

Painting, Singing and Dancing Ourselves:

The Role of Artistic Production in Young Latinos' Development in Somerville, Massachusetts



Juliana Slocum

Fall 2008

Professor Pacini-Hernandez

Urban Borderlands

Tufts University

Acknowledgements

This project would never have occurred were it not for the hard work and patience of many individuals. I would like to first thank my family: my mom, dad, and two sisters for asking questions, encouraging me and even helping to drive me to interviews! I am extremely grateful for all that you do for me and I appreciate your help with this project. I would also like to recognize Professor Pacini-Hernandez, who has coached me through all of my interviews and given me valuable advice on how to conduct qualitative research. She offered me great tips and advice on how to organize this project, and she continually encouraged me, even when I doubted my own project. In addition, I am grateful to my classmates in the Urban Borderlands seminar. Although the process has not always been easy, together we have created impressive research papers. I would thank all of you for offering me tips and allowing me to vent my frustration at times. I would also like to thank my friends outside of the Urban Borderlands class who have listened to me talk about the project and offered me kind words of encouragement. Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my narrators and all those whom I spoke with for this project. I understand that all of you are extremely busy people, and I really appreciate the fact that you took time out to talk and share your artwork with me. I am grateful to my young interviewees, as well as to Wil Renderos, Prince Charles, Rick Saunders, Marcus Santos, Maria Landaverde, and Warren Goldstein-Gelb for their help. I would also like to thank the parents of my narrators, who trusted me enough to interview their children and who once again, took time out of their busy lives to accommodate my interviews. In sum, I am grateful to all those who assisted me in any way on this project. Even the shortest phone call has made a difference. This paper is truly the product of all of your input and hard work.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Introduction	5
Description of Project	7
Methodology	8
Objectives and Outline for Paper	8
Background of Somerville	11
General Description of Youth Art Programs Available in Somerville	15
Centro Presente	15
The Welcome Project	16
Somerville Community Access Television	17
Somerville High School	18
Music Program	18
Involvement of Latino Students	19
Obstacles	21
Theories of Child Development	22
Development of Personal Identity	23
Development of Ethnic Identity	24
Explanation for Use of Pseudonyms	26
Narrators	
Maria	26
José	27
Juan	28
Ana	29
Diego	31
Art as a Means of Personal Expression	
Expression of Universal Emotions	33
Expression for Narrators in Somerville	35
Expression for Immigrants	36
Therapeutic Value of Artistic Production	38
Role of Artistic Production in Formation of Personal Identity	
Confusion over Personal Identity	39
Artistic Production and Increased Self Awareness	41
Sense of Self Esteem and Empowerment	42
Formation of an Ethnic Identity	46
Role of Artistic Production in Formation of Ethnic Identity	49
Maria	49
José	53
Juan	54

Ana	56
Diego	58
Art as a Means of Social Commentary	
Addressing Community Issues	59
Speaking for the Community	63
Pintamos Nuestro Mundo: A Case Study	64
Centro Presente	65
Pintamos Nuestro Mundo	66
Participants' Evaluation	69
Discussion and Concluding Thoughts	71
Areas for Further Research	74
Bibliography	77
Appendices	
Artist Profile: José	80
Link	84
About the Author	84

Introduction

Tucked away in an abandoned lot covered in cracked concrete and barbed wire on Cross Street, lies a somewhat perplexing work of art. The colorful mural stands out amidst gray, urban surroundings in East Somerville, a dense, ethnically diverse section of Somerville, Massachusetts. Upon further examination, one begins to recognize its confusing and contradictory features. The mural depicts roughly two dozen young people in various postures, wearing many different expressions. One light skinned boy looks directly outward with a sweet smile, his blonde hair spiked into a mohawk. Another dark skinned young man looks sideways, as if talking to someone nearby. One girl has her arm clasped around another girl's shoulder as they smile contentedly out at the viewer. The faces represent a variety of different races and ethnicities and there are flags from various countries, including Brazil, El Salvador and the United States, in the background.



The drawings are somewhat simplistic; the brush strokes are rough, the colors blend together and the shapes are not clearly defined. Some finer details, such as the shadowing of the faces or the contours of body movements, are lacking from the mural. Certain faces seem to

contrast with one another, as if they were created by different artists with distinct styles.

It is clear that the painting was not created by a single, professionally trained artist.

However, it is also obvious that the mural is not the same as the graffiti which covers the other walls of the abandoned lot. Artists clearly invested a lot of time and effort into the

piece; it sends a clear message of ethnic unity to all those who pass by on the busy street.



In fact, the mural was created by teenagers from an arts program for Latino youth in Somerville. These young people consciously designed and created the mural in order to show the public that they are intelligent, involved citizens who care about their community. They want to present a positive self image to others. Although they do not earn money for their artwork, they are nevertheless talented and active creators of meaningful works of

art. In Somerville, teenagers and young adults are producing art in various venues and through different methods. While there has been little research done on Latino artistic production in Somerville in general, there has been even less examination of the art that young Latinos are producing. These minors remain a valuable area of research; they have their own distinct voice and role in the artistic community. It has been my objective to learn from these young artists and to examine how artistic production affects their development as young Latinos in Somerville. As a Child Development and Spanish major, I am interested in looking at how artistic production influences identity formation and the creation of a unique space for oneself in society. I have found that many young Latinos are using art as a way to express themselves personally, address issues in their community and form a distinct identity. I propose that art can be a valuable tool

for young Latinos in Somerville because it greatly aids them in personal expression, self esteem, and ethnic identity formation.

Project Description

This project is the result of a class called Urban Borderlands, which is offered through the Anthropology Department at Tufts University. Taught by Professor Deborah Pacini-Hernandez, students engage in semester long qualitative research on the Latino community in Somerville. Each year, undergraduates conduct a series of interviews with Latino residents in the Somerville area. They focus on topics that are relevant to the Latino community, but of their own interest. In the past, students have documented the Latino businesses in the city, discussed how the education system serves young Latinos and examined the importance of local soccer teams. After conducting research, students then produce a final paper, which is posted on the Internet and made available to the public. The goal of the class is to produce papers that effectively illuminate the Latino community of Somerville and educate the public about this largely marginalized population. The class also hopes to teach students about the value of qualitative research and to foster a greater awareness and appreciation of the community which houses the university. This semester, the class specifically focused on the arts scene within the Latino community in Somerville. Students conducted interviews with musicians, dancers and visual artists, as well as with local community leaders, in order to learn more about these talented artists.

Methodology

For my project, I chose to focus on young Latino artists in the area. I conducted interviews with five artists between the ages of fourteen and twenty. All but one of my narrators is a resident of Somerville. They are musicians, dancers, and visual artists, as well as sons, daughters, students, athletes and workers. They are busy people, and it was often difficult to coordinate schedules and meet for interviews. Two of my narrators were under age eighteen, so I needed to obtain parental consent before conducting the interviews. This necessity required further scheduling and made the entire process slightly more challenging, these young narrators provided valuable insight and greatly contributed to this final paper. In addition to conducting interviews, I also had informal discussion with a number of other individuals. I spoke with Wil Renderos, program director for Pintamos Nuestro Mundo, on numerous occasions. I corresponded with Rick Saunders, head of the music department at Somerville High School, and also spoke with Prince Charles, who is the director of Somerville Community Access Television's youth program. I attended one of Marcus Santos' percussion classes at Somerville High School and I visited Centro Presente to watch students create works of art after school. I also learned much simply by walking around the streets of Somerville and making observations. I believe I am much more knowledgeable and comfortable with my local community as a result of this project.

Objectives

The objective of this paper is to determine the role of artistic production in young Latinos' development in Somerville. Through my interviews, I have discovered that there are four broad branches of investigation. Firstly, I will examine how young Latinos use art as a

means of personal expression; I aim to learn what types of feelings they are expressing and what effect artistic production has on their emotional reactions. In order to learn about how narrators view art as a means of personal expression, I asked such questions as: “What do you hope to express through artwork?” “When and why do you choose to create art?” “How do you feel when you are producing artwork?” “How do you feel after you have created an original work of art?” I discovered that many times, narrators are expressing emotions, such as happiness, anger or sadness that are not unique to their specific situations in Somerville, but rather are universal feelings that many teenagers may grapple with.

Secondly, I investigate the role of artistic production in identity formation. My research focuses on the creation of both a personal identity and an ethnic identity. I first aim to learn how artistic production affects narrators’ self-discovery. I hypothesize that art can be used as a way to analyze and reflect on past emotions and build self esteem. Some of the questions that I asked narrators are: “How do you feel about yourself when you are creating art?” “How does artistic production relate to the way you view yourself?” “Does artistic production help you to build self esteem?” I also investigate how art might be used specifically by Latino teenagers in order to help with the creation of an ethnic or cultural identity. For some narrators, art provides a medium through which to grapple with issues of ethnic identity and ultimately, to create an identity that reflects their unique, bicultural position in society. When asking my narrators about the role of artistic production in the formation of ethnic identity, I presented questions such as: “With what ethnic group do you feel like you belong?” “In what ways is your art reflective of your homeland or ethnic heritage?” “Has artistic production helped you to create a cultural/ethnic identity?”

Thirdly, I investigate the connection between the art of young Latinos and the unique context of Somerville, MA. I found that many young narrators utilize art to comment issues relevant to their peers and to critique their surroundings. Thus, many young people use art not only to express themselves personally and culturally, but also to express their opinions on pertinent issues in the larger community. For this area of research, I considered research questions such as “Does the art of young Latinos in Somerville reflect topics or issues that are important to all young people in Somerville?” “Does the art of young people contain some sort of social critique?” “What message do young artists hope to send through their artwork and who is their intended audience?”

Finally, I examine the resources that are available to young Latino artists in Somerville. I focus on Pintamos Nuestro Mundo as an example of a positive organization that effectively helps young Latinos in their artistic and personal development. I examine the organization’s goals and objectives, as well as its effectiveness. I find that art programs for youth can be highly effective in terms of allowing teenagers to build express themselves, create a personal and cultural identity, and comment on relevant social and political issues. For this topic, I was guided by such as questions as: “What do youth art programs hope to accomplish?” “What do they believe that youth can gain through artistic production?” “What are some obstacles that are standing in the way of such programs achieving their goals?” “Are there adequate programs and resources available to young Latino artists in Somerville?” I have organized the paper according to these four broad areas of research.

Background on Somerville

Upon consulting a map of the greater Boston metropolitan area, it might be fairly easy to overlook the city of Somerville. The city covers a small area, only 4.1 square miles in total, and is nestled between the larger, more affluent cities of Cambridge, Arlington and Medford¹. Yet Somerville is actually unique in many ways. It was home to roughly 75,372 residents in 2007, although the actual number is most likely significantly higher due to a large number of undocumented residents². The city has the highest population density in the state, with roughly 18,383 people living in every square mile³. The result of such density is that there are a high numbers of multi-family houses and apartments, and vast numbers of residents from many different backgrounds live in close proximity to one another.

This ethnic diversity of the population is another characteristic of the city. According to Avantika Taneja's 2004 Urban Borderlands report, Irish and Italian immigrants first arrived in Somerville in the early twentieth century. The city still has a fairly large number of individuals of Italian or Irish descent. However, during the 1980s, the patterns of immigration began to shift. The city witnessed an influx of Cape Verdean immigrants in the late 1970s. As these recent arrivals settled in the city, they were joined by other Portuguese-speaking migrants from Portugal and Brazil. The civil wars that ravaged many Central American countries in the 1980s also provided the impetus for mass migration. Vast numbers of immigrants began arriving from Latin America, especially from El Salvador.

Today, Somerville remains a city largely composed of immigrants. According to the 2005 American Community Survey, nearly 32% of the total population was born outside of the

¹ Cited in the "Somerville Community Profile, 2008," a report published by the Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS). Please see the bibliography for the complete citation.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

United States⁴. In comparison, the state average of foreign born individuals is just over 12%⁵. Somerville is the city with the third-highest percentage of foreign born individuals in Massachusetts, after Chelsea and Lawrence⁶. In addition, the rate of immigration to the city continues to be on the rise; according to the 2006 U.S. Census, 28% of the immigrants who currently live in the greater Boston metropolitan area entered the United States in 2000 or later⁷. In Somerville, the overwhelming majority of these immigrants came from countries in Central America, the Caribbean or South America. In fact, the city has one of the highest percentages of Hispanic or Latino residents in the state. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the most recent official figures available, there were approximately 6,786 Hispanics or Latinos living in Somerville, constituting nearly 9% of the total population⁸. Again, the rise in the Latino population has occurred fairly recently. According to a survey by the Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS), there was a 35% increase in the number of Latinos living in city between 1990 and 2000. This same survey estimates that this number has continued to increase since 2000 and estimates that Latinos constituted roughly 16.2% of the total Somerville population in 2002⁹.

Due to the recent surge in immigration, the city is now struggling to accommodate these recent arrivals. One of the biggest problems for residents is the lack of available and affordable housing. During the 1990s, the gap between the richest and poorest residents increased. Although the 2000 U.S. Census reported that the median household income increased 56% from 1990 to 1999, the number of families living below the poverty level increased by 3% during this

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Cited in city-data.com. Please see bibliography for complete citation.

⁶ Cited CAAS's 2008 Somerville Community Profile.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

same time period¹⁰. In fact, the census found that 20% of Somerville households earned less than \$20,000 per year in 2000, and 10% of the households earned less than \$10,000¹¹. These high percentages are extremely troubling considering that the average annual rent in the city stands at \$13,500¹². Based on these figures, a significant proportion of the population is unable to afford housing in Somerville. Even though over 2,000 households receive some sort of federal or state rental assistance¹³, many Somerville residents, especially recent immigrants, struggle to pay rent each month.

Another obstacle that the city has encountered as a result of recent immigration is the increasing language barrier. The annual report by CAAS cites a study by the Heath Data Watch of Massachusetts Emergency Preparedness Region 4b that finds that in 2007 “36% of residents age 5 and over spoke a language other than English at home, compared to 19% statewide.”¹⁴ The city has struggled to provide adequate translators and to accommodate the wide variety of languages that are now spoken throughout the area.

One institution that has faced extreme language barriers is the Somerville Public Schools. As mentioned earlier, much of the immigrant population is made up of recent arrivals and young people. In fact, the median age in Somerville is only 31.1 years, as compared to the national average of 36.5 years¹⁵. Although there are some private schools located in Somerville, such as Prospect Hill Academy, the majority of residents send their children to public schools. The school system has witnessed an even more dramatic influx of young immigrants, children of immigrants and non-native speakers than the city as a whole. For instance, according to the 2005

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Cited in city-data.com

American Community Survey, only 23% of the total city population was “non-white.” However, the Massachusetts Department of Education reports that over half (56%) of the students at Somerville High School were non-white in the 2006-2007 school year¹⁶. Somerville is distinct because it has only one public high school. Students travel from across the city to attend the same high school, which is located next to City Hall on Highland Avenue. Teenagers from all linguistic, ethnic and economic backgrounds come together and interact on a daily basis. The school system faces particular obstacles toward educating such a diverse student body. Not only must the high school address issues of racial and ethnic diversity in the student body, but it must somehow educate many students who do not yet speak English proficiently. Shockingly, according to the Report Card which Somerville High School submitted to the federal government as part of the No Child Left Behind Act, almost two-thirds (58.5%) of students come from households in which English is not the primary language¹⁷. The majority of these non-native English speakers are of Latino or Brazilian heritage. In fact, almost one-third (31.2%) of the student body are characterized as “Latino or Hispanic,” significantly higher than the state average of 13.2%¹⁸. Furthermore, the majority of the total student body comes from low-income households. Indeed, almost two-thirds (65.8%) are low-income, a percentage which is more than twice the state average of 29.5%¹⁹. The process of successfully accommodating and teaching such a wide variety of students is clearly one of the primary challenges to the public school system in the city.

Although there has been little research on the youth arts scene in Somerville, the city has been regarded as a hub of artistic activity for many years. There are numerous independent

¹⁶ Cited in CAAS’s 2008 Community Profile.

¹⁷ Cited in the 2007-2008 NCLB Report Card for Somerville High School. Please see bibliography for complete citation.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

artists and musicians living in the city. In fact, according to the city's official website, "only New York has more artists per capita than the City of Somerville; the local artists make the City one of the most vibrant and exciting arts centers in the country."²⁰ Although there has been fairly abundant coverage of white, English-speaking artists in the area, there has, until recently, been little available information about Latino artists working in Somerville. The objective of the Urban Borderlands class this semester was to expose these talented Latino artists.

Description of Youth Programs Available

Although many of my narrators describe how they feel marginalized and forgotten as members of the community, there is actually a variety of art programs specifically targeted toward young people. Here, I present a rough outline of the programs that I discovered in my research. This list is by no means exhaustive; there are almost certainly other programs in the Somerville area that encourage young people, especially young Latinos, to engage in artistic production. I hope that future scholars will investigate these programs in greater depth.

Pintamos Nuestro Mundo (PNM) is the youth arts program for Centro Presente, an advocacy organization for Latin American immigrants in East Somerville. PNM was originally formed as an after-school arts program, but it has since evolved into a more comprehensive program that includes artistic and musical production, leadership development, academic tutoring and supportive discussion groups. PNM remains the only youth art program in the city that is devoted specifically to Latino youth. For a more thorough description of PNM, its

²⁰ Cited in the City of Somerville's website. Please see bibliography for complete citation.

objectives and its effectiveness, please refer to the chapter called “Pintamos Nuestro Mundo: A Case Study” later in this paper.

The Welcome Project is a community organization located in the Mystic Housing Development in Somerville. It was formed in 1987 when an influx of immigrants from around



the world settled in the once predominantly white housing development. Tension soon began to brew among the residents. In response, residents joined together to form an organization dedicated to supporting and welcoming these new immigrants.²¹

Today, the Welcome Project works not only with recent arrivals in the housing development, but with immigrants throughout the city.

One objective of the Welcome Project is to get immigrant youth actively involved in their



new communities. The Welcome Project operates an after-school program for young immigrants of all backgrounds. The program is not art-based, but rather focuses on leadership development and giving back to the community through volunteering and providing translating

²¹ Information acquired from The Welcome Project’s website. Please see bibliography for complete citation.

services. Two of my narrators worked at the Welcome Project as translators. They were extremely helpful in putting me in contact with other knowledgeable people in the community who assisted me with my project. Even though the program is not a youth arts program and it is not specifically targeted toward Latino youth, it nevertheless provides support and encouragement to some Latino teenagers.

Somerville Community Access Television (SCAT), the access television station for



Somerville, is located in Union Square.

It operates Channel 3 and is the oldest access center in the state.²² SCAT broadcasts a variety of shows, community events and public service announcements.

In addition, SCAT also runs a youth program called Next Generation Producers. Participants in the

program create their own videos, which are then aired on Channel 3. Students can create a video on any topic of their interest and SCAT provides them with equipment and studio space.

SCAT encourages students to produce films that are socially relevant and that address issues in the community. SCAT has collaborated with schools and other youth programs, including PNM, to reach a diverse group of students and ensure that various young people make their voices heard. Although Next Generation Producers is open to youth of all backgrounds, some young Latinos do participate in its programs. Teenagers in Next Generation Producers produce high-quality, evocative videos and their talent has not gone unnoticed; in both 2006 and 2007, teenagers who had produced films through SCAT won first place awards from the Alliance

²² Information acquired from SCAT's website. Please see bibliography for complete citation.

for Community Media, an organization advocating for equal access to public media in the Boston area.

Somerville High School

Music Program

As noted earlier, Somerville High School, the only public high school in the city, is a



large, ethnically and economically diverse high school located on Highland Avenue in the middle of the city. Like many public high schools in the state of Massachusetts, Somerville High School faces a tight and constraining budget. Other towns, such as Franklin and Canton, have had to cut music and art programs, or charge high fees for

students to participate. Fortunately, Somerville High School continues to offer an extensive music and art program. All students can take music classes for credit, and they do not need to pay a fee. For this paper, I have chosen to focus on the music program at Somerville High School. I interviewed Rick Saunders, the director of the Music Department for the Somerville Public School system. The high school also has an art department, led by Dr. Luci Prawdzik. There are also two after school clubs devoted to dance, a dance club and a step club. Due to time constraints, I was unable to investigate the art and dance programs at Somerville High School. I hope that future researchers will examine and analyze these programs in depth.

According to Rick Saunders, the music department at Somerville High School (SHS) offers eight classes every semester:

Introduction to Guitar, Introduction to Piano, World Percussion, Music Technology and Production, Honors Level Music Theory, Band, Chorus and Orchestra. He also notes that the



department sometimes offers special, one-time courses, called independent studies. For example, during the 2007-2008 year, there was an American Music class. According to Saunders, there are over 200 total students in all of these classes. In addition to these classes, the music department also runs a number of after-school clubs including a pep band for the football games, a chamber music singing group, a jazz band, and a male singing group called The Low Tones. Saunders did not explain how many students were involved in these clubs. As noted earlier, the music department has been lucky in that it has not had to cut programs or charge students to participate. In fact, last year the music department received a capital endorsement from Joseph Curatone, the Mayor of Somerville, so that it could purchase \$100,000 worth of instruments. Despite this support, Saunders admits that the department still struggles financially; he says that it is difficult to purchase new music books and sheet music.

Involvement of Latino Students

In terms of actively involving Latino students into the music program, Saunders admits that “percentage wise, the SHS Music Program is not doing well in engaging immigrant students to pursue performance ensembles” (Rick Saunders – 12/04/2008). He explains that less than

20% of the Latino/Hispanic population is involved in music, although he does note that “that 20% make up about 60% of our students in our programs” (Rick Saunders – 12/04/2008).

Therefore, although most Latino students do not participate in music, those that do participate actually form the majority in those programs. I believe that such a statistic testifies to the high percentage of Latino students at Somerville High School; even though less than a quarter participate in music programs, that number is still high enough to constitute a significant percentage of the students in these classes.

One class that has been particularly effective at engaging Latino and immigrant students is the World Percussion class. Marcus Santos, a percussionist from Brazil, teaches the class²³. Currently, there are roughly 20 students in the class and most are non-native English speakers. Marcus teaches the students how to play the drums, and the group presents a concert at the end of the semester. Marcus instructs the teenagers in a variety of rhythms from around the world, but he mostly focuses on music from Africa, the Caribbean and Brazil.

Saunders claims that the student response to Marcus Santos’ class has been “overwhelmingly positive.” The class has been especially popular for immigrants and non-native English speakers. Saunders explains that “the World Percussion class has been very successful in motivating the Latino population to participate in music. This year we focused on Brazilian drumming and this class has attracted a high percentage of Latino students” (Rick Saunders – 12/04/2008). Students seem to appreciate his positive, upbeat attitude and his energetic teaching style. Many non-native English speakers also appreciate the fact that Marcus speaks multiple languages and often acts as a translator for his students.

²³ For a more detailed description of Marcus Santos and his music, please refer to Abby Berg’s or Caitlin Felsman’s 2008 UB Reports.

The fact that Marcus' class is a music class is in itself an attractive feature for some Latino students or non-native English speakers. For those who are not yet proficient in the English language, music can be a valuable vehicle through which to express themselves and build self esteem. Marcus' class also allows immigrants from Latin America and Brazil to produce music from their homelands, thus helping them to reconnect and take pride in their ethnic background. I will discuss the benefits of artistic production for young Latinos in greater detail later in this paper. Saunders believes that "young immigrants benefit from music making because it introduces them to other cultures while providing them with a forum to express elements of their culture. Making music allows young people to explore and express emotions and feel like they are part of something bigger" (Rick Saunders – 12/04/2008). The World Percussion class has been an effective way to engage young Latinos at Somerville High School and Saunders hopes to implement other, similar programs in the future.

Obstacles

Besides budgetary constraints, the music department at Somerville High School also faces other obstacles. Most notably, instructors often struggle to overcome language barriers. Saunders says that even though "music transcends language barriers," many instructors still struggle to communicate their goals and expectations to students who are not proficient in English. However, Saunders believes that it is possible to overcome language barriers by incorporating visual and kinesthetic elements into classes. Far more difficult to overcome, he claims, are cultural barriers. He explains that immigrant students often identify strongly with the music from their homelands, so they are unwilling to learn other styles of music. He also notes that some of the instructors may have subconscious biases against more traditional forms of

music from immigrant students' homelands. He explains that "many teachers are schooled in the western 'classical' style of music and often view this music as more educationally appropriate. This creates a cultural divide" with students who might identify more strongly with alternative forms of music (Rick Saunders). Despite the fact that some teacher struggle to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, Saunders considers the faculty to be the primary strength of the music department. He describes instructors as generally devoted, engaged, knowledgeable and conscientious. When I asked Saunders what kind of support he wished he could receive in order to improve the music program, he explained that he would like to include more "active parents, artists from the community and retired musicians who could 'adopt' a student" and serve as mentors (Rick Saunders). Saunders was unclear about if or how he plans to go about making such improvements. Although the music program at Somerville High School is clearly not perfect, there are certainly many positive elements, including the fact that it is actively engaging Latino students through the World Percussion class.

Theories of Child Development

Throughout this paper, I refer to the process of identity formation for adolescents and young adults. I focus on the development of a personal identity and the construction of an ethnic or cultural identity. Because I refer to certain theories frequently throughout the paper, I will first provide a broad overview of several theories. This list is by no means an exhaustive representation of all the theories on identity formation that exist within the interdisciplinary field of Child Development. Due to the rather limited scope of this paper, I will describe only those theories that are directly relevant to my research.

Development of a Personal Identity



Erik Erikson (1950, 1968) is widely regarded as the leading researcher on identity formation in children and adolescents. He defines the construction of an identity as a process involving “defining who you are, what you value, and the directions you choose to pursue in life” (qtd. in Berk 463). Erikson believes that the formation of an identity is necessary in order to become a productive, functional member of society. Yet this process does not really occur until late adolescence. According to Erikson, it is not until the teenage years that individuals really begin to grapple with issues of identity. During adolescence, “teenagers experience an identity crisis – a temporary period of confusion and distress as they experiment with alternatives before settling on values and goals” (qtd. in Berk 464). For most teenagers, this process of experimentation is difficult and can sometimes be traumatic.

James Marcia (1980) expands upon Erikson’s theory of identity formation and examines the process of experimentation followed by commitment more closely. According to Marcia, there are a variety of possible identity statuses; at any given moment, a young person can be in any one of these phases. The ultimate identity status which all adolescents eventually hope to accomplish is called identity achievement. In order to achieve such a status, adolescents must first go through a period of exploration, and eventually commit to a set of values, beliefs and goals (cited in Berk 464). Therefore, Marcia argues that the process of exploration and experimentation is necessary in order to truly construct an identity that is truly reflective of

themselves as individuals. Hence, the soul-searching and uncertainty that generally accompanies the adolescent years is necessary and functional.

Development of an Ethnic Identity

According to Erikson and Marcia, the construction of an identity is difficult for almost all teenagers, regardless of their background or life situations. Therefore, identity formation can be an even more challenging process for ethnic minorities, who must not only identify themselves, but also define themselves ethnically and create a space for themselves between two potentially conflicting cultures. Various researchers, most notably Jensen and Phinney, have investigated how adolescents construct ethnic identities.

Lene Jensen (2003) theorizes that the construction of an ethnic identity is difficult than because it involves creating a personal identity as well as selecting a group identity. He believes this difficulty results from the fact that “the Eriksonian identity formation task centers on deciding what distinguishes you as an individual among members of your cultural community, whereas forming a cultural identity involves deciding on the cultural communities to which you will belong” (Jensen, 5). He acknowledges that the process of ethnic identity formation involves many aspects of Erikson’s universal process of identity construction. For example, he recognizes that the creation of one’s cultural identity includes the formation of unique ideologies, and decisions on personal relationships and occupations. However, Jensen notes that “Erikson’s focus was on how adolescents make choices about ideology, love, and work, in order to arrive at an independent and unique sense of self *within* the cultural context in which they live... Forming a cultural identity, however, involves making choices about the

cultural contexts that one identifies with in the first place” (Jensen 5). Therefore, Jensen argues that the construction of an ethnic identity is a complex process because it involves defining oneself not only individually, but also as a member of an ethnic group.

Similarly, **Jean Phinney** theorizes that adolescence can be an especially difficult time for immigrants or ethnic minority teenagers because it is at this time that they are faced with the task of constructing an ethnic identity. According to Phinney, “adolescence seems to be a critical period for ethnic identity development” (Phinney, 50). He reasons that for many individuals, adolescence is the time when they are first exposed to a variety of new contexts, such as ethnically or socioeconomically diverse high schools. In a diverse student body, adolescents must learn how to position themselves within the larger peer group. Phinney explains that this “increased contact with people from backgrounds other than their own leads to greater awareness of differences and more questions about their group membership” (Phinney 50). It can also lead some second generation immigrants to question the values that their parents may have raised them with. Before adolescence, some individuals may not have considered alternative values or lifestyles because they had only been exposed to those espoused in their own homes. The increased contact with a diverse peer network complicates the process of ethnic identity formation because it “involves sorting out and resolving positive and negative feelings and attitudes about one’s own group and about other groups and identifying one’s place in relation to both” (Phinney 49). Phinney theorizes that as adolescents distance themselves from their homes, they are exposed to more diversity. This increased contact with diverse peers serves as a catalyst for the construction of an ethnic identity as adolescents now must position themselves within a larger social group. He acknowledges that the construction of an ethnic identity can be difficult

and even painful for adolescents, but he agrees with Marcia that it is necessary for teenagers to experience this period of soul-searching and uncertainty in order to finally reach identity achievement.

Explanation for Use of Pseudonyms

Before conducting interviews, each of my narrators provided consent for me to publish their names and to include any information from our interview in this paper. However, I have chosen to give each narrator a pseudonym, rather than include their real names as many of my narrators disclosed very personal and insightful information during our discussions. I understand that the use of pseudonyms makes this paper somewhat more impersonal, yet I feel that it is the only way to fully respect my narrators, while still accurately conveying their responses.

Narrators

“Maria” is nineteen years old and is currently a senior at Somerville High School. She was born and raised in Governador Veladares, a city in the eastern state of Minas Gerais in Brazil. Her father left for the United States to find work while her mother was still pregnant with her so Maria did not meet her father in person until she was fifteen years old. She is the youngest of four children and she grew up on a working farm. When she was sixteen, Maria decided to come to the United States and live with her father in order to study and attend college. She arrived in Somerville in 2007 knowing no English at all. Today, she lives with her father and stepmother. She is essentially fluent in Portuguese, Spanish and English and she works as a translator for the Welcome Project. In the future, Maria hopes to continue dancing and writing music recreationally, although she does not foresee that she will have a career in the music

industry. She was my only narrator who did anticipate using art as a way to make money. Instead, Maria would like to graduate from college and then return to Brazil.

Although Maria does not dance in public or in order to earn money, she loves to dance samba in her spare time. She also engages in other traditional Brazilian dance forms such as bossa-nova, sertanejo (somewhat like country music), and pagote (storytelling through music). In addition, she likes to write poems and songs in Portuguese. She has never received any formal instruction in dance and claims that she learned just by watching her friends and neighbors in Brazil. In fact, when I asked her who taught her to dance, she seemed somewhat perplexed by the question. Although she was briefly active in the Spanish club at Somerville High School, she mostly just dances at her house by herself or with her friends. She especially enjoys teaching her non-Brazilian friends how to dance samba. Maria provided very interesting responses and her opinions about the role of artwork in transnationalism were extremely valuable to this report.

“José” is a twenty year old composer and musician from El Salvador. He immigrated to the United States in 2006 and graduated from Somerville High School in 2007. He began playing the guitar and composing his own songs while he was a child in El Salvador. Initially, José only composed slow, romantic songs, although he also liked to play rock songs with the band he formed with his high school friends. After moving to the United States, he became involved in the Evangelical Church and has since begun to compose Christian music. He is a member of a band at his church and plays mostly Christian rock songs, although he does continue to compose some romantic ballads as well. Please refer to the Artist Profile (Appendix A) for a more detailed description of José and his music.

“Juan” is sixteen years old and a junior at Somerville High School. He was born in a small town on the coast of Peru, about two hours away from the capital city of Lima. Growing up, his mother ran a small business, but the family struggled financially. Juan’s maternal grandfather had already immigrated to the United States and was a U.S. citizen. In 2002, he applied for Juan and his mother to join him in the United States. They came in 2002, stayed in Somerville for nine months, returned to Peru for a year and a half and then returned to the United States permanently. Juan now lives with his mother, stepfather and two younger half-brothers. He works as a peer leader with *Pintamos Nuestro Mundo*, the youth program at Centro Presente. He comes to Centro Presente every day after school to facilitate groups for younger children and serve as a positive role model. In the future, Juan hopes to graduate from high school and then attend college and study graphic design.

Juan has been drawing ever since he can remember; he describes how he used to draw all over his folders in elementary school because he just couldn’t stand to see a blank sheet of paper. Although he has always been an active artist, he did not participate in any art classes in Peru because he claims there were very few opportunities to do so. After coming to the United States, he became interested in graphic design and took a shop class at Somerville High School that taught him many valuable skills. He started coming to Centro Presente in middle school and he has been a peer leader for the past two years. After joining PNM, he became even more interested in graphic design and he has created a variety of computer-generated images. His primary focus seems to be on creating air-brushed T-shirts, but he also draws comic books in the manga style and has produced a short film through a collaborative program between PNM and the Somerville Community Action Television (SCAT). Juan also believes that public art and

graffiti are also beautiful and meaningful styles of art; he admires the Latino muralists in Los Angeles and he has worked with other students from PNM to paint two murals in East Somerville. Juan emphasizes that his designs are not “just pretty pictures,” but are also personally and socially relevant. Through his art, he aims to send a message and address controversial political and social issues. Juan helped me to understand how he relates his artwork to larger, communal issues. He also provided valuable information about the work of PNM and Centro Presente.

“**Ana**” is a fourteen year old freshman at Boston Arts Academy (BAA). BAA is a pilot high school within the Boston Public School system that is located near Fenway Park. It is the only high school in the city that is dedicated to promoting the visual and performing arts among its students. Teachers incorporate artistic instruction into the academic curriculum.²⁴ Ana applied to BAA last year and began studying there in September 2008.

Although her high school is located in downtown Boston, Ana actually lives in East Boston with her mother and two younger sisters. She was born at Boston Medical Center and has lived her whole life in East Boston. Her parents grew up in Santa Ana, the second largest city in El Salvador. In the late 1980s, they came to the Boston area and became U.S. citizens. Growing up, Ana’s parents spoke to her in Spanish, but her primary language is now English. She claims that she has now lost much of her Spanish fluency.

Ana is an extremely active young musician. Her entire family is very musically inclined. Ana cannot remember when she first became interested in making music, but she notes that she had an “amazing teacher” in third grade that inspired her to express herself through poetry. Today, Ana still writes poems, and she often puts these verses to music. She plays the guitar,

²⁴ Information acquired from the Boston Arts Academy’s website. Please see bibliography for complete citation.

sings and composes original pieces. Ana takes three music classes at her high school and is also involved in the gospel choir. In addition, she attends ZUMIX, a non-profit organization in East Boston that operates numerous after school programs designed to empower youth through the channel of musical production. Ana is a member of a band that is based at ZUMIX. The band consists of three girls and four boys between the ages of 14 and 17. Divercity has performed at various venues in the Boston area, including the Boston Park Plaza. In 2008, the band performed at EarthFest, a free public radio station concert held every spring on the Esplanade in downtown Boston.

Although Ana has no direct ties to Somerville, I chose to interview her because she does have some connection to Somerville. She is a student of Marcus Santos, a percussion teacher at Somerville High School. He takes classes with Marcus at his studio, AfroBrazil, on Boylston Street in downtown Boston. She was also a member of the Tufts marching band that participated in the third annual Honk! Festival in Somerville. The Honk! Festival is a public festival of activist marching bands from all around the country. On Columbus Day weekend, 2008, bands gathered in Davis Square in Somerville to perform. Each band had a specific political or social message and the performers encouraged the general public to also participate in musical production. The bands then marched from Davis Square to Harvard Square in Cambridge, MA. Tufts University sponsored a band composed of Tufts students, faculty, and members of the local community. The university held multiple workshops on campus so that members of this newly formed band could practice. Ana came to these workshops and learned how to play a simple percussion instrument. She then marched with the Tufts band in the parade.

I understand that Ana has no direct ties to the city of Somerville; therefore, her experience is not exactly reflective of what it means to be a young artist specifically in

Somerville. Nevertheless, Ana is still a young, Latina artist and she provided valuable insight into how music can be used as a means of personal expression and identity construction. Her experience does not really shed light on why some young Latinos are creating art in Somerville, but her responses do help to illuminate the role that artistic production plays in young Latinos' development.

“Diego” graduated from Somerville High School in June 2008. I spoke with him on his nineteenth birthday on November 7th, 2008. Diego was born in the Boston area, but both of his parents are from El Salvador. I do not know when or why his parents came to the United States, but I suspect that they may have been fleeing the violent civil war in El Salvador in the 1980s. Although neither of his parents speaks much English, Diego actually speaks little Spanish. Growing up, he had an English-speaking nanny, so Diego never learned much Spanish. He admits that it is often difficult to communicate with his parents due to this language barrier. Diego hopes to eventually go to college and become a video game designer.

Diego is extremely active in PNM. He comes to Centro Presente nearly every day at around noon and stays until late in the afternoon. Diego's primary artistic pursuit is comic production. He has worked extensively on creating comic strips for many years. Currently, he has two comic series. He began drawing the “NightLight Twin” series in 2003 and has been consistently publishing them on his MySpace page. The plot of the series is extremely complex; essentially it follows the adventure of a young man named Shiro who has supernatural powers. Shiro's father murders his mother and then escapes. Shiro then embarks on a mission to find his father and avenge his mother's death. He is joined by his friend Lillia, who also has supernatural powers. The heroes spend two years trying to catch Shiro's father, but the villain manages to

escape. Suddenly, a boy named Elias appears from a different, parallel world. Elias also has supernatural powers, so he, Lillia and Shira join together to form a gang called the Resistance, which is later called Organization Unknown (OU). Currently, this gang of supernatural teenagers has been joined by other characters from this parallel world and they are all still trying to get revenge on Shiro's father. Diego is also writing a novel that retells the story of these comic strips. Diego's second comic strip, "S'ville" stands for "Somerville." He only began drawing this comic this past year, so it is still in its beginning stages. The story revolves around a teenager who was involved in a gang, but who chooses to leave after the gang becomes involved in illegal activities. Labeled as a traitor, the comic strip follows the young man as he tries to escape from his pursuers. Diego draws all of his comic strips in the manga style. In addition, Diego has been involved in video production. During his senior year of high school, he took a class at Somerville Community Access Television (SCAT) in which he produced his own variety TV show. The show largely focused on a discussion of video games, and it aired every week on a local TV channel. He has also taken part in a number of PNM's video production classes. In the future, Diego hopes to become involved in the video game production. He offered insight on how he uses art to express himself personally and also provided valuable information about Centro Presente and PNM.

Art as a Means of Personal Expression

Expression of Universal Emotions

In the modern era of advanced technology and globalization, it is becoming increasingly easy to interact with people across the globe. Fifty years ago, the thought of an American

teenager instantly connecting with a young person in Asia or South America would have seemed strange. Today it is not only widely accepted but extremely common. Citizens across the globe, especially young people, share news, ideas and consumer products through such conduits as the Internet and long-distance calling plans. Yet, amidst the fast-paced hubbub of emails, faxes and text messages, much personal interaction is lost. Ironically, although people are generally in more constant contact with others, they often feel increasingly isolated. In this day and age, the ability to express and discuss raw emotions is becoming increasingly jeopardized in a globalized world that seems to value instantaneous communication, rather than personal dialogue.

In this sense, artistic production is perhaps even more valuable today than it was in past decades because of its ability to connect humans on a personal, emotional level. Like other forms of communication, art allows people to send messages and communicate. Indeed, “art is a vibrant second language that is universally available to all human beings” (Igoa 122). Thus, art could be viewed as the original form of globalization, connecting humans from all geographic, historical and social backgrounds. According to art critic Sir Herbert Read, music and “the visual arts know no such barriers of time or of space. They constitute one language, and though this language has provincial accents, it is essentially a language of symbols that without hindrance communicates a meaning from country to country and across the centuries” (18).

However, unlike an email or a fax, which are largely intended to merely convey information, artwork is also an expression of the artist’s personal emotions. Through dance, music or the visual arts, a person may express feelings that are common to all humans: joy, sorrow, anger, fear. Indeed, making music, “drawing and painting are expressive statements about what one knows, feels and wants to understand” (Golomb 43). Through artwork, we are reminded of our own humanity and commonality. The production of artwork also allows the

artist to reflect on emotions and find ways to deal with them. Thus, artistic production can be a means of personal expression as well as a coping mechanism.

In my own research, all of my narrators view art as a way to express themselves personally and deal with complex, yet universal emotions. They value art because it allows them to express themselves freely and honestly. In large part, their mood at the time of production greatly influences the artwork that they create. For instance, Diego describes how his comic strips sometimes seem illogical because they are essentially reflections of his feelings at the time. He explains, “That’s probably why my comics seem so random. Because when I’m upset, I draw about dark things like characters fighting, and when I’m happy, I draw my characters succeeding and accomplishing their missions. I guess that’s why everything happens so suddenly” (“Diego” – 11/07/2008). Similarly, when I asked Juan what his artwork depicts, he replied that “it depends, you know? Sometimes I will draw some pretty weird stuff, like it depends on my mood” (“Juan” – 10/24/2008). For these narrators, art is an almost direct reflection of what they are feeling at the time of production.

Other narrators concur and describe how they produce art in order to express their emotions. When I asked José what he writes his songs about, he immediately said “I write what I feel” (“José” – 10/17/2008). José is an extremely passionate young man who freely admits that “I feel and love too much.” In order to avoid being overcome by these emotions and so that he can express his feelings, he turns to song-writing and music production. Similarly, Ana says that “when I’m upset, or even when I’m happy, I write songs and poems” (“Ana” – 10/31/2008). She expresses emotions that are not necessarily specific to second generation immigrants, but are essentially universal. For instance, her songs describe happiness with friendships, anger over

breakups in romantic relationships, and sadness about a sick parent. Thus, for many of my narrators, artistic production serves as a way to freely express common human emotions.

Emotional Expression for Narrators in Somerville

Sometimes, narrators produce works of art that express emotions that are the result of their unique situation as Latinos in Somerville. For instance, Juan feels frustrated because he believes that some teachers at school do not support his academic or artistic development. He claims that some instructors, such as his guidance counselor, do not believe that he can really succeed academically and so they offer little support or encouragement. He notes that “the guidance counselors they really don’t help you. I hear it from my friends. They’re pretty much just good to change your schedule. And that’s about it” (“Juan” – 10/24/2008). In order to express this frustration with this lack of support, Juan demonstrates his talent through his artwork. Similarly, Diego feels frustrated by the lack of support he receives at the high school and from his family. He draws comic strips in order to vent his frustration and offer hope for individuals who lack a support network; the main character in his Twin Nightlight series, Shiro, succeeds despite the fact that his mother is dead and his father is absent. Even without a support network, Shiro perseveres. I believe that Diego may intentionally depict Shiro’s success in order to offer encouragement for himself and others who lack a strong support system. Although both Diego and Juan do feel supported and encouraged by instructors at Pintamos Nuestro Mundo, (a topic I will discuss in greater detail later), they nevertheless feel as if some staff, community members and family members do not support them. Both young men use artwork in order to express their frustration over their perceived marginalization in the high school and in Somerville at large.

Emotional Expression for Immigrants

Artistic production can also be a way for immigrant children to express specific emotions that may result from the immigrant experience. The process of immigration can be a difficult and even traumatic process for children and adolescents; they sometimes experience loneliness, confusion and even depression. Art can allow them to address and express these painful emotions. In her experience working with immigrants in an elementary school, Cristina Igoa found that “art allows immigrant children... to communicate in a state of pure creativity, channeling the anger and other human emotions that are the result of their uprooting: anxiety, ‘loss of language,’ insecurity, and conflicts about integrating their native culture with the new” (Igoa 123). In his work as director of Pintamos Nuestro Mundo (PNM), Wil Renderos has seen firsthand how art can help new immigrants to deal with the trauma of relocation. He describes how PNM holds “circle groups” in which young people discuss issues such as immigration, gang violence and academics. There is also a group specifically dedicated to recent immigrants. In his experience, Wil has found that artwork can be an effective way to facilitate discussion in this group. He claims that often, group leaders will ask young immigrants to first draw what they are feeling. He finds that a discussion soon builds off of what the students have depicted. He believes that drawing allows recent immigrants to express and silently articulate painful emotions that they are feeling.

Similarly, Maria describes how she often feels sad or lonely and wishes she were “home again” in Brazil. She only arrived in the United States two and a half years ago and most of her family, including her mother, still lives in Brazil. She says that she misses her family and her country very much. But when she dances samba or writes songs in her native Portuguese, she

feels more comfortable here in the United States. When I asked her if she felt good when she dances, she replied, “Oh sure. It makes me feel like I’m in Brazil at that moment. Or maybe I feel comfortable enough. It’s like I feel like I’m in Brazil for that moment” (“Maria” – 10/10/2008). She also describes how music helps her to cope with feelings of sadness and homesickness: “And then I start to think, oh if I was there now, I’d be with my mom, doing this or that and then at that time, the music really helps me to get out of it or stop thinking of them” (“Maria” – 10/10/2008). Even just listening to music helps her to deal with painful emotions and calm herself. She describes how “sometimes I would just feel lonely and I would put my radio on and just put on a song and it would help me a lot to get out of that bad time” (“Maria” – 10/10/2008).

Another important characteristic of artistic and musical production for new immigrants is that it can serve as a nonverbal means of expression. Recent immigrants who are not yet fluent in English can express emotions through artwork that they may not yet be able to articulate verbally. Instead of suppressing their feelings, they can acknowledge and express them. When linguistic barriers exist, artistic production can serve as an outlet for expression. I suspect that many recent immigrants in Somerville turn to artwork to express themselves when they cannot do so verbally. When I visited Marcus Santos’ percussion class, there were a number of students who spoke little or no English. While Marcus was talking, these young people remained silent and withdrawn from the rest of the class. But as soon as they began to play the drums, the students became animated and extremely expressive. I believe that they were able to express themselves freely and spontaneously through music, without the constraints of language. Thus, artistic production can be especially valuable to young, recent immigrants in Somerville because it allows them to overcome the language barrier and express their emotions.

Therapeutic Value of Artistic Production

Maria is certainly not alone in her view that music and artwork can be calming. In fact, regardless of whether my narrators express emotions specific to immigrants or common to many other teenagers, all of my narrators found the process of creating art to be relaxing and therapeutic. The young artists that I interviewed described how producing artwork allows them to forget about their troubles and momentarily escape from the stresses and hardships of reality. Indeed, for many of my narrators, this subtle form of escapism seems to be their primary motivation for engaging in music, dance, or the visual arts. For instance, Maria clearly articulates why she chooses to dance: “It feels great. It’s really fulfilling. Happy. Maybe when you’re dancing you don’t really think of problems or anything, just the good time that you’re having” (“Maria” – 10/10/2008). José essentially echoes Maria’s sentiment and claims that he often sings and writes music because “it feels good not to think” (“José” – 10/17/2008). Juan concurs, saying that “I feel good when I draw; it’s relaxing to me” (“Juan” – 10/24/2008). For all of these immigrants, artistic production helps them to relax and temporarily forget about the struggles of being an immigrant in this country.

However, it is not only recent immigrants who use artwork as a way to relax or block out hardships in their lives. Ana and Diego, both of whom were born in the United States, also describe the therapeutic value of music and art. For instance, Diego claims that when he draws comic strips, he is able to temporarily forget about family difficulties and the teasing he endures at school. It seems to me as if Diego may use artwork as a sort of numbing device, allowing him to block out and suppress painful emotions that may arise from his difficult home life. Furthermore, Ana also turns to music for comfort during difficult times. In order to deal with

sadness over her sick parent, Ana writes and performs songs. She says that after writing a song about a difficult emotion, “I feel like that’s done, it’s out of me” (“Ana” – 10/31/2008). Unlike Diego, who seems to use art to further dull his emotions, Ana uses music to vent and release her emotions. Nevertheless, both narrators benefit from artistic production, because both felt better and more relaxed after creating an original piece. Thus, the therapeutic benefits of artistic production are evident in all of my narrators’ experiences, regardless of their backgrounds.

Art and the Creation of a Personal Identity

Confusion Over Personal Identity

As noted earlier, the stage of adolescence is a critical time in the construction of an identity because it is when most individuals develop a clear self-definition. According to Erikson, teenagers explore various identities before eventually selecting the one that best represents their true personality and character. While the process of identity formation is challenging for virtually all adolescents, the task is even more difficult for Latinos. Indeed, Phinney and Jensen describe how Latino teenagers not only have to define their personalities, but also position themselves ethnically and culturally. I argue that art can be used as a tool for the development of both the personal identity and the ethnic identity. I first investigate the role that artistic production plays in the development of a personal identity.

When I refer to a personal identity, I do not mean to imply that one’s ethnic identity is by any means impersonal; clearly, the creation of an ethnic identity is shaped primarily by the individual. I would argue that the creation of one’s ethnic identity is a component of the larger construction of one’s personal identity. I choose to define the term “ethnic identity” as that component of the identity that acknowledges belonging to a particular ethnic or cultural group. I

will refer to the term “personal identity” as all those other components of identity, such as values, beliefs and emotions that exist separate from one’s position within a specific ethnic group. Clearly, it is impossible to completely distinguish these two components of identity, because one’s ethnicity inevitably affects the way one views him/herself. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this study, I will refer first to the effect of artistic production on my narrators’ development of personal identities, and then investigate the role of art in the creation of unique ethnic identities.

In support of Erikson’s theory of identity formation in adolescence, my narrators generally express uncertainty over how to identify themselves personally. For example, Diego describes how he does not feel as if he belongs to any particular group; he does not view himself as an athlete, or an exceptional student, or an extremely popular young man. He does not feel really accepted by any particular group of students because he thinks he is different from all of them. Indeed, when I asked Diego about what group he feels he belongs with, he replied “no one; I’m kind of a loner.” Later on in the interview, he said, “I don’t really like to work in teams.” It seems to me as if Diego is unsure about his own beliefs, values and opinions, and is therefore unable to position himself within his peer group. Diego expresses a confusion of identity that Erikson would argue is typical of the majority of teenagers, regardless of ethnicity.

Artistic Production and Increased Self-Awareness

The act of producing artwork seems to help my narrators become more aware of the complex emotions that they are experiencing. As Igoa found in her research, “through art the children stay in touch with their feelings” (Igoa 123). By creating original works of art, narrators are able to reflect on past emotions and gain a better understanding of their complex feelings.

For instance, Maria claims that when she dances, “I kind of go back to the moment and I think of things I did wrong and I shouldn’t do and things that I did that were good at that time” (“Maria” – 10/10/2008). Maria dances samba, a style which is very common in Brazil. When she dances, she imagines herself in Brazil and recalls particular moments when she danced to the same song at home. She is able to think back to those moments and reflect on her emotions at that time. Essentially, she analyzes and looks back on past emotions through the lens of music, thus gaining a more complete understanding of her own feelings.

For some of my narrators, thinking creatively and producing original pieces allows them to assume a concrete identity: that of an artist or musician. In fact, three of my narrators clearly identify themselves as artists. The two other narrators are hesitant to define themselves as such because they do not produce work for the public, but instead engage in artistic production recreationally. Nevertheless, all consider art to be a component of their identity, even if they do not define themselves as artists. Furthermore, they view this artistic identity as stable and permanent; they anticipate continuing with artistic production in some way in the future. Even though Ana is only fourteen years old, she is already very clear about her identity as a musician. She knows emphatically that music is an important part of her life and that she will undoubtedly continue making music in some capacity in the future: “I absolutely love music... I just have to do it; I can’t not do it” (“Ana” – 10/31/2008). By creating music, Ana already has a clear sense of herself and her future trajectory. Similarly, Juan defines himself as an artist and anticipates having a career in graphic design. This sixteen year old already understands his own strengths and has a career plan. José also strongly identifies as a musician. In the interview, José described how his family in El Salvador did not appreciate his musical ability. In fact, he claims that his mother openly discouraged him from writing music and performing, and that she

disapproved of his decision to focus on music rather than on other pursuits such as sports or job training, which she believed could lead to a more lucrative career. However, José refused to listen to his family's opinion and instead created his own distinct identity as a musician. Making music has allowed him to define himself separately from, and in opposition to, his family's beliefs. My research indicates that artistic production can enable young people to explore their own emotions and develop identities as musicians or artists.

Sense of Self Esteem and Empowerment

For my narrators, artistic production not only helps them to explore their emotions, but also to gain self esteem. In her work with immigrant students in elementary schools, Igoa also notes how the “the immigrant children felt their strength, and through their artistic talents, they became quite visible and respected in the school” (Igoa 128). Indeed, she found that “through art, they [immigrant children] can begin to gain inner confidence because their first ‘masterpieces’ can be hung around the room, making them instantly visible” (Igoa 125). Although my research, unlike Igoa's, was not confined to young immigrants, I too have found that narrators gain self confidence through their artwork. My narrators are proud of what they have created; they recognize their ability to create something that is not only original but also well-received by the larger community. For example, Juan feels proud of himself when he sees his finished product, especially if his artwork can make someone else happy. He explains that “for me, it's always rewarding to see when I'm done drawing something, especially if I think it's going to be so... if it was really hard to draw it” (“Juan” – 10/24/2008). He also acknowledges that the mere participation in artistic activities helps him to gain self esteem. He describes how his life has changed as a result of his involvement in PNM and graphic design:

“So it’s like right now I would still be, you know, one of those kids who doesn’t do anything in the afternoon, just like hanging out in the parks doing nothing productive. But here, I learn a lot of things. I’ve changed my ways. You know, like learning how to be responsible and all that stuff. It’s going to help me for the future... I mean, I see myself having a future, going to college and studying graphic design” (“Juan” – 10/24/2008).

He contrasts his life before and after beginning to create artwork. Clearly, Juan has gained life skills, such as greater responsibility, as a result of his artistic involvement. He now has a clearer idea of a potential career path, and he envisions a successful educational and occupational future.

Similarly, Ana describes how she feels confident and “powerful” she feels when she sings. She claims that “when I have the mic in my hand, I feel like I can do anything” (“Ana” – 10/31/2008). She loves the feeling she gets when she performs live in front of a crowd; there is no other equivalent feeling in her opinion. She feels as if she is special and she immediately gains energy and confidence. Similarly, she feels good about herself after she composes a song. After she finishes writing a song, she says that “I always feel good because I just accomplished something. I mean I did that!” (“Ana” – 10/31/2008).

Wil Renderos also emphasizes the importance of allowing young people to create something original. He claims that in school, students are constantly being told what to do. He does not want to criticize Somerville High School in particular, because he believes that the American educational system in general is highly structured and based around standardized curricula. He believes that students would experience the same level of structure at almost any urban, public high school in the country. Despite the fact that such standardization is widespread, he still opposes the rigid structure. Wil believes that it is extremely important for

adolescents to think for themselves and create artwork that is meaningful to them. He insists that teenagers gain a sense of empowerment when they see what they have produced themselves. They begin to believe in themselves and their own abilities; they realize that they do not need instructions or regulation by others in order to succeed. Wil believes that encouraging students to be artistic and think creativity is an invaluable tool toward building teenagers' self esteem. Thus, he structures PNM around an assets-based model that stresses creativity and personal initiative²⁵. Due to federal regulations, Somerville High School cannot provide many opportunities for artistic production because teachers must adhere to established lesson plans. Therefore, independent programs, such as PNM, are essential in order to empower adolescents and offer a respite from the nearly continuous structure of the school day²⁶.

Artistic production can also be a way for Latino youth to distinguish themselves. As noted earlier, I saw numerous students in Marcus Santos' percussion class who were recent immigrants and spoke little English. Before class, they were withdrawn and seemed to try to fade into the surrounding mass of people. However, once they began playing drums, these students lost this sense of anonymity. Not only did they grow animated and lively, but they also distinguished themselves. Their musical talent enabled them to stand out from the crowd. In a high school that is so large and diverse, I would imagine it would be difficult for recent immigrants to establish a space for themselves, especially if they do speak the native language. Music, therefore, can be a valuable tool for immigrants at Somerville High School to distinguish themselves nonverbally and to develop a sense of pride. When given the opportunity to show their musical talents, I suspect that they grow to believe in themselves and gain self esteem.

²⁵ Please see the section entitled "Pintamos Nuestro Mundo: A Case Study" for a more detailed description of PNM and its philosophies.

²⁶ Please see "Discussion and Concluding Thoughts" for further discussion of potential improvements to Somerville High School, PNM, and other community groups.

Even those students who do speak English fluently can still produce art in order to distinguish themselves and build self esteem. As noted earlier, Juan often feels underappreciated at Somerville High School. He feels as if teachers sometimes do not recognize his academic and artistic potential; he believes that some teachers and community members assume that he is always getting into trouble. Juan believes that one reason why some adults hold these prejudices is because they assume that all young Latinos are members of gangs, specifically the MS-13 gang. While Juan admits that he does have friends in street gangs, he is certainly not a member. Nevertheless, Latino teenagers in Somerville often struggle to overcome the negative stereotypes associated with them as gang members. In her 2004 UB report, Avantika Taneja found that many citizens and officials overstate the issue of gang activity in Somerville. Her narrators “perceived the problem to be overstated. Regardless of the reality of incidence of gang-mandated activity, narrators that discussed the gang issue asserted that it figures heavily in the perception of Latino teens in Somerville by the City and community” (Taneja, 20). Juan believes that teachers and other community members sometimes assume that he is in a gang even when he is not, and therefore do not appreciate his academic and artistic potential. Similarly, José says that his mother does not trust him because she fears he is in a gang, even though he is not. She constantly monitors his activity and discourages him from hanging out with his friends on the weekends, because she is afraid his friends may be part of a gang.

Such stereotypes can damage teenagers’ self esteem. Many Latino teenagers internalize these unfair assumptions and come to expect little of themselves. Some even join a gang themselves, with the hope of finding a supportive peer network and a sense of self confidence. Juan believes that many young people become involved in gangs and in delinquent activity because they lack self confidence and because they have internalized the low expectations

espoused by certain members of the community. He believes that it is essential for young Latinos to find a way to display their unique talents, so that they can actively defy stereotypes which label them as untalented and lacking potential. He explains that there are many talented young Latino artists in Somerville. But, he explains, “if you don’t find a way for a kid to show his talent, it’s just going to wash away. You know, they might get involved into bad stuff in the streets” (“Juan” – 10/24/2008). He believes that some young people turn to gangs and street life because they lack an alternative outlet through which to gain self esteem and disprove others’ negative assumptions. He proposes artistic production as an effective way to prevent Latino teenagers from engaging delinquent activity. By creating art, young Latinos actively counter negative stereotypes; they demonstrate that they are not failures, but rather talented artists and individuals. Rather than internalize external criticism, they gain self esteem because they see that others’ assumptions are not necessarily true. Thus, artistic production could be an effective way to help Latino teenagers in Somerville feel good about themselves and disprove negative stereotypes.

Formation of an Ethnic Identity

As indicated previously, Erikson theorizes that individuals from a variety of contexts and backgrounds are prone to struggle with “identity crises” in adolescence. Yet, my narrators face the additional struggle of having to define themselves ethnically and create a space for themselves between two potentially conflicting cultures. Phinney and Jensen both describe how ethnic identity formation is especially critical in adolescence because it is often when individuals are first immersed in ethnically diverse contexts, such as public high schools. Such a situation is especially true in Somerville, where almost all teenagers attend the same high school. At

Somerville High School, they must interact with an ethnically, racially and economically diverse student body and position somehow position themselves within this larger peer group. My narrators are actively trying to construct their ethnic identities. Some of my narrators, especially those who were born in this country but maintain some degree of connection to their parents' homelands, express ambiguity about their ethnic identities. They are unsure how to define themselves or which box they should check off when identifying themselves ethnically.

For instance, Ana does not know how she would describe herself ethnically. She was born in Boston and has lived her whole life in the United States, but her parents speak Spanish at home and the family travels to El Salvador quite frequently. Ana acknowledges that "I do feel a connection to El Salvador," but she speaks little Spanish, which seems to prevent her from identifying fully as a Latina. She explains that "I'm kind of half American, half Salvadorian because both my parents were born in El Salvador but I was born here... I am a Latina, but I don't really show it sometimes because I don't really speak Spanish. It's kind of confusing" ("Ana" – 10/31/2008). It seems to me that Ana does sense that she is in some way distinct from her white, native-born peers, but she also feels that she is not a full-fledged Salvadorian or Latina due to her lack of fluency in Spanish. I believe that Ana is confused about how to define herself ethnically because she maintains a bicultural identity in which she identifies partly with both El Salvador and the United States.

In fact, I found that the majority of my narrators, especially those who had lived for a significant amount of time in the United States, feel at least partly torn between their parents' culture and the lifestyle that they are exposed to on a daily basis outside of the home. I suspect that the gap between parents' cultures and children's lifestyles is particularly strong in Somerville due to the fact that the vast majority of Latinos in Somerville are immigrants or

children of immigrants. Unlike other cities, such as Los Angeles, which have an established Latino community dating back many generations, the Latino community in Somerville is still young. Immigrants from Latin America didn't arrive in Somerville in large numbers until the 1970s. Thus, most Latino adolescents in the city today are either immigrants themselves or have parents who are immigrants. For children of immigrants, there can be a particularly large cultural rift between parent and child. As the child becomes immersed in American popular culture at school, he/she may question some of the cultural values of his/her parents' ethnic group. Thus, the task of selecting an ethnic group with which to identify, while still maintaining familial harmony, becomes very complex. They struggle to gain acceptance in the larger society, while still trying to retain some connection to their parents and their heritage. The result, for many, is that they do not feel as if they truly fit in anywhere. Juan describes how at PNM, "we're trying to help kids to have a sense of belonging. Because some Latino kids, they don't feel with the Latino culturally and they don't feel with the American culturally, you know?" ("Juan" – 10/24/2008). He believes that some of his peers who are children of immigrants feel culturally because they cannot completely relate to any ethnic group.

Diego seems to be one such individual. He claims that although most of his friends at school are also of Salvadorian descent, he doesn't really identify with other Latinos at the high school because he is so different from them. According to Diego, "even though a lot of my friends are of the same nationality, I still feel left out. Because I'm so different from everyone else" ("Diego" – 11/07/2008). When I asked him to expound on these differences, he described how many of the Latino students are involved in gangs, wear baggy clothes and chains, and listen to rap and hip-hop. Diego, in contrast, is not a member of a gang, and enjoys listening to songs by rock bands such as Blink 182. At our interview, he was wearing a button-down shirt

and jeans. Diego seems to be unwilling to place himself as a member of the “Latino” ethnic group, but he also seems to feel as if he is different from other non-Latino students, as is evident by the fact that he claims to be “a loner.” Like Ana, Diego is unable to identify fully with any ethnic group.

Role of Artistic Production in Ethnic Identity Formation

One way to explore and ultimately create an ethnic identity, is to create artwork. Through music, dance and the visual arts, the young people I interviewed reflect their understanding of their own ethnic identity. In this way, the production of artwork aids in the formation of a distinct ethnic and cultural identity. Through art, the narrators are able to create and depict an ethnic identity that is uniquely reflective of them as individuals. Because no two narrators have identical ethnic identities, each narrator’s artwork is also distinct. I believe that my narrators’ works of art are accurate representations of their perceptions of their own ethnic identities.

Maria

Out of all my narrators, Maria is the one who seems to maintain the strongest connection to her homeland. I believe she engages in transnationalism. Researchers and scholars differ in how they define a transnational individual, but for purposes of this paper, I will adopt Levitt’s definition. According to Levitt, a transnational is an immigrant who remains actively invested in his/her country of origin (Levitt 6). Transnationalism does not merely refer to the maintenance of certain cultural practices or lingering feelings of solidarity with citizens of one’s homeland. Instead, transnational persons also remain actively involved in their country of origin. This type

of involvement can manifest itself in many different forms. Transnational individuals often maintain frequent contact with relatives and friends in their country of origin. Some immigrants form hometown associations that fund projects in their homeland, such as the construction of schools or the creation of a public park. Transnational individuals often remain intimately involved in the day-to-day lives of family members and friends who have remained in their homelands. Clearly, the ability to maintain nearly constant contact is made possible by recent advances in technology. Levitt notes that “New communication and transportation technologies permit easier and more intimate connections... A closeness arises just from knowing that you can be in touch immediately if you so desire. It also gives migrants the ability to be involved in the day-to-day decisions of the households they leave behind” (Levitt 22-23). In contrast to the traditional assimilationist model, many transnational immigrants today continue to identify strongly with their country of origin, even after settling in the United States.

Based on my interview with Maria, I believe that she maintains a transnational identity. Although she has lived in the United States for more than two years and she speaks nearly flawless English, she still identifies closely with Brazil. In fact, she is the only narrator who could clearly and easily define her ethnic identity. When I asked her how she would define herself ethnically, she answered emphatically, “I’m Brazilian” (“Maria” – 10/10/2008). She included no mention of an American or a Latina identity. I believe part of the reason that Maria identifies so completely with Brazil is because she does not intend to stay in the United States. Maria wants to be a sojourner and return to Brazil after she completes college. She continues to call Brazil her home, and so it makes sense that she would identify with the nation that she considers her true homeland. Maria actively maintains a connection to Brazil in her everyday life. She calls home nearly every day to speak with her mother and brothers, and helps to guide

the family's financial decisions. She has already been back to Brazil twice to visit. Furthermore, she lives in a neighborhood that is dominated by Brazilian immigrants. It seems as if these neighbors have joined together to form a sort of transnational community. Maria explains that her neighborhood is "almost like a piece of Brazil" ("Maria – 10/10/2008). She goes on to say:

"We all listen to Brazilian music, the same music I listened to there. And I also go to the Internet and I listen to the radio stations. And TV; we have Globo, it's a Brazilian channel. We have that at home. And pretty much, we do our food, we cook our different dishes and everything. I know I'm in the United States because when I go out I have to speak English... but besides that, I'm very Brazilian" ("Maria – 10/10/2008).

She and her neighbors seem to try to recreate their lives from Brazil. Based on Maria's description, many aspects of her life, such as her food, music, television stations and primary language, remain the same even though she has immigrated to the United States.

Maria's transnational identity is extremely obvious not only in her style of dance, but also in her motives for dancing. Maria participates in traditional forms of Brazilian dance, such as pagote, samba and bossa-nova. She does not try to mix more American dance forms, such as hip hop, into her dance. Instead, she remains very loyal to the dance styles that she learned as a child. She listens to the same type of music and engages in the same dance steps as she did when she was in Brazil. In this way, her dance represents a sort of continuity between her life in Brazil and her life in Somerville. Like her transnational identity, Maria's dance transcends national borders and allows her to maintain a strong connection to her homeland. I believe that Maria's dance may help her to maintain an identity that is distinct from that of her native, white peers. Samba reminds Maria of her Brazilian identity and allows her to position herself in contrast to her non-Brazilian peers who may participate in other forms of dance, such as hip hop or

reggaeton. Indeed, “immigrant children sometimes fear that they will be swallowed up by another culture and often need to express their cultural identities in their artwork” (Igoa 130). It is possible that Maria’s dance allows her to preserve a purely Brazilian identity.

Furthermore, one of Maria’s primary reasons for participating in dance is to reconnect with her homeland. She claims that when she dances, she feels a strong tie to Brazil and to the loved ones she left behind. For Maria, dancing “makes me feel like I’m in Brazil at that moment. Or maybe I feel comfortable enough. It’s like I feel like I’m in Brazil for that moment, because I really miss it” (“Maria” – 10/10/2008). Through dance, Maria is able to return to her home, even if only for a few minutes. In addition, dance helps to strengthen her identification as a Brazilian. She claims that “basically everyone there dances,” so when she dances, she also “feels very Brazilian” (“Maria” – 10/10/2008). By dancing samba, she clearly identifies herself as a member of the larger Brazilian community; she is just another Brazilian who likes to dance. Hence, it appears that dance helps Maria to reconnect with her homeland and confirm her Brazilian identity. Art is yet another channel through which Maria maintains a connection to Brazil as an immigrant in the United States. Artistic production could thus be viewed as an additional form of transnationalism for Maria.

José

Even though José also moved to the United States only a few years ago, he does not seem to possess the same type of distinctly transnational identity as Maria. It is true that his art is somewhat reflective of his Salvadorian heritage. For instance, he writes all of his songs in Spanish and frequently refers to romantic relationships that he experienced in El Salvador.

Maria also claims that José makes music in order to reconnect with his homeland. Maria and José are good friends, and she believes that José writes songs for essentially the same reason as she dances: “The same way he listens to the songs... He used to live there [El Salvador] and he just feels the same way, like, oh right now I’m feeling like I’m there. And he starts remembering the good times he had and also sometimes the bad things that happened and...it’s therapy for him I guess” (“Maria” – 10/10/2008).

Interestingly, José’s own responses seem to contradict Maria’s beliefs. José insists that he feels little connection to his homeland. When I asked him whether he misses his friends and his previous life in El Salvador, he only concedes “maybe sometimes” (“José” – 10/17/2008). He claims that he didn’t have many friends while growing up and he seems to have endured much heartache in the past. Unlike Maria, José does not want to return to El Salvador. Even though his mother wants him to move back to El Salvador, José does not want to leave the United States because he “like[s] it here too much” (“José” – 10/17/2008). He does not identify himself as a Salvadorian. Interestingly, he also does not identify as an American. Instead, he refuses to ascribe any ethnic label to himself insisting that “I don’t think I’m Salvadorian or American. I don’t like to discriminate. I’m just my person. I’m what God made me” (“José” – 10/17/2008). It is possible that José has achieved such a level of transnationalism that he no longer even recognizes national boundaries and instead defines himself as a truly global citizen. It is also possible that José’s refusal to define himself ethnically is due to his own ambiguity over his ethnic identity. It is clear that he has distanced himself from his past and his homeland. While he is striving to gain acceptance in the larger society, he nevertheless recognizes that he is not yet fully American.

José's music reflects this desire to appeal to a broader audience in the United States. His music is not typical of Salvadorian music. José explains that in El Salvador, people mostly listen to cumbia, or Colombian folk music that is also popular across Latin America. José, however, does not enjoy cumbia and instead composes romantic ballads and Christian rock songs. Before emigrating, José felt very constrained by the traditional musical expectations. He notes that there were few opportunities to produce the kind of music that he wanted to play. Here, he feels as if he can express himself more freely because there is a broader acceptance of various types of music. Rather than only playing for members of his community or for other Salvadorian immigrants, José hopes to reach a wide audience. In fact, he hopes to soon write his lyrics in English so that his songs would appeal to a broader audience and be more accepted by non-Salvadorians. Overall, José's music does contain some elements of his Salvadorian heritage, but it also demonstrates his desire to fit in with more mainstream society. He is willing to sacrifice some of the more traditional elements of his music, such as the Spanish language, in order to reach a broader audience.

Juan

In comparison to my other narrators, Juan appears to be the only interviewee who identified clearly as a Latino. He maintains some level of connection to Peru, but it seems to me that he feels the strongest connection to his Latino peers, many of whom are active in PNM as well. Juan is the only narrator to refer to himself as a "Latino." He acknowledges that he is distinct from other members of society, but he also appears to feel accepted by the Latino community. In my opinion, he has adopted a clear Latino identity; this identity includes

influences from his homeland and from American, popular culture, but it is definitely separate from each.

I believe that Juan's art is a direct reflection of his identity. Through his art, he expresses his view of the world and his own place within society. Although Juan has lived in the United States for over five years, his artwork implies that he still feels a connection to the country where he was born. His artwork is influenced by elements of Peruvian culture. He includes images from the Incas and landscapes of the Andes mountains in some of his graphic designs and air-brushed paintings. He is also inspired by the Incans' use of colors and shapes. Juan explained to me why he feels it is important to include such images in his artwork:

“Always in my art I always put my signature, you know, but also I want to have that distinctive touch to it so that when they see a drawing, oh, that's Jair or something. Not just for its signature, but for what it has.

And so you feel as if showing the Peruvian side is an important part of you?

Ya, I'm not going to completely forget about it. Like, you know, I...I do a lot of things, you know, [unintelligible] but when I try to draw something from Peru or Peruvian background. I want them to know I'm from there.

Why is it important for people to know?

Because I...it's like, that's my identity. That's where I come from. So they know that it's not just like another country in South America” (“Juan” – 10/24/2008).

Clearly, the Peruvian culture still affects Juan and continues to be a part of his identity. By drawing, Juan can relate to his heritage and express his ethnic background.

While Juan is clearly influenced by Peruvian culture, he would not identify as a Peruvian. Although I did not ask him specifically, I suspect that he would not identify as a mainstream,

American teenager either. I believe Juan considers himself to be an American, but a Latino American. His artwork suggests that he views himself as being in some way distinct from others. He describes how he recently designed an air-brushed T-shirt. On the back, he drew two DNA strands. One of the strands was “normal,” but the other was “kind of weird, like missing things or something” (“Juan” – 10/24/2008). Juan seems to identify with the “strange” strand of DNA, saying that “people always describe me as, like, you know I’m kind of... not odd, but... I don’t know, like it’s the way to show that I’m different in some way, but in a good way” (“Juan” – 10/24/2008). Juan acknowledges that he is different from some of his peers, but he seems to have accepted and even embraced this diversity. He does not seem to view his Latinidad as negative in any way; in fact, he celebrates his unique ethnic identity through artwork.

Ana

As mentioned before, Ana struggles to identify herself ethnically. She was born in this country, yet she maintains some connection to her parents’ homeland. She acknowledges that she does feel some connection to El Salvador, although she seems to identify strongly with her American peers. I believe her identity could be best characterized as bicultural; she is largely influenced by the mainstream American society in which she has grown up, yet she retains a tie to El Salvador and recognizes that she is in some way distinct from her peers.

Ana’s music is highly reflective of this fusion of American and Salvadorian influences. Thus, I believe it is accurately representative of her biculturalism. Ana’s music mostly deals with themes from daily life in the United States. Most of her songs address relationships between friends or romantic partners; she describes disagreements, breakups, gossip, laughter

and the close bonds of girlfriends. While such themes are largely universal to the adolescent experience, Ana writes specifically about her own experience in this country. Her songs are targeted toward her own specific peer group, and thus are more reflective of her unique experience in the United States.

Despite the fact that Ana writes mostly about American experiences, she chooses to write some of her songs in Spanish. It is interesting that Ana makes some music in Spanish, even though she rarely speaks the language. She acknowledges that she sings much more in Spanish than she speaks. When I asked her why she sings in Spanish, she said, “it’s just easier and it sounds better when you sing in Spanish” (“Ana” – 10/31/2008). She had trouble articulating why she writes in Spanish, which leads me to suspect that it is not a very conscious decision; it seems as if some of Ana’s songs naturally end up in Spanish, without much planning or consideration. Furthermore, Ana’s band is composed of nearly all Latinos; all but two of the members are Spanish speakers. The band frequently plays cumbia and reggae, musical styles that are common in Latin American countries. Ana had never considered why her band chooses to play such forms of music; again, it seems as if the decision was not a conscious one. Ana eventually concluded that this choice could be a reflection of their shared Latino identity. She says that “if you grew up with that music, then you know it” (“Ana” – 10/31/2008) so it’s only natural to incorporate such musical elements into their songs. Although Ana does not consciously recognize her music as reflective of her Salvadorian heritage, it appears as if her music does incorporate elements from her parents’ homeland. Thus, I would argue that Ana’s music represents an effortless fusion of Salvadorian and American influences, one that reflects Ana’s largely subconscious bicultural identity.

Diego

Out of all my narrators, Diego most clearly rejects the term “Latino.” Although both of his parents were born in El Salvador, he insists that he feels no connection to that country. He speaks little Spanish and does not travel frequently between the United States and El Salvador. He seems to resent his parents for speaking mostly Spanish; he is frustrated by their unwillingness to learn English. I also find it interesting that Diego has adopted a nickname that is more common in the United States. He has rejected his father’s name in favor of a more conventional nickname. As noted earlier, he does not associate with other Latinos in high school. Despite the fact that Diego seems to identify with neither El Salvador nor the pan-Latino movement, he still faces racial discrimination. In the interview, Diego did not elaborate on exactly how he has faced prejudice, but he did mention that he has been the victim of racism in the past. I suspect that such discrimination and “internalized racism” could be one factor leading Diego to reject his ethnic heritage²⁷. It seems as if Diego seeks to identify himself independently of the Latino movement.

As a result, his artwork is not particularly reflective of his Salvadorian heritage. Through his comics, I believe he attempts to downplay his Latino heritage and emphasize American influences. It is true that his comics do contain some characters from El Salvador. But in general, there are very few Salvadorian or Latino influences in his artwork. The comics are written in English and he uses the manga cartoons when drawing his comics, a style that actually originates from Japan. He cites Akira Toriyama as his inspiration. Mr. Toriyama is a Japanese manga artist who created the popular manga series, Dragon Ball, which is full of martial arts and magic. Unlike Juan’s designs, Diego’s drawings do not contain images from El Salvador, nor

²⁷ Please see Jessie Sofio’s 2008 UB report for a more detailed description of internalized racism and how it affects artistic production.

are they written in his parents' native language. I believe that artwork serves as a tool for Diego to distance himself from the ethnic and racial label that is so often imposed on him. Thus, once again, artistic production is a means through which to express and clarify one's ethnic identity.

All of my narrators seek to clarify and somehow express their ethnic identities through artwork, music or dance. They are faced with the task of positioning themselves between the American culture in which they are immersed, and the native culture of their family's homeland. Their artwork demonstrates their efforts to construct such a complex ethnic identity. This process of ethnic identity formation is not necessarily unique to Somerville. I suspect that many teenagers living in other ethnically diverse, urban areas would experience a similar struggle and may turn to art as a way to express and reflect on their ethnic identity.

How Artistic Production Relates to Somerville

Addressing Community Issues

Regardless of how they define themselves ethnically, many narrators use art to address and reflect on issues that are relevant not only to themselves, but to the larger community. They seek to call attention to group problems and send a political or social message through their artwork. Out of all my narrators, Juan most often incorporates political and social critiques into his artwork. In fact, nearly all of his designs call attention to complex and troublesome issues that are prevalent in the young Latino community. For example, he has designed a T-shirt that criticizes the Somerville Police Department's role in immigration raids. He explains that through a class at PNM, "we've done a shirt that... it's called ICE, it's the immigration police. You know, the police in Somerville they say they don't work with immigration but then again, they don't stop the raids and stuff like that so you know, we did a shirt that's like "polICE" kind of

giving the message out there” (“Juan” – 10/24/2008). Juan hopes that this T-shirt will invoke open discussion among the community; he believes that people too often do not acknowledge all of the arrests and deportations that occur in Somerville. He says that immigration is a major issue for many Latinos in Somerville due to the high number of undocumented residents: “what’s going on with the Latino community, what’s going on with immigration, the immigration problem is a big deal” (“Juan” – 10/24/2008). Although there are few official statistics available on deportations, immigration raids do occur in the city. This past August, federal immigration officials arrested and deported two undocumented immigrants in Somerville, including one with alleged ties to MS-13, in a project dubbed Operation Community Shield (Smith). Juan opposes such deportations and addresses this issue directly, with the hope of bringing it to others’ attention and hopefully inspiring some changes in the police force’s policies.

Issues of immigration and undocumented residents were also the topics of multiple videos that the students at PNM produced in collaboration with SCAT. During the 2007-2008 school year, various members of PNM joined with instructors from SCAT to create original films. The program is called Next Generation Producers Youth Video Program²⁸. The instructors taught the students how to film and edit, and also provided them with the necessary equipment. Students were encouraged to produce a film on any topic that was of personal interest to them. While some students chose to create music videos or short, fictional films, many students also utilized their films as a way to send a political or social message to a larger audience. Wil Renderos, program director for PNM, was not surprised when students began to engage in social critique even when they were not prompted. He explains that many students want to comment on larger, community issues, but they don’t always know how to do so. He says it is not uncommon for young people to discover an outlet for political and social expression

²⁸ Please see appendix B for a link to the website containing these films.

through art. Among the films that the students produced through the program with SCAT, there was a film discussing undocumented students at Somerville High School. The film consists of a series of interviews with school officials and anonymous undocumented students. The directors ask such questions as, “What are some difficulties that immigrant students face to succeed academically?” and “How does an undocumented child differ from an adult immigrant?”

Another film, entitled “Immigrant PSA” discusses the economic importance of immigrants in the Somerville area. Again, directors interviewed immigrants throughout Somerville to get their opinions. Due to the efforts of these young people, viewers now have a better understanding of the issues affecting the Latino community in Somerville.

Another issue that Juan discusses through his art is the prevalence of teenage gangs in Somerville. In the interview, he described how many of his friends were involved in gangs and engaged in illegal and sometimes violent activity. He also described how young people are often unfairly accused of being part of a gang; he believes that police officers and school officials target young Latinos and make rash, premature assumptions. He views gangs as a major problem that is plaguing his peers and classmates. In an effort to make others aware of this trouble, Juan produces artwork. He describes how he drew a comic strip to reveal the truth about gangs, but also to offer a message of hope:

“And what inspired me was, you know, the gang problem that is happening in Somerville. Seeing my friends, you know, getting jumped unfairly when they’re not part of a gang. What you see, what you hear in school, oh this kid got jumped [unintelligible] other stuff. You know, seeing fights at school. So I came up with a story with my friend who wanted to do that. I also... you know, it was a positive story. It was a good ending... it was a positive message to see at the end, you can always work out your

problems, you know? Because friends always, will always be friends” (“Juan” – 10/24/2008).

Juan hopes to not only call attention to this pertinent issue, but also to offer encouragement and optimism. He hopes to inspire others to mobilize for change by reassuring his viewers that change is possible.

Diego also addresses the issue of gangs through his artwork. Unlike Juan, Diego was not conscious of the fact his comics address larger, community-based issues. He is not intentionally trying to send a message about the dangers of gang membership. Nevertheless, I believe that his art is at least reflective of the gang problem in Somerville. In the interview, Diego revealed that “I knew a bunch of people in gangs and I saw what happened to them and so I guess that affected my comics in some way” (“Diego” – 11/07/2008). His S’ville comic series describes a boy who is pursued by dangerous gang members after he quits the gang due to its illegal activity. I believe that Diego is trying to reveal the truth about the dangers of becoming involved in a gang through his comic strips.

Although Ana does not make any sort of political critique through her music, she does comment on the dangers of romantic relationships. She says that she targets many of her songs toward her female peers. She tries to warn them about the risks of entering relationships; she believes that too many girls have their hearts broken by disloyal boyfriends. She hopes to send a message to her female peer group through her music.

Speaking for Their Community

Because many of my narrators address issues that are relevant to a larger group, some view themselves as representatives or “voices” for their communities. For instance, Juan

admires the Latino muralists in Los Angeles because he believes they speak for the larger community. He explains that:

“they can show what they see in their community or you know, what they’ve been through, what the community has been through. Like... I admire the murals they have in LA. You know, some people say they’re graffiti and destructive, but you know, some of that stuff is really beautiful and you can see people put a lot of hard work into it” (“Juan” – 10/24/-2008).

Juan strives to emulate these muralists and serve as a voice for the group he identifies most strongly with: young Latinos in Somerville. He wants to share his community’s unique opinions and perspectives with a larger audience. He notes that:

“I always want to show what a young person sees. Because it’s different from what an older person would see, what a little kid would see or what a senior citizen would see. I want to show it in my perspective. And so like my people’s perspective... I always like expressing myself and also what the community goes through. Because what I go through is something that maybe a lot of people go through. So when I express myself I might be expressing others too” (“Juan” – 10/24/2008).

Juan feels as if the Latino adolescent population in Somerville has a distinct perspective and he hopes to share that view with the rest of community. I believe that Juan feels a sort of moral obligation as an artist to accurately represent his peer group to a broad audience and serve as a voice for “his people.”

Pintamos Nuestro Mundo: A Case Study

One local program that helps young Latinos address such important community and moral issues is Pintamos Nuestro Mundo, the youth program at Centro Presente. As previously indicated, there is actually a variety of youth arts programs offered in Somerville. In addition to PNM, SCAT runs a program called Next Generation Producers which allows high school students to create original films on pertinent topics. Somerville High School also offers music classes and dance clubs; of particular interest is Marcus Santos's percussion class, which unites and empowers students of all backgrounds by teaching them how to play drums. Ideally, I would have liked to devote equal attention to all of these programs. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, I was unable to investigate SCAT's program or the classes at Somerville High School in depth. I have decided to focus on Pintamos Nuestro Mundo as a case study of a youth arts program in the Somerville area. I chose this program because two of my narrators are active members of PNM and because I was able to speak with Wil Renderos quite frequently. I believe that PNM provides a good model of a program that both builds artistic skills, and empowers young Latinos in the Somerville area. For this case study, I will first discuss the history of Centro Presente and of PNM. I will then describe PNM's goals and objectives. Finally, I will describe how some of my narrators view PNM and I will present my own evaluation of the program, along with potential suggestions for youth programs in the future.

Centro Presente

Centro Presente is a state-wide organization that is directed by and targeted toward Central American immigrants. The organization was founded in 1981, in direct response to the influx of Central American immigrants at this time. As noted earlier, vast numbers of

Salvadorians and Guatemalans arrived in Massachusetts during the 1980s because they were fleeing civil wars in their home countries.



Due to its reputation as an established immigrant city, Somerville witnessed a rapid rise in the number of Central American immigrants. Upon arrival, some of these immigrants began to organize and advocate for equality and social rights.

These immigrants united around common causes and began to “think of themselves as a group... They acknowledge[d] that they belong to a collectivity constituted across space and express some level of self-consciousness about this membership” (Levitt 10). The resulting organization, Centro Presente, officially began in Cambridge, Massachusetts, but its office is now located in East Somerville, near the border with Charlestown. According to its mission statement, Centro Presente is “dedicated to the self-determination and self-sufficiency of the Latin American immigrant community of Massachusetts... Centro Presente strives to give our members voice and build community power”²⁹. Today, the organization provides a variety of services to clients, adult education and legal services. There is also an Education and Advocacy Group that advocates for the rights of immigrants. The group “produces and distributes information about immigration policy, labor rights and the global economy through various media” in an effort to raise awareness and reduce

²⁹ Cited in Centro Presente’s website. Please see bibliography for complete citation.

unfair arrests and deportations³⁰. In addition, Centro Presente has another working group dedicated to protecting workers' rights through outreach and organization³¹.

Pintamos Nuestro Mundo

Centro Presente also operates a youth program called Pintamos Nuestro Mundo (PNM), or “We Paint Our World.” Founded in 1995, PNM is “a unique initiative that engages immigrant Latino youth between the ages of 11 and 18 in comprehensive arts-oriented curriculum,



homework assistance, outdoor activities and leadership development”³². The program is the only private program in Somerville that is specifically targeted toward young Latino immigrants and children of immigrants³³. When the program first began, it was solely an after school arts program. It has since “transitioned into a youth leadership development program.” Juan, a peer leader at PNM explains that:

“It has evolved from that [art]. When I first joined it was, and since it started in the 90s, it has become... It was an all art program. I came when the coordinator was Cynthia and it was an art program. And then we had the peer leader program. And then after that, you know, Wil, who is the current coordinator, he came and changed the way the program works. It was still an art-based program but he added a lot of things” (“Juan”– 10/24/2008).

Today, PNM offers classes in a variety of art forms, including air-brushing, graphic design, film production and DJ remix. The program also offers homework assistance and informal

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

counseling services. There are also peer-led boys' and girls' groups, which try to build teamwork and self esteem³⁴. Participants in PNM have created an impressive collection of artwork over the years. According to the group's website its accomplishments include "fifteen murals, sixteen multi-media public presentations and the painting of five city switchboxes"³⁵ The group is currently creating a Welcome sign for the community garden located at the Growing Center near Union Square in Somerville. The sign is extremely colorful and depicts flags from all over the world as a symbol of unity.

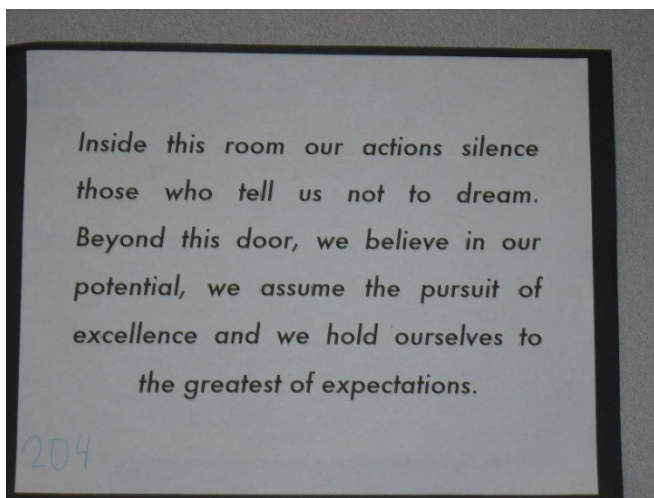
Participants in PNM are encouraged to create classes based on their interests. For example, Wil recalls how many high school students became interested in air brushing a few years ago after they heard about Latinos creating air-brushed paintings in Los Angeles. The students expressed an interest in learning how to air brush and Wil helped them to acquire the necessary equipment and arrange for an artist to come in and teach them. Wil claims that these sorts of proactive decisions are exactly what he wants to see out of the young people. He encourages teenagers to think creatively and take initiatives. In fact, he says that "the most important thing for me is that they do something creative, that they produce something original. Because at school, it's all structured" (Wil Renderos – 11/13/08). One of the primary objectives of PNM is to allow each individual to voice his/her opinion through artwork. Program directors and peer leaders encourage young people to express themselves through art; he does not explicitly ask them to create socially conscious works of art, but he finds that students often express their views on political and social issues through music or the visual arts. He believes that it is important for young people to comment on their community, because it helps teenagers to position themselves within the larger society and clarify their own identity in relation to

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

others. Thus, “art is treated as a form of ethnic identity expression” and PNM provides a “space for teens to negotiate cultural/ethnic identity” (Taneja 27, 29). PNM strives to utilize art as a medium through which young Latinos can express themselves both personally and politically.

In addition to this artistic aim, PNM maintains a more comprehensive objective. The program seeks to provide a safe place for young Latinos where they can feel comfortable and empowered. Wil explains that many participants feel underappreciated at school and may



receive little attention at home because their parents are absent or busy working. In contrast, he claims that PNM’s directors devote attention to each individual and recognize his/her own strengths. He explains that “we recognize their talents and believe in them... I would call it an assets-based model” (Wil Renderos –

11/13/2008). By focusing on each teenager’s strengths, Wil hopes to empower the individual and strengthen his/her sense of self esteem. He encourages participants to be proud of their Latino heritage, but also to be proud of their own unique abilities and gifts. PNM strives to create a positive, nurturing environment for young Latinos so that they can grow stronger and more confident over time.

Participants’ Evaluation

Based on my discussions with Diego and Juan, two participants in PNM, it seems as if the program is meeting these objectives. Both narrators speak very positively about PNM and insist that it has helped them greatly during their teenage years. Juan first discusses the importance of the program for other young people. He describes how many of his peers are talented artists, but they never would have had the opportunity to display their talent if it were not for PNM. He reasons that, “it’s better to have a program like this that gives young people an opportunity to show what they got to the community” (“Juan” – 10/24/2008). He also explains how PNM helps young Latinos to feel a sense of belonging. When describing the goals of PNM, he says “We’re trying to help kids to have a sense of belonging, you know?” (“Juan” – 10/24/2008). Clearly, Juan believes that PNM is helping other young people to reveal their talent and feel comfortable with themselves.

He also describes the positive impact that PNM has had on his personal life. He reflects on his experience with PNM and describes how:

“Since joining this program, like almost five years now, it’s helping me to be more involved in my community and it’s helping me open doors to really good people who are helping my future. So it’s like right now I would still be, you know, one of those kids who doesn’t do anything productive in the afternoon, just like hanging out in the parks doing nothing productive. But here, I learn a lot of things. I’ve like changed my ways. You know, like learning to be more responsible and all that stuff. It’s going to help me, you know, for the future” (“Juan” – 10/24/2008).

I find it interesting that Juan does not mention anything about the artistic knowledge he has gained from being involved in PNM; instead, he notes how PNM has taught him many life skills

and how he is generally a more confident individual as a result. The impact of PNM on Juan's life has clearly not been limited to artistic production.

Similarly, when describing what makes PNM special, Juan does not mention its art programs, but rather its unique, supportive environment. He explains how:

“here, they don't put you down. You know, they always tell you, you can do this and this and that... And here, the coordinators, they always support you with your academic stuff and even problems at home. And so it's nice to have someone who will listen to you. And maybe provide a solution or help you through your problems” (“Juan” – 10/24/2008).

Based on Juan's responses, it appears that he feels appreciated at PNM. He feels a sense of belonging and empowerment. At the same time, he also appreciates the coordinators at PNM and feels as if they are doing a good job helping him and preparing him for the future. Juan's description of PNM seems to match Wil's vision for the program, suggesting the PNM is largely meeting its objectives.

Diego also speaks positively about how PNM has affected him personally. He says that at school, he often gets teased by fellow classmates. He also describes how he has a few supportive teachers, but most of them “just care about homework” (“Diego” – 11/07/08). In addition, Diego does not feel appreciated at home; he is frequently by himself at his house and he does not feel much support from his father. Diego comes to PNM because it is the only place where he feels comfortable and appreciated. When I asked him why he comes to Centro Presente every day, even when no one else is in the office, he says that “it's better than home” (“Diego” – 11/07/2008). He claims that he can relax here; he doesn't need to worry about family difficulties or cruel peers. At PNM, “no one teases me, which is weird” (“Diego” – 11/07/2008).

He thinks the coordinators and fellow participants in PNM are very friendly and he believes that they accept and welcome him just the way he is. Like Juan, Diego does not mention how PNM affects his artistic production; it seems as if Diego's primary reason for coming is not necessarily to learn art skills, but rather to feel a sense of belonging. For Diego, PNM provides a valuable, safe place in which he can forget about his worries and feel comfortable and confident in himself.

Discussion and Concluding Thoughts

Upon evaluating PNM, I believe that the program has many strengths, as well as a few areas that could be improved. Young people seem to really benefit from receiving one-on-one attention; Diego and Juan feel as if they are appreciated and listened to at PNM. Another strength of the program is its dedication to an assets-based model. Coordinators recognize the unique talents and strengths of each individual. They offer encouragement and regard each participant in the program as special and full of potential. Another positive aspect of the program is its exclusively Latino participants. Although I understand the importance of maintaining groups with students of mixed-ethnicity, I also believe that young Latinos benefit from interacting solely with other Latinos. They are surrounded by students of various ethnic backgrounds at high school all day. Some seem to crave a safe space where they can speak their native language and explore their ethnic identity through artistic production. At PNM, young Latinos are no longer the minority; they are not labeled as different but are instead accepted and gain a sense of belonging. I believe that it is necessary to have some youth programs that cater specifically to Latinos. Finally, students in PNM benefit because they are able to design and create projects for themselves. Coordinators want young people to make decisions

independently and implement classes that are of interest to them. They encourage them to be proactive and think creatively, thus empowering young people for the future.

It is clear that PNM creates a positive space for young Latinos in many ways. However, I believe that the program also has a few weaknesses. Firstly, PNM is only able to serve a fairly small number of individuals at a time. Although the program does not limit the number of participants, there are currently around twenty active members. Like many private, community-based organizations, PNM is constrained by its budget and cannot accommodate large numbers of participants. It does not charge students to participate in programs, but I suspect that it could not support dozens of participants, because there are only a few full-time staff members, and its office space is quite small. Unfortunately, I do not see any solution to these barriers. Ideally, PNM would have a larger budget and would be able to afford a larger staff, but such a situation is highly unlikely. Therefore, I believe that there should be more programs similar to PNM offered in Somerville. Currently, PNM is the only program in the city that specifically targets young Latinos. I believe that other programs should be made available so that those Latinos who cannot participate in PNM can find a safe space where they can explore their ethnic identities.

Another possible way to improve PNM would be to offer transportation services for the children. I suspect that some students may have difficulty getting to and from PNM every day, and that such limitations on transportation might prevent some people from participating. Right now, it seems as if most students take public transportation from the high school to PNM in the afternoon. But I wonder how these students return to their houses in the late afternoon; although public transportation is fairly extensive in the city, I doubt that there are buses that connect PNM to every student's house. I believe that PNM should develop a system of transporting students

home in the late afternoon. A simple carpool program may be an effective and cost-efficient way to allow more students to attend the program.

As indicated earlier, Somerville High School faces a number of obstacles in educating such a diverse student body on a limited budget. Although some of my narrators complain about the lack of attention and support that they receive at school, I believe that the public school system is doing a fairly good job considering its resources. Ideally students, especially young Latinos, would receive more one-on-one attention and more encouragement. They would be able to take more art and music classes, and construct their own projects. However, it would be unreasonable to make such suggestions, because the high school is constrained by a shortage of staff, a lack of funding and a duty to adhere to a state-mandated curriculum. Nevertheless, there are two reasonable ways in which I believe Somerville High School could better serve its Latino students. Firstly, I think that there should be more Spanish and Portuguese speaking teachers and staff members. Currently, most bilingual instructors only teach in the ELL classes. Including bilingual teachers in all subject areas would help to make Latino students feel more accepted and comfortable. Secondly, I understand that art and music classes are frequently cut due to budget constraints and the emphasis on standardized curriculums and testing. Ideally, I would recommend that such classes receive more funding because they are crucial for young people's development. However, it appears unlikely that cuts in funding for art and music programs will end in the near future. Thus, in order to ensure that students continue to reap some benefits of thinking independently, I believe that creativity should be incorporated into other subjects at school. Teachers of math, science, literature and history should all encourage students to create independent projects or choose from a list of possible assignments. Even if all students

cannot take part in art or music classes, it is important that they nevertheless continue to think creatively and gain a sense of empowerment.

The construction of one's identity is a difficult process for all adolescents, but especially for young Latinos in the Somerville area. My narrators have found artistic and musical production to be effective means of expressing their emotions, gaining self esteem and commenting on issues relevant to their community. Artistic production can help recent immigrants to deal with trauma and loneliness, and can provide non-native English speakers with a way to nonverbally express themselves. It can also serve as a way to maintain a connection to one's homeland or one's ethnic heritage. My narrators also find artistic production to be empowering, because it allows them to counter perceived negative assumptions. Many narrators feel marginalized or unfairly labeled as failures or troublemakers. By creating art, young people can realize their potential and disprove those critics who doubt their abilities. Hence, art and music greatly aid my narrators in their development and transition from childhood into adulthood. The key is to ensure that these young people can continue to reap the benefits of artistic production in the future. In order for these young people to realize their potential and become successful artists and citizens, it is pertinent that resources, opportunities and encouragement continue to be made available to them.

Areas for Further Research

Due to the fact that this class only lasted for one semester, I have been forced to limit the scope of my project. I have been constrained by time and have been unable to delve further into certain areas of research. In an ideal world, I would have interviewed more young people in order to get a wider variety of opinions. I understand that my five narrators by no means

constitute a representative sample. All of them already have connections to art programs in Somerville, either through PNM, The Welcome Project or Marcus Santos' class. I would be interested in interviewing young people who may not be directly involved in such activities, but who instead create art more recreationally. I also would have like to interview community leaders and instructors. There are a variety of topics that I would have liked to explore in my own research and that I would like to recommend to future scholars and curious individuals:

1. A closer examination of other community art programs, such as Somerville Community Access Television, The Growing Center, Books of Hope, and classes offered through the Somerville Arts Council. I focused on Pintamos Nuestro Mundo as a case study for this report, but I believe that other programs are just as worthy of investigation. It is also likely that there are other youth art programs in Somerville that I never knew about and therefore did not mention in my paper. A more comprehensive study of all of these programs would certainly be valuable to the community.
2. A closer examination of the art and music programs available through the Somerville Public School System. In this paper, I touched briefly upon the classes and programs that are offered by the Music Department at Somerville High School. A more comprehensive analysis of such programs, as well as an examination of the visual art classes available to students, would be a valuable area of research.
3. The impact of duration of time in the United States on identity formation. I have discussed how each of my narrators has a distinct ethnic identity. The narrators felt varying degrees of connectedness with their homelands, or their parents' homelands. It would be interesting to investigate to what extent such an identity is the result of immigration and/or time spent in the United States. Do first generation immigrants

inevitably feel a stronger connection to their homeland? Do second generation immigrants who have lived their whole lives in the United States invariably feel a weaker connection to their parents' homeland? What other factors could be involved? It would also be interesting to look further into how young people express such an identity through artwork.

4. A more thorough investigation of other types of artwork. For this report, I was only able to interview five artists. I suspect that there are other young Latinos who are producing other forms of music and artwork. It would be interesting to investigate how other Latinos engage in artistic production in different ways.
5. Analysis of family background. I tried not to inquire much about my narrators' home life or family structure, because I did not believe such information was pertinent for my project. However, it would be interesting to look into whether any narrators' family members are also musically and/or artistically involved. Are teenagers whose parents are musically or artistically inclined more likely to become artists themselves?
6. A closer examination of public programs. Although I did communicate with Rick Saunders and I have tried to include information about art and music classes offered at Somerville High School, it would be worthwhile to investigate these classes further. It would also be interesting to research any other public art programs for youth, perhaps offered by the recreation department. I believe it is important to compare private and public programs and consider the unique strengths and struggles of each. I hope that scholars will pursue these areas of research in the future.

Bibliography

- “2007-2008 NCLB Report Card – Somerville High School.” Somerville High School. October 1, 2007. 6, December 2008.
<http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us/education/sctemp/f9a8c18fdaff2241b04ca41fb6fe74f8/1228566789/SHS_Report_Card.pdf>
- “About Somerville.” City of Somerville, Mayor Joseph A. Curatone. 2008. 11, November 2008. <<http://www.somervillema.gov/AboutSomerville.cfm>>
- “Ana.” Personal interview with Juliana Slocum. 31, October 2008. 129 Putnam Street, East Boston, MA 02228.
- Arcaya, Sara. “La Quinceañera: Performances of Race, Culture, Class, and Religion in the Somerville Community.” *Urban Borderlands: Somerville Oral History Project*. Tufts University, Fall 2004.
- Berk, Laura E. *Child Development: Eighth Edition*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc. 2009.
- “Boston Arts Academy: About Our School.” Boston Arts Academy: Educating Boston’s next generation of artists, scholars and citizens. 23, November 2008.
<<http://www.bostonartsacademy.org/Pages/index>>
- Centro Presente staff. Centro Presente: Union, Poder, Justicia. 2008. 8, December 2008.
<<http://www.cpresente.org/home.htm>>
- Community Action Agency of Somerville. “Somerville Community Profile 2008.”
Community Action Agency of Somerville: Data. 24, June 2008. 23, November 2008.
<<http://www.caasomerville.org/about/data>>
- “Diego.” Personal interview with Juliana Slocum. 7, November 2008. Centro Presente, 17 Inner Belt Road, Somerville, MA 02143.
- Golomb, Claire. *Child Art in Context: A Cultural and Comparative Perspective*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2002.
- Igoa, Cristina. “Immigrant Children: Art as a Second Language.” *Invisible Children in the Society and Its Schools. Third Edition*. Sue Brooks, ed. Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc., Publishers, 2007. 117-140.

- Jensen, Lene Arnett. "Coming of Age in a Multicultural World: Globalization and Adolescent Cultural Identity Formation." *Adolescent Identities: A Collection of Readings*. Ed. Deborah L. Browning. New York: The Analytic Press, Taylor & Francis Group, 2008. 3-17.
- "José." Personal Interview with Juliana Slocum. 17, October 2008. The Welcome Project, 530 Mystic Avenue, Somerville, MA 02143.
- "Juan." Personal interview with Juliana Slocum. 24, October 2008. Centro Presente, 17 Inner Belt Road, Somerville, MA 02143. 367 Medford Street, Somerville, MA 02143.
- Levitt, Peggy. *Transnational Villagers*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2001.
- "Maria." Personal interview with Juliana Slocum. 10, October 2008. The Welcome Project, 530 Mystic Avenue, Somerville, MA 02143.
- Matthews, John. *The Art of Childhood and Adolescence: The Construction of Meaning*. Philadelphia: Falmer Press, Taylor & Francis Inc. 1999.
- Metro Media Group. The Welcome Project: Making Families at Home in Somerville, Massachusetts. November 25, 2008. <<http://www.welcomeproject.org/staff.html>>
- Onboard Informatics. Somerville Massachusetts. 2008. November 11, 2008. <<http://www.city-data.com/city/Somerville-Massachusetts.html>>
- Phinney, Jean S. "Ethnic Identity Exploration in Emerging Adulthood." *Adolescent Identities: A Collection of Readings*. Ed. Deborah L. Browning. New York: The Analytic Press, Taylor & Francis Group, 2008. 47-66.
- Read, Sir Herbert. "Art As a Unifying Principle in Education." *Child Art: The Beginnings of Self-Affirmation*. Hilda Present Lewis, ed. Berkeley, CA: Diablo Press, 1966. 17-35.
- Renderos, Wilber. "Pintamos Nuestro Mundo." Personal conversation with Juliana Slocum. 13, December 2008. Centro Presente, 17 Inner Belt Road, Somerville, MA 02143.
- Saunders, Richard. "RE: [BULK] questions for project for tufts university." E-mail to Juliana Slocum. 4, December 2008.

Smith, Erin. "Immigration raid nets two in Somerville." Somerville Journal. 12, August 2008.
8, December 2008.
<<http://www.wickedlocal.com/somerville/archive/x1822514047/Immigration-raid-nets-two-in-Somerville>>

Suárez-Orozco, Carola and Marcelo. *Transformations: Migration, Family Life, and Achievement Motivation Among Latino Adolescents*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995.

Taneja, Avantika. "Coming of Age in Somerville." *Urban Borderlands: Somerville Oral History Project*. Tufts University, Fall 2004.

Appendices

Artist Profile

“José” is a twenty year old musician and songwriter in Somerville who plays the guitar and performs Christian rock songs as well as romantic ballads. He was born in San Vicente, the capital city of the department of San Vicente in the center of El Salvador. He has an identical twin brother. Almost immediately after José and his brother were born, his mother immigrated to the United States to find work. She settled in the Boston area and continued to send remittances back to her children. José and his brother were raised by their aunt, Tía Francisca. José is extremely close to his aunt; they speak almost daily on the phone and he often calls her to ask for advice. When José was eighteen, his mother applied for him and his brother to join her in the United States. Initially, José was extremely excited to go, because he describes his past in El Salvador as being bleak and difficult. He frequently mentions how people used to call him “stupid” and how he had his heart broken many times. He arrived in the United States on May 21, 2006, knowing not a word of English. He and his brother moved in with his mother, his stepfather, who is also originally from San Vicente, and his two half-brothers. His mother works as a housekeeper at a hotel in Boston; José could not remember the name of the specific establishment. José immediately enrolled in Somerville High School and began learning English. In June 2007, he graduated and has since been living at home. José is very close to his twin brother, who moved out of the house a few months ago and now lives with friends in Somerville.

José cannot remember exactly when he became interested in music. No one in his immediate family made music while growing up, so it is unclear how he first developed an

interest. He began playing the guitar when he was nine years old. One of his uncles was a guitarist in a local rock band called La Orquesta San Vicente. José learned the very basics from his uncle, and then taught himself how to play more complex melodies. He is largely a self-taught musician and he has never received any formal instruction. It is unclear how José acquired his first guitar. His mother and his aunt actually actively discouraged him from playing; he recalls how members of his family called him “stupid” for choosing to constantly make music. But José insists that he always knew he was destined to make music. He says that when he hears music he feels “a flame somewhere in my chest” and “deep in my soul” (“José” – 10/17/2008). He describes his connection to music as being “like magic.” He said that playing the guitar comes very naturally to him; he never had to work particularly hard to learn. He explains that “It wasn’t hard for me. I don’t know why. My fingers just work and I don’t even think” (“José” – 10/17/2008). There is something about music that speaks to José and inspires him to express himself musically. He insists that his family’s objections never discouraged him from making music, because he has always been certain that producing music is what he was meant to do.

As a child, he listened to Argentine and Puerto Rican rock bands on the radio. He cites Enanitos Verdes, a rock band from Argentina, as one of his favorite bands and primary inspirations. Growing up, he also overheard local bands playing at a club as he walked home from school. José hung around the night club for a long time, begging the older musicians to let him play. Eventually, they agree and they also gave him further instruction in the guitar. Soon, he became an accomplished musician. He claims that he had “always” written poetry as a way of expressing himself, but when he reached age sixteen or so, he began to make these verses into lyrics and compose his own songs. José soon became well known among his peers and

classmates. He had many fans and started to play regularly at La Casa La Cultura, a club in downtown San Vicente. His brother soon followed in his footsteps and began to play the guitar as well. At some point when José was in high school, he, his brother and some friends formed a heavy metal band. The band played at school and in local establishments, but José quit after two years in order to focus on writing his own material. Since coming to the United States, José has grown even more involved in musical production. When he was in high school, he, his brother, and three non-Latino friends formed another band. The band played rock songs by such American bands as Creed. For the most part, however, José composes and then performs his own songs.

Many of José's songs, especially those written when he was younger, deal with romance and love. Most of his compositions express sadness or heartbreak because José usually writes when he is upset, as a way of coping with grief. The first song he wrote, "Historias," describes a young man who has his heart broken by a beautiful girl. This song is a direct reflection of José's own experience. He wrote it at 11:30 at night after breaking up with his first girlfriend. He was devastated and he claims that the words just sort of poured out on the paper; then he felt the need to pick up his guitar and the song just flowed out of him. He said that he felt better after expressing himself through music. In another example, the songs "Contigo" also refers to a past relationship that did not work out. In Spanish, the lyrics read "Dame todo lo que tengas/Y te doy el lado izquierda de mi pecho." Essentially, José is grieving over how this girl broke his heart. He expresses raw emotions and anguish through his music; he says that people often cry when they are listening to his songs.

In addition to creating romantic ballads, José is also extremely involved in producing Christian rock music. In fact, he says that he now writes almost entirely Christian songs,

although he still writes an occasional personal song if he feels very passionate. José is a deeply religious young man. He reads the Bible and prays for at least two hours every morning. He was not very involved in religious life in El Salvador because his aunt did not regularly attend church. But after coming to the United States, he started to attend mass with some of his friends from school.

Today, José is a member of a band at an evangelical church near Central Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The band does not have a name, but it plays every Sunday during mass. In addition to José, the band consists of his brother and three other Salvadorian musicians. José is the lead electrical guitarist and he also composes the majority of the songs for the band. He tries to write at least a few songs every day. So far, the band has only performed at the church in Cambridge, but within the next few weeks, it will travel to Virginia to perform at a church there.

When I asked José what he hopes to express through his Christian songs, he says that he hopes to send a message to his fellow Christians. He believes that God is coming soon and that people need to prepare themselves for his arrival. He claims that people need to change their ways; they need to pray, read the Bible, attend mass and strive to stop all sinning. He is trying to alert people about the imminent arrival of God so that they can save themselves. He claims that many people in his community, especially young people, are involved in gangs and do not act “the way God wants us to” (“José” – 10/17/2008). He hopes that through his music, he can change their lives and “bring them back to God” (“José” – 10/17/2008). The act of writing songs also helps to strengthen José’s own relationship with God; he believes he is a better Christian as a result of his musical production.

José's primary inspiration is Jesus Adrian Romero, a famous Mexican Christian singer who also owns a record label. José describes him as an amazing composer and musician who is able to spread God's message through his music. José hopes to emulate him in the future. Currently, the band is preparing a demonstration of their songs. Within the next year, José and his band members want to travel to Texas to meet with Jesus Adrian Romero and present their songs to him. They hope that he will enjoy their songs and help them to produce a CD. It is José's ultimate goal to create a CD of Christian songs written in English. He believes that then, he can truly spread his religious message to a broad audience.

Link

Videos produced by young people at Centro Presente in collaboration with SCAT:

<http://www.cpresente.org/pnmylp.html>

About the Author

My name is Juliana Slocum and I am a nineteen year old sophomore at Tufts University. I am double majoring in Spanish and Child Development, with a concentration in Early Childhood Education. I was born in Washington DC in January 1989, the middle of three daughters, but I lived most of my life in Concord, Massachusetts. Concord is an affluent, homogeneous suburb of Boston, consisting of roughly 35,000 people. I attended Concord Public Schools and graduated from Concord-Carlisle Regional High School in June 2007. I did not

want to go far away from home so I only applied to schools in the Boston area. Tufts was appealing because I wanted to expose myself to a wider variety of people and experiences. I appreciate the diverse student body at Tufts and welcome opportunities, such as this class, to learn more about the larger community of Somerville. In addition to my schoolwork, I am involved in a variety of extracurricular activities, including Nordic skiing, volunteering, and writing for the news magazine on campus. In the future, I hope to be a preschool or kindergarten teacher and work with Spanish-speaking families.