as an individual who combined the different sides of his personality and the different roles he was compelled to fulfill into a professional identity as a passionate and dedicated doctor. Years of practical experiences or the depth of one’s professional knowledge may serve as qualities for being successful, yet, Patch Adams had an unending pursuit of idealism and never wanted to settle for being just a part of the prevailing system; therefore, he created a new system. His unconventional methods revealed that doctors should treat people, not just disease. Rather than solely fulfilling the vocational training of diagnosing and curing diseases, he played multiple identities that arose from his compassion, involvement, and natural empathy towards his patients. My research seeks to confirm that a conversation in-between identities is necessary for the well-rounded development of any professional.

Conversation in-between identities as a theory, suggests that teachers reveal relevant roles embedded in their lifelong learning for the context of their practice. To initiate “conversation,” we find out the art, which are relevant artifacts while we engaged in learning, artistic practices and teaching. We also find out the act, which are the conversations that had initiated transformations of our identities. From my reflections, I understand that I had
moved in-between identities while sharing my interest and passion in art with others. By positioning the I in-between the art (artifact) and act (conversation), we engage in the process searching for the social I. Through “conversations”, teachers create connections in-between neurons for the mutations of the new educational policies and different classroom context. To open the “conversation”, teachers will need to put their efforts into recognizing their multiple selves from artifacts, otherness, and hidden bitterness. My self-study research has been a practice following the above guidelines and, based on the needs of Taiwanese learners, I believe I have successfully found access to the identities that constitute a teacher. With these guidelines and the stories developed from my experiences, I may present my thesis as a reference for learners on their journey toward becoming (art) teachers, and for educators guiding their teacher-to-be students through self-study practices. I may also provide another example to support the academic group that has been continually voicing their stories through autoethnography.

Through my practices, I understand I have engaged in personal growth and self-actualization. The understanding of this theory allow me to develop the ability to adapt/transform myself from the East to the West, learner to teacher, and one context to another. However, I believe long-term engagement in self-reflection is necessary if we attempt to find out a clearer path for our identities to merge, interconnect and integrate. I am glad that I have finally reached this point thus far, yet, I am still reminded by Maxine Greene that the discovery of my identities as a professional teacher does not ever end due to what I have thus far; I am forever on the way toward becoming a successful teacher.

**Implications for Art Education**

Out of my mother’s efforts discovering my interest in art in the role of a facilitator and observer, she realized that I love art as much as she does. She had naturally become my company who attended to my interests in art, and learned with me through sharing over the last two decades. Newspaper clippings addressed in this study were only one example of how we collaborated amongst many other things. This informal pedagogy my mother created at home never followed a prescribed curriculum or any objective of what I must learn; however, we have been participating in this interest for two decades without any coercion. I thus
questioned whether if the collaborative interactions between my mother, my participants and I can be perceived as curriculum?

Derived from learning and collaborating with my mother, I believed that teaching should originate from the learner’s interest and a continual discovery of what the learner needs as they seek to discover more. The interactions between my mother and I were “mediated by situational factors” (Sullivan, 2004, p. 808), which means what is next is never determined by her alone but through the context and how we interacted. Accordingly, I employed such a belief during student teaching and allowed my students to conduct what interested them most in a series of curriculum as they collaborated on art project-making. I had also put a lot of effort into studying similar forms of collaborative learning in art education. I found the contribution of our approach lies in the negotiation of both the teacher and students’ identities as the teacher uses such an approach in a classroom setting.

The Proposal for Policy Reform in Arts Education published by Ministry of Education of Taiwan in 2006 had underlined our undergraduate art programs neglected the importance of Art Education as “a professional field of knowledge” (The Proposal for Policy Reform in Arts Education, 2006, p. 12). The problem lies in that most art departments believed preservice teachers can self integrate the knowledge and drawing concepts learned in fine art courses for appropriate performance in classroom teaching (p.12). However, I believe our schooling that missed out to emphasize reflexive training had prevented our preservice teachers from successfully integrating their personal, professional, and possible identities for teaching.

Hatfield, Montana, & Deffenbaugh’s (2006) research addressed the ideal undergraduate-level art education course recognize “two identities [artist and art teacher] interacting, acknowledges that one profoundly influences the other, and effectively reinforces both.” They highlighted the need to perceive art education as a required field of study and also pointed out the importance of linking college courses with the art teacher’s identity formation.

From my reflections, I realized that even art significantly pertains to the discoveries of personal identities, I was unaware of my sense of self as a high school artistic talented student and college art majored student in Taiwan. Freire reminds us that simply seeing in the presence of art forms is not enough to occasion an aesthetic experience or the change of life
As indicated by Deasy & Stevenson, art teachers “unlock the capacity of the arts to engage students when they treat student works of art as an emerging expression of something very personal, a risky revelation of ideas, emotions, and experiences that are deeply felt” (2005, p. 66). I understand that I was not trained to deeply reflect upon my practices in the past years. Understanding the identity obstacles inservice and preservice teachers facing in Taiwanese educational reform, emphasizing on the training in which the self is revealed through artistic practice and reflectivity is an urge.

As a suggestion for improvement in Taiwanese fine arts programs, I believe there should be an emphasis placed on visual forms of reflections expressed through artmaking. We should focus on dealing with the teacher’s personal identities by including trainings of reflective writings, logs, journals, and diaries before and throughout a teacher’s teaching practices. In addition, we should place an emphasis on understanding and practicing contemporary collaborative artmaking, and be attentive to the conversation in-between our identities within such a process. As a suggestion for Taiwanese educational reform, more research needs to be done regarding the problematics of a professional teaching identity faced by art teachers in Taiwan rather than on further and unending amendments of our curriculum. The curriculum guidelines only make our teachers teach from the starting point of a confused concept of self rather than teaching from all that they are. I have come to be the person I am today, aware of the multiple identities that inform my teaching and of what has been missing in Taiwanese schooling, because of my lifelong practice in the arts. In my journey towards becoming an art teacher, I have gained a greater understanding of the necessity for advocating my identity as an arts practitioner. I believe arts practice must be an important facet of development for each art teacher in the pursuit of his or her professional teaching career.

Third Space: When Learning Matters, a book written by Deasy & Stevenson (2005), addressed a five-year national education initiative—Transforming Education through the Arts Challenge (TETAC)—to link comprehensive arts engagements with national and local efforts to reform schools in America. Their valuable experiences of school reform through the arts revealed that learning art mattered because “it offered to explore their [student's] own identities and to express themselves” (2005, p. 19). Similarly, Anderson & Milbrandt have been focusing their research on preservice art teacher training in the belief that art allows us
to create meaning and involve students in a construction of identity through purposeful and expressive visual language (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2004, cited in Milbrandt, 2006).

Consistent with the understanding of art for the exploration of our identity, I have argued that each of us constantly engage in artistic practices in and outside of art classrooms. Throughout my lifetime of learning through the arts, the experience of art has been the “pearly mare” I have ridden on the “fantasy ride” I have practiced in.

**A Fantasy Ride**

*Chance gallops on its pearly mare,*  
*R revolving in our souls,*  
*Yet it was like words without echoes,*  
*D drops in a pond without ripples.*  
*Faded away.*

*There was a quagmire,*  
*Drawing it down.*  
*Stinking mud surrounded by the sun,*

*We waited to take an evolving path*  
*For a ride on the pearly mare.*  
*Like drops of spring water stir up ripples in our still pond;*  
*Like all those planets revolving around,*  
*While we were the sun.*

*And all at once,*  
*We migrated with the orbit of the far-reaching galaxy,*  
*Where freedom becomes eternal truth.*

*Chong-hwa Chin*  
*3-7-07*
Appendix A

Questionnaire

Figure 17: The questionnaire sheet of Questionnaire Through Imagery Time, 2002.
Appendix B
Translation of Questionnaire

Basic Information:
Occupation:
Position and year of position:
Age:
Height:
Weight:
Favorite food:
Most preferred activities:
The thing that is most important of your life:
Address:
Tel:

Imagery Time Questionnaire

What is imagery time? The purpose of this questionnaire is to enable you possess a black and white photo, and the point is, you have to hold a clock that I prepared for you.

Have you had any special experience in your life; some reasons that caused you wanted to race with the time and take the time machine back to the past? Please try to answer the following questions:

1. What will be the reason for you to take this picture?
   A. Wish to reverse the time and the time could pass slower.
   B. Wish that it could stop at a certain time.
   C. The clock (winded to a certain time) reminds you of something meaningful.
   D. Others:______________________________________________________

2. Do you like to take pictures? A. Like B. Very like C. Hate D. Very Hate. Please express your true feelings while taking this picture.

3. How would you like to hold the clock while taking the picture? A. In front of your chest B. On your head C. On your back with your back facing the camera D. others:___________________________________

4. Referring to your answer to the first question, how would you prepare for taking this picture? A. Make up and dress up B. Other than the clock, you wish to include other things or backgrounds C. take the photo with somebody else. D. Others:_______________________________________________

5. Referring to the first question, what time do you wish to appear on the clock?

   _______: _______
Bibliography

References in English


**References in Chinese**


