VISUAL CULTURE ART EDUCATION AND ART THERAPY: AN APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING IMAGES CREATED BY YOUNG ADOLESCENTS IN A CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

by

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the RMIT University

The research was implemented in the School of Education in the Design and Social Context Portfolio

March, 2006
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any materials previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person where due reference is not made in the text.

_________________

March 5, 2006
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<td>Committee of Visual Arts Curriculum Development</td>
<td>CVACD</td>
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<td>Curriculum Development Council</td>
<td>CDC</td>
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<td>Curriculum Development Council Committee on Arts Education</td>
<td>CDCCCAE</td>
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<td>Discipline-Based Art Education</td>
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<td>English Medium of Instruction</td>
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<td>Hong Kong Special Administrative Region</td>
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SUMMARY

This study is about understanding images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents in a Hong Kong school context. It adopted a phenomenological case study method to investigate the images created by eight students from a low band secondary school, in which students participated in a manga creation program. The study suggested a matrix for the investigation that stressed investigating the meaning of the images young adolescents create through their art creation experiences, the reasons for creating images in the particular way, and the way of interpreting their creation process. The study found that there were two types of aesthetics in the image of popular visual culture affecting young adolescents’ image creation: the stereotyped aesthetics and the counter-stereotyped aesthetics. They not only affected young adolescents’ artistic representations, but they also influenced the representation forms of the images of both sexes. Most importantly, they revealed a psycho-cognitive learning process for self-transformation. Each had its specific functions and meanings contributing to understanding images. The matrix demonstrated a self-actualised and self-autonomous ecological system formulated by the socio-cultural context and individual real world problems, in which young adolescents sought solutions to their real world problems through being sophisticated in drawing skills and techniques. The study indicated that the matrix was also an ecological entity of both the visual-image based learning and the psycho-cognitive understanding. Within the ecological system, young adolescents self-actualised to seek an ideal icon from the Japanese manga to represent their identities, examine their stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetics as well as the particular artistic expression in image creation, and project themselves onto the images. The study also found that the matrix was constructed by three stratifications and independently established by each young
adolescent, in which he or she encountered various self-transformation experiences. Under the socio-cultural context, they looked for the aesthetic unity and the individual artistic style according to the individual psychological need to reach the peak experience for self-transforming.
Chapter One

Introduction

1. General picture

This study is about understanding images of visual culture created by young adolescents in the classroom environment, through an approach combining elements of visual culture art education and art therapy. Chapter One is a general outline of the study including the aims and intentions, research questions, approach, scope, limitations, principal definitions, translation note, and an outline of the contents and organisation of the thesis.

Several major issues are briefly raised in this chapter to provide background information for considering the approach for this study: (1) the phenomenon of the increasing awareness of popular visual culture; (2) the emergence of the new technological and symbolic forms of arts and culture dominated by popular visual images in which young adolescents are being exposed and confronted; (3) the shift of the concept of teaching art in the local and global context; (4) the relationship between art therapy, art creation and art education; and (5) the importance of understanding images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents. All of these issues are closely related and ground the rationale of the study.

To young adolescents, comics undoubtedly are one of the most popular and favoured art forms in visual culture, or more accurately, the “popular visual culture”. In Tokyo’s 2000 Summer Comics Market event, there were 500,000 young adolescents buying and selling popular magazines that they created themselves, most of them were comic books called “manga” (Wilson, 2003a). Popular visual culture specifically refers to identifying the type of visual culture that is mainly constructed by contemporary popular visual images and is prevalent among youngsters. Teenagers and other amateurs who are interested in creating manga organise the self-published fanzines club that are called “dojinshi”. Manga and dojinshi are creating a popular phenomenon in Japanese society, becoming the
latest trends of fashion that a sub-culture is raised from mainstream culture. In the late 1990s, there were as many as 50,000 dojinshi circles in Japan and the phenomenon spread fast to other Asian countries such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea, the Mainland China, and even the United States (Schodt, 1996). With increasing awareness of popular visual culture surrounded by a specific aesthetic communication form that is mainly constructed by popular visual images, it is asserted that young adolescents feel more comfortable to express their feelings in this particular way. The emergence of popular visual culture seems natural because young adolescents themselves are exposed to all forms of popular visual images through all kinds of media seen everyday. Although manga is regarded as one of the cultural genres, it has been deliberately rejected by the mainstream.

For young adolescents, visual culture, especially popular visual culture obviously becomes the global and cross-cultural favourite by arousing the common aesthetics related to the cognition of visual images. It is not only limited to the visual form, as sound and text are also included; for example, music video, computer game, Internet, and manga. Although manga is not only limited to the visual form, the creation is a visual-dominated art form that young adolescents select as a way to express themselves. The questions are whether we understand why young adolescents are enthusiastic about images of popular visual culture and why they are willing to make these images in school and even after school. They seem to have significant meanings to them so that they are willing to continue to make the images. It is important to articulate what the images mean to them in the local context within the global environment.

The content and context of visual culture indeed goes beyond the traditional fine arts domain. As images in the postmodern era become as complex as the ever-changing world, the role of images in visual arts education do not necessarily follow the modernist’s concept of aesthetics and categories that limit the selection of art only to the fine arts domain. Visual culture opens the door to new technologies, new media, and new art forms. The realm of visual culture is not only open to all traditional forms of visual communications including architecture, product design, graphic design, painting, drawing, photography, and sculpture, it also includes the non-traditional forms of visual representation such as popular arts, computer games, comics, cartoon, music videos, fashions, new
media arts, computer art, multi-media art, installations, and so forth. Visual culture encompasses all images surrounding our culture and everyday life, no matter whether it is in a conventional form or postmodern state.

From a communication perspective, every form of art can be seen as visual culture but visual culture is not necessarily popular. Popular visual culture specifically deals with images from the mass media such as television, movies, magazines, advertisements, newspaper, comics, and all new art forms. Like visual culture, popular visual culture deals with the content and context in which the political, sociological, cultural, psychological, and historical issues behind the visual images. Adolescents who study the art of popular visual culture may articulate and appreciate the sociology, politics, and cultural aspects of the image through the socio-cultural approach.

Art creation can project and reveal what an individual thinks about the world in which he or she has experience and lives. Art creation is regarded not only as helpful and powerful tools to the self-concept enhancement process, but it also can release from painful experiences. For those painful experiences that cannot be easily described verbally, art can be an ideal and safe “medicine” to help release the non-physical painful experiences in our mind because art is a visual and transcending language (McNiff, 1992). Especially to the young adolescents studying in a low band school in which they are labelled as students with low academic achievement by the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), the question is whether art creation can give a significant meaning to their lives and help transform them?

The forms of art and presentation, which are continuously influenced by popular visual culture, have dramatically expanded. Confronting a new art world in a global cultural environment where there is no precedent that people much depend on technology-based media than ever before, the question is whether the medicine can still help self-growth and self-enhancement, or even release the unspoken painful experiences, just as usual as the traditional media can do in terms of self-expression. The question is whether young adolescents realise that popular visual culture could be a tool to understand and a way to transform them.
In art creation process, symbolic meanings constructed by metaphors are concealed behind the visual images representing people’s lived experiences, feelings, and thoughts. Symbols offer the foundation for “all forms of human communication” (Edwards, 2004, p. 61). On the other hand, the autonomous process of healing happens once the symbolic forms are created. These symbolic forms in art creation can help us to discover, understand, identify, define, interpret, communicate, and judge the conditions or states of the individual by projecting him or her outside himself or herself (Simon, 1997). Symbols have essential meanings to young adolescents, but the question is how they apply these symbols. The concept of art as therapy seems applicable when confronting the challenges of the postmodern world.

From an educational perspective, the concept of visual culture in education can “stimulate, develop, and refine among the highest and most sophisticated forms of human cognition” as students learn how to think and solve a visual problem that has emerged in front of them (Eisner, 2001, p. 8). Visual culture offers opportunities for adolescents to challenge and re-examine their traditional assumptions of the interpretation of texts, words, images, personality, and mind. Visual culture in art education, a new concept and an approach applied to art education, developed by art educators like Paul Duncum and Kerry Freedman in the late 1990s, focuses on making images that combine critical questions with the freedom for individuals and groups to explore meaning for themselves, seeing making and critique as “symbiotic” (Duncum, 2002, p. 3). The vast popular visual cultural phenomenon becomes a trend that young people virtually control by themselves. Under such circumstances, “the possibility of learning through the transformation of images discovered by both teachers and students could result in a new form of visual cultural art education” (Wilson, 2003b, p. 229).

With reference to the local context, in 2003/2004 there were 467,223 students studying in secondary levels (junior and senior high—Form One to Form Seven, equivalent to Year Seven to Year Thirteen) in Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department, n.d.). The young adolescent students whose ages are around 15 studying in Form One to Form Three constitute 31.9 percent of the total population in 2003/2004. These young adolescents are exposed to and affected by different kinds of images of popular visual culture everyday through various media. If we believe that they are the future of the
society, then the question is what effects the images of popular visual culture may have on their future development.

In learning, young adolescents seem to create images of popular visual culture through peer learning, and sharing after school, rather than being formally instructed by teachers in an art lesson. The techniques and artistic skills they learn and apply for art creation seem not to be acknowledged from what art teachers teach in school either. Some of the contents of popular visual culture like *manga* creation and appreciation of music video are even censored and prohibited in the formal art curriculum. As it turns out, a paradoxical condition could happen to the existing art curriculum that what teachers teach might not be what our students need. What students learn may not fully reflect their lived experience and environment. Undoubtedly, the creation of the image of popular visual culture has significant meanings to young adolescents. The question is whether popular visual culture can be considered as one of the important components in the art curriculum.

Obviously, image making is important to the young adolescent’s growth and culture. The images belong to their generation and represent their culture. The essential meanings and messages from the images drive them to have the impulse to be willing to make images continuously. They could be learning something from it. The further questions are what young adolescents know about themselves and how this understanding depends on their culture. It could be a reason that young adolescents might feel comfortable in continuously making images of popular visual culture. This is a critical issue for this study.

1.1. Aims and intentions

Undoubtedly, the global and fashioned phenomenon of the popular visual culture industry becomes a significant issue for young adolescents today. The popular visual culture reflects the importance to the young adolescents’ growth, providing them with a platform to communicate with each other and driving them to reflect on their culture and identity through symbols recognised by their peers. The popular visual culture may not only influence the life styles of the young adolescents, but also their
ways of communication. The essential meanings and the messages of the popular visual culture are delivered to them through the creation of images. *Manga* has been one of the most popular and favourite forms of media of visual culture to young adolescents. They love to read, create, share, and talk about it. Through this media of art, *manga* discloses the identity of young adolescents in close relation to the exploration of images of popular visual culture.

Accordingly, this study adopts the *manga* media to understand the meanings of the images of popular visual culture created and interpreted by young adolescents in the classroom environment and examines the importance of the images to their everyday life, their specific ways of expression, and the interrelationship between their lived experience and the artworks. With the background mentioned, the aims of this study are first, to broaden perspectives of understanding the meanings of the images of popular visual culture in educational settings through an approach combining elements of visual culture and art therapy, and second, to reconceptualise the understanding of the body knowledge on images of popular visual culture within the socio-cultural context.

Images created by young adolescents can actually reflect the authentic image of themselves in terms of the social, cultural, and psychological conditions. The image of self-concept has long been created and has appeared in diverse forms of metaphorical expression (McNiff, 1988; Schaverien, 1999; Waller, 1993). Like verbal metaphors, visual metaphors function in the same way as verb metaphors do; however, visual metaphors mainly apply imagery to arouse feelings or thoughts (Edwards, 2004). Creativity for young adolescents is a learning process of coping with difficulties like depression: it establishes social connection with other students rather than the result of catharsis or sublimation, facilitating students to have a healthy mental growth (Edwards, 2004). From the young adolescents’ experiences of creating the images of popular visual culture, we can articulate how important the meanings are to them.

In search of the meaning of the art creation, this study also raises a further argument whether or not they have the ability to make the aesthetic judgement affiliated with their life experiences, as well as eventually by using the aesthetic conception and judgement to construct their meanings towards the
world. The argument puts the question as to whether the conception of aesthetics can be acknowledged from popular visual culture. A different layer of structure of understanding the images of popular visual culture will be explored.

1.2. Considering the research approach

This section discusses the scaffolding of the research approach to the study. It presents the rationale of the framework construction explicating why this is important to the formulation of the research questions, and how this influences the direction of the study. First, it must be stressed that the study does not use a cognitive approach to inquiry. According to Parsons (1987), most cognitive studies in the arts cannot capture the whole picture of the arts:

Most cognitive studies in the arts have had a limited conception of cognition...they have not taken art seriously, so to speak, on its own terms. Art deals with meanings that are sui generis and are not reducible to other kinds of meanings. Works of art are first of all aesthetic objects, and their significance is lost when they are understood as if they are just ordinary objects. (p. xi)

In contrast, this study is about understanding images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents through combining the elements of visual culture art education and art therapy. It is about how these elements promote communication with each other to create meanings. Manga creation is selected as the art medium for art creation. Besides, there has been remarkable research in manga undertaken from a communication perspective that are mentioned later in Communication Discourse on Manga of Chapter Five, such as Baker (1989), Z. Z. Lin (2000), Xiao (2002), and Wei (2000). The intention of these studies is to connect communication with understanding the meaning of manga as in this study.

Liebmann (1990) found that the communication skills of her clients were dramatically increased after using comic strips in art therapy sessions. She first introduces the basic concept of the comic strip and
uses it as a dialogue in which the counsellor encourages the client to look at the image and talk about the experience of art making together. Applied in the study, the dialogue begins with a collaborative interpretation process. The meaning of the image is then revealed through the triangular relationship between the participant, the researcher, and the artwork together in the art process. The image looking-and-talking process offers the opportunities for students to review their stages from a distance and facilitates them to have further exploration of their “irrational thoughts” (Gladding & Newsome, 2003, p. 247).

Jung (1965) first connects creating an image with explicating an individual’s inner experience. He attempts to interpret dreams by conferring a visual form of representation. In this connection, image making as communication as a road map tells the story and discloses the person’s inner experience. This connection can widely be applied in various daily lives to “help put the dilemma into perspective, provide opportunity for insight, and reveal additional possibilities and choices for living” (Gladding & Newsome, 2003, p. 248).

The researcher has no intention to examine the behaviour, the artistic stage of development, or the developmental stage of the young adolescents, for “behaviours are not equivalent to understanding” (Parsons, 1987, p. xii). The approach adopted does not necessarily belong to any specific disciplinary field. For adopting any one of the approaches will lead art to be “reducible to other kinds of meanings” and to even lose its specific meanings (Parsons, 1987, p. xi). Instead, the study goes back to the philosophical foundation to consider a matrix to formulate the research questions. The first point is to look at the fundamental philosophical considerations concerning the what, why, and how of the study as the foundations of the research questions. The assumption of understanding art is based on three aspects: understanding the creator’s experiences in art creation, the creator’s response to art creation, and the creation process leading to the art product. The above established grounding follows the basic assumptions that understanding art should first understand the creator’s experience in art making, the creator’s response to art creation, and the process leading to the art product. To understand the creator is not equal to an understanding of the art. Parsons (1987) elucidates:
Art is not just a series of pretty objects; it is rather a way we have of articulating our interior life. We have continuing and complex inner response to the external world, composed of various needs, emotions, and thoughts, both fleeting and long-term. The inner life is not transparent to us, not self-interpreting; if we are to understand it we must give it some more perceptible shapes, and then examine the shapes. Art is one way of doing this. (p. 13)

Understanding images can be regarded as understanding the interrelationships among the three parties from an aesthetic communication perspective. Remier (2003, p. 138) suggests a “communication model” of the musical creation process to describe the relationship among them (Figure 1.1). In the model, communication happens when there is “a message from the sender to the receiver as directly as possible with as little interference as possible from the thing (the signal) that carries the message” in music and the arts (Reimer, 2003, p. 138).

To understand means to make connections to and communicate with the experience of the creator in art creation, the creator’s response to art, and the creation process. To articulate the young adolescent’s images of popular visual culture can be related to different perspectives. In the study, to understand is to socio-culturally, psychologically, communicatively, and educationally connect. These four perspectives form a concrete theoretical framework for considering the literature and will be discussed in Part III. To the study, Reimer’s diagram (Figure 1.1) highlights three domains indicating the interrelationships among the creators (the young adolescents’) experiences in the arts, creator
response to the arts, and the creation process leading to art products respectively. They are reasonable and applicable to the development of the foundations of the research questions. With the relationships, it can construct meanings in the arts. The interrelationship among process, products, and experience is like a chain. Sporre (2001) refers to the arts as composed of “process, products, and experiences” (p. 12). To Sporre (2001), processes refer to “the creative actions, thoughts, materials, and techniques artists combine to create product—that is, artworks” (p. 14) and experiences means “human interactions and responses that occur when people encounter an artist’s vision in an artwork” (p. 14). In a communication perspective, the artworks are about communication with human experience. He states,

Artworks involve communication and sharing. The common factor in all art is the humanizing experience; artists need other people to whom they can convey their perception of human reality. (Sporre, 2001, p. 16)

When approaching aesthetics, art involves aesthetic communication in the quality of human experience. The arts can be understood as communication, which is to make connection with the human experience and feelings about the world. Therefore, the process of creating art can be denoted as the process of aesthetic communication. An artwork can be understood as “anything that attempts to communicate a vision of human reality” (Sporre, 2001, p. 15). The process of art making is one of the most decisive issues in visual culture and visual culture in art education. Duncum (2002) describes that the essence of visual culture for art education is not to study the object or image but to study the process leading to understanding by investigating “how images are situated in social contexts of power and privilege” (p. 12) and analyse “how power is allocated to privilege certain values, and who’s art and aesthetic values are not supposed economically and culturally” (p. 12). Duncum’s perspective on the emphasis on studying the process of image creation contributes to one of the groundings in terms of formulating the research questions in this study.

Art, according to Sporre (2003), can be functioned in ways that include enjoyment, political and social commentary, therapy, and artifact respectively. In therapy, symbols are used to make
transformation. These symbols make art possible to be therapeutic. In communication, symbols are used as a magnificent media to make the connections. They “carry deeper, wider, and richer meanings” than signs (Sporre, 2001, p. 16). The diverse symbols construct the meanings and direct us to the way of understanding art. Sporre (2001) describes,

Artworks use a variety of symbols to convey meaning. By using symbols, artworks can relay meanings that go well beyond the surface of the work and offer glimpses of human reality that cannot be sufficiently described in any other manner. Symbols transform artworks into doorways through which we pass in order to experience, in limited time and space, more of the human condition. (p. 16)

To Sporre (2003), in art therapy, the quality of images made by symbols not only can reveal the human physical and mental condition, it “acts as a healing agent for society’s general illness as well” (p. 29). Both art creation and art therapy depend on symbols created to make communication in the human experience through the creation process, products, and experiences. In this sense, this perspective makes sense of the assumption that understanding art should understand the creator’s experience in art making, the creator’s response to art creation, and the process leading to the art product. Nevertheless, this is not a study examining the effects of therapeutic art in young adolescent. On the contrary, the role of art therapy in the study is an approach to contribute its knowledge to understand images created by young adolescent. Co-operated with visual culture in art education, art therapy reveals the meaning of the images so that we can understand rather than start a healing process for the creators.

In addition to the symbols, the study of interrelationships between the creator, the artwork, and the process of art creation are the main subjects in art therapy. Malchodi (1998a) emphases the importance of continuing to study the creator, the artwork, and the art making process in art therapy. Kaplan (2000) suggests investigating “the impact of different kinds of imagery on the creator” (p. 26), “the most beneficial ways of approaching art making” (p. 26), and “the value” in the art-making process” (p. 27). From this perspective, the interrelationships among the three parties—the creators’
experiences, the artworks, and the art making process create the essential meaning. D. E. Young (1982) proposes a perspective similar to the anthropological and sociological viewpoint on the description of
the interrelationship among the experiences from the external world, the aesthetic response, and the
creative process.

The aesthetic response is intimately connected with the creative processing of
information associated with the formal properties of the external world…includes the act
of perception itself and extends to the rearrangement of such formal properties in artifacts,
in order to exert greater control over the environment. (Young, D. E., 1982, p. 5)

Challenged by postmodern theory, Rossen (1989) describes a contemporary concept of understanding
artwork and he defines the meanings of artworks as follows.

Today, a work of art is understood to be a very complex set of signals and meanings,
sometimes contradictory and always relative, embedded in the object not only at the
moment of its creation (and then not always consciously by its creator) but also by its
subsequent life and by what we bring to it from other times and places. (Rossen, 1989, p.
122)

To Rossen, understanding art becomes more complex because the context in which we live is full of
complicated meanings that needed to be decoded; thus causing making the interpretation more
complex than before. With reference to the above, Reimer, Sporre, D. E. Young, Rossen, Duncum,
Malchodi, and Kaplan raise the similar issue on the direction of understanding the arts. What they
argue can be seen as the creator’s experience in art creation, the creator’s response to art, and the
creation process leading to the art product. All these can be described as an aesthetic communication
process that can happen in art creation. The research employs this communication theory to develop
the research questions. The reason for the above-mentioned groundings is based on the belief that to
understand images should be involved with the images. It means to treat the images as an aesthetic
object. The basic assumption for the studies of images in the study is that to understand the images
should understand the creator’s experience in art creation, the creator’s response to the arts, and the creation process leading to the artwork. Art becomes an element going through different disciplines and it can be shared. They are remarkable because the disciplines relate together and create the meanings of the images.

Understanding images examined in this study then grounds the research questions on a matrix constructed by the interaction between the fundamental philosophical considerations and three domains. The scaffolding of the matrix stresses four important underpinnings: socio-cultural underpinning in visual culture, communication underpinning in manga, psychological underpinning in art therapy, and educational underpinning in visual culture art education. It provides a co-related and substantial structure to construct the responses to the research questions; therefore, it is significant that to answer the research questions is to make an interpretation of the matrix. The research is based on this framework. The three fundamental philosophical considerations against three domains to examine the understanding of the images formulate the research questions. These questions reveal the meaning of the images of popular visual culture the young adolescents create. With these underpinnings, the research questions can be represented in a diagram in which the fundamental philosophical considerations are presented vertically while the three domains are presented horizontally (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Matrix of the research questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fundamental philosophical considerations</th>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>The meaning of the images through the experiences of creating artwork</th>
<th>The creators’ responses to the particular way of art creation</th>
<th>The way of interpreting the creation process leading to art products</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The matrix builds a logical way and a foundation to develop the research questions. It shows a close relationship with communication that becomes the essential point of the study. In this matrix, an
account of the nine cells provides directions to consider the research questions. Some research questions in this matrix are more or less important than others. For example, when approaching the creation process leading to art products, the question of how becomes more important than the questions of what and why. Number one or number two is drawn in the diagram to represent the higher rank of the importance of the questions. Focusing on the number ones, three essential questions of the research are: (1) what the meanings of the images are about through the experiences of creating artwork; (2) why the creators’ responses to art creation are in this particular way, and (3) how the creator interprets the creation process lead to art products.

The table below shows how the research questions start with the most important fundamental question—the question of what (Table 1.2). This is the first and most important starting question for all. Because of this, it also directs the intention to adopt the phenomenological method as the principal research method in the study. This question provides the content and context of the real lived experience of the young adolescents, giving an authentic description of the scenario of the research, influencing the development of the other questions directly. Following the question of what, the question of why is to focus on the particular lived experiences the creator makes response to their art creation. Finally, following the question of why, the last question of how is to investigate the way of interpretation.

![Table 1.2 Order of fundamental questions](image)

According to this structure, the three research questions are then developed. They can be formed to be one consolidated question that drives the study—the question of the interrelationships among experience, process, and products. In the study, to understand images is to understand the interrelationships. The consolidated question becomes the main research question that includes three
subordinate questions. To resolve the question much depends on the self-reflective experience. The main question posed by the study based on the matrix is about communication:

1. What are the interrelationships of the images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents?

In answering the main question, clarification will be sought on the following issues: the experiences of creating artwork, the creator’s responses to the particular way of art creation, and the way of interpreting the creation process leading to the art product. The issues are formed in three subordinated questions under the main research question are:

1. What are the meanings of the images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents through the experiences of art creation?
2. Why do they create these images in this particular way?
3. How do they interpret the creation process leading to the art product?

Besides, the main research question, the secondary questions are:

1. What is the meaning and significance to the understanding of the images to the art curriculum in the local context?
2. What perspectives should be reconsidered in teaching art today in the local context?

The secondary research questions are directly related to the resolution of the main research questions. As one of the most popular and representational forms of visual culture, manga creation is specifically chosen as an art method in this research. Manga is prevalent among young adolescents. It is a simple art form that is easy to read, understand, create, and store. The study finds out what experiences the young adolescents have in creating the images of popular visual culture in this art form, why they create these images in a particular way, and how they make the images.

To answer the research questions, a phenomenological case study method for the inquiry into the research is adopted. The phenomenological method reveals the meanings through the investigation into the lived experience within a particular context, which fits the most important research
question—the question of what, that is the phenomenological question of “what is it like to be”. This method adapts for “mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualise, perceive, and understand various aspects of, and phenomena in the world around them” (Marton, 1986, p. 31). In Chapter Three, methodology presents the detailed descriptions of the phenomenological method.

1.3. Scope

This study connects with different themes in popular culture, communication, psychology, art, and education but it does not belong to just one of these. The study adopts an interdisciplinary approach combining disciplines of visual culture, art therapy, and art education to study the understanding of the image (Figure 1.2). This scope provides a clear picture of the research focus that is the overlapping area of understanding images. The rationale for the linking is that all the disciplines have an imitate relationship with art.

![Figure 1.2 An interdisciplinary scope in the study](image)

The study presents a new theory of development in terms of understanding images of visual culture. It will contribute further to our understanding of the basic idea that the visual arts education in the visual culture and art therapy context can be a means of effective communication with the students in a classroom environment. The potential benefits to both students and the contribution to the general body of knowledge are to understand the meanings of images of popular visual culture.
Most importantly, by contrast with the global context in politics, societal customs, cultural discrepancy, and the education system, the study certainly contributes to the body knowledge of understanding images of visual culture created by young adolescents in the local context under the influence of the global context environment. A consideration of combining visual culture and art therapy applied in the art curriculum to understand the meaning of the images of young adolescents is eventually suggested. The study will lead to the extension of the knowledge that is not only in art therapy, popular culture and visual culture in art education, but also in the integration of them all. This makes it possible to develop an approach combining visual culture and art therapy applied to the local visual arts education context, though this is not principally the focus of the study. The study will contribute to the understanding of visual arts pedagogy, the visual culture industry, and the art therapy profession; it may offer new perspectives and insights into future visual arts education and art therapy approaches.

1.4. Limitations

The limitations first, lay on the insufficient literature about combining the visual culture in art education and art therapy approach to understand images created by young adolescents. The reason is that visual culture in art education is a new and debatable concept that has been developing. Second, the study is undertaken over 12 sessions and takes almost one semester to be completed. Although the limitation of time in this condition seems reasonable, it is still expected to take a longitudinal strategy to examine the data.

The design of the study is focused to a manageable size, which allows the reasonable number of participants to be involved. Accordingly, the research study focuses on cases of 12 young adolescents who are students around 15 years old in a local secondary school, with only eight who completed all art sessions, one participated in half of the sessions, and three quit at the very beginning due to the fact that they were asked to participate in an academic supplementary class with other teachers. The teachers-in-charge and social workers acknowledged their departure.
Consideration of the gender balance is not an issue for the selection of participants in this research because the criteria for the selection of the participant are not based on gender. However, as the final discussion are limited to the valid eight cases which consists of seven females and one male student. Details in validation will be discussed in Validity, Reliability, and Sample Selection (6.2.1.2.) of the Methodology chapter. Although the research is undertaken in a low band secondary school, the research results do not necessarily represent and apply to all students in other bandings. In addition, the research limits the field to an educational setting rather than a clinical one, in which the results of the study may not suggest a generalised scope to the art therapy professions. However, it is expected to establish a reference framework in epistemology across visual culture, art therapy, and art education.

1.5. Principal definitions

Art therapy is “based on the belief that the creative process involved in the making of art is healing and life-enhancing” according to the American Art Therapy Association (AATA, 2003). Through creating art and talking about art and the process of art making with an art therapist, one can “increase awareness of self, cope with symptoms, stress, and traumatic experiences, enhance cognitive abilities, and enjoy the life-affirming pleasures of artistic creativity” (AATA, 2003). The British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT, 2005) states that art therapy is “the use of art materials for self-expression and reflection in the presence of a trained art therapist. Clients who are referred to an art therapist need not have previous experience or skill in art; the art therapist is not primarily concerned with making an aesthetic or diagnostic assessment of the client's image. The overall aim of its practitioners is to enable a client to effect change and growth on a personal level through the use of art materials in a safe and facilitating environment”. In general, art therapy is using art as a medium, a creative process, and a therapeutic tool to let people experience and raise their awareness of their self-enhancement in terms of cognitive, psychological, and social levels.

Dojinshi is a Japanese word used to describe teenagers and other amateurs who create their own comics and organised self-published fanzines in Japan.
Images are, according to Broudy (1987), “sensory patterns” (p. 11). Images can be presented as the form of visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, or olfactory images. Throughout the research study, images refer to the visual images that are “the patterns produced by the eye and brain” (Broudy, 1987, p. 11). Images concerned in the study can be understood as art objects in manga creation in general, including drawings and sketches made related to the popular visual culture.

Manga are comic books. It is a Japanese term that specifically refers to Japanese teenagers buying and selling popular magazines they create themselves. This study employs this term for the description of the comic’s creation in general. The themes and types of manga are various from romance to fighting comic stories. According to Wong (2002b, pp. 12-13), there are different types of manga: (1) irony; (2) humour; (3) concerning current issues; (4) allegory; (5) exaggeration; (6) popularity; and (7) all the above.

Popular visual culture is one of the parts of visual culture that specifically refers to all contemporary forms and contents of arts and culture in postmodern times. These forms and contents are popular and prevalent among people, and include music video, computer games, and the Internet. In the study, it specifically focuses on the images of popular visual culture.

Visual culture denotes a concept that art is a social and cultural product that constructs our social life and meaning in our daily life through vision or visualization. Visual culture can also be regarded as one of the significant forms of socio-cultural productions instead of the traditional concept of art history. The concept of visual culture can be applied to re-visit art history, giving a new explanation and vision. As visual culture is interdisciplinary and multimodal, its realm is increasing. Visual culture contains not only the traditional category of art which refers to fine arts such as drawing, painting, sculpture, print-making, crafts, ceramics, and architecture, but also the contemporary that is other than the fine arts category such as television and video, mixed-media forms, installations, films, music video, computer games, performance art, pop concerts, animation, cartoons, comics, Internet, virtual reality, logos and symbols, product design, daily life objects design, subcultures, fashion and so forth.
**Visual culture art education** (VCAE) is a new and emerging concept of teaching art with a visual culture perspective in terms of the context and content. In art curriculum, there has been a debate in the United States since the late 1990s. It is about the paradigm shift of art education from a discipline-based approach to a visual culture in art education one. The realm, the rationale, teaching contents, and teaching and evaluation methods in teaching visual culture have been widely discussed. Paul Duncum suggests replacing the Discipline-Based Art Education by applying a new model called *Visual Culture Art Education*. The paradigm of *Visual Culture Art Education* is still being established.

*Young adolescents* refer to young people in the state of development between puberty and maturity. With reference to the Oxford English Dictionary, adolescents mean a youth between childhood and manhood, in the process of developing from a child into an adult, growing towards maturity, and advancing from childhood to maturity. *Young adolescents* cannot be defined simply according to age. The characteristics of adolescents biologically refer to sex characteristics and the definition of adolescents, generally from the age of 11 to 22, includes the person’s cognition and social behaviour in a mature manner (Cheung, 2002). The range of age of young adolescent is different due to the different recognition and cultural difference. In the study, *young adolescents* are confined to the age 13 to 16.

### 1.6. Translation note

This research study focusses on: (1) the transcripts completed in the interviews and artwork of the 12 students; and (2) the transcripts and observations of the teachers-in-charge, the research assistants, and the researcher. All participants are Chinese young adolescents and the interviews conducted in the research are in Chinese. Translation is necessary. In addition, the researcher will do all translation for the texts. The concept of translation is based on paraphrase. The interpretation follows the original meanings of the interviewees as accurately as possible. Besides the transcripts of the interviewees, participant comments, and statements made in each session between the research team and the students, and the sketches and dialogues designed in their art creation are comprehensively recorded and translated. The approval letter of the principal to undertaking research in the secondary school,
consent forms, and plain language statements to the participants including the two teachers-in-charge, two social workers, and participants’ parents or guardians are translated in Chinese.

2. Outline of content, organisation, and presentation of chapters

The contents of the study are presented in 10 chapters divided into four parts. Chapter One is the introduction given to the key aspects of the study as presented that contains the aims and intentions, research approach, scope, limitations, the principal definitions, and translation notes. A general picture of the awareness of popular visual culture arose in young adolescents, the rationale of the study, and the scope of the cross-disciplinary realm. One of the focal points in the chapter is to outline the development process of considering the research approach. The chapter highlights the issues with which this study concerns and how the research approach is formulated. The research approach directly contributes to the rationale of the choice of methodology adapted, elucidating how the rapport between the research approach and the development of methodology.

Part I, Overview of Current Issues in Art Education Related to Research Questions, is composed of one chapter. Chapter Two, Overview of New Perspectives on Art Education in Local Context, describes the local context by introducing the educational reform and policy in the post-colonial context of Hong Kong from 1997. Two critical issues are raised in this chapter for further discussion: the Three Banding Secondary School System and the inclusive learning environment in which the approach to catering of students with diverse needs has been advocated recently by the government. It also introduces the promulgation of the new Visual Arts Curriculum Guide in terms of targets, contents, and context. In addition, the chapter draws the picture of the aims and future of the new art curriculum. These changes are re-writing the history of the local art curriculum and may have a far-reaching influence in the development of art education in Hong Kong. These policies project an image of understanding the students and the art curriculum under the local educational context.

Part II is the Methodology, which consists of one chapter, Chapter Three the Research Design. Following the background of the educational policy in local context given in Chapter Two, this chapter
highlights the importance of the consolidation and restatement of the research questions. Besides, the chapter demonstrates how the research approach links to the methodology and method design leads to the resolution of the research questions. To be consistent with this connection, Chapter Three is organised to present to have a better and consistent understanding of the theoretical framework and scaffolding of the study. In general, the chapter describes the rationale, restatement of research questions, program of study, stages, and phenomenological inquiry method for the study. The methodology presents a description of the design for phenomenological case study process, preparing the data collection and the process, artwork documentation, and methods of analysis including collaborative interpretation and textual and structural descriptions.

In Part III, Framework of Related Literature including chapters four to seven, presents the main discourse relevant to the study. There are four perspectives applied in examining the knowledge and raising arguments related to the study. They are Socio-cultural Discourse in Visual Culture in Chapter Four, Communication Discourse in Manga in Chapter Five, Psychological Discourse in Therapeutic Art in Chapter Six, and Educational Discourse in Visual Culture in Art Education in Chapter Seven. The principle of the organisation of the discourse in the literature is based on the communication concentration, in which the four coherent parts of literature are brought to an in-depth discussion. Each of the sections of literature has its own specific focus to be discussed.

Chapter Four, Socio-cultural Discourse in Visual Culture, reconceptualises popular culture and its relation to visual culture with a macro perspective. Issues of popularity, remapping the arts and culture in the post-industrial era, and the impact of visual power are included. As a selected medium in the study to articulate the meanings of the images created by young adolescents, essential arguments about the meaning and artistic structure, catharsis and stereotyped phenomena, the influence of cognition, value, and attitude, as well as the use of symbolic language in manga present in Chapter Five, the Communication Discourse in Manga with a micro view.

Chapter Six, Psychological Discourse in Therapeutic Art, collates a psychological perspective on examining the aspect of therapeutic art in image making. It explores the meaning of therapeutic art
and the roles of metaphor as well as symbols in it. Interpretation and communication methods and their interrelationships with aesthetics will be further discussed in this chapter. The concept of art education therapy and the possibilities of implementing the therapeutic art approach to art education in a school setting are also highlighted. Chapter Seven, Educational Discourse in Visual Culture Art Education focuses on the discussion about the trend of considering visual culture in the art curriculum from a global view. The rationale, teaching content, and issues related to non-mainstream aesthetics are reviewed.

Part IV, Horizontal Discourse: Introduction to Data Presentation and Analysis Leading to the Concluding Discussion contains data presentation, analysis, interpretation, and conclusion. In this part, there are three chapters. Chapter Eight, Presentation of Data, deals with the presentation of the conceptions and categories of description, types of data, and other data analysis by case presentation method, while Chapter Nine the Analysis: Explication and Interpretation, formulates and interprets the findings. These findings finally lead to the elucidation of the outcomes and implications presented in Chapter Ten the Concluding Discussions. The Concluding Discussion chapter highlights the result of the study, providing the resolution of research questions. It concludes and critically responds to the arguments relevant to the matrix based on the findings and interpretation in the previous chapter. Besides, the chapter also lays stress on the implications of the matrix and the contributions to the knowledge of visual culture, art education, and art therapy.
PART I  OVERVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES IN ART EDUCATION RELATED TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS
Chapter Two

Overview of New Perspectives in Art Education in Local Context

1. Overview of chapter

This chapter provides an overview of the current development of art education in Hong Kong. It aims to draw attention to the consideration of the local context to examine the issues concerning the research questions. The chapter is not a discussion of all aspects covering the recent development of school education today. Rather, its focus is to present a general picture and raise some essential issues in art education policy and art curriculum in order to better understand the context of the school environment where students are involved in the study.

After the reunification of Hong Kong in 1997, there have been changes in the educational policies. In art education, various discussions of educational reform have been raised from the official level of the Committee of Visual Arts Curriculum Development (CVACD) of the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB). The spirit of the reform can be examined in the promulgation of the new Visual Arts Curriculum Guide in 2003. In the chapter, an overview of the new Visual Arts curriculum is highlighted and discussed. Issues like the policy of the Secondary School Places Allocation, the establishment of the inclusive learning environment for diverse needs, and the Visual Arts Curriculum Guide, which certainly affect students, are underlined in the chapter. They give a macro view on both the background of the current developments of education and the micro background of the development of art education.

2. Education reform and policy in the post-colonial Hong Kong context

After 1997, several future directions regarding Hong Kong education are highlighted in the educational reform proposed by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) of the EMB of the HKSAR. They are, at the policy level the implementation of the Three Banding Secondary School
System, at the curriculum development level the school-based curriculum, and at the learning and
teaching level the Key Learning Area (KLA). The KLA contains eight areas of Chinese Language
Education; English Language Education; Mathematics Education; Personal, Social and Humanities
Education; Science Education; Technology Education; Arts Education; and Physical Education
respectively (CDC, 2002b, p. 22). In arts education, some critical changes endorsed by the
Curriculum Development Council Committee on Arts Education (CDCCAE) are even more far
reaching. These essential policies shape how the local context and content influence the development
of art education. They are important because the students involved in the study are receiving
education within the macro context in education now.

The CDC has developed a series of curriculum development documents and supporting resources since
2001; for example, *Learning to Learn—The Way Forward in Curriculum Development* (2001a) and
*Exemplars of Curriculum Development in Schools* (2001b), *Basic Education Curriculum
Guide—Building on Strategies* (2002a), *Key Learning Area Curriculum Guides (1-8)* (2002b), and
*Subject Curriculum Guides (1-8)* (2002c). These documents provide a new and wider perspective on
the development of curriculum in the local context. Among them, there are two issues closely related
to the study that are particularly highlighted here for discussion: the policy of classification of
academic ability achievement in secondary school and its impact on students, and catering for students
with diverse needs in an inclusive learning environment.

System

Hong Kong is a small city that embraces high-density population of 6,895,500 (Census and Statistics
Department, n.d.), in which there were in total 501 secondary schools in the 2003/2004 school year
including students from Form Three to Form Five, equivalent to junior high and senior high levels in
Hong Kong (EMB, 2005). There are up to 467,223 junior and senior high students studying in the
secondary schools. With reference to the target group in the study who mostly are young adolescents at
the age around 12 to 15 studying in the Form One to Form Three level, the population of this specific
group takes 251,463 out of the total number of junior and senior high students including Form One to Form Seven students. In other words, young adolescents constitute 27.4 percent in comparison with the whole population in Hong Kong in the 2003/2004 school year. Therefore, any new policies related to education can be expected to have a great impact on them. One of the policies that has already influenced the young adolescents is the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) system.

The SSPA system has been implemented since 1998. Divided into two stages as discretionary places and central allocation, the SSPA system is a scheme designed for secondary school place allocation. The central allocation is “based on school net, banding, parental choice of schools and random number” (EMB, 2005). The allocation bands of students are “according to their scaled internal assessments results” (EMB, 2005). Although the original idea of the SSPA policy is not concerned with the medium of instruction (MOI), it turns out to be an argument about the MOI policy for the use of instructional language in secondary schools.

Mainly based on the students’ scaled internal assessment results and the teachers’ capacities, the SSPA system unavoidably gets involved in the banding system that is to classify the standard of the secondary school mostly according to the students’ results and teachers’ capacities. Under the SSPA policy, the unclassified secondary schools applying English as the medium of instruction (EMI) has to change to adopt Chinese as the medium of instruction (CMI) based on their bandings. The secondary schools that intend to continue to use EMI must provide strong evidence showing the sufficiency of the academic ability of the students and the capability of the teachers for approval by the EMB. The number of bands was five but has changed to three. In response to the questioning of the banding system in the Legislative Council, the Secretary for EMB stresses:

Reviewing the secondary school places allocation system, the Education Commission (EC) proposed that starting from 2001, the number of banding will be reduced from five to three, and that five years later, students’ banding will solely be determined according to their internal assessment. In other words, each primary school will have students of band one to band three. Under the proposed allocation system, the diversity in students’ ability
in a secondary school may widen, and it would be difficult to ensure that each and every student allocated to an English secondary school is suitable to learn through English as the medium of instruction. (HKSAR, 2000)

Under the system, secondary schools are classified in a three level banding system in which a band one secondary school represents the highest academic achievement attained and EMI school while a band three secondary school means the lowest groupings of CMI. Consequently, local secondary schools are struggling with upgrading themselves from the pool of a wide mix of student abilities and language proficiencies within the lower banding classification. In the meeting of the Education Commission Working Group (ECWG) on the Review of the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) system and MOI for Secondary Schools, the Chairman of the ECWG comments that “the crux lies in the standards set for the three conditions of student ability, teacher capability and school's supporting measures for English-medium teaching” and “consequentially, the existing SSPA mechanism will continue to be adopted in the 2005/06 school year (for admission to Secondary 1 in September 2006) and the existing MOI arrangement for secondary schools will remain unchanged” (HKSAR, 2004).

The argument about the SSPA and MOI can be viewed as a violation against human rights because the policies can create bias and false perception of the image of the secondary school labelled as a low banding school to the communities. To give a secondary school a banding may imply that the student studying at the school could be a student with low academic ability, lacking in competency in language, or even have behavioural problems. Criticism is pointed at the influence on the primary students due to the chain reaction. Even the Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor complains to the authority on the issue of the banding system, which “effectively denies a large proportion of Hong Kong students their right to a decent education” (Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor, 1999). The organisation supplements that [t]he root of many of the problems with the current education system lies in the rigid system of banding for secondary school students…This system effectively determines a child’s future from the age of twelve or younger…These schools are generally perceived by the community, as well as by their own teachers and students, as ‘sink’ schools, and
their students, categorised *en bloc* from the start as ‘low achievers’ are not expected and do not themselves expect to gain any qualifications at the end of their secondary schooling. It has long been recognised that such schools serve as recruiting grounds for triad gangs, and the social problems perceived as resulting directly or indirectly from the banding system have recently been a topic of discussion in the local media. (Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor, 1999)

Under the circumstance that the secondary school in the study is a band three (CMI) school, would the image of the lowest banding make any influence on the students and thus reflect on their lived experiences? The researcher does not maintain any pre-conceived assumptions or any perceptions on this issue. The banding in the school in the study should not be considered as a hindrance to the study. Rather, it could be the common reflection of the lived experiences of most of the young adolescents. This specific context makes the study unique.

2.2. Catering for students with diverse needs in an inclusive learning environment

Besides the SSPAS, the MOI policy, and banding system, the concept of the implementation of special educational services is one of the significant policies in the post-colonial period in Hong Kong. The policy on special education outlines a picture of an inclusive education environment for all children. The rationale for inclusive education in Hong Kong is to stress receiving the same needs without being distinguished from each other based on the belief of developing the whole child (CDC, n.d.). From this foundation, the curriculum should not differ from the existing mainstream curriculum. The EMB uses the term “special educational needs” (SEN) to describe children with special needs in educational environments as:

> Children are considered to have special educational needs if they cannot benefit fully from the curriculum provided for children of their age or if they cannot be catered for adequately in an ordinary educational setting. (EMB, 2004)
The Committee on Special Educational Needs (CSEN) under the Curriculum Development Council suggests the implementation of inclusive education. The concept is based on the principle of “one curriculum framework for all” that enables the SEN children to be maintained in the mainstream school curriculum for life-long learning experiences (EMB, 2004). The current policy of inclusive education is to allow the SEN children to enter ordinary schools so that they can learn, cope with difficulties, and communicate with other children. The policy includes “those with specific disabilities, different cultural and ethnic backgrounds and socio-economic status, who are gifted and talented, or those who are potentially marginalized for a range of other reasons” (Heung & Forlin, 2005, p. 28).

The criteria for the definition of SEN children are according to the characteristics of one or more of the following disabilities as hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical handicap, mental handicap, maladjustment, and/or learning difficulties (EMB, 2004). The EMB (2004) adopts an holistic approach to SEN children, with emphasis on the development of both cognitive and affective domains through the design of the curriculum. It is through a balanced curriculum, that the SEN children’s “psychological, emotional and social development besides the cognitive aspects” is to be facilitated (EMB, 2004).

To create a SEN environment is difficult, especially under the context of the SSPAS and MOI policies. The difficulties partly come from the diverse background and varying experiences of the SEN children, and partly from the integration into an authentic and ordinary classroom environment. However, the policy of preparing for inclusivity is a long-term plan. As encouraged by the EMB, there were 117 schools participating into the integration project in 2003 and 169 primary schools involved as “inclusive whole school communities” (Heung & Forlin, 2005, p. 28).

In the school year of 2003/2004, the EMB funded 25 primary schools to support the SEN pilot project under the condition that the participated schools had to take care of each SEN student who had either learning difficulties or special needs. According to the EMB (2004), the project resulted in a great success and as a result expanded it to invite 160 primary schools to participate in the project in the 2004/2005 school year. During the school year of 2004/2005, there was a total of 117 schools fully
implementing the SEN project in which about 800 students participated with varying disabilities as hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical handicap, slightly mental handicap, and autism (*At school, At work*, 2005).

The general aims of the special education curriculum suggested are: (1) to help the children achieve personal development according to their individual differences; (2) to prepare the children for living and functioning in their homes, the neighbourhood and the community; (3) to develop in the children study skills, a positive study attitude and good study habits for self-learning or for further studies; (4) to develop in the children work skills, a positive work attitude and good work habits for vocational training or for work; and (5) to help the children achieve as much independence as possible and become contributing members of the community (CDC, n.d.).

In addition to the general aims, the specific aims are divided into five categories highlighting the aims related to intellectual development, communicative development, social and moral developments, personal and physical developments, and aesthetic development (CDC, n.d.). Among these aims, some specific aspects should be highlighted concerning the study. These aspects perfectly match the philosophical underpinning of the study and the essence of the teaching and learning Visual Arts nowadays; for instance, helping “the children understand the interdependent nature of individuals and the world”, fostering “in the children self-esteem, self-confidence and a positive, realistic self-image”, and fostering “in the children imagination and creativity and to develop in them an appreciation for beauty” (CDC, n.d.).

In Visual Arts, catering for learning diversity involves the “identification of students at both ends of the ability spectrum” which means to identify the “students’ modes and pace of learning” (CDC, 2002b, p. 68). The issue relates to the design and planning of the school-based curriculum in terms of providing a comprehensive and balanced consideration for the students with diversity. In the curriculum guide, teachers are encouraged to provide feedback to students about their learning (CDC, 2002b, p. 68). The principle of curriculum planning adopts a balanced and diversified strategy with
concerning students with different abilities and interests, addressing students’ individual learning needs (CDC, 2003, p. 20).

3. Transition in art curriculum

In 2002, the CDC (2002a) published *Basic Education Curriculum Guide—Building on Strengths (Primary 1—Secondary 3)* as a direction of the basic education in Hong Kong. In the same year, a series of eight KLA curriculum guides including the *Arts Education Key Learning Curriculum Guide (Primary 1—Secondary 3)* was developed to support the basic arts education (CDC, 2002b). In response to the *Art Education Key Learning Curriculum Guide*, the *Visual Arts Curriculum Guide (Primary 1—Secondary 3)* was written to demonstrate the framework of the Visual Arts curriculum (CDC, 2003).

With reference to the new *Visual Arts Curriculum Guide*, there are some important changes found that may influence the aims, teaching content, and even the future direction of the visual arts. These changes in fact are shaping and influencing not only the local subject teachers, but also the students now. As the students in the study are immersed in such a context, it is important to review what the new curriculum may bring to them and what impacts may arise. In this connection, this part is to explore some of the issues of the new curriculum related to the teaching and learning in the visual arts particularly in the junior high school level.

3.1. Visual Arts Curriculum Guide

In 2001, the CDCCAЕ endorsed the change of the subject names from “Art and Craft” in the primary level and “Art and Design” in the junior and senior high levels to “Visual Arts” (CDC, 2003). The rationale for the change is to “align with the trend of development in art education and the arts” (CDC, 2003, p. 2). Visual Arts, consisting of the contemporary art media and educational theories, can be regarded as a more suitable and wide boarding name to describe the current development in the arts and education.
The rationale for the *Visual Arts Curriculum Guide* is based on the human-oriented approach, concerning what the essence in the visual arts the students have to learn (CDC, 2003). In the curriculum guide, the rationale, the method, and the expectations of the subject is clearly stated. The students

need to learn through systematic and thematic study in order to be able to understand and manipulate aesthetic expression, coding systems, and visual structures presented by visual languages and visual forms. They can then make use of visual images to convey their personal feelings and thoughts as well as appreciate and judge the significance and value of various artistic pursuits and artefacts. Students can develop their artistic potential and values and establish global and diversified views towards the world and a variety of cultures. (CDC, 2003, p. 2)

From the rationale, it builds on the foundation where the visual arts has its own specific code and system, in which students have to be acquainted with the knowledge and then attain meaning. It is an art-based oriented and thematic approach to understanding and developing values and beliefs in the arts and cultures through the learning in aesthetic expression, visual languages, and structures. In other words, the subject is to learn the key to knowing and developing.

3.1.1. Aims and goals

The overall aims of the arts curriculum lay in the philosophy that arts education can help students in four aspects. According to the CDC (2002b), they are to “develop creativity and critical thinking, nurture aesthetic sensitivity, and build up cultural awareness and effective communication”, “develop skills, knowledge and positive values and attitudes in the arts”; “gain delight, enjoyment and satisfaction through participating in arts-making activities”; and “purse a life-long interest in the arts”’ (p. 23). Under the overall aims, the specific aims of the curriculum reflect the belief and abstract of the visual arts in school education. Besides, there are five focal points to underline the aims of the
Visual Arts: (1) to develop students’ perceptual abilities, with special emphasis on visual, aesthetic and arts experience; (2) to enable students to express personal feelings and thoughts through artistic presentations; (3) to develop students’ visual cognition, generic skills and metacognition through art making, appreciation and criticism; (4) to broaden students’ perspectives through exploration of the arts of diverse cultures; and (5) to cultivate students’ emotions, personal refinement, morals and sense of commitment towards the nation and the world (CDC, 2003, p. 8).

The aims of the Visual Arts Curriculum Guide cover aspects of “cognitive learning, feeling expression, and vision broadening, and morality establishment” (CDC, 2003, p. 10). They can be summarised as: (1) developing cognitive and visual-perceptual abilities; (2) expressing feelings and emotions; and (3) cultivate personal-and-human oriented sophistication toward culture, moral and the world. The aims outlined are followed by the four learning targets: (1) Developing Creativity and Imagination; (2) Developing Skills and Processes; (3) Cultivating Critical Responses; and (4) Understanding Arts in Context (CDC, 2003, p. 10).

The focal point of the first target Developing Creativity and Imagination is to stress the new expression and creative thinking while the second one Developing Skills and Processes elevates the creation process as an enhancement tool for developing various generic skills. Cultivating Critical Responses refers to critically understanding the visual arts through judgement. Finally, Understanding Arts in Context puts the emphasis on understanding art through various considerations in different context. With these aims and targets, the CDC (2003) suggests a key stage for the learning objectives leading to the four learning targets. Divided in three different stages, there are specific objectives lying on each stage.

In the curriculum guide, generic skills as well as values and attitudes are particularly highlighted for the reference of the development of school-based curriculum. There are in total nine generic skills mentioned: creativity, communication skills, critical thinking skills, collaboration skills, problem solving skills, self-management skills, study skills, information technology skills, and numeracy skills (CDC, 2002b, p. 44). In light of the values and attitudes, the focus is on understanding the
relationship between the visual arts, society, and culture from both a local and global perspective; besides, the cultivation of the national commitments and the experience of the culture of the motherland are also stressed (CDC, 2003, pp. 16-17).

3.1.2. Teaching contents and context

The learning of Visual Arts focuses on three domains suggested by the curriculum guide: visual arts knowledge, visual arts appreciation and criticism, and visual arts making (CDC, 2003). In the three domains, all teaching contents are connected to the context in which aesthetic and cognitive perspectives on the learning in the arts are mentioned. The teaching contents are presented in a systematic structure. The curriculum guide clearly illustrates the connections between different levels of teaching content from the three domains and different learning targets on different stages.

In the first learning domain, visual arts knowledge contains studies in visual language, art forms, media, skills, materials, and knowledge of the arts and culture in context. Students are encouraged to apply the knowledge they learn for developing and expressing their art. The focus of the learning in visual arts language is on the visual elements and design principles, which both of them construct the visual phenomenon around us. Visual elements include lines, shapes, forms, spaces, tones, colours, textures, and so forth, and the design principles include the organisation of the elements such as balance, repetition, and unity (CDC, 2003, p. 24).

The second domain of visual arts appreciation and criticism refers to the studies of the arts and culture reflected by the socio-cultural or historical context. Through observation from the arts together with various experiences in the arts, students learn to judge and interpret the arts so that students can appreciate the value of the arts. The journey of seeking, exploration and appreciation of art starts with realising and appreciating the cultural differences. Students within a multicultural context can learn how to “analyse and select, then develop their own values and beliefs in the arts” (CDC, 2003, p. 25). The teaching contents in relation to the context not only include the scope of socio-cultural values, but the “technological contexts” to fit the needs and reflect the society (CDC, 2003, p. 25).
Appreciation and criticism approaches depend on the learning of interpretation. Regarding this, the curriculum guide suggests stages to proceed: “literal description”, “comprehensive feeling”, “formal analysis”, “interpretation of meanings”, and “value judgment” (CDC, 2003, p. 27).

The domain of visual arts making refers to the exploring and developing of ideas in the process of art making or presentation. Students learning to create art through learning the application of varying visual elements and design principles to transform the media into an aesthetic work. Visual arts making in this connection depends on the ability of integration to both the ideas and knowledge. It is because in the process of art making, students “identify, interpret and synthesize themes that reflect their own daily life experiences and feelings in particular contexts”, with applying visual elements and design principles (CDC, 2003, p. 28). The making process is regarded as a response to the world and process of concept visualisation.

3.2. Future directions

The future directions for the development of Visual Arts Curriculum will definitely match with the direction of curriculum development. For the implementation of the direction, some plans have been suggested in the curriculum guide as “planning the School-based Visual Arts Curriculum”, “developing the capabilities of learning to learn”, “nurturing an attitude for aesthetic learning”, and “exploring effective modes of learning and teaching” (CDC, 2003, pp. 3-4). “Learning to learn”, as the CDC (2000) states, refers to “a means to achieve the aims of education” and is one of the most important aims for all (p. 3).

In the Visual Arts Curriculum Guide (CDC, 2003), there are principles provided for the future directions for the development of Visual Arts curriculum for discussion. The directions stress that visual arts learning should:

1. Extend students’ views on art making, appreciation and criticism by studying the arts of different cultures, thus enriching their visual arts experiences as well as enabling them to keep pace with the development of the contemporary arts;
2. Explore alternative means of arts production through learning about visual culture and various methods of arts creation and presentation generated from information technology; and

3. Employ a human-oriented teaching approach, cultivate students’ abilities, intelligence and attitudes for self-study, and help them develop their interests in life-long pursuit of the arts. (CDC, 2003, p. 5)

In comparison with the Art and Design curriculum in the colonial period, the new curriculum obviously shows the intention to enhance the relationship and national commitments to the motherland. Within this specific context, the concept of Chinese culture in arts education is promoted as “an effective means to help students experience their own culture and understand its values” (CDC, 2002b, p. 48). Ignoring the possible political factors or influences on the considerations of the emphasis on the cultivation of the national commitment through learning in the arts, it indeed provides a new but reflective perspective on considering the importance of the intimate relationship between the teaching contents and the authentic context in the development of the arts curriculum. Meanwhile, developing Chinese arts and culture in Visual Arts curriculum can be expected to be one of future directions.

4. Summary of chapter

This chapter presents an overview of the Visual Arts curriculum development in a local context, specifically illustrating the general context in secondary education. Some essential issues presented brought in the chapter raise some questions concerning the students in the study, the policies of MOI and banding systems for examples. Problems caused by these policies may relate to the achievement in language that equals the academic ability and based on this logic to classify the standard of secondary school. Although competency in language is important in secondary education, overemphasising the ability and to set this as the only target for classification is a problem. Even worse, it may have influences on the self-images if students study in a low band secondary school. Under this circumstance, the meanings of the images created by them within this particular context are necessary and important.
To reach the goal of inclusive education, the curriculum planning has to be as flexible as it can be. Somehow the level of difficulties and complexity of the teaching contents have to be adjusted and reduced to be more appropriate in order to fit the needs of diverse students. It implies that something must be sacrificed in the end. If we believe that the value of the inclusive education lays stress on the equal opportunities to learn, to communicate, and to enjoy life, it seems that no one would object to this idea. The problem now does not come from the idea, but the conflict and contradiction between the practically banding systems and the ideal inclusive education—it makes the situation a dilemma. However, some points emphasized in inclusive education are intimately related to therapeutic art practices such as the enhancement of the self-images, the importance of the established peer relationships, and the relief and acceptance of the negative feelings as well as emotions from the daily lifeworld and experience.

The directions for the development of learning in the Visual Arts suggest the importance of learning about contemporary arts and culture. It is foreseeable that learning in visual culture in art education will increasingly be important. At the same time, various art media and teaching and learning methods can be expected to become more diverse than ever before. Manga, as one of the most popular visual culture and art media nowadays, greatly influences the students. Although it is important, the Visual Arts Curriculum Guide fails to demonstrate the direction, as well as the cognitive and the teaching and learning methods to the teachers for reference. It seems that visual culture in art education in the local context is mentioned only in the conceptual framework. Therefore, this context reflects the importance and need for the study.
PART II METHODOLOGY
Chapter Three
Research Design

1. Overview of chapter

Following the discussion of the main issues raised and the construction of the research approach in Chapter One, as well as the background information of the educational policy in local context given in Chapter Two, this chapter is the methodology, the strategies and action plan for undertaking this study. In order to illustrate a coherent idea for the organisation of presentation and response to the part of Considering the Research Approach (1.2.), Chapter Three focuses on the discussion of methodology. The philosophy and methods in the study are based on the notion of interpretation. The study adapts a phenomenological approach to investigate the meanings of the images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents. In the chapter, methodology mainly deals with the rationale for the choice of the phenomenological case study method, preparation of data collection, and the process. It governs which approach is to be taken and which method is to be used for the resolution of the research questions. It is a link between “the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3).

2. Rationale

The rationale is to give reasons to the theoretical framework and the chosen methods. Crotty (1998) defines the rationale of the methodology as follow:

Justification of our choice and particular use of methodology and methods is something that reaches into the assumptions about reality that we bring to our work. To ask about these assumptions is to ask about our theoretical perspectives. (p. 2)

Crotty (1998) remarks that the theoretical framework is the “philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria” (p. 3)
while the research methods is about “the concrete techniques or procedures we plan to use” (p. 6). Making interpretations of the matrix are the outcomes of understanding images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents in the study. According to the formulated matrix, the first research question begins with the fundamental philosophical considerations inquiring what the experience the young adolescents have in art creation. It is reasonable that a phenomenological approach is applicable to the framework because the focal point of the phenomenological approach is to study the essences of the phenomena (van Manen, 1998; Merleau-Ponty, 1962).

Under the umbrella of the phenomenological perspective, a case study method was chosen after considering the small number of students to be involved in the study. Although the study is not large in scale, the large amount of empirical data collected in cases including the participants’ transcriptions, students’ artworks, the questionnaire, and observation from the research team gives substantial support to interpret the matrix.

There are significant studies in understanding children’s drawing particularly in applying sociological, psychological, and cultural perspectives in interpreting their art. These studies in children’s drawings have already elucidated substantial evidence that children present their social life and problems in reality in their drawings (Dorn, 2003; Wilson & Wilson, 1985). They demonstrate an intimate relationship between children’s drawings and their social life, with the belief that images can reflect their real life experience.

The projection method used in the research in children’s drawing mostly depends on investigating the relationship between the images they create and the real life problems they have. The method borrows from the theory of transference and counter-transference applied in psychotherapy in explicating how children can transform themselves through images (McNiff, 1981). Malchiodi (1998b) remarks, “Psychologists, therapists, counsellors, and others have long used drawings in less formal ways with children, ways that are not specifically designed to assess, diagnose, or evaluate the child, but to provide a way for the child to communicate issues, feelings, and other experiences, and to explore, invent, and problem solve through self-expression” (p. 10).
Harris’s (1963) early work raises concern about the competence of the children’s drawings and their attitudes toward drawing for the measurement of the level of intellectual maturity, while later Reimche (2002) criticises that psychologists, educators, and parents apply a limited perspective to examine children’s drawings. She realises that they over-emphasise studying the children’s drawings for understanding the stages of child development rather than understanding the lived experiences of the children’s drawings. The latter suggests applying a phenomenological method of studying the children’s drawings to understand the meaning of the drawing experience of the child. Both viewpoints dissolve the focus on understanding the meaning of the artwork itself. Malchiodi (1998b) states,

What is important about a phenomenological approach to looking at children’s drawings is its emphasis on an openness to a variety of meanings, the context in which they were created, and the maker’s way of viewing the world. It is a way of understanding children’s expressive work from many perspectives, allowing the viewer to amplify the images and construct meanings from more than one vantage point and to develop a more integral view of children’s art expressions. (p. 35)

Unlike the psychological perspective, socio-cultural perspectives examine art as the social and cultural production that makes cultural reflection in our society (Freedman, 1997, 2000; Wilson & Litgvoet, 1992; Wilson & Wilson, 1985). Anthropologists and sociologists adapt the participant observation method to understand different cultures from different social groups, which is applicable to the study. The method and concept used in studying visual culture emphasises the inquiry into socio-cultural issues. The pre-requisite of such an observation method, which “requires the researcher to lay aside his or her pre-occupied artistic taste, favourite, and value to engage in the target audience, is to be in common use in studying visual culture” (Walker & Chaplin, 1997, p. 11).

There are several main points that can draw the principles when applying the participant observation method. The research teams must clearly understand the local context and carefully consider the “different concepts of the aesthetics and interpretation in different spaces at different times from a
local identity perspective” (Lai & Ball, 2002, pp. 49-50). Considering the local identity context can be an advantage to balance different viewpoints from the mainstream and to “balance the research context by considering parts and wholes” (van Manen, 1998, p. 161). Otherwise, the meaning will be covered by the mainstream or pre-occupied concept (Freedman & Stuhr, 2000). Concerning studies in art therapy, Kaplan (2000) argues that there has long been an argument that research in relation to art therapy lacks “existing studies”, “science minded”, and “well-planned investigations” (p. 21). Even though much research in art therapy is conducted each year, most of them focus on the analysis and reflection on the final art product (Kaplan, 2000). Malchiodi (1998a) complains that many studies in art therapy put too much focus on the search of the psychological “meaning of the form and content of art images” made by clients (p. 82). They hardly seem to provide a picture as a whole on a balanced account of the images.

Malchiodi (1998a) posed a question towards such phenomena: “Why has the field of art therapy spent most of its energy conducting research on the meaning of images rather than on understanding the process it takes to make them?” (p.82). It is also misunderstood easily that conducting research in art therapy means investigating the meaning of the art product only. On the contrary, the creators, the creation process, and the art product are important in art therapy (Malchiodi, 1998a, p. 82). Besides studying the art product, Kaplan (2000) claims that it is “imperative for the advancement of the field that we amplify our efforts to include explorations of the art-making process” (p. 26). Art therapy relies much on the belief of the creative process involved in the making of art, the healing, and life-enhancing experience during the process of art creation (AATA, 2003). The study regards this perspective and emphasises the importance of the interrelationships among them.

Unlike the sociological or psychological approach, phenomenology focuses on describing a specific experience from the participant’s perspective. The nature of the research process is to study the individual’s lived experience. The phenomenological method depends much on open interpretations and is meaning oriented through searching for themes or patterns so that thematic narratives are important. Both the unstructured and in-depth interviews are essential methods for collecting data in the phenomenon.
Studies in art therapy with the application of phenomenological process can be found in early and recent research, for instance, research in single and group art therapy (McNiff, 1973, 1974). Lazarus-Leff (1998) in her research applies a phenomenological inquiry method to examine the meaning of the positive effects of the aesthetic environment given to people with traumatic brain injuries, while Hitchcock (1999) adopts a phenomenological case study method to reveal the meaning of an adult woman who has self-mutilated behaviours. Some art therapists advocate heuristic models of research, particularly phenomenology and hermeneutics, since they employ both artistic instincts and implicit methods of understanding art (Bloomgarden & Netzer, 1998, pp. 51-54; Lazarus-Leff, 1998; McNiff, 1998).

3. Restatement of research questions

As mentioned in Chapter One, the research approach is to focus on the matrix, regarding the images as the aesthetic objects. To examine the behaviour, the artistic stage of development, or the developmental stage of the young adolescents is not the aim of the research because as Parsons (1987) states that

what art expresses is more than what one person has in mind at one time. What art enables us to understand is not necessarily what the artist sought consciously to communicate. It is more a public property than that. Art is capable of layers of interpretation and may reveal aspects of its creators of which they themselves were unaware. (p. 13)

To find the meanings of the images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents, three main research questions in different layers have to be answered. There are three fundamental philosophical considerations of what, why, and how against the three domains, formulating a matrix in which the research questions were presented. The three domains contain the meaning of the image through the experience of creating artwork, the creators’ responses to the reason of creating the image in a
particular way, and the way of interpreting the art process leading to art products. The study only focuses on making the interpretation to the matrix, which means that to understand the images is to connect with the matrix—the interrelationships. The researcher sees the matrix as a whole communication process in which the interrelationships among them can reveal the meaning.

From this perspective, the study engages in studying the matrix in order to understand the interrelationships of the images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents. The main research questions posed in the study are:

1. What are the meanings of the images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents through the experiences of art creation?
2. Why do they create these images in this particular way?
3. How do they interpret the creation process leading to the art product?

The secondary questions that directly come from the resolutions of the main research questions are:

1. What is the meaning and significance to the understanding of the images to the art curriculum in the local context?
2. What perspectives should be reconsidered in teaching art today in the local context?

4. Program of study

The researcher designed a scheme of work that is a *manga* creation program for the study. The purpose of this program is to understand images created by young adolescents through creating images in a *manga* creation program. The program is delivered in the form of a serial *manga* story creation. The program is divided in 12 lessons. In each session, students are required to create their *manga* stories and make a response to the images. They could be free to develop their storylines based on their original characters created in the first lesson.

In the study, the students are required to make a personal *manga* book. Students can feel free to select and cut the image out, fine tune, and reorganise them in a personal *manga* book through deconstruction
and reconstruction processes. As to the format of the creation, students are required to create their images within picture frames in each lesson. The size of the finished book is 22 cm in length and 19 cm width. The *manga* creation activity takes place within a framed setting in an A4 size paper, in which students can feel free to create. The space creates boundaries that can drive them possibly to distinguish and differentiate between the realm of the imagination and reality, between the literal and the symbolic, and between internal and external reality (Edwards, 2004; Schaverien, 1992; Young, R. M., 1998).

The students’ artwork produced in the sessions plays a most essential part of the research study. Sketches, artwork, manuscript, and transcripts other than the ones made in the lessons are to be collected as part of the interview process. The students are asked to bring the art that they think most representative of the experience to the sessions. For the purpose of accurate documentation, each interview are recorded by one video camera and later transcribed. The written works such as poems or logs are copied from the original to be sure of accurate punctuation and authenticity.

The researcher considers the image of visual culture in relation to socio-cultural, psychological, and educational narratives, collaborative interpretation, and intertextuality. Students in the study are encouraged to make interpretation of their work with free association. Freedman (2003a) emphasizes that images are chosen not for their inherent aesthetic value, but for their power. Images about visual culture are significant and remarkable for assessment because they present “ideas, beliefs, imagination, sense of time and space, feelings of agency, and the quality of life at all ages” (Boughton, et al., 2002). Artworks can reveal meanings, ideas, and beliefs though this study does not intend to assess the artworks. Therefore, exploration of the images created by adolescents through *manga* creation and interpretation can be a method of art inquiry.

Concerning evaluation and recording, Liebmann (2004) suggests that they may consist of the researcher and student’s feedback on each session, visual outcomes including artwork produced, observation notes, record of process, and written questionnaire including interviews. In this study, the above-mentioned suggestion can be summarised in four items as: (1) formal questionnaire; (2) artwork;
(3) observation from the researcher, the two-teachers-in-charge, and the two research assistants; and (4) students’ transcripts of informal interviews in each lesson.

A research team is formed for the study, which consisted of the researcher, two research assistants, two school teachers-in-charge, and two school social workers. The role of the social workers, as consultants, is to select the students and provide professional advice as well as any necessary urgent assistance if needed. Emergency care from the school social worker is offered and advisable. They are not required to be involved in the data analysis in order to make the study more focused on studying images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents from an art-based perspective, not the students’ behaviour. For this research study, 12 students and two teachers-in-charge are interviewed. The two teachers-in-charge also attend and observe the whole sessions of art creation. The role of the two research assistants is to help record the data, encourage the dialogue in class, and build relationships with students in a friendly atmosphere. Privacy is strictly preserved.

4.1. Selection of participants

The two teachers-in-charge and the two social workers recommended the selected students in this study. Some of the dialogues made by the students in relation to their background or experience during the art sessions will be seen as reference. Students come from a Band Three secondary school in Hong Kong. Its context may project the reality of the majority of young adolescents in terms of school education to a certain degree.

Gender consideration is not an issue for the selection of students in the study. Besides the two teachers-in-charge and the two social workers, the researcher did not know the history of the students and their gender before the group was formed in order to avoid any bias. The other reason is that the focus of the study investigates the present lived experience of creating images of popular visual culture, not their past experiences. The design and setting is close to the real art room situation in a Band Three secondary school where a class with an inclusive background mixes with different students including students with special needs and normal students. In such a natural environment, students may feel
more comfortable since they think that they attend the *manga* creation sessions as usual as they attend an ordinary art class so that they may not feel that they are labelled. There are in total 11 females and 1 male selected to participate in the study.

The selection of students involved in the research is based upon their present observed behaviour by the teachers-in-charge and the social workers, not a previous diagnosis. Students are required to be willing to talk about their experience in art creation. Some of them are informed by the social workers that they may have some kind of minor problem such as inappropriate behaviour. Details are as follows.

1. Age 13-16, average 15 years old, in a local Band Three secondary school.
2. Students mainly in junior secondary school level.
3. The school’s teachers-in-charge and the social workers recommend cases.
4. Intensive course conducted after school hours. The program is part of the extracurricular of the school and is not separate.
5. The program will take 12 sessions to be implemented and will run on Mondays. A double lesson of eighty minutes duration will be taken each time. The program will be conducted over one semester.
6. The students must be willing and able to describe his or her experience in school.
7. Parents or Guardians are willing to help in the research. Signed consent forms allowing the researcher to take video, photographs, and to accept the students to be interviewed before and after the study are obtained and confirmed by their parents or guardians before the research begins.

From Cohen (1994), “phenomenology is research at a pre-experimental level. Sample sizes are small and purposeful because the purpose of the research was to obtain subjective depth in the data, not objective or quantitative data. The sample size is considered sufficient when the data are saturated or the same patterns recur with each new participant interview” (p. 38). Normally, the purposeful sampling size is about five to 10 individuals (Leedy, 1997). The size of the group in the study is believed to best fit the requirement of the phenomenological inquiry method.
4.2. Structure of group and setting

The principle of forming the group should concern several decisive factors. First, it should offer equal opportunities for both the research team and the students to communicate with each other. Second, students are formed as a group and aims to release the atmosphere of any unnecessary tension. Research in art therapy emphasises the advantages of the purposes of the group. For example, Liebmann (2004) highlights that the aim of forming a group in art therapy is for the purpose of personal and social functioning changes. Although the primary focus of the study is not art therapy, by studying the images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents, students can still benefit from the group forming suggested in art therapy. Liebmann (2004) suggests that the size of the group is between 4 to 12 members since:

1. Members can maintain visual and verbal contact with all others members.
2. Group cohesiveness can be achieved.
3. There is an opportunity for each person to have an adequate share of time in discussion.
4. There are enough people to encourage interaction and a free flow of ideas, and to undertake group projects. (p. 32)

This structure is widely used in different settings such as educational, social or therapeutic settings (Liebmann, 2004). However, as the interest of the study is not to examine whether the personal or the social functioning increase through the combined approach of visual culture in art education and art therapy, the group is regarded as a physical and psychological support to the environment to make the students feel comfortable to create their images like what they do in ordinary art class. It can also be viewed as a facilitator for students to interpret the images created. Based on this context, the study focuses on individual cases in terms of the interpretation to the image made rather than group case presentation.

The role of the group is a general one. For “general personal purposes of groups” in art therapy, Liebmann (1981) stresses several points: (1) creativity and spontaneity; (2) confidence building,
self-validation, realisation of own potential; (3) increase personal autonomy and motivation, develop as individual; (4) freedom to make decisions, experiment, test out ideas; (5) express feelings, emotions, conflicts; (6) work with fantasy and unconscious; (7) insight, self-awareness, reflection; (8) ordering of experience visually and verbally; and (9) relaxation (p. 27). Besides, for “general social purposes of groups” she addresses:

1. Awareness, recognition, and appreciation of others.
2. Co-operation, involvement in group activity.
3. Communication.
4. Sharing of problems, experiences and insights.
5. Discovery of universality of experience/uniqueness of individual.
6. Related to others in a group, understanding of effect of self on others, and relationships.
7. Social support and trust.
8. Cohesion of group.

The principle of forming a group requires a consideration of several conditions and criteria. These conditions and criteria are important for creating a warm and trusting atmosphere and environment so that participants involved can “feel at ease in revealing personal matters” (Liebmann, 2004, p. 23). Liebmann suggests 19 checklists about running a group, which can contribute to the rationale for a group setting in the study. They are: (1) setting up the group; (2) equal opportunities; (3) outside factors affecting the group; (4) aims and goals; (5) group boundaries and ground rules; (6) size of group; (7) open and closed groups; (8) therapist and facilitator roles; (9) transference and projections; (10) useful pattern for session; (11) alternative patterns of sessions; (12) introductions and ‘warming up’; (13) choosing a theme; (14) engaging in the artwork; (15) discussion; (16) interpretation; (17) ending the session; (18) group process over time; and (19) recording and evaluation (Liebmann, 2004, p. 23).

Students are allowed to bring their favourite music to class for discussion or sharing, and could be free to share them with each other, as well as listening to the music or taking their favourite manga during
the process of art creation. Rhythmic music is allowed to be brought to the environment because “music can serve as a stimulus for creative action” and the “sound patterns have an isomorphic effect on the organism that can fully perceive them” (McNiff, 1981, p. 67). The other advantage of music is to create a released atmosphere for the creative environment. In terms of the field, the art room provides a safe place for gathering. They not only work in a group working atmosphere, but they also work individually. Some basic and advanced drawing techniques such using various lines and shapes, ink, brushstrokes, and colours to depict images are instructed in each session to provide the students with a basic understanding of the skill. Finally, students will make their own manga books and select the best of their artwork to compile into a portfolio.

Students are encouraged to make interpretation about their thoughts, feelings, experiences, the process and artwork, they also are encouraged to destruct their old beliefs and reconstruct new meanings in the program. As Dunn-Snow and D’Amelio (2000) comment that “although we tend to view destruction as a negative action, it leads to reconstruction” (p. 3). Malchiodi and Cattaneo (1988) state the meaning of the destruction and reconstruction as “in the process old beliefs are destroyed to allow for new ideas to emerge” (p. 55) because they are the vital process of the “beginning of therapeutic reconstruction and integration” (p. 55). Destruction and reconstruction are a critical process in art therapy. They are not a negative process; on the contrary, through the destroying process of their old belief they will build up their new ideas and meanings to their life (Malchiodi & Cattaneo, 1988). Sharing activities are deliberately arranged in each session because “the sharing of our personal imagery and symbols assists others in understanding how we view the world” (McNiff, 1881, p.79).

The supportive, facilitating, and safe atmosphere and environment for proceeding with the study are carefully considered. The study is to take place in the art room of the school. The rationale of the selection of the location is based on, first, the art room is familiar to all the students at the school so that all participants may feel comfortable; second, students may not feel that they are labelled as a special, problematic case and finally, the art room that is easy to manage offers a relaxed, safe, and encouraging environment for allowing participants to express their feelings. In the study, the setting of the environment and numbers of students involved follows Liebmann’s suggestion.
5. Stages

A scheme of work and a unit plan of a *manga* creation program are designed for this study. The sessions designed are a supportive laboratory for the participants to experiment with and respond to the image created. All the art activities such as drawings or sharing are general ones found in both the ordinary art class and in art therapy session. Art therapists have had these art activities for groups, themes, games, and exercises (Liebmann, 2004).

The program was divided into two stages—understanding the images and reconceptualizing the images. Each stage has its specific objectives and the proposed outcome is the understanding of the matrix by connecting the lived experiences they have. The first stage specifically focuses on the interrelationship between the student’s lived experience and the image through which we may capture the meaning of the image, the reason for creating the image in particular ways, and the way the student interprets the creation process.

With the foundation established in the first stage, the second stage is an advanced stage that emphasises the integration of the student’s lived experience in the image created in order to have an in-depth inquiry into the interrelationship in the matrix. Liebmann (2004) claims that the patterns of sessions can be diverse, but she suggests a general format for a theme-based art therapy group that should cover four phases: (1) introduction and ‘warming up’: 10-30 minutes; (2) artwork: 20-45 minutes; (3) discussion of images: 30-45 minutes; (4) ending: 5-10 minutes (pp. 35-36).

The purpose of the design of the four phases is to ease the exciting atmosphere, let the participant gradually feel comfortable to join in the art activities, engage in an in-depth discussion and interpretation of the artwork, and sharing with each other (Liebmann, 2004). Each lesson arranges time for collaborative interpretation, reflection and sharing with the experience of art creation between students and the research teams. The focus and procedure of each stage is presented as follows.
The First Stage—Understanding the Images

Session One to Two: Create a Cast—Myself

This session requires students to create a new cast that could represent themselves. In this first session, it emphasises the transference of the image that represents the student. The character of the design can be either human or non-human object. Students are encouraged to use their first creation to develop their storylines afterwards. The focus is to:

1. Establish a safe environment and regulations.
2. Establish a trust relationship between group members and the research team.
3. Encourage the students to feel free to express their feeling.
4. Understand the meaning of the new character that represents the student.
5. Understand why the student creates the character in this way.
6. Understand how they create it.

The procedure of the activity is to:

1. Do warm-up activity—introducing myself as researcher, talking about school life, personal experience, and manga.
2. Design a cast representing them in a one-block manga story.
3. Make collaborative interpretation, reflection, and sharing.

Session Three to Four: The Worst Day in My Life

The students are required to draw a four-panel manga strip based on the theme. Basic drawing techniques as using various lines, shapes, and brushstrokes with ink to make different visual effects are introduced. The focus is to:

1. Understand what the students have experienced.
2. Understand how they transform their experience to manga.
3. Understand why they depict their expression in the particular visual way through images creation.
4. Encourage the participant to feel free to express their feeling.
The procedure of the activity is to:

1. Talk about their school life, any other experience, and *manga*.

2. Demonstrate the drawing techniques.

3. Use the character designed in the first session to continue the *manga* story creation.

4. Draw “the worst experienced I have in my life—happiness, sadness, difficulties, embarrassment, and so forth”

5. Make collaborative interpretations, reflections, and sharings.

*Lesson Five to Six: A Pawnshop*

This session is to look at the student’s inner dream, particular experience or problem faced in reality. The students are required to create a *manga* story about a pawnshop in which they can exchange anything in there from what they do not want to have to what they want, good or bad habits, happy or sad experience for example. Advanced drawing techniques as using various brushstrokes with ink for making shadows and decorating the background with intense colour lines are introduced. They are required to draw the story in the form of four-panel comic strip. The students may create the dialogue if necessary. The focus is to:

1. Understand how the images can help ease their emotions and fears.

2. Understand how the images help clarify their needs, hopes, and fears in their daily life.

3. Understand why they create the image in this way.

4. Understand how the images communicate with their inner self.

The procedure of the activity is to:

1. Talk about their school life, any other experience, and *manga* comics.

2. Demonstrate the advanced drawing techniques.

3. Design a story that represents their experience and dreams.

4. Make collaborative interpretation, reflection, and sharing.

*Session Seven to Eight: Design of a Free-Panel Strip—Free Style and Expression*

Students are required to create a *manga* story about their lived experiences in a free atmosphere. They
are encouraged to create the story based on free association. The goals of this session is to understand what and how they transform their lived experience through free association, as well as understand why they create the images in particular ways. The participants may insert dialogue if necessary. Basis colour theory as cool and warm as well as the contrast colours, and the advanced drawing techniques about using the colour pencil depicting shadows, various brushstrokes and ink, shapes, and lines to make the visual effects are introduced. The focus is to:

1. Understand the relationship between the image and their lived experience.
2. Understand why they create the image in this particular way.
3. Understand how they process.

The procedure of the activity is to:
1. Talk about their school life, any other experience, and manga comics.
2. Demonstrate the colour theories and drawing techniques.
3. Create a story that represents them.
4. Make collaborative interpretation, reflection, and sharing.

The Second Stage—Reconceptualizing the Images

Session Nine to Ten: The World and I

Students are required to refer to the images shown in magazines and newspaper to create a manga story about an issue with a free-panels manga strip. The students may create the dialogue if necessary. The focus is to:

1. Understand the cultural context and its influence in their creation.
2. Understand why they depict it in this way.
3. Understand how they transform the subject matter to a visual form.
4. Learn about their belief and values on culture.

The procedure of the activity is to:
1. Read the political, social issues and themes on pop culture in the magazines and issues on newspaper.
2. Apply all the drawing techniques learnt before to create a *manga* story.

3. Make collaborative interpretation, reflection, and sharing.

**Session Eleven to Fourteen: Create My Manga Book**

Students are required to integrate what they learnt before to design and create their *manga* books. They can select the most satisfied images they created in class and edit the book based on their preferences. Students may create the dialogues if necessary. The focus is to:

1. Understand the meaning of the image.
2. Understand why they create the image in this particular way.
3. Understand how they respond to their image creation process.

The procedure of the activity is to:

1. Introduce the design of the *manga* book.
2. Use all the drawing techniques attained before to create their own a *manga* story.
3. Make collaborative interpretation, reflection, and sharing.

6. Methodology

According to Gantt (1998), art is a concrete object that can be studied from various perspectives. When studying the subjective experience of the students during the process of art creation, qualitative methodologies are more appropriate especially investigating some specific artworks they create, which are associated with their particular experiences. Although the phenomenological method does not necessarily need art for inquiry, it is too important for the study to have the art method on account of the fact that the art creation for inquiry process and result in the study significantly direct to the origin of art.

Art experience can be applied in phenomenological studies. Gadamer (1994) suggests a phenomenological understanding of aesthetic experience that “aesthetic experience is not just one kind of experience among others, but represents the essence of experience” (p. 70). He suggests that the art
method of knowing reaches the higher levels of creativity that are extremely different from the verbal logic (Gardner, 1983, p. 24), while McNiff (1998) applies an art-based research method in the art therapy profession and defines the method by “its use of the arts as objects of inquiry as well as modes of investigation” (p. 15). Unlike the other ways of knowing, art has its own structure of communication and inquiry method (Allen, 1995). Without the basis of art and only by linguistic interpretation, the meaning of the image definitely cannot be revealed. Reflections and responses to the art experience, art process and artwork are made based on the quality of art, which can perfectly match the phenomenological inquiry method into the meaning of the image.

Besides, the reflection on both the “artistic processes and phenomena are essential component” of the method (McNiff, 1998, p. 89). Therefore, the image revealing method begins with the inquiry into art itself. Unlike the other research methods, as an “imaginative science” (McNiff, 1998, p. 39), art-based research “grows from a trust in the intelligence of the creative process and a desire for relationships with the images that emerges from it” (McNiff, 1998, p. 37).

6.1. Description of the theoretical perspective and methodology

Phenomenology is “the science of phenomena” (van Manen, 1998, p. 183). According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), phenomenology is “the study of essences” (p. vii). Essence means a linguistic construction, a description of a phenomenon in which the definitions of linguistics is as metaphorical as “that phenomenon by which people inherently experience the world and organize their observations into patterns which are subsequently assigned names and meaning” (Morris, 1994). The phenomenological inquiry means to search the essence of the nature of a lived experience (van Manen, 1998; Moustakas, 1994).

According to van Manen (1998), essence is “what makes a thing what it is (and without which it would not be what it is)” and “that what makes a thing what it is rather than its being or becoming something else” (p. 177). In van Manen’s (1998) definition, phenomenology “always asks the question of what is the nature or meaning of something” (p. 184). Leedy (1997) defines phenomenology “as a research
method that attempts to understand participants’ perspectives and views of social realities” (p. 161), in which “a person’s construction of the meaning of a phenomenon” is established. It seems that phenomenology is subjective but it is too important for the future development of one’s behaviour (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Since phenomenological research is similar to questioning the essence through lived experience, what the nature of the lived experience of an individual is the centre of formulating the phenomenological question. Van Manen (1998) explicates that

our lived experiences and the structures of meanings (themes) in terms of which theses lived experiences can be described and interpreted constitute the immense complexity of the lifeworld. (p. 101)

After further contemplation, a phenomenological methodology is chosen, a philosophy that lies well in the theoretical beliefs of the researcher. The phenomenological approach used for this study borrows from a method of analysis refined by van Manen (1998) and Moustakas (1994). Van Manen’s phenomenology emphasises the nature and power of data as the lifeworld and lived experience in terms of revealing the meanings while Moustakas’ methodology is structural, systematic and incorporates intuitions, as well as self-reflection. The process of phenomenological analysis encompasses determining meaning units, themes, clustered themes and then a synthesis. A phenomenological inquiry into understanding the meaning of the image of visual culture created by adolescents through the application to visual culture art education and art therapy approach is the focus in this proposed case study. A primary goal of this study is to provide an opportunity for students to describe their experience in their own words and images. The open-ended questionnaire is one of the methods suggested to capture the meaning. As Patton (1987) states,

[T]he open-ended response permits one to understand the world as seen by the respondent. The purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions is to permit the evaluation to understand and capture the perspective of program participants without predetermining their perspective through prior selection or questionnaire categories. (p. 11)
There is remarkable research in various disciplines related to education or psychotherapy using phenomenon as an inquiry method for studies; for example, phenomenological psychology (Giorgi, 1970; Hitchcock, 1999). The phenomenological method stresses the construction of meaning. Meaning units are statements by the research participant that are pertinent to the object being studied, which a complete thought, sentence or paragraph could be clustered according to themes (Moustakas, 1994).

This process of creating themes and writing about them will be done from these two perspectives for each interview. After the meaning units are clustered, the researcher contemplates each clustered theme. For each individual, the final synthesis is an integration of these clusters of themes. Then, the final synthesis of the experience is brought together to clarify the meaning, following by an individual composite textural and structural description (Moustakas, 1994). Details of the thematic analysis are to be presented in the part of Process (6.4.). Douglass and Moustakas (1985) offer a description of phenomenological research that well describes the design of the case study.

Through disciplined focus on the structure of experience (e.g., time, space, materiality, causality, interpersonal factors), the phenomenological investigation attempts to reveal the actual nature and meaning of an event, perception, or occurrence, just as it appears. Rigorous analysis transforms the subjective data (in the form of direct reports and observations) into objective accounts of reality…Phenomenological reduction (analysis) is complete when themes or patterns have been distilled from the data and when the essence of the phenomenon is fully disclosed through textural and structural descriptions. (p. 43)

The importance of the structure of experience becomes the main target for the phenomenological investigation. Cohen (1994) delineates a short overview of phenomenology below, which describes the nature of the design for the study.

Phenomenology as a research method is based upon the philosophies of Husserl, Heidegger and others. It is a qualitative, as opposed to quantitative, method of systematic scientific inquiry. The aim of the researcher is to describe the human experience and
understand it, not quantify it. As it is philosophically understood that meaning exists through mutually experienced encounters between individuals and the world. (p. 38)

The study adopts the phenomenological method to search the essential themes through the presence of phenomena that reflect people’s lived experience. It is a way to explore into “the structure of human lifeworld”, which we experience in “everyday situations and relations” (van Manen, 1998, p. 101).

6.2. Description of the design for phenomenological case study process

The method used in this study requires a significant interaction between art creation and the students. This research adapts a method of “clutches of ideas” (Parsons, 1987, p. 11), which allow the researcher to gather from a large amount of empirical data through a phenomenological approach. Details will be discussed in Collecting Data (6.3.1.). A triangulation method to examine the data collected is adapted in this stage. Details of the triangulation will be presented in Validity, Reliability, and Sample Selection (6.2.1.2.). Finally, a matrix indicating the individual textural-structural descriptions and describing the meanings and essences is established to understand the image of popular visual culture created by young adolescents.

6.2.1. Preparing to collect data

In phenomenological studies, data are “live-experience descriptions” or “materials on which to work” (van Manen, 1998, p. 55). This understanding is firmly grounded in the philosophy that the phenomenological research is devoted to asking the question of what the nature of the phenomenon as an essentially human experience is (van Manen, 1998, p. 62). To van Manen (1998), data contains a wide range of meaning in phenomenology. It refers to “oral”, “written discourse”, all “recollections of experiences, reflections on experiences, descriptions of experiences, taped interviews about experiences, or transcribed conversations about experiences” (p. 54). In order to capture the whole picture of the image through the student’s manga creation experience, this study collects data from a variety of sources as the above-mentioned.
6.2.1.1. Details of school and participants

This study was implemented at the Church of Christ in China Tam Lee Lai Fun Memorial Secondary School (10, San Wo Lane, San Hui, Tuen Mun, New Territories, Hong Kong). As one of the satellite communities in the North-Western New Territories in Hong Kong, Tuen Mun started being developed in the 1980s. Most of the students are living in this community and are familiar with the local environment. With a total of 1,100 students and 65 teachers, the school is a Band Three secondary school of CMI, where the students are classified with the low academic achievement. The school was established in 1990 and funded by the government offering basic education curricula from Form One to Form Three level students, which is equivalent to Year Seven to Nine. In the senior high level (Form Four to Form Seven, which is equivalent to Year Ten to Year Twelve) mostly students are divided into two professional groups of studies based on their preferences: science and business. The culture and vision of the school is to provide students with a comprehensive learning environment and encourage them to cultivate one arts-and-culture related hobby for the long-life learning component of their schooling. The two teachers-in-charge have 15 years and five years teaching experiences at the school respectively. The one with rich experience is the supervisor of the Visual Arts at the school. The two social workers are from the Church of Christ in China, Hong Kong. They are registered social workers and have served the school for over 10 years in both positions of social worker and school counsellor. Concerning the two researcher assistants who are also referred to as teaching assistants, they are final year Visual Arts major students of the Bachelor of Secondary Education program at The Hong Kong Institute of Education. They both have two years part-time experience in teaching art in secondary school in Hong Kong.

6.2.1.2. Validity, reliability, and sample selection

Commitment to both the interpretation and responses to art becomes the significant tool of measurement toward validation. As art is “an interactional process, and in order for the relationship to succeed there must be a mutuality of response” (McNiff, 1981, p. 57). The validation in the study
depends on the participant’s responsibility and commitment to art (McNiff, 1981). It includes five essential aspects for consideration.

The first is the participant’s commitment (including the students, the researcher, the teaching assistants, and the teachers-in-charge) to make interpretation and responses to the student’s creating experience, the process, and the artwork. The second is the student’s commitment to “have the strength and self-confidence necessary to maintain artistic vitality” which is the commitment to create (McNiff, 1981, p. 48). The third is the commitment to “increasing the silent dialogue with art materials” which means to help “to heighten concentration, commitment and the effective use of time” and reduce meaningless talking (McNiff, 1988, p. 136). The next is the researcher’s commitment to maintain a sound and trusting environment with stimulating, safe, and encouraging support in terms of both the physical and psychological environment.

The quality control of the stability of the surroundings is important because “the creative impulse” may be “reinforced or interrupted by environment conditions, with certain physical surroundings stimulating art and others serving as obstacles” (McNiff, 1981, p. 48). Finally, the commitment to regular attendance and achieve the requirement of full attendance is one of the requirements. The participants are required to make the agreement on the commitment. Otherwise, the research teams will regard the participant as an invalid and unreliable case.

Since the study depends on interpretation, interpretation also relies on the validity of interpretation (Altheide & Johnson, 1994, p. 485). To achieve and increase the study’s credibility and validity, a triangulation strategy is suggested as one of the effective and trustworthiness methods in qualitative studies (Gall, et al., 1996; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Lincoln & Denzin, 1994). According to Leedy (1997), triangulation refers to “the process of using multiple data collection methods, data sources, analysts, or theories to check the validity of the findings” (p. 169). He emphasises that “if similar themes are noted in data collected from a variety of sources, the credibility of the interpretation is enhanced” (Leedy, 1997, p. 169). The above was taken into account in the conduct of the study.
Images have multi-layers of personal and particular meanings that can help understand the participant’s state of mind (Edwards, 2004). These meanings attributes to the image created, which are covered and constructed by symbols and metaphors. Like the interpretation method applied in art psychotherapy, the art therapist (the researcher), the client (the students), and the art product including the art process establish the triangular relationship in order to reveal the meaning, which their interactions react the potential of therapeutic art (Edwards, 2004).

The importance of using triangulation is to construct the facts (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The concept of the examination of the data from different parties or sources in order to increase the validity and reliability is similar to the method of collaborative analysis applied in phenomenological study. On the other hand, the artwork itself adapts the triangular interpretation, too. Danto (1981) suggests a model of triadic dialogue for interpretation in which meanings can be unravelled through the involvement in the three parties of the viewer, the artist, and the artwork. It reflects that interpretation of the images depends on a consolidated relationship involved different parties. The meaning of the image is constructed not only by the students, but also their dialogues with the artwork and the researcher. The structure of the triangulation consists of the main researcher, the two teachers-in-charge, and the students.

In the study the examination method of triangulation lies with the researcher, the teacher-in-charge, and the student’s transcripts of recording the art experience and the artwork. Within such triangular relationships between the student, the student’s artwork, and the researcher, the content of the interpretation is made and becomes extremely important in terms of revealing meanings of the images. Therefore, interpretation made through the examination of triangulation to denote the creation process and experience in between the relationship is highly encouraged.

A case conference is held within one month after the completion of the program. The purpose of the meeting is to implement the method of “the art of testing” (Gadamer, 1994, p. 330), which means to “lay open, to place in the open” for a discussion or even a debate, as well as a test of the text (van Manen, 1998, p. 100). The researcher would invite the two teachers-in-charge and the two researcher
assistants to participate in the conference. In the conference, the raw data collected from each student was re-examined by the three parties. This process, in van Manen’s (1998) words, is “collaborative analysis: the research/seminar/group” (p. 100). Details are to be presented in the part of Collaborative Interpretation (6.3.2.).

The interpretation is made according to the clutches of ideas. Ideas, conceptions or themes are grouped together based on the conception-based method. If there are common and relevant ideas found, then the three parties will examine them. Once all parties agree to or made a consensus toward the ideas, the ideas would then be put on the table for data presentation as a theme of lived experience. The principles of sample selection follow the above-mentioned important issues and their qualities in terms of validity and reliability. Finally, although from the beginning 12 students are willing to participate into the program, eventually eight students (one male and seven females) fulfil their commitment. The students’ pseudonym names are Jack, Kei, KH, KW, Fish, Yin, Nie, and Yan.

6.2.1.3. Formal and informal questions designed for interview

In the study, there is an informal interview with each participant in the first session in order to capture an holistic impression of him or her. A formal questionnaire distributed in the last session and an in-depth interview is to be given to each student for evaluation (Appendix A). The questionnaire that consists of 36 questions adopts semi-structured questions and further questions important to reveal the answer. The rationale for using the semi-structured questions is to feel free to follow up the relevant dialogues and “allow the order and introduction of the topics to come as naturally as possible in the course of the discussion” (Parsons, 1987, p. 19).

According to Malchiodi (1998b), “memory, imagination, and real life” are the important issues that motivate children to draw (p. 20). Therefore, the questions for the interviews are open-ended, to encourage dialogue and evoke comprehensive accounts of individuals’ experiences, memories, and imaginations. The open-ended questions prompts are carefully designed and considered to cover the main research question on the basis on the matrix. Questions are designed to reveal the meaning of the
matrix. In the matrix, some questions may relate to the other questions to reveal the interrelationship as well.

In the questionnaire to the students (Appendix A and Table 3.1), the design of the questions numbered 1 to 3, 6 to 10, 12, 14, 16 to 20, 22, 23, 25 to 27, 30 to 31, and 33 to 35 are directed to the first research question of what the meanings of the images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents through the experiences of art creation are. The questions numbered 10, 13, 15 to 16, 18 to 19, 21 to 23, 25 to 26, and 30 are directed to responses to the second research question of why they are creating these images in this particular way. The response to the third research question of how they interpret the creation process goes to the questions numbered 4 to 5, 11, 15, 18 to 19, 21, 24, 26, 28 to 29, and 32. If the answers toward some of the questions were unclear or needed to have further explorations, a second interview toward the cases would have followed in the following week. In the study, eight students had arranged a second interview for further explorations although their answers had considered thoughtful, meaningful, and useful for the enrichment of the data.

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<th>Questions in the questionnaire (no.)</th>
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The questions one to five are about the students’ conceptions of popular culture. Questions 6 to 11 are about the students’ conceptions of aesthetics, while questions 12 to 18 focus on their conceptions of manga. Questions 19 to 26 emphasises the interrelationship between the students’ lived experiences, popular culture, relationships, and manga creation. Questions 27 to 32 are about the manga creation and their inner self. Questions 32 to 35 stress the students’ conceptions of the application of other arts elements like sound and text in the manga creation. The last is an open-ended question which students can feel free to respond to their manga creation experiences. All questions posed in the questionnaire direct to both the research questions and the issues raised in the literature.

The questionnaire is neither an assessment or an evaluation tool. Rather, it is one of the ways considered to have a better understanding of images. The questionnaire is designed to explore and reveal the experience of the student. Besides, to investigate their experience of art creation, some parts of the questionnaire are used to investigate how the popular visual culture influences their lifeworld, while other parts are to testify whether they have the abilities to make aesthetics judgment and the
meaning of the aesthetics. The two research assistants may help to explain what the questions mean in plain language if necessary. However, they are not allowed to interfere or direct the students thinking in terms of answering the questions.

In addition to the informal interview with the students in the first session and the formal questionnaire for the interview with the students in the final session, the two research assistants and the researcher asked the students informal questions in each session. Questions are specifically related to the student’s art creation experience, the artwork, and art creation process or focusing on one particular issue. Some questions are the essential phenomenological questions suggested by van Manen (1998) such as “how to understand” and “what it means to be” (p. 63).

Malchiodi (1998b) states, “Simply asking children questions about their drawings encourages them to tell the therapist many things beyond the obvious visual content of the drawing itself” (p. 48). In the study, questions for informal interview lay stress on:

1. What is it like to be in terms of the experience of art creation?
2. Is this what it means to why you create the image in this particular way?
3. Is this what it means to how you interpret the creation process?
4. How is this understood?
5. How do you describe the experience and give more examples about it? What does it mean to you?
6. How do you describe your inner feelings? (p. 68)

The direction of question can start with asking the student’s experience by focusing on one particular experience or event. The principle of asking informal question is based on phenomenological inquiry method. The interviewers are required to have patience and silence to prompt the student’s recollections (van Manen, 1998, p. 68). Parsons (1987) suggests to use probe questions in order to “prompt further clarification of what had been said” and the process of interviewing should be “enjoyable, though it was also demanding; and the best interviews became more like genuine conservations” (p. 19). Parsons (1987) suggests some neutral and remarkable probe questions like:
You said X. What do mean by that?
Can you give me an example?
Can you say more about that? (p. 19)

According to the above-mentioned, the research assistants are required to pose questions following the principle. Before interviewing, they repeatedly practice the tactful way of questions.

6.2.1.4. Ethical considerations and documents

The study obtained the Approval of A Research Project Involving Human Subjects approved by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee before being undertaken, and was classified as Category MR (moderate risk) (Appendix B).

The researcher respects and protects confidential information obtained from participants in conversation and/or through artistic expression. The researcher will not disclose confidential information without participants, school teachers, and parents’ explicit written consents. Consent Forms (Appendix C) and Plain Language Statement (Appendix D), and the Approval Letter to Undertaking Research from the School Principal (Appendix E) are appended with the thesis.

The researcher will not make or permit any public use or reproduction of the participant’s sessions, including dialogue and art expression, without express written consent of the participants. The participant in the study agreed that the sessions were video recorded and the interview with the participant and the process of making artwork as well as the art product were videotaped.

6.3. Process

The Process section contains data collection, content and context analysis, artwork documentation, textual and structural descriptions, and fusion of horizon.
6.3.1. Collecting data

There are two ways to deal with the data: the method of clutches of ideas and the triangulation. The method of “clusters of ideas” is suggested by Parsons (1987) in cognitive developmental studies of how people understand art. This is a method used to gather data recorded from the transcripts of the interviewees. The process is to quote the data based on the similar stage in which the ideas are presented in common interest within the same conceptual consideration. Parsons (1987) gives a clear definition of this method, describes it as “stages”, and suggests that

stages are clusters of ideas, and not properties of persons. A cluster is a pattern, or structure, of internally related assumptions that tend to go together in people’s minds just because they are internally, or logically, related. (p. 11)

In this study, collecting data means gathering the patterns of clusters of ideas, which also means to capture the generalisation of the conception of the young adolescents towards the meanings of the images of popular visual culture. Such a method is similar to the method of content analysis and the fusion of horizon in the phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994); it is a consistent and clear method to reveal the meanings. The patterns of clusters of ideas are similar to the theme suggested in phenomenology (van Manen, 1998). The study does not only look for the similarities, it also looks for differences that are particularly related to the response to the research questions and reflect what ideas make the students unique between cases.

6.3.2. Collaborative interpretation

As discussed earlier in the part of Validity, Reliability, and Sample Selection (6.3.2.), the study adopts a method of collaborative interpretation to re-examine the data through the triangulation between the two teachers-in-charge, the researcher, and the two research assistants in a case conference after the program finished. Collaborative interpretation can be open in both the formal and informal ways. The research group or the circle of the seminar, from van Manen (1998), is “the formal way for conveying
and gathering the interpretive insights of others to a research text”, while the informal way refers to “sharing the text with advisers, consultants, reviewers, colleagues, or friends” (p. 100).

The collaborative discussions can be regarded as collaborative reflections. The principle of the collaborative discussions is to seek and conclude common views on “the thematic descriptions of phenomena” by “a research group or seminar” to help generate “deeper insights and understandings” (van Manen, 1998, p. 100). According to van Manen (1998),

one participant researching a certain phenomenon will need a first (second, third, or fourth) draft of his or her paper. And on this basis of this description other participants share their views of the way the description does or does not resonate with their own experiences. Thus themes are examined, articulated, re-interpreted, omitted, added, or reformulated. (p. 100)

Data collected in the study can be divided into two parts: the original data and the data from the thematic analysis. The original data that are re-examined and discussed through triangulation contains:

1. Transcripts including observation from the researcher and the two research assistants and the informal questions asked in the sessions about each student recorded in the sessions from the researcher, the two teachers-in-charge, and the two researcher assistants.
2. The artwork.
3. The formal questionnaire distributed in the last session.

In the light of close observation adopted in the study requires the researcher, the two teachers-in-charge, and the two research assistants to participate into the field with reflective attitude. After testing the data and discussing the above items, similar and unique themes are put in the columns of the matrix with evidence such as the transcripts from different parties. The analysis method is first to abstract the essential themes or start with some specific descriptions about the students from each party and insert these sources into the appropriate domains against the fundamental philosophical considerations in the matrix, and then make a comparison with each other.
The principle of the selection of the essential themes is based on the determination of the “experiential structures that make up that experience” through the “conceptual formulations or categorical statements” (van Manen, 1998, p. 79). These experiential structures highlighted and abstracted must be related to the matrix. In short, it is “telling ‘something’ meaningful” (van Manen, 1998, p. 86). Finally, the common and unique theme emerges through the process of the triangular-collaborative interpretation draws in the matrix and the whole story of each student is restructured to explicate the meanings (Table 3.2). Detailed discussions about themes and making descriptions can be found in the part of Textual and Structural Descriptions (6.3.4.).

### Table 3.2 Matrix for the triangular-collaborative interpretation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matrix of the research questions</th>
<th>Domains</th>
<th>The meaning of the images through the experiences of creating artwork</th>
<th>The creators’ responses to art creation</th>
<th>Creation process leading to art products</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fundamental philosophical considerations</strong></td>
<td><strong>What?</strong></td>
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<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
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<td><strong>Why?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>How?</strong></td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
<td>1, 2, 3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Denotes the three parties: 1 refers to the researcher’s view on the common and unique theme, 2 refers to the views on the common and unique theme of the two teachers-in-charge, and 3 refers to the views on the common and unique theme of the two research assistants.

6.3.3. Artwork documentation

Art, like the other forms of insight as literature, poetry, or stories, can be one of the sources of phenomenological study due to

[a]n artistic text differs from the text of everyday talking and acting in that it is always arrived at in a reflective mood. In other words, the artist recreates experiences by transcending them. (van Manen, 1989, p. 97)
With the specific languages to express the feelings of the world, artistic media naturally can become a powerful source reflecting the lived experience. In addition to the open-ended research questions, the participant’s artwork made in the 10 lessons plays the most essential part of the research study. Sketch, artwork, manuscript, and transcripts other than manga images made in the ten lessons are to be collected as parts of the interview. However, they are only for reference. The student was asked to bring her/his art that s/he thinks most represented of his experience to the interview. Students’ interpretation of the art was also recorded. For the purpose of accurate documentation, each interview was recorded by one video camera and then transcribed. The artwork was photographed. The title, medium, size, date, time, and any other information about the artwork such as artist’s statement that might be helpful in the research was also be attached. The written works such as poems were duplicated from the original to be sure of accurate punctuation.

6.3.4. Textual and structural descriptions

Phenomenological descriptions depend on the qualities of the theme made. It is because “theme gives control and order to our research and writing” (van Manen, 1998, p. 79). As mentioned in the part of Collaborative Interpretation (6.4.2.), a triangulation method of theme abstraction for making collaborative interpretation is suggested to maintain the quality of the text for the preparation of making final interpretation. Thus, themes play a crucial role in explorations of the research questions. Van Manen (1998) identifies themes as the “needfulness or desire to make sense”, “openness to something”, and “the process of insightful invention, discovery, disclosure” (p. 88) as well as “the stars that make up the universes of meaning we live through” (p. 90). He further defines that:

1. Theme is the experience of focus, of meaning, of point.
2. Theme formulation is at best a simplification.
3. Themes are not objects one encounters at certain points or moments in a text. A theme is not a thing; themes are intransitive.
4. Theme is the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand. Theme describes an aspect of the structure of lived experience. (p. 87)
Besides, the relationship between themes and the concepts of the phenomenon is intimate since:

1. Theme is the means to get at the notion.
2. Theme gives shape to the shapeless.
3. Theme describes the content of the notion.
4. Theme is always a reduction of a notion. (van Manen, 1998, p. 88)

After selecting the theme, the next step is isolating or uncovering the thematic statements (van Manen, 1998). There are three approaches suggested by van Manen (1998) to do this from the text: (1) the holistic or sententious approach to seek sententious phrase that can capture the meaning as a whole; (2) the selective or highlighting approach to capture the specific statements or phrases to reveal the meaning (3) the detailed or line-by-line approach to reveal the meaning by sentence or sentence cluster (pp. 92-93). The gathered commonality of the theme description can be “lifting appropriate phrases or by capturing in singular statements the main thrust of the meaning of the themes” (van Manen, 1998, p. 93).

Similar with van Manen, the organisation of the data analysis follows a procedure called “horizontalizing” that regards the “horizon or statement relevant to the topic and question as having equal value” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 118). Moustakas (1994) comments that the horizontalised statements are to list the “meaning or meaning units” (p. 118). Within the horizontalised statement, Moustakas (1994) also mentions the relationship between the notion of clustered idea, the textual and structural descriptions of the experience, and the meaning of the phenomenon as below. On the other hand, this is very similar to Parsons’ concept of clusters of idea or themes (Parsons, 1987, p. 11).

These are clustered into common categories or themes, removing overlapping and repetitive statements. The clustered themes and meanings are used to develop the textual descriptions of the experience. From the textual descriptions, structural descriptions and an integration of textures and structures into the meanings and essences of the phenomenon are constructed. (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 118-119)
The textual and structural descriptions that are based on the clustered themes, meaning units, or ideas are seriously used to determine the quality of the meaning constructed. It shows how individuals experience the phenomenon. In this aspect, the relationship between the texture and structural descriptions transfers the abstract appearance and hidden essence to the concrete ones (Moustakas, 1994, p. 79). Therefore, writing of the textual and structural description as a horizontalised process can be seen as an important process of presenting the essence of the experience of the phenomenon.

The principle of the comprehensive writing of the textual and structural descriptions puts the focus on reconstructing the theme with the distilled, meaningful, high-quality textual and structural reflective, and synthetic description. The meaning turns out to be a result of the composite textual descriptions that are an “integration of all of the individual textual descriptions into a group or universal textual description” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 180). This kind of writing is like putting different parts of the puzzle together in terms of searching the common meaning. The configuration of meaning involves “both the structure of meaning and how it is created” (Von Eckartsberg, 1986, p. 27).

7. Summary of chapter

The Considering the Research Approach (1.2.) mentions that the matrix in which the first research question draws the attention to the most important fundamental question of what. This consolidates the rationale for applying the phenomenological method as the research method in the study. Therefore, the study adapts phenomenological approach as the theoretical framework and case study as inquiry method to find out the meaning of the images of the popular visual culture created by young adolescents.

Under the phenomenological framework, the chapter highlights the importance of the collaborative interpretation made through the emphasis on the examination of the triangulation. This is also a method specifically designed to respond to the matrix. Besides, the quality of the text including the art text constitutes the key in interpretation. Although phenomenological approaches to data analysis vary from Moustakas to van Manen, the study regards the phenomenological approach a practical method
with clear and effective procedure to reveal the meaning of the experience. According to this belief, the major process of data analysis leading to concluding discussions emphasises on collaborative interpretation including seeking clustered themes and textual and structural descriptions. The next chapter is concerned with the literature.
PART III  FRAMEWORK OF RELATED LITERATURE (INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE CHAPTERS FOUR TO SEVEN)
This part of the literature review is composed of four main components. Each has its own perspective on the discussion about issues related to the study. The texts are literature on visual culture from a socio-cultural perspective, literature about *manga* from a communication perspective, literature of art therapy from a therapeutic perspective, and literature of visual culture in art education from an educational perspective. It should be noted that this research is neither a study of visual culture nor art therapy. The study applies the ideas of socio-culture, communication, psychology, and education, but it is not necessary for it to become a cultural, sociological, psychological or educational study. The study regards these ideas as an approach to apply in different situation related to the research questions. The focus of the study is clearly on articulating images of popular visual culture created by young adolescent in the local context. The purpose of the literature review, as Leedy (1997) states is to assist you in attacking your problem for research. In any research undertaking, your own research problem is central. Everything you do, you do because it helps you resolve your problem or answer your research questions. When you know what others have done, you are better prepared to investigate your chosen problem with deeper insight and more complete knowledge. (p. 71)

The principle of the organisation of the literature is “not necessarily identical with, but collateral to” the area of study (Leedy, 1997, p. 71). Therefore, the aim of the organisation of the structure of literature is not to aimlessly cover and discuss all literature from the four perspectives. Instead, it aims to concentrate on raising some crucial issues consistently related to conceptually contribute to the background knowledge to fundamentally understand the matrix from the four perspectives in terms of epistemology.

Understanding images of young adolescents is closely involved into socio-cultural, psychological, communication, and educational contexts and the connections with each other. Both the context and the connections contribute to understanding of the interrelationships of the matrix. The interrelationships, in other words, are about communication. In order to integrate various areas of subject knowledge to contribute and enrich the matrix, a concentration or integration of one
A perspective for linking with different literature is then suggested—the communication concentration. Based on this understanding, the literature review focuses on this underpinning illustrating a comprehensive discourse in four major components from four particular perspectives.

In this connection, the communication concentration provides different literature with a common view to start with the discourse in the interrelationship. The concentration definitely gives the discourse in different literature an integrated direction. With this understanding, the four components of literature in the study are correspondently and consistently formed. The four parts of literature have common issues concerning in relation to the matrix in terms of revealing the meaning of the image though they are from different disciplines. They also stand on the same point of view from the communication concentration on examining the symbolic and metaphorical expression and its way of communication in seeking the meaning of the images of popular visual culture to young adolescents from socio-cultural, communication, psychological and educational aspects.

The reasoning behind the selection of the four parts of literature lies on carefully considering the relevant involvement of the discipline, knowledge, content, context, and value with diverse issues intimately in relation to the matrix from socio-cultural, psychological, communication, and educational underpinnings. Besides, the application of these perspectives is based on the view that all literature are involved in specific metaphorical and symbolic ways of communication. Thus, these views can provide the common platform for the study to examine the issue of understanding images created by young adolescents.

This structure of literature effectively sets and defines limits, the boundary and scope of literature of this study, providing insight into essential arguments related together, informing the epistemological questions in association with the matrix—the interrelationships suggested in the study (Part III). The four parts of the literature and their underpinnings make clear in outline the significant fields involved in the inquiry into the knowledge related in the study. Although each of the fields has its own specific subject knowledge regarding understanding images, they provide in-depth discussion and related knowledge to nourish the conception of understanding of the whole round grounding knowledge.
Indeed, they are logically and conceptually coherent with each other to reveal the research questions proposed in the matrix.

**Part III Structure of related literature**

As a combined approach to understanding images, visual culture and art therapy provide the study with solid socio-cultural and psychological grounds of knowledge of the study. Taking into account *manga* as one of the most popular forms of visual culture and selected as a medium for the study, with this background, literature of *manga* can readily be brought out for in-depth discussions from a communication perspective. Finally, literature in visual culture in art education opens dialogues with the possibility of the application of visual culture within the art education context from an educational perspective. Therefore, the organisation of the literature is an intimate and comprehensive integral, contributing its relevant knowledge to the study.
Chapter Four

Socio-cultural Discourse in Visual Culture

1. Introduction

This is the first part of the literature review, giving an overview of understanding the concept of visual culture from a socio-cultural perspective. It outlines essential issues by discussing the transition from popular culture to visual culture and discourses in visual culture. The focus of the discussion is mainly on popular visual culture and its relevant issues about the research study.

Culture has various meanings and faces. McFee (1998) defines culture as something “used to identify the values, attitudes, and acceptable behaviour of people from a common heritage” (p. 4); it is “learned, transmitted, maintained and modified through languages, behaviour, ritual, play and art” (p. 51), in which it “has objective, subjective, universal, collective and individual dimensions” (p. 52). It can also be understood as both the material and semiotic representation through which we see one’s interests, satisfactions, practices, and values (Krug, 1993).

The definition of culture can relate to the artwork as well. McFee (1998) states, “Art objectifies, enhances, differentiates, organizes, communicates and gives continuity to culture. Culture gives meaning and structure” (p. 52). She (1998) also assumes the artwork as cultural object that “stimulates in respondents subjective visual, emotional, intuitive, as well as reasoned modes of thought depending upon the viewers individual aptitudes and culturally learned abilities and values” (p. 52). According to this, the relationship between art and culture is extremely intimate. Contemporary cultural development and its appearance have an extraordinarily intimate relationship with visual image, as arts development always go hand in hand with culture. The basic view on art from a cultural perspective lays stress on the belief that art is cultural product (Freedman, 2000). The connection between them is based on the view that art takes the advantage of the continuity of the human cultural development. In reality, studies in visual culture may be pursued from divergent
angles and disciplines such as critical theory, post-colonialism, feminism, and neo-Marxism, starting from areas such as films and media, art history and cultural study (Duncum, 2002; Freedman, 2003b).

2. Socio-cultural context in the post-industrial era

Since the 1990s, consensus has gradually formed among arts commentators, making use of the term “visual culture” to denote visual media that are widespread yet distinct from those that can only be found in formal arts institution (Mirzoeff, 1998). Relevant studies in visual culture could be traced back to early 1970s when the concept of visual culture was not concisely developed. However, general studies in fashion with a sociological perspective can be sourced earlier than the 1900s (Gao, 2002). These studies are about the interpretation of the relationship between the Western culture and the form of the development of the capitalism by particularly focusing on popular culture (Simmel, 1971). The notion of socio-cultural phenomenon related to human’s interaction is understood as a logic vehicle of understanding the meaning of the dynamic culture in society (Sorokin, 1941, 1962).

2.1. Popularity, arts, and culture

Gao (2002) uses the term “fashion” to analyse the aesthetics principles based on the thought of popular culture, pointing out that the essence of the aesthetics of fashion is composed of a series of symbols. His view can best describe the contemporary fashion phenomenon. The composed elements of the aesthetics of fashion are symbols or signs since the formation and development of postmodernism is constant from beginning to end and closely related to symbols and criticism of linguistics (Gao, 1999; Merrel, 1997).

In postmodernism, the process of criticism of traditional culture regards “the criticism of symbols and the deconstruction of linguistics as a main task…the process of cultural production and reproduction can basically be seen as the reconstruction and deconstruction activity of all types of symbols” (Gao, 1999, p. 195). The view on the relationship between popular culture and its influence on humans is not always positive. During the 1930s to 1940s, the Frankfurt School changed the view of popular
culture to adopt a critical theory to study the sociology of mass culture (Held, 1980). In the view of mass culture, art is regarded as a product that is produced in an environment of culture industry (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1972).

The concept of cultural product and cultural industry arouses the debate by arguing the dualistic essences of the mass culture: it is, Benjamin (1969), on the one hand, who criticises the negative aspects toward the reproduction of culture from the influence of the development of technology and economy of the capitalistic society; on the other hand, he highly acknowledges modern technology which may take the advantage of the prevalence of the mass culture in human history. Although Benjamin recognises that the change of technological reproduction gives new meanings to art in the society, he rejects copying technology by claiming that such modern technology brings us tragedy because it ruins the authenticity of the arts. Particularly in reproduction of art, he comments, “Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be” (Benjamin, 1969, p. 220). Besides, Benjamin, Marcuse (1955, 1964) also contributes influential thoughts to review the position of the mass culture with a critical perspective. These influential thinkers critically view the issues on mass culture with a left-wing sociological perspective, establishing the foundation of critical theory in interpreting contemporary popular culture (Gao, 1999).

2.2. Consumer culture, lifestyle, and meaning

The significant importance of popular culture in the post-industrial society can be reflected in the aspect of the occurrence of the consuming cultural phenomenon. Arts and culture can be regarded as the manifestation of visual culture through the ages, especially after engaging the post-industrial society. Marcuse (1964) observes the culture similar to a large compound system in which the entertainment, lifestyle, commerce, and popular culture are embodied.

Benjamin (1991) utilises the term, “kaleidoscope” to describe the diverse cultural phenomena. He realises that the mass production of capitalism work both toward the advantage and disadvantage of
the arts: on the one hand the arts can benefit from the mass production, on the other hand it will diminish in the cultural value. Marcuse (1964) describes that people living in this system as one-dimensional man. Unlike Marcuse, Adorno and Horkheimer (1972) use the cultural industry to elucidate the aesthetic characteristics and phenomenon in the post-Ford era. Gans (1974) mentions the negative influence of popular culture on the sophisticated high culture such as causing the negative impact on our society, decreasing the cultural quality, and providing unnecessary desire. However, a bizarre phenomenon happens to the situation that on one hand people in the post-Ford society feel free to enjoy the desire for diverse and prevailing arts-and-culture related products, and on the other hand are exploited by the capitalist (Storey, 1993).

After the 1960s, critical theory turns to a linguistic approach to studying popular culture. Barthes investigates advertising, fashion, music, art, photography, consuming goods, and so forth by applying semiology in analysing the images and messages implied in popular culture. Barthes (1990) demonstrates how people’s desire of consuming and the meaning of fashion are constructed by the creation of myths that are created by playing with signs by writers, advertisers, and designers. In the 1980s, new sociologists and social theorists like Lyotard and Beck put their focuses on studies in culture, especially in popular culture (Gao, 2002). New research has started with specific categories of popular culture as popular music, films, fashions, popular novels, the phenomenon of McDonalds and so forth since then. Although these sociologists attempt to widely explore the field of popular culture, they seldom succeed in applying effective study methods in revealing the meaning of the text under the social foundation and mechanism; thus resulting in narrowing their studies in elucidating the aesthetic characteristics and meaning (Gao, 2002).

3. The foundation of visual culture

According to Sturken and Cartwright (2001),

[T]he world we inhabit is filled with visual images. They are central to how we represent, make meaning, and communicate in the world around us. In many ways, our culture is an
increasingly visual one. Over the course of the last two centuries, Western culture has come to be dominated by visual rather than oral or textual media. (p. 1)

Sturken and Cartwright (2001) address that images “have never been merely illustrations” (p. 1) and “they carry important content” (p. 1) in the century that is dominated with images. Visual arts, as a significant symbol of cultural development in human history, reflect the cultural condition, too. Visual culture and visual art have a common element—the visual form and the imagery meaning. However, studies in visual culture and visual studies are not one or the same thing. As Dikovitskava (2002) clarifies, visual studies is “the study of representation, pays close attention to the image, but uses theories coming from elsewhere in the humanities” (p. 4). Visual culture studies emphasises studying “those material artefacts, buildings and images, plus time-based media and performances, produced by human labour and imagination which serve aesthetic, symbolic, ritualistic or ideological-political ends, and/or practical functions, and which address the sense of sight to a significant extent” (Walker & Chaplin, 1997, pp. 1-2).

3.1. Socio-anthropological perspective on visual culture

The view on the concept of visual culture is different. Hooper-Greenhill (2000) articulates that visual culture studies relate to studying “the seen and the seer” (p. 108), which refers to the visual objects and the ways of seeing and interpreting. Freedman (2003b) realises that the visual arts today can be regarded as social and cultural products that construct our social life and meaning; therefore, visual culture can also be regraded as one of the significant forms of social production (Freedman, 2003a, 2003b). Freedman (2003b) also claims that “visual arts make up most of visual culture, which is all that is humanly formed and sensed through vision or visualization and shapes the way we live our lives” (p. 1).

Sociology and anthropology can be the foundation of understanding visual culture (Freedman & Stuhr, 2000). The early sociologist and anthropologist apply the method of visual anthropology and visual sociology to examine and represent human experiences and behaviours through visual media
(Hockings, 1975). In the 1980s and 1990s, ethnographers apply various visual instruments to record human’s behaviours, in which these instruments only play a role as recording, but they also function as instrument with educational meanings (Chaplin, 1994; Taylor, 1994).

The way of visual representation of the anthropologist and sociologist, which adopt a participant observation method to understand the cultural concepts and phenomena of different social groups, is suitable for the inquiry method of visual culture (Walker & Chaplin, 1997). The criticism method of ethnology can apply to visual culture because visual culture also emphasises the micro perspective of the socio-cultural, ecological, and aesthetic inquires (Lai & Ball, 2002).

3.2. Interdisciplinary relationship between art and culture

Visual culture can be defined as “transdisciplinary discourses and practices that focus on the realm of the everyday-popular culture-as a site of struggle” (Tavin, 2003, p. 197). In searching the meaning of visual image, the mode of learning in visual culture adopts an interdisciplinary mode for the construction of the multiliteral and multimodal meanings. Concerning the mode of learning, communicative mode of visual culture is “made through an interaction of music, the spoken voice, sound effects, language, and pictures” (Duncum, 2004, p. 252).

From Tavin (2003), visual is a “field of study that analysed and interprets how visual experiences are constructed within social systems, practices, and structure” (p. 197). Visual culture connects art history, design history, cultural studies and so forth, in which it produces, maintains, and transforms the social institution, media, object, and even the social class through the interaction between the media of visual culture, production, and consumer (Barnard, 1998). According to Freedman (2003b), visual culture is inherently interdisciplinary and increasingly multimodal. All of the arts, not just the arts traditionally considered visual arts, have visual culture characteristics. However, just as the definition of the term art has been debated for centuries, the term visual culture does
not necessarily require a precisely agreed upon definition to discuss it in terms of education. (p. 2)

In discussion with the realm of visual culture studies, Walker and Chaplin (1997) attempt to define the field of visual culture and its discipline for studies by suggesting a frame of reference below (Figure 4.1).

![Figure 4.1 The field of visual culture](image)


From the above frame of reference, the fields of general production and cultural production cover the field of visual culture. According to Walker and Chaplin (1997), visual culture can be divided into four different contents in the core of the field:

1. Fine arts such as painting, sculpture, printmaking, drawing, mixed-media forms, installations, photo-text, avant-garde films and video, architecture, and so forth.
2. Crafts/design such as urban design, retail design, corporate design, logos and symbols, graphics, product design, ceramics, costume and fashion, hair styling, body adornment, tattoos, landscape and garden design, and so forth.
3. Performing arts and the arts of spectacle such as acting, gesture and body language, playing musical instruments, dance/ballet, striptease, fashion shows, the circus, carnivals and festivals, public ceremonies such as coronations, funfairs, theme parks, Disneyworlds, video games, fireworks, illuminations and neon signs, pop and rock concerts, sporting events, and so forth.

4. Mass and electronic media such as photography, cinema/film, animation, television and video, advertising and propaganda, postcards and reproductions, magazines, cartoons, comics and newspapers, multimedia, Internet, virtual reality, computer imagery, and so forth.

Duncum (2002) highly regards the essential meaning of visual culture as “everyday visual experience” (p. 5). He emphasises that visual culture is constructed by visual and culture, that the former deals with the meaning and human’s experience through the various imagery experience, while the latter is about the cultural context (Duncum, 2001). Duncum (2002) remarks that

> visual culture is the nexus between visual objects and their cultural contexts. Visual culture study is the pursuit of meaning of imagery to include fine art, folk art, mass media, design, popular culture, architecture, and other constructed categories of visual phenomena in our culture and in everyday life. (p. 12)

Barnard (1998) propounds that there is no one definition of the meaning of visual culture since it is different according to various cultures and the concept toward what visual culture is. The meaning of visual culture is to study the system constructed by the visual, object, way of implementation, value, and belief (Barnard, 1998). This view is similar to Guo and Chiu (2002), who suggest that visual culture is about the visual experience that can construct and communicate with our attitudes, belief, and values in everyday life.

Besides the visual culture experience, the communicative mode of visual culture is essential. The definition of visual culture suggested by Sturken and Cartwright (2001) lays stress on social and psychological patterns of looking. What they suggest is an issue about the communicative mode or way of response to art. They also declare the definition of visual culture as “those aspects of culture
that are manifest in visual form—paintings, prints, photographs, film, television, video, advertisements, new images, and science images” (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, p. 4).

The traditional classification of high art and low art in visual arts has been broken. The more increasing the forms of visual culture present, the more freedom these forms cross-traditional borders (Freedman, 2000, p. 314). The meaning of visual culture can be seen as both a significant sign and a reflection on crossing traditional artistic and social boundaries in the visual arts in a contemporary democratic society (Freedman, 2000, p. 314). To Freedman (2000), the essence of visual arts is “the conceptual and physical interactions of various images, forms of imagery, and their meanings” (p. 315).

3.3. Impact on visual technology

Under the impact of electronic and digital media, the traditional form of music presentation has been changed to an integrative arts form, a cross-modal transfer or an interdisciplinary model (Howells, 2003; Mirzoeff, 1998). With the current wave of digital and electric visual media as shaped by Postmodernism, an interdisciplinary mode of development in visual culture is inevitable and becomes the general trend. Technology, especially visual technology, creates a major platform for communication and social interaction.

The revolution of communication technology brings people advantages of compassing the time and space; however, this utopia is being argued whether it can therefore bring us freedom or it only serves for the capitalism (Robin & Webster, 1999). As it turns out that communication between people and social interaction relies on visual image more than ever before. Taking the Windows platform development by the Microsoft company as an example, this platform creates a techno-culture through which people must communication with each other; however, it also becomes a new type of hegemony (Webster, 2003), though it successfully integrates the global media and breaks the distance of communication (Cunningham et al., 1997).
Mirzoeff (1999, 2002, 2004) argues that the focus of visual culture is on information, meaning, and pleasure for which consumers are searching through the interface of visual technology. To attempt to analyse the interface of visual subjects and visual events, Mirzoeff (2004) suggests three individual areas for possible inquiry: (1) the globalisation hypervisuality and its social and cultural impact; (2) the gathering of visual media, especially those related to digital culture such as Internet television and films made digitally, as well as digital photography seen in the daily life; and (3) the new definition of contemporary visual media based on these changes.

Under the impact of the new global media such as digital, electronic, and technologies in the postmodern era, the development of an interdisciplinary model in visual culture has become an important issue. Visual art is even taken as the new orientation in modern history for the reassessment of its priori assumption on history, social order and aesthetics (Mirzoeff, 1999). Visual culture has become an approach to review and re-evaluate the pre-occupied modernist’s concept of history, social order, and aesthetics (Jenks, 1995; Mirzoeff, 1998; Mirzoeff, 2004).

4. Interpretation of the visual power

There is a close relationship between culture, belief, and self-identity in terms of shaping the way of our cultural phenomenon being interpreted. Sturken and Cartwright (2001) describe such relationship as:

> to explore the meaning of images is to recognize that they are produced within dynamics of social power and ideology. Ideologies are system of belief that exists within all cultures. Images are an important means through which ideologies are produced and onto which ideologies are projected (p. 21).

As discussed earlier, the contemporary society is visual image-dominated in which the visual power becomes a symbolic way for expression of arts and culture. Therefore, to “explore the meaning of images is to recognize that they are produced within dynamics of social power and ideology.
4.1. Ideology

Ideology has different definitions. First, it can be realised as an unavoidable but important creation in a cultural system that makes the complex entity of the society more easily to be understood through meaning sharing (Geetz, 1964). McClure and Fischer (1969) attempts to dissolve the divergence concerning the conception of ideology to explicit the characteristics of ideology with suggestions for inducing these differences to three common characteristics as legitimation, conflict of power, and style of argument. Apple (1979) generalises ideology to three categories: the rationalisation and justification of the group activities of the particular professionals; the political or social movements; and the symbolic universes that synthesise views on the world. From these angles, views on ideology are made based on the belief that ideology is a political, social, and cultural creation and entity.

The definition of ideology can be defined as “ideas about how life should be…societies function by masking their ideologies as ‘natural’ systems of value or belief” (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, p. 51). Besides these, Althursser (1992) talks about ideology as that “the ultimate condition of production is the reproduction of the conditions of production” (p. 50), being caused to happen according to two criteria: the reproduction of the productive forces and the “reproduction of the existing relations of production” (p. 58).

In the mass media society, ideology could be understood as a concrete series of material symbols which transmit messages to an individual through the media as family, school and media (Curran, et al., 1991; Gurevitch, et al., 1982). Ideology moulds our perceptions of the world and our relationship with the society; in other words, we follow ideology (Fiske, 1996; Heywood & Sandywell, 1999). It offers us a “daily matter-of-course true” to our thoughts, action, and understanding of the relationship between the society and ourselves (Xiao, 2002, p. 101).

In visual culture, images are interpreted as ideologies. Sturken and Cartwright (2001) explicate, “Over time, images have been used to present, make meaning of, and convey various sentiments about nature, society, and culture as well as to present imagery worlds and abstract concepts” (p. 13).
Their views on images and ideologies are based on the living context creating socio-cultural meanings to human feelings. In the commerce society, ideology dispatches to the viewer through the power of image of various media (Williamson, 1978).

In discussion of using language to interpret visual images, there is a relationship between language and images. To Sturken and Cartwright (2001), representation means “the use of language and images to create meaning about the world around us” because just as “a language like English has a set of rules about how to express and interpret meaning, and so on, for instance, do the systems of representation of painting, photography, cinema, or television” (p. 12). It actually happens when we use words to understand, describe, and define the world as we see it, and we also use images to do this. This process takes place through systems of representation, such as language and visual media, that have rules and conventions about how they are organized. (Sturken & Cartwright, 2001, p. 12)

In other words, when we view an image, there starts a process of translation from the visual form to the linguistic representation or the same on the contrary in terms of searching for meaning. However, the equal and co-existing relationship toward translation in language and image in terms of representation is debateable. According to Parsons (1992), the main argument is that the knowing about language is different from knowing art. “Thinking about art is not the same as thinking in art” (Parsons, 1992, p. 79). Language interpretation toward art is not essential because talking is “not what really counts and the best artistic thinking is not in words” and because the former is ‘about art’ but ‘not art’” (Parsons, 1992, p. 79). Although both language and art language apply symbols to reveal meanings, their orientations are different. Language is to carry meaning rather than being a symbolic system that art focuses on (Parsons, 1992, p. 87). Parsons (1992) remarks that “thinking in the arts has little to do with language because it is essentially thinking in the terms of medium” (p. 79). From this aspect, talking about art is a process of translation or interpretation about art. However, due to “the artworld
and the culture increasingly require artistic and aesthetic work to be linguistically based if it is to be intelligent”, it has to turn to consider the importance of both in interpretation; therefore, interpretation means thinking in language and thinking in the art medium cognitively under this context (Parsons, 1992, p. 88).

4.2. Identity issues

The identity issue in visual culture is about how popular culture shapes people’s beliefs and identities, as well as how it establishes their “relationships with others and the environment” (Wagner-Ott, 2002, p. 246). The concept of identity is formed by cultural discourse through narrative. Identity that is under construction in the cognition of an individual and the other groups examines and shares with the characteristics of the common source (Hall, 1996; Zhang, C. X. & Yang, 1998). Identity is a “developing process” which refers to an individual confronting the process of socialisation and searching the similarity from the difference or the difference from the similarity through continuous searching the target for learning, imitating, recognising in families, schools or other groups (Xiao, 2002, p. 153).

Hall (1996) realises that identity is a “narrative of the self; it’s the story we tell about the self in order to know who we are” (p. 16). Hall (1996) also suggests using narrative forms to consider thinking the identity issue reflected by images of our culture by declaring that identity is “within discourse, within representation” (p. 16). According to this, the foundation of visual culture can be traced from the transformed nature of political discourse, social interaction, and cultural identity (Freedman, 2000, p. 314).

McNiff (1981) describes how social recognition relates to both the personal identity and the creative work by emphasising that social recognition is “but another manifestation of the need to create a positive sense of self that is accepted by others. As we move away from the tactile recognition received in infancy, we depend more and more on symbolic forms of acceptance” (p. 44).
4.3. Influences of images

Violent images can easily be seen in various forms of popular visual culture, like manga, movies, cartoons, computer games, violent toys or television. Jeffers (2002) points out a serious problem of the violent images that seriously influence the living environment of children by complaining that it is the parents who ironically not only do not protect their children from acquiring violence in the media, but they also provide their children with it. Z. Y. Lin (1999) and Wei (2000) study the connection between manga with violent content and the occurrence of violent behaviour of junior high students. They both found that the violent image can directly affect the young viewer’s behaviour.

The subject content of images of popular culture being viewed not only can affect children, but also the structure of the representation of the images. It shows a formulated structure or style within a particular context. In Ien’s (1985) critical study of the American soap opera, Dallas, she finds that on one hand, the soap opera is a reflection of popular culture in which it advocates love, money, and conflict between good and evil; and on the other hand, the structure of the play is also constrained to a fixed storyline and the story itself does not really care about the reality.

Ien (1985) finds that people who do not like watching Dallas think that it is bad popular culture; however, for those who love to watch it think that the story is rational. One point is highlighted that people still want to watch it though they understand that the program always follows a stereotyped storyline to develop. The conclusion by Ien (1985) is that it is not the play itself that attracts the audience, but the stereotyped structure of the play. It means that the subject matter of the popular culture is not a cause, but the stereotyped form of artistic expression as well as the stereotyped communicative mode. This indicates that the aesthetics of popular culture concerns the form that reflects the expression of the skin-deep ideology rather than the subject matter (McDonald, 1957). Jameson (1991) criticises that the communicative mode of the popular culture in the postmodern era becomes unlike; thus causing that the way for both the media and the audience hardly communicate with each other.
5. Summary of chapter

The development of art is always in line with cultural development (McFee, 1998). The development of contemporary culture and the pattern presented have a close relationship with the visual form. In a way, our cultural experience has been intensively becoming one mainly visual-dominated that is constructed by the visual. The foundation of human behaviour mostly depends on visual form of representation in which images are always used as a medium of communicating and expressing feelings. In the history of visual culture, *manga* is one of the most directed forms of expression that are mainly formed by visual images accompanied with texts playing an important role in communication (Hong, 1994; Li, C., 1978; Xiao, 1998).

We are living in a society full of images. The emergence of the new media and technology gives an impact on reconceptualising the human situation and our understanding of culture. Confronting the postmodern society, Fischman (2001) states, “A capitalist society requires a culture based on images. It needs to furnish vast mounts of entertainment in order to stimulate buying and anesthetize the injuries of class, race, and sex” (p. 30). Visual culture becomes important in terms of understanding the arts and culture in the contemporary society since, according to Boughton, et al. (2002), it “reflects and contributes to the construction of knowledge, identity, beliefs, imagination, sense of time and space, feelings of agency, and the quality of life at all ages”

Popular culture enriches the foundation of popular visual culture. Popular visual culture contains essential issues such as identity, gender, the influence of media, and ideology. These issues are closely related to the students’ everyday experiences, making understanding images of popular visual culture complicated. This is because understanding popular visual culture not only involves a socio-cultural perspective on examining the new technology and media, it also examines the symbolic meaning and ideology of the images. In this study, students create their *manga* stories based on their lived experiences within this popular visual cultural context. As the socio-cultural context affects and shapes the belief and way of the construction of meaning of young adolescents through various media, to understand the meaning of the image cannot ignore this significant aspect.
In this chapter, we have discussed the meaning of visual culture and understood the importance of visual culture in contemporary society. This gives a macro background for this study under the global and local socio-cultural context. There is no doubt that understanding today’s images are far more complex than we have before in this rapid changing world. The following chapter specifically reviews the literature of *manga* media from a communication perspective, one of the most popular forms of visual culture with a micro view.
1. Introduction

This chapter begins with a description of the varied influences of the *manga* medium. *Manga* is a Japanese word that refers to Japanese young adolescents buying and selling popular magazines in which some are created by themselves and most of them are comic books (Wilson, 2003d). With a huge market of customers including children, young adolescents, and adults, *manga* becomes a main trend of consuming especially for children and young adolescents in Japan (Xiao, 2002).

The definition of *manga* can particularly be understood as a type of “realistic art in terms of the contents, not the artistic style, by applying simply and generalised lines to depict poignant and affecting meanings” (Zhang, Y. W., 1954, p. 12). Wong (2002a) addresses that *manga* “comes in many forms: cartoons, caricatures, political and editorial satire, comics, graphic novels, and *lianhuantu* [a traditional illustrated storybook]” (p. 7). In *manga*, the creators depict their “thoughts, feelings, suggestions, and criticism by using an exaggerative method to highlight the character or the object” (Zhang, Y. C., 1954, p. 28). This study employs the term *manga* for the description of the creation of comics and all kinds of comic books in general.

Japanese *manga* is believed to be the most popular readings in Japan, Hong Kong, and Taiwan (Schodt, 1996). It becomes a lifestyle and a part of learning in young adolescents (Xiao, 2002). Although *manga* is one of the most popular forms of visual culture, to give a precise definition of the meaning of *manga* seems difficult since the change of favour of the readers, categories, and themes of *manga* has increasingly enlarged (Li, C., 1998). Taking into account the “low-brow entertainment for the enjoyment of the working class and children”, *manga* has already become one of the most popular reading materials and an “important money-making industry” in Hong Kong (Wong, 2002a, p. 11).
In Taiwan, manga is the most circulated readings in the market and covers the population from the age of 10 to 60 (Jin, 1994; Ruan, 1993). Among all the manga, Japanese manga has become the most favourable readings to primary students (He, 1991). There are 91.3% of the total 678 young adolescents who think reading manga is an important activity (Su, 1994a). A study by Shang (1997) suggests that 97% of primary students read manga at leisure, 96% of junior high students read the most popular manga, and 70% of the older students often read manga. A more recent study in 2000 addresses that 91.2% among 375 Grade Six students often read manga (Lin, Z. Z., 2000). Xiao (2002) finds that there is up to 66.13% of all the municipal schools, colleges, and university in the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels regarding reading manga as a daily routine.

Early research related to manga highlights a common view that the forms of presentation of the media culture encountered by young adolescents are rough to a great extent, which means that it is a media culture that young adolescents could use to obtain the cheapest emotional reaction with the least intelligent activity (Leavis & Thompson, 1933). The immature form of presentation is one of the negative stands which often presents in the early research in the relationships among young adolescents, popular culture and media until the 1960s (Craggs, 1992; Xiao, 2002). Relevant studies depict a misunderstanding about the issue and even suggest that popular culture and media are a medium of non-sophisticated and of a low culture that could ruin the taste and habit of the young generation (Craggs, 1992). It was not until the 1980s when studies in media literacy increased to raise new researcher concerns. Since then, the studies have dramatically shifted from studying the mainstream value of the text exposed in media culture to studying the contents, appreciation, and the meaning of the media within the cultural environment, as well as the context in which young adolescents expose (Brunt, 1992).

2. Communication perspective on understanding manga

Manga is a communication medium between the creator and the reader in the social context. Xiao (2002) describes that manga is “simple or complex images constructed by the combination of a variety of lines for the purpose of making communication with the meanings and the purposes
through different combinations of forms and media” (p. 13). He proposes that the three fundamental features of *manga* as: (1) the expression of message; (2) the form of media; and (3) the purpose of communication (Xiao, 2002, p. 13). It also can be defined as a specific way to express figures by putting consciousness as a centre and using exaggerated and distorted methods (Wong, 2002a).

The context of *manga* can be examined from a sociological perspective that is often applied by many *manga* researchers (Xiao, 2002). The assumption lays stress on understanding *manga* as an interaction of a relationship between the symbolic presentation of *manga* media and the social structure (Xiao, 2002). According to Xiao (2002), the production of *manga* is affected by the political, economic, and social environment; therefore, it should not be and cannot be excluded from considering the social context. Under various political, economic, and historical contexts, the symbols emerged in *manga* media to produce diverse meaning (Streicher, 1967). The context provided in *manga* is fictitious; however, it provides possibilities for readers to imagine. *Manga* offers wishes and plays a role providing a possibility with imagination. In the process of making wishes, readers are to beautify and make their own stories whatever the harshness of the real life is (Xiao, 2002).

*Manga* can be regarded as a projection of an ideal social group, reflecting contemporary cultural values and norms, advocating readers to thinking about the meaning hidden in *manga* relevant to their life (Xiao, 2002). *Manga*, just as other media, also reflects the social condition of different social classes, manner of existence, common social values and belief (Lent, 1995). Z. Z. Lin (2000) observes the character in *manga*, finding out that once the character is popular and favourable, readers are able to connect the meaning to their lived experiences. This selection process is not a natural mode of action by which a thing fulfils its purpose; on the contrary, it involves in the “movements of symbol, reproduction of meaning, and socio-cultural limitation” (Xiao, 2002, p. 173).

3. Influence of cognition, value, and attitude

As a process of the perception of an individual toward the “external human beings, issue, and object”, cognition refers to a combined system through understanding of the “fact, knowledge, and belief”
In terms of cognitive understanding, manga provides an individual lived experience toward understanding the external world. Images can reflect the external cognition of the media content. Xiao (2002) argues that the more images the individual obtains from the media, the more effects on the external cognition the individual has. Significant impacts on the external cognition caused by the manga media contain the confusion of both the reality and fiction (Xiao, 2002; Lin, Z. Z., 2000) and the simplified world and life context (Baker, 1989; Xiao, 2002; Zheng, 1999).

Attitudes can change human behaviour or views on issues. In social psychology, attitude that can be regarded as parts of personality and magnificent indicator indicating the trend of the reaction, groups of idea, and the imitated relationship with relevant behaviours which may occur in the future, refers to the correspondent, organised, and accustomed internal psychological reactions of an individual presenting all kinds of complex thoughts, feelings, and behaviours (Zhang, C. X. & Yang, 1998).

Xiao (2002) stresses that different types of manga can actually affect an individual’s attitude. This results in an action of transferring and even changing their behaviours and beliefs. Z. Y. Lin (1999) and Wei (2000) find that senior high school girls’ attitudes toward love are changed after reading romance manga. Their findings support the discourse. Besides, a study of the young girls’ romance manga reading of the senior high school girls by Wei (2000) suggests that manga can enforce their attitudes toward love.

3.1. Relationship between ideology and behaviour

Different contents of manga deliver different ideologies to readers, thus influencing their behaviour and values. A study of the impact on the value of pre-school children reading Japanese manga gives the evidence that different ideologies transmitted from different types of manga to early childhood will directly influence their behaviours and values toward everyday life, which some behaviours and values are deflected from Chinese traditional beliefs (Xiao, 1997).
The content and theme of *manga* promotes a trend and particular values in our society (Gifford, 1976). Values, which play an important role in both the cultural system and the development of personality, represents a direction of a kind of behaviour or goal that an individual applies to judge things and behaviours in terms of political, social, moral, and everyday life aspects, with an interaction between an individual and the external environment (Xiao, 2002). From this understanding, *manga* is a text that can certainly reproduce messages and carry particular values.

In a study of the popular comics *Jackie* and *Seventeen* magazines, McRobbie (1991) discovers that *manga* text presents simplified and opposite values in the reproduction process of messages. *Jackie* and *Seventeen* particularise a formula for the development of the content, showing a picture of a world constructed by an ideology of dualism: boys against girls, likeableness against dislikeableness, family against career, freedom against binding, and ordinary boys against boys with special occupations. *Jackie* narrows the conception of love and projects a world in which the value of romantic individualism is highly praised and regarded, reflecting an ideology that the only value for girl is to seeking love (McRobbie, 1991). It is arguable that this excessively simplified and dual conception may distort the conception of the reader about love.

3.2. Peer culture and cognitive-structural reading behaviour

*Manga* having a great impact on the consciousness and values of the public has become a part of our culture and everyday life by means of the imitate relationship and interaction between media and our lived experience (Wong, 2002a). The behaviour and the prevalent phenomenon of reading *manga* can be explained as a kind of fan culture. Jenson (1992, p. 9) defines a fan as “the obsessed individual” and “the hysterical crowd” in which significant “energy” is assembled and involved in some kinds of paranoid or crazy behaviour.

However, not all *manga* reading behaviours are irrational. It is believed that reading *manga* could enrich distinguishable abilities through the peer culture. Pustz (1999) studies the behaviour of the *manga* fan culture and debates that *manga* fans are capable to distinguish different *manga* creators’
styles and the characteristic of the scenario. Brown (1997) argues that the ability to recognise the style is highly regarded as excellence or achievement in the peer fan culture.

The behaviour of reading *manga* can also be realised as a structured, rational, and self-actualised behaviour. That means that *manga* reading is not what the mass thinks that it is only a fanatical behaviour occurring in the peer culture. On the contrary, it seems to elucidate an organised cognitive process in reading. Xiao (2000) studying the *manga* fan behaviour and its meaning, discovering that *manga* reading follows some rules. He takes one *manga* fan and describes his reading behaviour as follows:

We read *manga* for three times. First, we relax ourselves to read it. Second, we appreciate the images and some scenario, or read it again especially for the part that we do not understand at the first time. At last, we find out the content and meaning and even connect it to our lived experiences to make further association. (Xiao, 2000, p. 72)

The behaviour of reading *manga* is not just for entertainment. *Manga* readers, especially for those who are *manga* fans, regard it as both a learning tool and a proper media for leisure (Xiao, 2002). Xiao’s view on understanding the behaviour of reading *manga* is very close to Palmgreen, Wenner and Rosengren’s (1985) theories of understanding media and the way of communication. In their theories, audiences are always goal-oriented and play an active role to satisfy their needs in context in association with media selected. Therefore, *manga* reading could be a self-actualised and active behaviour.

According to Biocca (1998), audiences intentionally select, encounter, understand, and evaluate the media. It refers to the rational process and evaluation of selectivity of the audience toward the media and content. The communication process is rational and organised following an informative schema. His study reflects that audiences are self-actualised and completely acknowledge the media selected. The audience makes his or her own decision to decide how to use the media based on his or her demand and goals without being influenced by media (Biocca, 1998).
4. Metaphorical communication with image, representation, and ideology

*Manga* reflects social conditions and provides the cognitive world of the readers with a symbol (McAllister, 1990). Constructed by visual images, texts, and picture frames, the language of *manga* with its specific coding and decoding systems makes communication with readers. Xiao (2002) describes coding as “representing” and decoding as “interpreting” in understanding *manga* and during the process of coding/representing and decoding/interpreting. In Xiao’s studies (2002), images in *manga* mainly counts on two concepts of scenes to exist: one is about the context of the happening of the event or behaviour like the design of the physical space where the characters are placed and the other is the creator’s decoration including the establishment of the atmosphere. In terms of visual communication, scenes that are divided by picture frames also divide scenarios in *manga*.

Ceng (1999) argues that the front and the back *manga* text produced between picture frames which means the picture frames do not only limit the image’s presence, it also build up a relationship between the reader and the text. The picture frame could limit the appearance of the meaning; however, it opens for the reader to establish meaning so that the reader can understand the social relationship between himself or herself and the society (Ceng, 1999). Despite the fact that readers can see nothing between the picture frames, they can use their imagination to connect the context and create the meanings for themselves.

The way that the image emerged in *manga* is an essential issue. According to Hall (1996), representation is more than a concept of reflection; it implies the choice, representation, structure, and moulding. It deals with what images are going to emerge, how they emerge, what message they bring out. When reading the *manga* text, readers begin to interpret the meaning. Therefore, the process of reading is a representation of ideology (Xiao, 2002). *Manga* creators stress the selection and the most representative image to put in the picture frame, unlike the movie director focuses on the continuous, comprehensive, and across-the-board image (Yuan, 1992).
Images in *manga* embedded in each scene are highly sophisticated. Every image emerged in each picture frame is designed through careful consideration. Taken into account that images become the soul of *manga*, they naturally reflect ideology. The matter-of-course ideology tends to integrate the mainstream value in order to eliminate the conflict of the counterview on sub-culture. McAllister (1990) studies the comic book industry and the early presence of the series of American comics of *Superman*, discovering that the contents of the *manga* are largely revised to fit the mainstream culture, values, and expectation of the parents, scholars, community, and religious group. In the light of the counter-interpretation, it emphasises the mass culture for the readers to take an active role to participate in looking for their identities. Even though the original creator delivers some kinds of “mainstream consciousness” to the reader in the process of reading, the reader still takes an active role to deconstruct it instead of making new interpretations of the meaning to them (Xiao, 2002, p. 103).

4.1. Structure of picture frame and meaning construction

In *manga*, the organisation of picture frames is for expressing a series of figure movements or psychological and emotional changes (Xiao, 2002). Understanding the meaning of images embedded in picture frames does not necessarily follow the order of emergency of images. Readers can be free to select any images that emerge from any picture frames to make interpretation. Meanings are exposed through raising associations with the expansion and imagination of thought. Making a comparison among other conventional media that highly regard the relationship of cause-and-effect as well as the ability to read in the light of understanding the meaning of the text, *manga* reading overturns these traditional rules and is beyond comparison (Schmitt, 1992). Image and text in *manga* that interact together to present meanings and re-create new meanings through the continuous casting aside the old meaning (Schmitt, 1992).

Zheng (1999) discovers that the sequential order of *manga* reading appears in a specific form of proper order that is always from right to left and top to bottom, but the permutation of the picture frames does not necessarily have to be neat and uniform. Readers’ positive involvement and
interaction in between picture frames can autonomously integrated the meanings into context (Zheng, 1999). There are several phenomena of manga reading: first, the content of the text would affect the reading direction; second, dialogues in the picture frames have a great impact on the direction of reading; third, the size of the picture frame does not have an impact on the sequential order of reading; and finally, the position of onomatopoeia does not have an impact on the sequential order of reading (Zheng, 1999). The emergence of meaning relies on reading behaviour and readers’ involvement in interpretation.

4.2. Symbolic language in visual text

Manga provides a text with pleasant sensation for readers. Pleasant sensations cannot be aroused without a context and if readers discover satisfaction in the process of reading, they will continue using the media (Xiao, 2000). The activity of the audience toward media can be found in pleasant sensations. The pleasant sensation can be viewed as cognitive behaviour. Q. B. Wang (1998) proposes three pleasant sensations produced by readers in the tertiary levels when reading manga in her studies in the relationships among manga, pleasant experiences, and social implementation. They are: (1) pleasant sensation from the media reading behaviour; (2) pleasant sensation from the process of the use of media; and (3) pleasant sensation from the connection between media and lived experiences (Wang, Q. B., 1998). Z. Z. Lin (2000) in his research on children’s manga reading discovers two major pleasant sensations: pleasant sensation of escaping from reality; pleasant sensation of enriching their creation. It seems that the use of media and pleasant sensation has a close cause-and-effect relationship. Nevertheless, it is arguable that the motivation of using media and seeking for satisfaction are different things with different meanings on different levels because the former concerns the expectation and the latter cares about the result (Palmgreen, Wenner & Rosengren, 1985).

Some manga researchers focus on applying various approaches to understanding the motivation of manga reading, such as knowledge approach, entertainment approach, catharsis approach, and friendship approach (Su, 1994a; Lin, Z. Y., 1999; Xiao, 2000). Knowledge approach can be deemed
as a learning tool for understanding the world and achieving the goal of self-growth through the imitation of the creator and acquisition of information from *manga* media; for instance, readers can absorb knowledge, techniques, thoughts, and styles from creators (Su, 1994a). Comparatively, the entertainment approach is less educational meaning than the knowledge one, while both a cathartic approach and friendship approach emphasises the effect of psychological aspects (Xiao, 2002). Readers encounter the transference experience from the content, scenario, image, dialogue, or the character emerged in *manga* (Su, 1994b).

Symbols such as visual images, text or sound connect various elements emerged in *manga*. One of the most important symbols is the visual image constructed by lines and then the text is secondary (Xiao, 2002). In other words, the text serves the image, playing a subordinate role in *manga* (Xiao, 2002). Although the way of the presentation of *manga* depends on visual images, the text and the image become more dependent upon each other due to the cinematic impact on the artistic expression of *manga* (Yuan, 1992). When these two elements are integrated, the “*manga* text” is formed (Xiao, 2002, p. 80). When the text of *manga* is formed, the meaning is ready for the reader to reveal.

Denton (1992) argues that the visual image is superior in communication to the text if the former takes a larger part of the proportion than the latter. Under this condition, the best effect on communication will come to the visual image. The visual image has the advantage of communication in many aspects. According to Denton (1992), visual images are faster to read and easier for readers to memorise than texts, as well they attract our sight easily; the story can be told in detail by the visual rather than the text in such a very limited space of picture frames; readers can feel free to scan the image and readers can read several different images at the same time. Xiao (2002) argues that reading *manga* is the “same as watching a movie projected on the surface of paper” (p. 80). In making a deconstruction, *manga* coherently connects some elements to create the story—the elements of text, visual image, and picture frame, that are the three essential criteria for the “language of *manga*” (Xiao, 2002, p. 80). *Manga* relies on the above elements to deliver human emotions when readers read the images between the picture frames; thus causing a pleasant sensation of reading (Xiao, 2002).
4.3. Super power, recognition, and identity

Metaphorical communication in understanding manga is the issue of recognition and identity. In comparison with other ages, young adolescents are more eager to search their identities in media. Walkerdine (1990) explains that this phenomenon is a result of the fact that media texts create identity readily accepted by young adolescents. Some evidence from the studies of Dorfman (1983), Lent (1995), and Su (1994b) demonstrate that young adolescents look for the characters, contents, and contexts in the image of popular visual culture for identity based on whether they are closely related to their real lived experiences. Dorfman (1983) argues that the so-called super heroes emerged in American comics rationalise the social system that reflects the mainstream value of our society. This mainstream value makes connections with the young adolescent’s identity. The concrete reflection of the identity is under the mainstream value on facilitating appreciation, thinking, and dialogues with the character (Su, 1994b).

Identity to young adolescents is an achievement of psychological need of self-recognition. Identity also matches the personality and sex of the reader; for example, males tend to read young boys’ manga while females like reading girls’ ones (Lin, Z. Z., 2000). In a study, Wang, X. L. (2000) uncovers a phenomenon that personal needs regarding identity and imitation emerge in the manga reading process. Identity does not only come from the psychological needs, it also can be developed by the reader’s recognition of the theme in manga (Wang, X. L., 2000). Identity can be symbolised and can easily be found in the character of super heroes emerged in manga. It could be a cross-cultural issue, too. In a comparative study in American-and-Japanese heroes emerged in manga, Xiao (1988) discovers that it always has a hero character designed in all successful and favourable manga, in which the hero character is always outstanding and becomes the idol to the readers.

4.4. Stereotyped meaning

Manga is mainly constituted by visual images. Its meaning is created through the connections of each image presented in the picture frames. In manga, the process of creating meanings must go through
reading the connections between images in which the reader needs his or her psychological involvement for interpretation (Xiao, 2002). Even the same content is being read by readers, different readers can interpret a variety of meanings: different readers’ lived experiences create different imaginations (Xiao, 2002).

The content of manga seems to follow a stereotyped principle. In a study of young girl’s romance manga (Baker, 1989), it elucidates that the contents of manga always follow a four-phased structure as a blueprint for the development of the story, which encompasses the introduction, the struggling with the conflict, the dissolution of the conflict, and the ending. However, Xiao (2002) argues that the formalised popular culture can offer the creators a ready-made model to create even though the structure of the story of manga follows the stereotyped rules. The stereotyped rules not only imply the formalised structure of the manga story, it also reflects on the established rules or symbols that are usually used in the sex of the main character of manga. In a study of the protagonist of both young boys’ and girls’ manga, Z. Z. Lin (2000) presents a special established rule of using symbols in manga. It demonstrates how the stereotyped concept dominates the characteristics of the protagonist (Table 5.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young girl’s manga</th>
<th>Young boys’ manga</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The protagonist is female.</td>
<td>The protagonist is male.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The protagonist usually takes an active role (in business or love).</td>
<td>The protagonist usually has one (or more) assistant(s) or attendant(s).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The female protagonist and the male protagonist usually overcome difficulties and eventually have a happy life.</td>
<td>If the protagonist does not have an attendant, he usually forms a hero team with somebody.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration, obstacles, and real love are the important symbol and code.</td>
<td>Friendship, endeavour, and victory are the important symbol and code in the hero team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being the target of love, the male character plays an important role in the story.</td>
<td>The protagonist passes through all the tests or competitions and finally obtains victory or self-enhancement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The main development of the story is based on the characteristics of the character.</td>
<td>Girl protagonists usually have lesser performance than male protagonists, playing an unimportant role.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 Established rules or symbols often seen in young boys’ and girls’ manga (Lin, Z. Z., 2000, p. 49, 69)
Compared to the young boy’s *manga*, the young girl’s *manga* more emphasises the reality of everyday life. Compared to the young girls’ *manga*, the young boy’s *manga* is more divorced from the reality of everyday life.

Putting great emphasis on the connection with readers, it usually happens that the protagonist opens a heart-to-heart talk column for readers. It usually emerges from some irrelevant images of undraped female figures.

It has particular symbols and codes: psychological monologue, pretty and fashionable character, delicate fashion, space of freedom, and subjective background, etc. There is less development of the characteristics of character, focusing on events instead.

Under this category, it includes love, homosexuality, inference, history, sport, etc. Under this category, it includes combat, action, alien, inference, adventure, etc.

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*Manga* reading is constituted by the established rules and symbols often used by different genders. According to the established rules and symbols in young boys’ and girls’ *manga*, different genders have its own interest in terms of the selection of reading. Besides reading, different categories of *manga* may help readers to be integrated as a part of social relationship between readers and text (Baker, 1989). Xiao (2002) examines Baker’s viewpoint referring to the gender issues that there is a connection between the different sexes and the category of *manga*; for example, boys find favour in the eyes of the *manga* story of simplicity, with strong image of the manly man, being full of challenges and exciting, and having lots of scenes of combat, while that of girls are about romance, love, and beauty.

The sexual stereotyping ideology distinctly emerges in both young boys’ and girls’ *manga*. As mentioned previously, the stereotyped concept of ideology dominates the characteristics of the protagonist emerged in young boys’ and girls’ *manga*, which are constituted by the established rules and symbols. In these rules and symbols, gender has its recognised system and different ways of representation presented mythically. Male characters and male combats are highly elevated in young boys’ *manga*, while young girls’ *manga* project a strong image of ideology that love is the greatest considerations of all in which the female is expected to sacrifice their career and even their life to pursue the love that they believe it will lead them to eternal happiness (Lin, Z. Z., 2000).
In the late 1960s, Streicher (1967) elucidates that female images in American comics are presented in stereotype. Taking account of a study of *manga* about a love triangle relationship in a metropolis for example, Glasberg (1992) finds that some impressions of both genders are imbued with formalism. In the love triangle relationship, male images reflect an individual having independent behaviour and power of choosing love, but female images present as a passive and dependent individual with the sexy attraction or a miserable individual that has no attraction for the male.

The hero character emerged in *manga* presents a stereotyping phenomenon reflecting that the stereotyping ideology of gender is socially constructed. Pecora (1992) studies a series of *Superman* hero comics and discovers that the hero is always playing a role of “socializing agent” whose image presents a world confronting violence, always waiting for a white male to maintain the social order and solve the problem (pp. 65). In the story, the female appears as a victim, a loathsome individual or an incomplete being lacking warm love even though they are successful in business.

The stereotypical concept of both genders can be found in Japanese *manga*. It seems to become cross-cultural in both the Eastern and Western society. Liu, P. J. (1996) studies the implication of female image of one of the most popular Japanese *manga* distributed in Taiwan and has similar findings as Pecora that the female represents a sex object for the male’s satisfaction of gaze looking in a patriarchal society (Liu, P. J., 1996). He criticises that the relationship of the family member strictly follows the rules of patriarchy. In a male’s society, romantic love stories summon females to reproduce the unbalanced power of gender relationship (Liu, P. J., 1996). Japanese *manga* are penetrated with ideologies of class consciousness, feudalistic ideas, and nationalism. These Japanese ideologies resemble traditional Chinese culture in terms of feudalistic ideology (Xiao, 2002).

4.5. Text, language, sound, and literacy issues

Language itself is a social product that connotes a structural system, representing rules for human communication (Xiao, 2002). According to the system, different cultural connotations have different language systems. *Manga* has already established a consensus of customary practices in producing
and the application of language. Such practices are a conventional rule of language application, relying on symbols to construct the story (Baker, 1989). To examine the language structure of manga can adopt a functional perspective on the image (Morrison, 1969); the structure of presentation (Turner, 1977); and the content, style, and symbolic interaction between visual image and language (De Sousa & Medhurst, 1982).

In manga, the text is composed of “narrative, dialogue, and onomatopoeia” in which each has different functions and purposes (Xiao, 2002, p. 85). The dialogue is usually placed inside the picture frame and responsible for introducing and describing the story so that the reader can understand the context of the story. The function of dialogue is to establish a bridge between the visual image and the text, driving both of them to be consistent in terms of making interpretation. Considering the consistent relationship between the visual image and the text, Carrier (2000) suggests the form of creation of manga is a critical philosophical discovery since both of them can express the thoughts and text simultaneously.

Onomatopoeia is an expressive method of the representation of sound (Xiao, 2002). Sound is the main component in manga, which mostly presents as a visual form. It exists only through the imagination. Onomatopoeia deals with sound effects in a specific context. As an important property, onomatopoeia is used to emphasise a specific situation or context in order to help enhance the visual effects. It not only plays a role to assist the story in enhancing the atmosphere as well as implicates the sound effect, but it also associates with time and context in which it produces an effect of combining the text and visual image (Xiao, 2002). The application of onomatopoeia strictly follows three principles, the space guide that the sound implies the location, the time guide that the sound implies the season or timing, and the context guide that the sound implies the situation (Zheng, 1999). A study of the application of onomatopoeia in Taiwanese manga suggests that onomatopoeia is presented in the national phonetic alphabet, Chinese, and English, in which Chinese is the most common use in onomatopoeia (Zheng, 1999). Zheng (1999) discovers that sometimes the application of using Chinese language as onomatopoeia in manga is being restrained by the limited space offered in the picture frame due to the complex strokes and various compositions of the Chinese characters.
though it is widely used in onomatopoeia expression. Zheng (1999) claims that the simple structure of
the national phonetic alphabet comparatively is recognised without difficult and can save lots of space;
however, to pronounce the alphabet is difficult and confusing due to the confusion of the
pronunciation toward some of the similar words.

On the contrary, English as onomatopoeia takes the advantage of making communication in a
cross-cultural context for its structure is easy and it has become an international language. The
application of English as onomatopoeia in *manga* becomes increasingly prevalent (Zheng, 1999). The
expression of onomatopoeia in *manga* also elucidates a stereotyping trend, which has become a
system of common symbols in communication. The application of onomatopoeia in *manga*
demonstrates that sound in *manga* is completely designed for the presentation of the visual image
(Zheng, 1999).

Any one of the usages of media has its particular language expression. Users have to fully understand
the structure of language or symbol, meanings then can come out smoothly. To acquire the structure
and symbol means to establish the ability of literacy, in which contains writing, reading, and the
condition and quality of the knowledge (Xiao, 2002). Confronting a transcultural context through
which meanings spread over, the implications of media literacy tend to a phenomenon of “cultural
technology” (Kress, 1992, p. 189). Because of this reason, the readers’ sophisticated literacy skills or
abilities become the pre-requisite to understand *manga* and to access to the contents of *manga* (Pustz,
1999). McCloud (1993) points out that literacy in *manga* culture is obvious. He argues that *manga*
creation is not only a production of the creator, but also a production of the interaction between the
creator and the reader, which means that this relationship is a collaborative one.

*Manga* becomes the essential element in the light of the construction of the meaning from both the
*manga* language and literacy. According to Xiao, the language system of *manga* is established by
“revisions through interaction and collaboratively education between the creator and the reader”
(Xiao, 2002, p. 135). With this understanding, the interaction and collaboration becomes one of the
fundamental elements of *manga* culture. Creating and reading *manga* can be regarded as a continuous
construction of the *manga* language system through the collaborative interpretation made by the interaction between the two parties.

In a study of junior high students’ *manga* literacy, Xiao (2002) examines the index according to four different abilities including understanding ability, distinguishable ability, selective ability, and critical thinking ability. Understanding ability is to examine the reader’s level of the understanding of the content and symbol emerged in *manga*. Distinguishable ability means to examine the level of the ability to distinguish real from fictitious content of the story. Selective ability refers to examine the level of self-control during the process of using *manga* media while critical thinking ability is to examine the level of the reader toward criticism made to the content of *manga*.

Xiao (2002) suggests that junior high students have the highest rate of critical thinking ability, distinguishable ability, selective ability, and understanding ability in regular succession. He finds that when one of the abilities increases, all the other abilities relatively increase (Xiao, 2002). Although students with higher academic achievements can do much better in terms of selecting specific contents and types of *manga* that are suitable for them to read, both students who have higher and lower academic achievements have no remarkable differences in understanding, distinguishable, and critical thinking abilities (Xiao, 2002). According to Xiao (2002), gender is not an issue toward *manga* literacy, but students’ academic achievements are.

5. **Summary of chapter**

*Manga* lays stress on the importance of imagination and its connection with the reader’s real lived experiences. Reading *manga* means to communicate with the content and the context. In communication, text and language used play a decisive part. Both the text and image constitute the message with meaning brought from *manga*. During the process of making communication with the images, readers reorganise these images and add their imagination to create new meanings with new context in which they are intimate to their real life that they are faced with, as well as looking for possible solutions.
The underpinning of the inquiry into manga can start from psychological and sociological perspectives. Although manga provides a text for readers to create imagination to satisfy their desires and escape from reality, it relates to socio-cultural context in which readers experience. Young adolescents borrow images from manga to fulfil their dreams and satisfy their desires even though their dreams cannot turn into reality. However, it is arguable that manga not only brings in the issue of psychological satisfaction, it also implies a learning process of understanding the world projected and the creators themselves. The manga content is constrained to the gender’s consideration. Although imagination for both sexes releases the same chemical reaction to ease pressure from the lived experiences, gender differences designate different directions of favourable selection of reading materials.

As a projecting process, manga not only begins with reading, the choice of reading materials also reflects on the readers’ personality. They are clear to explicate the interrelationships among reading manga, imagination, and personality. In the communication between the readers and the reality, young adolescents understand their difficult situations and wish to mould their personalities and make changes to solve the problems through imagination offered in manga text. The literature also implies a relationship between manga and academic achievements as well as related skills. However, in this study, the students are from a local band-five secondary school with low academic achievement. What the meaning of the images created by them is an essential issue within this specific context.

From a communication perspective, manga reading is a cognitive behaviour. However, we seldom find literature about how it actually processes. Audience approaching media is a cognitive behaviour not only in terms of the audience’s selection of the media, but also in a pleasant sensation. Selectivity is a rational matter but pleasant feeling is a psychological issue. Although both natures are different, it argues that both have cognitive qualities. This view gives an important understanding of the images of visual culture for the reason that creating and reading images are self-actualised cognitive and psychological behaviour. Issues about the possibility of applying therapeutic art related to understanding images are discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter Six
Psychological Discourse in Therapeutic Art

1. Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of art therapy, narrowing the focus of discussion from a psychological perspective on therapeutic art related to the issues of understanding images in this study. The literature presented in this chapter focuses on some crucial issues and concepts of art therapy which importantly occur in image making. As the matrix itself is about communication, the realm of discussion does not necessarily include all issues about art therapy.

Art links with psychotherapy because of its relation to communication. Malchiodi (2003) addresses art as a “powerful tool in communication” and remarks that “art expression is a way to visually communicate thought and feelings that are too painful to put into words” (p. ix). From Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987),

[t]he drawing or painting activity is also considered therapeutic. That is, the child usually paints freely the events and problems that have caused conflicts. The ability to put these on paper and to see these things in context with other parts of the child’s environment serves as a catharsis. The child is usually encouraged to act out or to paint those things that seem to be important, and the verbalization of these activities is supposed to provide good therapy. (p. 23-24)

There is not just one definition of art therapy since the term first emerged in the late 1940s (Waller & Gilroy, 1978); however, all definitions tend to depict art “as a means of personal expression to communicate feelings, rather than aiming at aesthetically pleasing end products to be judged by external standards” (Liebmann, 2004, p. 7). Art therapy refers to two “parallel strands: art as therapy and art psychotherapy” (Waller, 1993, p. 8).
From The British Association of Art Therapists (BAAT, 2005), art therapy is defined as applying art materials for self-expression, personal growth, and reflection in a safe environment, without showing concern on the aesthetic aspect of the images made by the client. The effect of art media directly reflects on images created as well. In art therapy, the role of art materials is not only consuming materials, it also plays a therapeutic role, which means that using art materials is for the purpose of therapy (Rubin, 1983, 1999).

In the process of therapeutic art, the role of art is an instrument. Art media in art therapy is a tool for communication. The arts are to be examined as interactive creation through which people get involved in an “instinctual process of ministering” to themselves (McNiff, 1992, p. 1). The therapeutic process has to get involved in applying various art media. Case and Dalley (1992) state that through the media “a patient can express and work through the issues and concerns that have brought him or her into therapy” (p. 1). Similar to the BAAT definition, The American Art Therapy Association (AATA, 1996) lays stress on the creation and reflection on both the process and art product to raise the client’s awareness of self and ability of cognition in a non-verbal form of communication of thoughts and feelings.

In art therapy, the great emphasis is placed on obtaining access to the “unknown or unacknowledged ‘inner world’ and the ways in which it influences relationships in the external world” in order to turn out to be an enhancement of self-understanding (Edwards, 2004, p. 44). Through the facilitating process of making images, the inner experiences will connect the outer experience. Although the general conception of art therapy remains the same basic idea, there is slight difference between the different approaches like client-centred and psychoanalytic approaches.

Liebmann (2004) summarises some essential benefits from art therapy for everyone as: (1) an encouragement to everyone; (2) a means of non-verbal communication; (3) a means of self-expression and self-exploration; (4) helping people become more aware of feelings previously hidden from them; (5) helping people release feelings; (6) helping people recognise their current situations and find out
ways of making changes; (7) recapturing the ability for adults to play; (8) using the concrete product for raising further discussion; (9) using the artwork to build a relationship between art therapist and client; (10) interpreting and making meaning; (11) actualising people; (12) sharing of pleasure and developing creativity; and (13) diagnosis of disorder (pp. 9-10). Payne (1993) denotes a common ground for art therapy that “includes the focus on non-verbal communication and creative processes, together with the facilitation of a trusting and safe environment within which people can acknowledge and express strong emotions” (p. xi). Inside the construction, metaphors and symbols, compared with verbal communications, are more readily to be expressed in tangible artworks than words (Perry, 2000).

Art therapy is divided in two orientations: art as therapy and art psychotherapy. Naumburg (2001) denotes art therapy based on her methods on

releasing the unconscious by means of spontaneous art expression; it has its roots in the transference relation between patient and therapist and on the encouragement of free association. It is closely allied to psychoanalytic theory. (p. 17)

Ulman makes a comparison between Naumburg and Kramer’s theories and defines the core theoretical frameworks in art therapy: Kramer’s approach to art as therapy and Naumburg’s approach to art psychotherapy (Ulman, 2001; Ulman & Dachinge, 1996). McMurray and Schwartz-Mirman (1998) identify two major art therapy approaches: the application of structured activity in which the process of art therapy is dominated by art therapists and the spontaneous creativity that is driven by the freedom of creativity of clients. The emphasis on the client’s spontaneous art creation process leading to therapeutic effects tends to be the approach of art as therapy while the other stresses the verbal communication and response to the image created tends to be art psychotherapy approach. However, sometimes art therapy can be both (Moon, 1999, p. 78).

Art as therapy emphasises the “healing potential of art” (Edwards, 2004, p. vii). The origin of the theory of art therapy can be traced back to Naumburg’s (1973) writing. This approach, also called the
dynamically oriented art therapy, is heavily influenced and based on the psychoanalytic approaches of Freud and Jung (Naumburg, 1973, 1987). Art as therapy approach heavily stresses the analytic and dynamic methods toward the clients’ descriptions of their artwork through free association (Naumburg, 1987; Wadeson, 1980).

Another psychoanalytic approach to art as therapy that emphasises the catharsis, enhancement of the sense of self, and ego building through art creation is suggested by Kramer (1993). Unlike Naumburg’s theory, Kramer (1993) puts her focus on the art creation process in which sublimation leads the intrinsic therapeutic potential of human. According to Kramer (1993), this model can also be applied in the assessment of the effect of art therapy.

Whatever the process of making images or whatever the end product presents in an unpolished or a sophisticated form of expression, the client can still share the experience and meaning with each other in art therapy. Within such a supportive atmosphere, an individual can be fostered to create, express, and interpret meaning of the image to recognise his or her difficulties (Edwards, 2004). In this respect, the emphasis on creativity in the art process in art therapy is regarded as a personal transforming and enhancing processes.

2. Interpretations and metaphorical communication

Interpretation in therapeutic art stresses the creation process and artwork. As discussed earlier, the foundation of art therapy from a psychological perspective underlines the function of releasing the unconscious through spontaneous art expression and free association under the transference relationship among the client, the artwork, and the art therapist. The rapport lying between the client, the art therapist, and the art is always a dynamic triangular one (Ball, 1998). In art therapy, the method of “treatment depends on the development of the transference relation and on a continuous effort to obtain the patient’s own interpretation of his symbolic designs” and the role of image is regarded as “a form of communication between patient and therapist; they constitute symbolic speech” (Naumburg, 2001, p. 17).
Philosophical perspectives on understanding art therapy view art as “an instrument of knowledge, though its nature as a cognitive act committed to the purpose of projecting feelings into visual form” (Julliard & Van Den Heuvel, 1999, p. 112). Interpreting and discussing the emotions expressed in images mean articulating the relationship between mind and body. Art therapy stresses the “translation of the client’s feelings into art work” and “discuss the impact of transference from the client towards the therapist—on the creativity of the client, and explain how to overcome the problem of transference” (McMurray & Schwartz-Mirman, 1998, p. 31). Hillman (1972) explains that a picture is “a connection which means something to the soul” (p. 107). Visual images offer a rich channel for us to interpret and uncloak the hidden meaning through a process of “staying with images” suggested by McNiff (1992, p. 56). McNiff (1992) explains this concept of staying with images that can demonstrate “how the object before us is an opening to soul” and “find ‘depth’ on the surface of the image, in the details of its presentation” (p. 56), which is similar to the “psychological interpretation of paintings” (p. 56) that emphasises the reflection of the structural analysis on the visual quality of the image.

2.1. Metaphors and symbols

According to Edwards (2004), metaphors and symbols are two important elements of therapeutic art, which represent a thought or feeling. However, metaphors, which are divided into verb and visual metaphors, are different from symbols. Verb metaphors mean “a figure of speech used to imply that the properties or qualities possessed by one thing are like those belonging to something else”, while visual metaphors “function in much the same way as verb metaphors and use imagery to evoke an idea or emotion beyond the specific object depicted” (Edwards, 2004, p. 61).

Symbols, unlike metaphors, do not just have one meaning and sometimes they are even hardly understood immediately (Edwards, 2004). The crucial element of making therapeutic art goes to the symbolisation of the image created to look for resolution of real lived problems. As Storr (1972) states, creativity provides opportunities for a person to seek “symbolic solutions for, the internal tensions and
dissociations from which all human beings suffer in varying degree” (p. 203). Despite the varying forms of communication that human beings employ to give meaning to their everyday lives, art, as an non-verbal form of expression, can express and overcome particular emotions, feelings, experiences, and thoughts better than words (Edwards, 2004).

Psychological interpretation of an artwork depends on the details and careful observation of the image created. It includes psychological dialogues of “the feelings we have about the image, the stories we tell about how we made it, the reminiscences it evokes, the things that the images say to us, and the things that we say to them” (McNiff, 1992, p. 57). Psychological reflections are a critical issue in interpretation for the reason that “psychological significance comes from relating these visual characteristics to the intimate details of the interpreter’s life” (McNiff, 1992, p. 57). Interpretation does not only mean to look for meanings of visual objects, but it also includes non-visual aspects of lives and becomes a continuous entity of creation. As McNiff (1992) states,

We view interpretations as metaphors, verb responses to the image, analogies that we make to other aspects of our lives, and translations of the image into other art forms—poetry, movement, sound, performance. Art is constantly being interpreted by art in a sequential process of creation, metaphorical movement, and image making that refreshes the soul. (p. 57)

Psychological interpretation is a process of making metaphorical communication with understanding what, why, and how to make images, which these are what the matrix concerns. It is, when using metaphors, a process of “putting the inside out” which allows people to comment on art creation within the context of their lived experiences (Jean, 1999, p. 45). The context of the lived experience provides a link between metaphors and experience, producing therapeutic functions.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the spontaneous phenomenon can directly lead to the result of therapeutic art. The relationship of the spontaneous is delicate and related to the unconscious. Naumburg (2001) comments on the projection of the spontaneous as
a direct communication from the unconscious. It is distinguished from psychoanalysis and other well-known forms of psychotherapy by its emphasis on the use of spontaneous art productions as a non-verbal form of communication between pupil and art teacher or patient and art therapist. While psychoanalysis reduces the symbolic images of dream, fantasy, and daydream to words, art therapy encourages their projection in drawing, painting, and sculpture. (pp. 46-47)

Naumburg (2001) explains the relationship of the form of communication as the “images produced are a form of communication between patient and therapist; they constitute symbolic speech” (p. 17). The interpretation of artwork becomes the main method to articulate meanings once artistic expressions, metaphorical, and linguistic communications are widely explored and enhanced in the process of art therapy. Although art therapy can adopt a non-verb narrative communication process, verbal interpretation still plays critical parts in helping understanding images. In fact, verb-and-image based communications in art therapy are mostly used as a combination method in practice (Goodman, Williams, Agell & Gantt, 1998).

Art therapy does not only focus on understanding the creation process, but also the art product. The art product is as important as the process since it is “not only as a record of the problems and conflicts the child is facing, but also as a record of progress toward the healthy personality” (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987, p. 24). Process and product are one in art therapy and cannot be seen apart as art therapy includes the task of integration (Levy, et al., 1974, p. 13). Although the analysis of completed artwork is a vital part of art therapy, the main benefit of art therapy goes to the act of involving clients in art making (Kaplan, 2000).

2.2. Methods of communication with inner world

Projection, transference and counter-transference are three particular phenomena that happen in the process of psychoanalytic art therapy (McNiff, 1981, 1992). They are involved in the emergence of
the client’s symptom, the reaction to someone in transference, and the therapist’s counter-reaction, figuring out the picture of how images emerged in different stages within different contexts and what kinds of message they capture.

Viewing and reviewing images are a powerful strategy of understanding images by providing a new perspective with communicating with our soul in a distance; however, an obstructing phenomenon may occur naturally when facing difficulties in perceiving motion (McNiff, 1992). “Struckness”, according to McNiff’s (1992) phrase under this circumstance, refers to “an absence of movement and the inability to perceive motion in the moment” (p. 55). The method of examining the images in art therapy is called “restating” or “reframing” (McNiff, 1992, p. 55). It describes the condition under which people leave their images, shift their views, and review their perspectives on their images. McNiff (1992) also elucidates that this method “is sustained communion with ‘the other’, the image or painting” (p. 55). From projection, transference, and counter-transference, images created can be examined through the trace of the restating and reframing process.

Art can project a person’s life. McNiff (1992, p. 53) claims that “art as medicine, like surrealism, is a manifestation of art’s desire to connect psyche, the dream, the suffering soul, and the daily lives of other people”. On this ground, projection means that each artwork “is a microcosm of life and will reflect the thematic ups and downs of a person’s existence” (McNiff, 1981, p. 59). Transference is a psychoanalytic term to imply the phenomenon that the therapist possesses the unconscious feelings, attitudes, and characteristics of the previous figures in the client’s life during the therapeutic process (Edwards, 2004). The concept of projection can link with the concept of transference in a certain degree if transference refers to projecting a person’s feeling or emotion into another person without informing in advance (Young, R. M., 1994). Counter-transference can be understood as a therapist’s counter-reaction. It refers to “the therapist’s (unconscious) feelings towards the client” (Edwards, 2004, p. 56). Whitaker (2001) elucidates countertransference as “therapists’ feelings and responses in a group which are rooted in her or his personal needs” (p. 103), while transference is regarded as a psychotherapeutic term to describe
the tendency of group members to ‘transfer’ feelings for significant figures in their lives on
to the group facilitator or therapist. They may, for instance, ‘project’ their continued need
for a parent on to the group facilitator or therapist. (Liebmann, 2004, p. 34)

Counter-transference also relates its meaning to projective identification if viewing transference as
projection (Young, R. M., 1994). According to Little (1986), countertransference is developed as a
more concrete concept that concludes any one or covers all of the followings: (1) the analyst’s
unconscious attitude to the patient; (2) repressed elements; (3) some specific mechanisms with which
the analyst meets the patient’s transference; and (4) the whole of the analyst’s attitudes and behaviour
towards his patient (p. 34).

From a psychotherapeutic perspective, art therapy requires to get involved in activities of transference
and countertransference. It is a therapeutic exchange activity between the therapist and the client,
which aims to explicate, integrate, and understand the early stage of the client (Dalley, et al., 1987).
The experience of both transference and counter-transference can be found in the everyday lived
experience.

Schaverien (1999) illustrates that the concept of disposing of or splitting is a psychological process in
psychoanalytic theory which emphasises “an internalized form of relating to the outer world” so that
the destructive impulses will not ruin the good (p. 32). All pictures are external objects “in which the
‘waste-disposal’ takes place” (Schaverien, 1999, p. 35). The whole ritual implies a necessary
transference process emerged during the therapeutic process. This process offers opportunities for the
client to split the problems faced and look for possible resolutions. Upon completing the ritual process,
the problems will be solved (Schaverien, 1987, 1999).

Frames experiences are applied in therapeutic art in understanding the metaphors and symbols.
Frames are a special concept first suggested by Milner (1952) to describe the metaphors and symbols
of the picture. Schaverien (1992) uses the term “picture within the frame” to specifically refer to “the
picture which is created within the framed space of the room and the relationship” (p. 65). It means
that the “transference may be illustrated, revealed and enacted” in the physical space and let the picture can be “safely contained within the boundaries of the edge of the paper” to depict “the imaginal world” (Schaverien, 1992, p. 77). The frame is regarded as a therapeutic concept (Young, R. M., 1998). Without the frame provided, communication may be blocked and cause difficulties in feelings expression. The art room, studio or paper can also be regarded as the frame, in which the space for clients have therapeutic experiences. Edwards (2004) presents the concept as follow.

In art therapy, the edges of a sheet of paper or the frame surrounding a painting also help us distinguish between the realm of the imagination and everyday reality. Boundaries are particularly important in art therapy because without them it would not be possible to differentiate between the literal and the symbolic or between internal and external reality. (Edwards, 2004, p. 46)

The picture-frame concept not only refers to the physical boundaries, it refers to the psychological, conceptual, and symbolic meanings. In analytical art psychotherapy, there emerge two types of frames constructed: the outer frame and the inner frame (Schaverien, 1992). The outer frame is physical, material, and substantial space of setting while the inner frame is within the outer frame in which transference and countertransference develop in the inner space. The picture reveals the hidden and inner particular experience, which “is like a window with a view into the inner world” and “reveals and ‘uncloaks’ the image” (Schaverien, 1992, p. 71). Pictures are framed on the condition that the artist sets the boundary of the paper and limitation of the materials before beginning with working on his or her art and the artist is “placed around the boundary of the completed work” (p. 71).

3. Interrelationships between aesthetics, manga images, and therapeutic process

Aesthetic qualities involved in images making in art therapy reflect insights of the artistic and therapeutic aspects of therapeutic art. The influence of the aesthetic quality and its possible advantages catch the art therapist’s attention to reconsider the relevant aspects of transference and countertransference (Case, 1996, p. 39). Imagination, on the one hand, links personal images to an
artistically analytic level; on the other hand, it implies systems of personal belief. It involves and acts on a variety of possibilities upon replacing the old beliefs and ideas in which personal thoughts, belief systems, and ideas also reflect in the artwork through imagination (Malchiodi & Cattaneo, 1988, p. 57).

The relationship between aesthetics and the image created is like a mirror. According to Cavarnos (1998), the quality of the image also reflects the aesthetic quality of a person. This reflection can also be projected into the therapy process, explicating the interrelationship in details and further measuring the condition of the state (Cavarnos, 1998). The quality of this interaction can directly make a positive or negative impact on the body and soul. The integrated concept of aesthetics and personality goes to what McNiff (1981) suggests the concept of balance of the “aesthetic order” and “personality” in attaining the perfect perception of aesthetic equilibrium (p. xv). This balanced relationship is inferred from the conceptual assumption that the quality the aesthetic can directly influence the order of the equilibrium of a person’s feelings.

The rise of aesthetic consciousness of an individual and responses to his or her feelings through art can be helpful in affecting the whole personality. The key in this corresponding process relies on motivations within the aesthetic relationship. To increase a person’s motivation to access the aesthetic relationship is the matter of communication. Therefore, art is “thus concerned with deepening relationship” in which “art motivation is the drive to communicate and share feelings” (McNiff, 1981, p. 42). The relationship between creativity and therapeutic process is like a psychotherapy process that self-actualising is the key to begin. Rogers (1961) writes that

the mainspring of creativity appears to be the same tendency which we discover so deeply as the creative force in psychotherapy—man’s tendency to actualize himself, to become his potentialities. (pp. 350-351)

Although self-actualisation links with the relationship between creativity and therapy, Langer (1967) clarifies the difference between them with an emphasis that “psychoanalysis is not artistic judgement”
for the former concerns about the “significant form” but the latter cares the “significant motif” (p. 240). Schaverien (1999) suggests a concept of “aesthetic transference and countertransference” by applying the influence of the aesthetic quality in the process of image making, with an emphasis on the diagrammatic and the embodied images schema constructed by aesthetics in art therapy as a significant agent of therapeutic functioning (1999, pp. 58-59).

In contrast with Schaverien, Case (2000, p. 15) discusses phenomena of the “projective process” and “refractive transference” occurred in the interweaving relationships among images, the artist, the children, and the therapist in art therapy. These rapports demonstrate how aesthetics and countertransference react on each other through children’s response to drawings. She argues that children can split the images and project the self to manage problems, bringing out a significant matter of the importance of aesthetic responses to the process of therapeutic art, revealing aesthetics may enact a role of countertransference.

The psychological approach to understanding popular visual culture tends to focus on interpreting the phenomenon of catharsis as a sublimation process that elucidates how the relationship between distress and relief acts on each other. Psychoanalytic approach deals with manga in the way as a medium for people to ease their stress, claiming that it can provide with a suitable channel for catharsis and replace hostile or assault behaviours (Xiao, 2002). The exaggerative language used and the entertaining scenario in manga, for example, can naturally release the reader’s pressure from reality by transferring the character to the reader (Xiao, 2002).

In addition to transference and countertransference, sublimation involvement in creation process links with aesthetics. Sublimation can simply be defined as giving “another aim to the drive, another satisfaction” (Kaltenbeck, 2003, p. 105). The aesthetic pleasure brought out from the artwork increases the same degree of the attainment as sublimation does (Edwards, 2004). The function of sublimation found in creativity can harmonically balance and integrate the tensions (Kramer, 2000). In other words, the sublimation-and-aesthetic relationship depends on the quality of the form and content in art therapy from a psychological aesthetics perspective (Maclagan, 2001).
Catharsis means “to release feelings of anger and grief” that cannot be expressed elsewhere (McNiff, 1981, p. 45). Views on manga reading from a psychological analysis perspective emphasise the function of the symbol of language or image and its consequence of catharsis. From the catharsis perspective, De Sousa and Medhurst (1982) argue that the reason why manga becomes one of the major reading materials in children is that manga creates symbols, a dream that can effectively lessen the distress to the children when growing up in an adult world.

Walkerdine (1990) stresses the authenticity of the implementation of text by suggesting that the intention of the text is not to distort the external fact but to construct a subject position in the meaning structure of identity. According to Walkerdine’s (1990) viewpoint, manga successfully creates an imaginative culture including all aspects of feelings such as fear, hope, or sadness and connect these with desires. When reading manga story, readers mould their feelings into desires. At the same time, the manga story leads the reader to the text of imaginative world (Xiao, 2002).

Imagination from manga, as dreams, can also affect young girls’ desire. Walkerdine (1990) analyses the young girls’ manga and explicates a structure indicating how the imagination provided by manga reacts to the young girl’s desire. In this structure, young girls who face or hide their real everyday life problems borrow imagination from manga to satisfy their desires. Desires expand and create materials for them to fulfil. Therefore, reading is a psychological decoding process in which manga offer all the materials of desires that young girls need based on a principle that imagination creates desire and desires mould their personal images (Walkerdine, 1990). Imagination starts the process of catharsis and results in satisfying the desires of the readers, as well as releasing their painful experiences from reality. Imagination in manga can psychologically mould a personality. Images lead readers to engage in an imaginative world of text in which it suggests possible solutions to the readers’ problems or directions to fulfil their wishes (Walkerdine, 1990). The narrative structure of manga text is an effective strategy providing readers with imagination, creating a solution to the real lived problems through escaping from reality and implementing their dreams (Walkerdine, 1990; Su, 1994b).
4. Visiting imitation and stereotyped images

The stereotyped image and the act of imitation can be explicated from both psychological and socio-cultural perspectives. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) negatively comment on copying as follows.

It has generally been accepted that children should not copy anything. The arts are supposed to be a means of one’s own expression and not a superficial copy of someone else’s thought and ideas. Copies for the most part are done with no understanding of the structure or meaning of what is imitated. (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987, pp. 179-180)

Wilson and Wilson (1982) see that the advantage of the imitation in the art creation is inevitable since it can provide children with an artistic method of focusing on depicting the details of an object. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) disagree with this view and declare that their emphases are on the final product instead of the thinking processes. The artistic spontaneity in creative activity can be measured as a reflection of a person’s feelings and thoughts, which also demonstrates the ability to mobilise the logical thoughts (McNiff, 1981; Naumburg, 1973). Stereotypic ways of expression is considered as a non-spontaneous expression in creation. The act of imitation reflects the wish to possess something and emulation itself is a necessary process of gaining identity from a quality form (Case, 2000, p. 37).

Stereotypic expression may disclose a psychological deficiency. However, N. R. Smith (1985) claims that most children invent their own imagery and their own themes in the cartoon strip image creation according to their real lived experiences; there are a few children who maintain the stereotyped types of expression. Stereotypic expression emerges in a particular pattern. McNiff (1981) remarks that the stereotypic expression denotes a particular pattern of repetitive, ritualistic, and highly controlled expressions, reflecting an insecure state indicating “a lack of self-confidence with the particular mode of expression and a need to defend oneself against the anxiety provoked by being exposed to experiences outside the pattern of daily routines” (p. 50).
The stereotypy seems to be a negative phenomenon occurred in art creation. The stereotypical way of expression understood as a conscious control is in contrast with the creative expression (McNiff, 1981). When the expressive ability is blocked, a person becomes gradually “withdrawn or dependent on stereotypic forms of communication” (McNiff, 1981, p. 53). In the creation process, the creator’s free will of expression is highly elevated as a symbol of escaping the social boundary. If the creator unsuccessfully transcends beyond the stereotypic obstacles, a phenomenon of regression emerges.

According to McNiff (1981, 1988), it reflects the relationship between the transcending process and the importance of releasing the conscious control to a person. The reflection of the conscious control, stereotypic expression discloses a phenomenon of the tendency to follow an ideal. McNiff (1981) explains this phenomenon as “excessive perfectionism” (p. 52) that is caused by the doubt about the personal belief in spontaneous expressions. Consequently, a person tends “to place unrealistic demands on themselves to achieve idealized goals” (McNiff, 1981, p. 52).

Case (2000) demonstrates an idea similar to McNiff that a child’s copying of images represents “some deficiency or lack in himself” and ideal for people to further develop based on this (p. 37). For those drawings for imitation, it indicates that there is an ideal model for children to follow. Another point brought from Case (2000) is the copy phenomenon caused by the lack of originality. In the report of the emulating behaviour which occurred in an art therapy group, Case (2000) discovers that it is a need for children to imitate in order to be “as good as another” even if they do not learn about “what it is that they are drawing” (p. 37). From her observation, children would first imitate the image exactly before obtaining sufficient confidence and feeling capable to have an idea (Case, 2000). Children seeking the ideal model to imitate reflect the recognition of the social identity since

[social recognition for the artist appears to lie in the acceptance and acknowledgement of a personal artistic identity as expressed through creative work…social recognition are but another manifestation of the need to create a positive sense of self that is accepted by others. (McNiff, 1981, p. 44)
The recognition represents a symbolic form of acceptance by the society. However, at the same time, it reflects a resistant attitude against the stereotypic socio-cultural identity because the personality and image of the artist represents that

[as a personality type, the artist is not content with the stereotypic social identities that are attached to people who fill more conventional and standardized roles in society. (McNiff, 1981, p. 44)]

From this perspective, it is a contradictory theory highlighted that children’s imitation mean to attain symbolic and stereotypic forms in which the society can accept their identities; however, they elevate the artist’s role as a creative, isolated identity, and reject the standardised society. This theory is close to what Kaltenbeck (2003) suggests that “the innovating artist works for culture, helping to refine it, but at the same time he works against culture and civilization, trying to revolutionize them” (p. 106). Although the motivation of imitation seems normal behaviour, a negative phenomenon toward the psychological development may occur.

The imitation of image can be viewed as an unconscious and spontaneous defence against the self (McNeilly, 1989). For the target of integrating art and psychotherapy, a concept of “spontaneous art” has been employed as a “means of orientation and deeper self-knowledge” (Naumbury, 2001, p. 46). The belief is to lay on the foundation of the universal symbolic power of communication. The method adopted is to encourage people to use the visual symbols to spontaneously express their feelings to “fresh forms of human adjustment” (Naumburg, 2001, p. 46). However, not all images are selected to be emulated: there is a criterion for the selection that images with fine quality may fall (McNeilly, 1989).

The mechanism of projection involved is a perception of saving fine images. Case (2000) supplements that the project saves “good qualities” from the destructive feelings inside, and the person’s good qualities are located outside for safety (p. 38). On mentioning a case of emulation unravels the relationship between imitation and inner feelings, Case (1992) indicates a cause-and-effect
relationship in which feelings of emptiness and desperation that block the creative expression lead to image copying. Besides, difficulty in seeking identity may cause the projection of imitative image.

Reading *manga* creates a process of transforming, giving an object a new meaning with reference to the creator’s lived experience. It is because in the world of *manga*, “some nonlife objects can be shaped to have life” (Ren, 1985, p. 85). Xiao (2002) attempts to classify the characters emerged in *manga* into two major stereotypes: one is called the “stereotypic character” (p. 81) that assembles all characteristics in one character and the other is the “individual character’ that signifies the outstanding of the character” (p. 81).

Both classifications have the similar nature in terms of projection. For the stereotypical character, readers’ characteristics correspond to the character in *manga*, while the individual character is opposite to the stereotypic one. The stereotypic character concerns the coherent experience between the characteristics of the character emerged in *manga*, which means what readers live are what they like. The individual character shows more concern on the conflict between the outstanding character and the real world where the individual stands. Some characters are even not acceptable in the custom characteristic of the society. They typically rebel against the existing society and the institution. Because of the lively, fierce, and rebel characteristics, such characters are easily attracted by young adolescents (Xiao, 2002).

5. Summary of chapter

There are several essential points brought out for discussion in this part of literature. First, it is the triangular relationship toward the exploration of the interpretation of the image. As McNiff (1981) claims that “art is forever seeking out relationships with the self, others, and nature” (p. 56), this seeking relationship connects and makes responses to the matrix. The relationship between the artwork, the client, and the art therapist emphasised in art therapy can be employed in the study in the way to demonstrate the dynamic triangular relationship between the artwork, the student, and the researcher.
Like other metaphorical and symbolic communications applied in most of the forms of popular visual culture, therapeutic art much depends on interpreting the image through the spontaneity of the process of art creation and art product. However, as the aim of the study is neither to examine the effectiveness of therapeutic art nor to demonstrate the benefits of utilising art therapy within a secondary school setting, the established relationship is to focus on fostering interpretation of the images. Although phenomena such as projection or transference may happen during the sessions in the study, it puts the focus on what projection or transference experiences the students may have toward articulating the meanings of the images created, why these phenomena may emerge in a particular way, and how these phenomena may be interpreted, rather than articulating the therapeutic art process.

The phenomenon of the emergence of the stereotyped images from a therapeutic art perspective represents a deficiency of the self or social identity, or even a sign of lacking self-confidence. This phenomenon can be seen in manga. Based on this stereotyped theory, the behaviour of imitation including copying the image of the protagonist emerged in manga is unconscious. It reflects the spontaneous defence against the self. Nevertheless, it is greatly doubtful that the stereotyped image represents the negative aspects of influence at all and the stereotyped is an unconscious behaviour.

Manga has increasingly become a prevailing cross-cultural phenomenon that millions of young adolescents involve in creating and reading manga. It goes to be arguable that their behaviours reflect that all the creators and readers would have the symptom of deficiency of the self. On the contrary, it is arguable that the phenomenon of stereotype obviously reflects the occurrence of the conscious behaviour that is related to both psychological and socio-cultural aspects. The stereotyped phenomenon is not only considered as a psychological issue, it also reflects cognition, value, and attitude toward popular culture. It has meaning in relation to aspects of psyche and culture in it. This is one of the concerns in the study. The next chapter, Educational Discourse in Visual Culture in Art Education, which is to focus on issues in visual culture in art education, is the final part of literature contributing to the matrix.
Chapter Seven
Educational Discourse in Visual Culture in Art Education

1. Introduction

This chapter specifically raises an educational discourse in visual culture in art education. It can be anticipated that implementing visual culture in art education may have more difficulties than advocating visual culture in art practice. As Pauly (2003) remarks, “Although many teachers explore art images with students as a source of personal inspiration for artmaking, they rarely interpret images as visual culture. Such images exist within networks of culturally learned meanings and power relations that surround the production and consumption of images. Teachers rarely consider how viewers negotiate meanings by linking images with cultural narratives that help them understand the ways cultural knowledge is learned, performed, and may be transformed” (p. 264). The difficulties not only come from the shift of paradigm, they also are from the teachers and students involved.

Riley (1999) states, “Adolescence is a very confusing time, even for the most well-adjusted teenagers. It is a time for excitement and adventure, yet is fraught with countless pitfalls. These short, but ever so critical, years produce conflicting demands from peers, school, parents and society” (p. 7). He defines adolescence as “a period not only of emotional and cognitive change but also of puberty, the physical, gender-defining development” (Riley, 2003, p. 224). Freedman (2003b) states,

Students use artistic practices as cultural and personal responses to experience, including in their search for identity. Students now have multiple and overlapping identities (for example, ethnic, socioeconomic, and sexual identities) and live within complex social environments that make artistic inquiry particularly helpful as part of their exploration and expression. Many students begin to explore the concept of self through postmodern juxtapositions and connections in their spontaneous art and should be enabled to advance their investigations of these issues in school. (pp. 38-39)
The adolescent’s identity in this changeable and specific period is an essential issue since the outer environment easily affects them. Blos (1979) claims that adolescent’s self-image becomes firm and the sense of individual identity connects the outer world. Evidence from studies in adolescents’ problems suggests several issues contributing to the symptoms; for example, adolescent’s depression mainly comes from the issues about whether being accepted or rejected from the peer group as well as the issues of the societal and familial pressure (Goodyer, 2001; Riley, 2003). To young adolescents, exploring their identity is an essential issue.

The development of visual culture in art education can be traced back to the studies in children’s drawings by applying inter-cultural and socio-cultural perspectives. Wilson and Wilson (1977) introduce an iconoclastic view of the imagery sources in the study of young people’s drawings, in which they attempt to apply analytic techniques to analyse these narrative drawings created by teenagers. They also find that children develop a symbol system of group in which children learn from each other (Wilson & Wilson, 1982, 1984). In the mid 1980s, they extended their studies of children’s drawings by undertaking cross-cultural research on themes and traditional conditions among American, Australian, Egyptian and Finnish children’s story drawings (Wilson & Wilson, 1984).

Since the late 1980s, there have been several significant publications undertaken which greatly contribute to the foundational body knowledge of visual culture in art education; for example, Duncum (1987, 1993, 1999), Wilson (1997b), and Wilson and Litgvoet (1992). These studies emphasize how popular culture affects children’s drawings and how children project their images onto the world through popular culture. These studies also enrich the realm and explore the visions of popular culture to both the social and children art.

From the late 20th century, different researchers adopt various approaches to study the relationship between culture and education. However, there is a common interest found in studying how popular culture influences education. For instance, Giroux (1994a, 1994b, 1997a, 1997b, 2000) studies the influence of popular culture in education; Anijar (2000) studies one of the most popular television
series, *Star Trek*; Dalton (1999) applies Hollywood films to design curricula; and Maeroff (1998) studies the influence in the American medium and its relationship with school; Stokrocki (2001) suggests that window shopping, fashion, advertisement, and products that can reflect young adolescents’ aesthetic tastes should be considered as art curricula. These studies of culture influence and education seem to focus on making criticism in ideology and hegemony in the capitalist society through school curricula.

Giroux (1981a, 1981b) criticises that education is forced to accept ideology through the output of culture. This view can be examined in visual culture. Applying Giroux’s concept of popular culture, Duttmann (2002) regards visual culture as cultural hegemony of the image. Whatever it is about hegemony or art shaped by the socio-cultural context, visual culture in general includes conventional and new media like paintings, printmaking, photography, films, television, advertisements, new images, and scientific images, as well as popular at forms as toys, scientific fiction and movies, in which the new forms of art are those that exclude from the general images (Duncum, 2001; Freedman, 2000; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001). In visual culture in art education, the essence of criticism is not in the new or old form, it is in the issue of the ideology and hegemony behind the images.

2. The paradigm shift

The rationale for the consideration of the transition in art curriculum lays stress on the changing of the broader. Wilson (2003b) describes,

> If the basic character of art changes, if new definitions and theories of art arise, if the artworld transform itself, and if the visual arts are seen as only one component within the vastly larger realm of visual culture, then should art education also change? Should the content of our school subject correspond primarily, as it has in the past, to the world of artists’ studios, galleries, and art museums, or should we expand our field to include urban design, graphic, product design, and material culture, and what of comics,
cinema, and the video arts...And most importantly of all, what are the pedagogical implications that would arise if it were impossible to diagram the terrain of art education? (p. 214)

The above statement points out the fact that today's art education is facing an impact on the change of the paradigm. Wilson (1997a) criticises that Discipline-based Art Education (DBAE) can no longer provide a rationale suitable to describe today’s art phenomenon especially visual culture, though it best fits for the modernist's idea of art education. He criticises that Eisner ignores contemporary art such as new media, digital art, comics, television, music video, and the non-visual art especially visual culture. These examples show that visual culture that has already occupied the young adolescent’s everyday life is shaping the new face of art education (Duncum, 2001; Duncum & Bracey, 2001; Freedman, 2000).

Wilson (2003a) further takes Japanese manga as an example to explain the broader view of visual culture is much wider than the traditional art world. He points out that Japanese manga, as one of the most popular forms in popular visual culture, prevails in many countries like Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, and the United States, demonstrating a particular cross-culturally artistic style of expression that belongs to young adolescents and cannot be replaced by any art forms (Wilson, 2003a). Besides the debate on paradigm shift, Wilson (2003a) suggests an aggressive approach to encourage students to criticise the traditional fine arts and adopts an intertextual approach to apply visual culture as a method to explore meanings.

2.1. Rationale for teaching visual culture

There are numbers of reasons for teaching visual culture today. As discussed in Chapter Four, Socio-cultural Discourse in Visual Culture, our culture has changed to be the visual images-dominated one and the context has changed to an era of new media and new technology. The lifestyle of our students living in the postmodern environment is different from the modern era. Under this condition, the concept of visual culture that replaces the traditional fine arts domain becomes a natural evolution.
Besides, the socio-cultural perspective on viewing art is as a part of the cultural product. Therefore, in art education, student art can also be regarded as a part of the cultural field (Freedman, 2003a). This is one of the beliefs and foundation for teaching visual culture.

There are some advantages of teaching visual culture. First, students may benefit from the social-cultural approach to art education. This view can be examined in the student’s learning attitude. According to Malchiodi (1998b), the socio-cultural effects “can affect children’s motivation to draw and their attitudes about art making in general” (p. 24) and might affect “the content of art expressions” (p. 24). The attitude toward learning in the arts is positive on the condition that art is regarded as sensitive communication that can facilitate the establishment of the diverse society. McFee (1998) remarks that learning in the arts as “cultural communication” as “one of the basic language skills needed to participate in a multicultural democracy”. She believes that the sensitive “awareness of qualities and diversities in both art and culture can increase inter-cultural communication and respect, and can possibly reduce stereotyping and conflict” (McFee, 1998, p. 66).

There are studies in the visual arts and cognition, and art applying psychological and socio-cultural perspectives; however, these perspectives have been enriched and reviewed since the late 1990s in accordance with the new evidence suggested from the studies in brain (Kindler, 2003). Zeki (1999) suggests a new approach applying neurology to understanding the relationship between art and brain. He shows some biological evidence to support the idea that human applies different visual brains to construct cognition in art when viewing different paintings, suggesting a concept of “neurology of aesthetics” or “neuro-esthetics” (Zeki, 1999, p. 215).

Kindler (2003) borrows Zeki’s theory to elucidate how the “visual brain” connects the art cognition, which the visual brain demonstrates to us a much more complicated and diverse ways to examine the visual culture. She also criticises that art education has too much emphasised the socio-cultural perspective on understanding visual culture but ignored this potential field and its influence in understanding visual culture (Kindler, 2003, p. 291). She concludes that implementing visual culture in art education may consider the potential of the visual brain (Kindler, 2003).
Kindler (2003) realises that whatever Lowenfeld’s (1987) theory of the children’s artistic developmental stage or the Gardner’s suggestion of the U-curve model (Davis, 1991, 1993; Gardner & Winnie, 1982), it always narrows the scope of the study. Besides, the research instrument and tool depends too much on drawing medium for collecting data; as it turns out, the study results only highlight a particular aesthetic taste, emerging in linear notions of artistic development (Kindler, 2003). Kindler also points out that images whether they are still images or moving images seen everyday can be a tool for improving the Intelligence Quotient Test result efficiently; therefore, teaching visual culture can make the advantage of art education. Besides, as visual culture challenges the existing issues as hegemony, politics, socio-culture, economy, race, gender and so forth, through the discourse in images, it can be merged with varying theories applied in education like critical theory and social reconstruction (Kindler, 2003).

Visual culture can contribute to the construction of knowledge, identity, belief, imagination, feelings, perception of space and so forth (Boughton, et al., 2002). What visual culture contributes most to art education is its critical thinking and our attitudes toward images, which break the disciplinary boarder with applying intertextuality as well as interdisciplinary approach to integrate various bodies of knowledge to understand the core meanings. The presentation of the popular visual culture emerges in a form of social story to reveal the metaphorical meanings through the story presented in images (Pauly, 2003). Therefore, to develop critical thinking toward the analysis on popular culture, learning to deconstruct the ideologies, and constructing meanings through the inter-cultural interpretations are an important issue in teaching visual culture. Besides, many studies in visual culture see art as a focus on the political role and communication in images, which may also help us understand the politics, society, and culture in the surrounding art context through visual representation method, showing that the art surrounding us is an environmental and cross-text product (Sullivan, 2003).

Although teaching visual culture has many advantages, from an educational perspective, teachers may show their concerns on carefully reviewing images selected for the development of teaching materials. To the selection of the content and consideration of the power of the image, teachers are necessary to
“have a serious attitude toward these images to avoid causing the negative influence on the students” (Guo, 2001, p. 435). McFee (1998) declares, “To understand cultural influences on children, the images that have meaning to them, and the styles of interaction and transition that they have internalized, we must be aware of the mass corporate culture that they are expose to, with its selection of what is of value, its criteria of how choices should be made and the styles of visual imagery used to project them” (p. 59).

2.2. Meaningful aesthetics and approaches

The concept and rationale for implementing Visual Culture Art Education (VCAE) has been continuously suggested by art educators who believe that this approach can drive both teachers and students to understand the socio-cultural role of the image and the importance of understanding the relationship between the image and everyday life through criticism and analysis on the image (Duncum, 2001; Duncum, 2002; Tavin, 1999, 2000, 2003). Although Duncum (2002) realises that it is necessary for VCAE to replace the old paradigm, he understands that letting students learn about popular culture production and viewer’s response is one thing, letting them understand the traditional fine arts is the other one because visual culture art education concerns about the relationship between ideology and meaning through images (Duncum 2002).

The impact of mass media on children is profound. It has given an unordinary impact on the children’s cognitive learning and metal development (Parsons, 1998). Children’s beliefs are shaped by parents, peers, religions, culture, social-and-economic class, politics, and other environmental factors such as mass media around them; among them, the advertising shown in television affect this belief enormously (Berk, 1994, 2000, 2006). Social learning theory criticises this phenomenon and suggests that it may influence children in two ways: one is to produce bad behaviour and the other is that children are accustomed to viewing the violent scene as usual (Bandura, 1986).

Pauly (2003) advocates the discourse analysis and the cultural narratives approaches to interpret visual culture. The discourse analysis refers to applying discourses in cultural phenomena to obtain a
common view, while the cultural narratives including gender, race, and social class issues means to cope the narrative story to give certain meanings to the values or social orders (Pauly, 2003). She extends the media studies method suggested by Fiske (1996) and the narrative analysis suggested by Gee (1999) to analyse the cultural texts, aiming at finding the socio-cultural meanings (Pauly, 2003).

The focus of visual culture in art education is on reading and interpreting the visual culture experiences to help students understand how to construct their knowledge through such experiences (Pauly, 2003). Although meanings are behind the culture, teachers seldom apply it as powerful and useful teaching materials. Images exploring on television bring us to consider how essential issues like ideology affect young adolescents (Dominick, 1984; Kelly, 1997). For instance, music video shown on television is a powerful tool dispatching ideologies to them, in which ideologies are coded and presented as a form of metaphorical and cultural narratives for making a connection between the story and symbol (Pauly, 2003).

Visual culture contains issues about general culture, new media, and everyday life under the socio-cultural context as well as the technology context; these become precious teaching resources for students to learn and consequently raise their cognitive understandings, abilities to make the aesthetic judgement, and art production and creation (Chen, 2004). Visual culture becomes the content in visual arts education, in which “no one would know what territory the next discoveries will take them either epistemological or pedagogically” (Wilson, 2003b, p. 216). Under this circumstance, students can be encouraged to interpret the meaning of the image they created and give meanings to their everyday lives through images of visual culture (Wilson, 2003b, p. 226).

The approach to teaching visual culture can be different. Freedman (2003b) suggested the following eight concepts that are foundations of teaching visual culture: (1) reconceptualizing the field; (2) meaningful aesthetics; (3) social perspectives; (4) interactive cognitive; (5) cultural response; (6) interdisciplinary interpretation; (7) technological experience; and (8) constructive critique (pp. 20-22). These foundations can conceptually and socially reflect the fact that our society has rapidly been changed from a modernist to a postmodernist one. Tavin (2000) suggests a transdisciplinary
curriculum, while Keifer-Boyd et al. (2003) stress an intertextual and interdisciplinary approach to teaching visual culture.

Keifer-Boyd et al. (2003) applies the above-mentioned models with a theme-based curriculum to start teaching visual culture; she finds that students not only can express their personal feelings through teaching visual culture, they also connect themselves with the socio-cultural values and meanings. The teaching methods include guiding students to analyse the sex and racial issues under the socio-political analysis context with connecting the students’ visual experiences to raise discourses in varying artists’ work, contemporary art, everyday life, education, and popular culture (Keifer-Boyd, et al., 2003).

Duncum (2002, pp. 25-32) encourages students to adapt critical and analytic methods with a serious attitude to response to the images of popular visual culture. Parsons (2004) sees visual culture in a positive way and advocates that popular visual culture may also have the advantage of helping students to be more self-critical in the process of art creation through self-assessment by making correction and improving their skills. Under the visual culture context, teachers should be responsible to help students to learn how to criticise images; this is important particularly in the assessment of the arts (Parsons, 2004). Visual culture in art education suggests art educators to start with questions based on images as a core-teaching concept (Tavin, 1999).

Art educators can consider what of the essential concept students can learn through images. According to Freedman (2000), visual culture emphasises visual images; the selection the visual image depends on its power, not taking reference to the pre-occupied aesthetic value. This indicates that images of popular visual culture can be more attractive to the young adolescents. The study of Freedman and Wood (1999) demonstrates that when viewing a work of art, senior high students have the same response to viewing an image of visual culture. However, their abilities to interpret the image is far more complex and different from the aesthetic cognition and experiences suggested by Parsons (1987) that we understand art based on various cognitive stages and aesthetic experiences.
Although the concept of teaching visual culture in art education suggested by different scholars is consistent, the approach is different. Apparently, the aim of this is not at training artists; rather, it trains students to adopt methods such as cultural narratives and intertextuality to clarify the value and meaning (Keifer-Boyd, et al., 2003). Freedman (2000) describes how to use themes and issues to develop a K-6 art curricula, providing social issues for reference such as love, marriage, sex, AIDS, murder, hatred, killing, drugs, god, holiday, friend, family, freedom, belief and so forth.

Freedman (2000) pronounces that the student’s art creation is not for matching some kinds of form, techniques, or values; instead, it should connect the student to make communication with issues. She presents a case about sculpture made by a female student who had a rape experience, showing how art functions as a social communication tool: although it is about a personal experience, the way the student who made a social response to the public is a fact (Freedman, 2000). Therefore, the meaning of art is not simply a personal matter; it indeed is a “personalization of the social issue” (Freedman, 2000, 319).

Wilson (2003c) assents that the meaning should be found from the collaborative interpretation in which the three parties of teachers, students, and the artwork work together to make the interpretation. He even suggests an aggressive strategy to abandon the traditional fine arts teaching contents instead of teaching visual culture as the core art curricula (Wilson, 2003c). However, Wilson (2003c) suggests adopting diverse teaching strategies to encourage students to use popular artistic expression and to intertextually analyse the traditional art to seek meanings relevant their everyday life. Furthermore, Duncum (2003a) provides four different exemplars as the family photograph, consuming goods, souvenirs, and teenager’s room for teaching visual culture, together with a set of guiding questions and teaching activities to stimulate students to think about teaching VCAE.

From the above-mentioned, the importance of the everyday life, consumer society, ideology, and meaning in teaching visual culture can be understood. The “symbolic culture” is embodied into these themes, which is rooted in popular visual culture (Villeneuve, 2003, p. 5). The approach to implement the symbolic culture is different according to different focuses. For example, Krug (1993) adopts the
concept of symbolic culture to examine art education; Taylor and Ballengee-Morris (2003) explore how visual culture is applied to popular culture; Smith-Shank (1995) reviews visual culture from semiotic-pedagogical and social reform perspectives; Barrett (1997a, 1997b) applies denotations and connotations to interpret visual culture from a multi-level perspective; Freedman (2003a) focuses on the teaching and learning behaviour in the visual culture teaching context.

Taylor and Ballengee-Morris (2003) address that teaching visual culture can adopt an essential concept-based or an issue-based approach: it can start with the inquiry into a music video, a comedy, an advertisement, or any other forms of visual culture. Images in various types can be the resources for teaching. Students not only can criticise the art products, the artists, and the creation contexts by making a comparison with the meanings, they also can compare with different media by writing a critical essay to interpret and challenge the pre-occupied meaning of the art product.

Parsons (2003) regards visual image production as a core art curriculum and realises that popular culture materials such as magazines, films, newspaper, comics, advertisements, music videos, Internet and so forth can be the teaching materials. To Parsons (1992) “the curriculum is a matter of interpretation” (p. 86). He explains, “Each of these transformations requires students to put meanings in the context of a different network of ideas and skills, to think them through again both in terms of the medium and in the terms of more general assumptions and understandings of the world, and with these two sets of terms interacting. In short, the student must each time make an interpretation” (Parson, 1992, p. 87).

Besides, Parsons (2003) takes some examples from television to suggest an integrated curriculum starting with a big idea to teach visual culture, such as the way of presenting the war, the race image in the media, the cigarette and wine advertisement, the narrative comic, the character in computer games, and fashion as well as sport reports in magazines. He suggests an ill-structured statement to start the teaching and assumes that students can learn to inquire into the complex issues about the community and popular culture since he believes that there is a complex context hidden behind the image (Parsons, 2003).
The focus of teaching visual culture lays stress on the phenomena such as the visual image, object, environment, and the viewer as well as the viewed through raising questions, in which the multiple coding, subjective culture, description of the cultural context, and cultural narratives can be developed as teaching materials (Duncum, 2002). Wagner-Ott (2002) suggests adopting the action figure to develop the educational discourse in the art class, with the political implications and belief that such discussion can enhance students’ awareness of gender issues, sexism, racism, and identities. Duncum (2002) describes,

The significance of visual culture for art education study lies not so much in the object or image but in the process or practice used to investigate how images are situated in social contexts of power and privilege…to consider how power is allocated to privilege certain values, and who’s art and aesthetic values are not supposed economically and culturally. (p. 12)

Teaching visual culture becomes an urgent issue for today’s art education; however, how a teacher gets prepared for this is an important issue. Pauly (2001) suggests various approaches to interpreting visual culture for the pre-service teachers. Her main ideas are about interpreting the meanings of the representation of the cultural codes, signs, and visual symbols; interpreting images intersubjectively based on the human, cultural text, and social interactions to raise socio-cultural issues like race, sex, and cultural identity; constructing the meaning of the image through the particular cultural-historical contextualization to review how various context influence the image; intertextual articulation with cultural texts including music, toys, games, films, and environment and cultural narratives including essential social stories or discourses relevant to gender, race, and history, to construct meanings through understanding the ideology in images; potential cultural consequences and discourses of representation to explore the ways affecting people’s feelings, behaviours, and future development; and applying the response-ability to reflect the pre-services teacher’s teaching, minds, and experiences according to the interpretation of their own culture (Pauly, 2001).
3. Debate on teaching visual culture

In the late 1990s, Duncum and Freedman focussed on making images that combine critical questions with the freedom for individuals and groups to explore meaning for themselves, seeing making and critique as symbiotic (Duncum, 2002). Within the visual culture context, this new approach will certainly have a great impact on art education, making the nature of art education transformed. Duncum (2001) realises that this change happens naturally, which is like the paradigm shift from the expressive creative mode to DBAE in the 1980s. He explains that VCAE is a new and balanced teaching approach emphasising and combining art creation with critical questioning and thinking to explore individual and group freedom of seeking meaning (Duncum, 2003a, 2003b).

Nevertheless, Eisner (2001) doubts the concept of teaching visual culture and alleges that art educators who advocate teaching visual culture equal to the announcement to the public that “art is dead” (p. 6). Eisner (2001) states that there is no difference in terms of the definition between visual culture and the arts called today because both contribute to the form of visual communications such as architecture, graphic design, painting, sculpture and so forth. Through studying the art phenomenon, students also can acquire the outcome and influence of sociology, history, culture, and economy (Eisner, 2001).

Although Eisner (2001) recognises the advantage of teaching visual culture, he doubts that the aesthetics will be lost because visual culture over-emphasises the aspect of political criticism; thus causing students to not be concerned about fine arts and the artwork itself only reflects the praising phenomenon on sociology and politics. Even worse is that the judgement of the art will turn out to be the judgement of the sociology (Eisner, 2001). He criticises that the analysis of sociology and politics is not the focus of being an art teacher; on the other hand, he also worries that teaching visual culture would change a student from a productive artist to an analyst or an observer (Eisner, 2001). Eisner (1997, 1999, 2001) suggests integrating visual materials such as cartoon, poster, window-displays and so forth in the existing curriculum with considering the diverse aspect of the arts to expand the body of knowledge. However, he seriously warns us that it will be a “shame” if art teacher forgets chasing “excellence” in school—that makes what a teacher should be (Eisner, 2001, p. 10).
There seems to be apparently an increasing trend of applying visual culture in art education as a new paradigm (Chalmers, 2001; Congdon & Blandy, 2001; Duncum, 2003b; Freedman, 2000; Tavin, 2000). This trend challenges the excellence idea suggested by Eisner. In response to the criticism made by Eisner, Duncum (2002) argues that Eisner misunderstands the implication of visual culture and he declares that “VCAE sees making and critique as symbiotic” (p. 6), which means that VCAE also highlights both image creation and criticism. In fact, art creation and criticism are one in VCAE. Duncum (2002) describes that

VCAE sees making and critiques as symbiotic. The critique and making of images need to go hand-in-hand, with the one supporting the other in a symbiotic relationship. Critical understanding and empowerment—not artistic expression—are the primary goals of VCAE, but critical understanding and empowerment are best developed through an emphasis on image-making where students have some freedom to explore meaning for themselves. (p. 6)

To Freedman (2003a), the art creation process involves “social action” and “personal expression” (p. 39); this viewpoint is similar to what Duncum suggests is the symbiotic relationship between art creation and criticism. Freedman and Duncum both highlight that in visual culture in art education, the artwork has social and personal meanings as well as discourse issues. VCAE concerns issues about the instruction method applied in classroom. It follows the ordinary teaching procedure such as discovering, planning, producing, and evaluating processes (Duncum, 2002). Since VCAE focuses on exploring students’ cultural experiences, this make a clear separation between the old paradigm and the new one in terms of the teaching philosophy, curriculum rationale, teaching approach, teaching content, teaching method, and evaluation method (Duncum, 2002, p. 9).

One strong response to the criticism made by Eisner toward VCAE is that what DBAE teaches students in the art curriculum is only about paintings; it should be more than that (Duncum, 2002). VCAE not only elevates the social issues, it also highlights the aesthetic value. It believes that
aesthetics is a kind of social product and issue. Therefore, aesthetic experiences indeed reflect the value of social issues. Duncum (2002) concludes that the core of VCAE concerns about how the meaning of the ideology presents through the aesthetics of artwork. Besides, in response to the argument of whether art teachers are prepared for VCAE, Duncum (2002) and Freedman (2003a) suggest that they should be prepared and well-equipped themselves for this change.

Furthermore, visual culture in art education can be regarded as a social reconstruction; it aims at improving life of the individual and social group. Through democratic and in-depth discussion, it focuses on investigating varying issues to help students take the responsible for their learning (Freedman, 1994; Freedman & Hernandez, 1998). In achieving this educational goal, Freedman (2003a) suggests basic principles that emphasise the construction of the identity through artwork; the importance of the idea development and techniques applied in creation; and learning in art and culture criticism.

4. Summary of chapter

Visual culture offers a wide space that we have never had in art education, providing much more imagination in terms of teaching art than ever before. When confronting the complex world, Howells (2003) remarks,

We live in a visual world. We are surrounded by increasingly sophisticated visual images.

But unless we are taught how to read them, we run the risk of remaining visually illiterate.

This is something that none of us can afford in the modern world. (p. 1)

We are living in a visual world; however, we do not know much about how far visual culture in art education can go in education. To Howells, a person with visual literacy means a person who can make judgement and interpret through visual images. According to this, we know how important visual culture in art education it is, but are teachers and students ready to make the change? Besides, visual culture in art education is interdisciplinary: it changes from one concept to another, from one
media to another in teaching art. It rejects the pre-occupied concept of modernism, viewing art as an independent study that can be understood as a process including varying visual forms emerged in our everyday life (Freedman, 2003a).

The literature review of visual culture and visual culture in art education mostly focused on the debate on the rationale and the socio-cultural context. It seems that the studies in the particular artistic expression are overlooked. We understand that there are studies in visual culture in art education from socio-cultural perspectives; however, we have not seen it from the interpretation of the specific aesthetic representation itself according to the existing literature. For example, what does the image of popular visual culture created by students look like under the socio-cultural context? Why do they create the image in this way? What are the other meanings behind the creation, except the macro socio-cultural explanation?

Beside, should we consider the student’s individual psychological need as an essential issue when discussing visual culture in art education? Would these factors affect the creation of the image? For this study, these questions are a big issue. However, it reflects that there are some missing points but are important parts that need to reconsider and contribute to the understanding the body knowledge of visual culture in art education. We do not hold any assumption; instead, we will discover this issue by examining what the meaning of the image created by young adolescent, why they create the image in such a particular way, and how they make interpretation to the creation process.

5. Summary of literature review

The organisation and structure of the literature is consolidated and based on exploring the communication concentration in association with the interrelationships of the matrix. It explores the essential discourse in visual culture, manga, therapeutic art, and visual culture in art education.

Chapter Four, Socio-cultural Discourse in Visual Culture, focuses on a discussion of the current issues in visual culture with a socio-cultural perspective. Given an overview of the context of the
post-industrial era, the chapter particularly highlights reconceptualising concepts of popular culture and its impact on the identity of young adolescent today. If the chapter of socio-cultural discourse in visual culture provides a macro view on understanding the context, then the next chapter about *manga* can be viewed as a micro perspective on the discussion. Chapter Five, Discourse in Communication Perspective on *Manga*, explores the issues of *manga*, leading various issues raised from this specific type of popular visual culture. It applies a communication perspective on examining the interrelationships among the experience of creating artwork, the reason of creating images in particular ways, and how to interpret the creation process. The main issues about *manga* related to the interrelationships include the content, context, meaning, cognition, value, attitude, and the metaphorical communication.

Understanding *manga* specifically brings common issues to the discussion from a metaphorical communication perspective under the communication scope while Psychological Discourse in Therapeutic Art of Chapter Six stresses the discussion from the psychological perspective. Chapter Six examines the process of how therapeutic art and the relationship between the issue like transference and the images are created, opening dialogues with elucidating the interrelationships from a psychological viewpoint. Chapter Seven, Educational Discourse in Visual Culture in Art Education, outlines essential issues by discussing the visual culture in art education. It highlights the rationale for teaching visual culture, various teaching approaches, and debate on the paradigm shift.

In conclusion, the communication concentration of the literature covers all the aspects of the matrix concerned, which can provide a concrete discussion and raise essential issues on understanding the interrelationships in the matrix. The four parts of literature directly contribute to the knowledge of understanding the image of popular visual culture. The next chapter is Presentation of Data, in which the data collected will be presented relevant to the research question.
PART IV  HORIZONTAL DISCOURSE: INTRODUCTION TO DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS LEADING TO THE CONCLUDING DISCUSSION
Part IV presents the data collected according to the phenomenological case study method. The organisation of the part is based on the relationship between data presentation and analysis that directly lead to the resolution to the research questions posed in the matrix. There are three chapters in this part. Presentation of Data in Chapter Eight focuses on describing the valid data of the eight students and data of the researcher team collected in the sessions against the three main research questions. Chapter Nine, Analysis: Explication and Interpretation, emphasises the interpretation and analysis of the data presented. The analysis directly leads to the discussion and implication in the Concluding Discussion of Chapter Ten.
Chapter Eight
Presentation of Data

1. Overview of information provided by the individuals

In this chapter, the data collected in the study is presented. The organisation of the presentation is based on the students’ responses to the matrix, which is the meanings of the images of popular visual culture through the experiences of art creation, the reason for creating these images in this particular way, and the manner of interpreting the creating process.

According to the Validity, Reliability, and Sample Selection (6.2.1.2.) of the Methodology chapter, commitments are the factors on the issues of validity and reliability. Starting with 12 students, the study counts eight of them as valid cases. Two students were absent from three lessons and two were absent from six lessons respectively. Eight students fulfilled the commitments of the study stated in 6.2.1.2. and had full attendance in the program. The students’ names are Jack, Kei, the twin sisters KH, KW, Fish, Yin, Nie, and Yan are all pseudonyms.

The method of the presentation of data adopts a thematic or idea-based approach to the categorisation of the individual cases. The themes or ideas are the responses to the research questions. Besides the similar themes or ideas, some specific themes or ideas abstracted from each case that are closely related to the research questions are presented in the chapter. Therefore, the presentation of data not only looks for the commonality, but it also looks for the differences between cases to see what specific ideas make the students’ images unique.

2. Data related to the matrix and case presentation

According to the themes or ideas, the following data are abstracted from the raw data to support and provide evidence for the matrix. The data are presented in three categories as transcripts, artwork, and
questionnaire. The process of analysis of the data is left to the next chapter where further textual and structural analysis is presented. The transcripts are described together with the artwork since they are coherent and can reflect the authentic situation in which students make response to art while making art. The researcher realises that it is the natural comfortable way for the students to respond to the questions and can immediately ask questions about their creation, as well as clarify some possible confusions about the meaning of the images.

2.1. Case study one—Jack

2.1.1. General description

Jack is a 14-year-old male student. According to the observation in class, he had difficulty in communication with his peers especially with females (Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 5 December 2003). He experienced being the target of bullying, mostly in language assaults like laughing at him, or even separating him from their peers. He was the only male participating in the program.

Jack was not only interested in reading Japanese *manga* but he also loved to create *manga* stories and novels based on a character named “Pokemon”. The origin of Pokemon came from a video game created by the Gameboy in the 1990s. “Pokemon is me”, said Jack (Jack, Interview, 7 November 2003). Jack had a notebook to write his story about Pokemon (The researcher (R), Observation, 21 November 2003; The research assistant (RA), Observation, 6 February 2004).

Jack focused on some specific characters and repeatedly practiced his drawings. He even drew the same character in the same position on a number of occasions. He told the researcher that he was never popular at school and had not made any friends. He did not like females because they were “born to be weak”, “always waiting for someone’s help”, and “too simple to live in this complex world” (Jack, Interview, 7 November 2003). The finished *manga* book created by Jack is in Appendix F (i) to Appendix F (x).
2.1.2. Meanings of images through experiences of art creation

To understand the images created by Jack, the first step was to understand the meaning of Pokemon. Unlike other students, Jack had put much effort in depicting the image for over five years (Jack, Interview, 7 November 2003).

2.1.2.1. Transcripts and artwork

Jack was apparently different from the other students. Almost all the *manga* stories he drew had Pokemon as the protagonist. The character of Pokemon had profound meaning to Jack. He created a world called the “Peaceful Town” or “Oasis Town” in his *manga* book (Appendix F (i)), where kind and good people lived. Pokemon and his pets (seen in Appendix F (vi) and Appendix F (vii)) were the protectors of the town. He alleged, “People who live there enjoyed the peaceful life—there are no fights, no laughing, no bias, and no discrimination at all” and “females are protected by Pokemon” (Jack, Interview, 12 December 2003).

Jack described the character of Pokemon as a “cool character, with extremely low changes in emotions” (Jack, Interview, 7 November 2003). He said, “Pokemon extremely hates smoking. He seldom talks but very much appreciates friendship. He usually uses his left hand. He makes a solemn promise. He loves eating cookies produced by Tai Pan Company. He inherits his ancestor’s blue eyes and often practice fighting with the sword” (Jack, Interview, 7 November 2003). What Jack described about Pokemon matched his characteristics in reality (Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 7 November 2003). He thought that Pokemon was “a good person with a sense of justice” (Jack, Interview, 7 November 2003). Concerning the socio-cultural influence of the popular culture on the selection of Pokemon for his art creation, he responded,

> It’s not Japanese *manga* affecting me; it is the character represented my thinking and reflecting my views on things. The character selected is similar to my personality. To have my peer’s recognition by drawing a good image is important. To me, I don’t count
on this. Pokemon is the reason, the character of him, not Japanese *manga*. (Jack, Interview, 7 November 2003)

When asked whether he imitated the original image, he dissented that he imitated the image and stressed that he changed “the story and appearance a lot by adding weapons, clothing, etc” (Jack, Interview, 7 November 2003). In Plate 1, Jack drew Pokemon wearing a baseball cap standing in the middle of the paper, without offering a detailed background. When asked about the criteria for the selection of the protagonist, he asserted that the protagonist must “match his characteristics and psychological needs”, which meant that the character could “reflect” his “psychological stage, thoughts, and real life” (Jack, Interview, 7 November 2003). The image of Pokemon presented is a stereotyped form of expression. This phenomenon could be found in depicting the side view of Pokemon in Plate 1, Appendix F (iv), and Appendix F (v).

![Plate 1](image)

*Plate 1  Pokemon—the first image created by Jack*

Jack described the stereotyped phenomenon as: “Some parts of the image like the cap, the eyes, clothes…must be drawn as the stereotyped forms; otherwise, you can’t capture the original spirit of
the story” (Jack, Interview, 6 February 2004). However, Jack also had some breakthroughs showing his intention and attempt to break the stereotypical way of expression through the various ways of observation and perspective to draw the details, for example, Appendix F (vi) and Appendix F (vii). As he said, “I am facing the problem of being stereotyped in my drawings. I am trying to draw some details to enrich the image or action through the careful observation. I do not intend to change the form of eyes, caps, or the facial expression. I want to enrich the details” (Jack, Interview, 6 February 2004).

Jack’s image of Pokemon seemed to lack the detail. He explained, “At this stage, I have to ignore the details and don’t draw the difficult parts like hands. When I improve my skills, I will put more details for sure” (Jack, Interview, 21 November 2003). The next issue was about the meaning of the power carried by Pokemon. Jack talked about the weapons and revealed an important message for understanding the meaning. Referring to the image in Plate 1, Jack said that Pokemon practiced his sword method. He claimed that it referred to the “Japanese bamboo method” which meant “using bamboo as a sword to fight” (Jack, Interview, 21 November 2003). He described, “It’s a symbol reflecting my views. It is the most powerful weapon. It is spiritual, soft but can be hard as steel. Pokemon won’t use it whatever he wishes. He is a self-disciplined person” (Jack, Interview, 21 November 2003).

Jack explained why Pokemon needed this powerful weapon for the reason of “protecting the girls” (Jack, Interview, 21 November 2003). He commented that girls “are always getting in trouble and weak creature” (Jack, Interview, 21 November 2003). He claimed that he did not like them; however, he still needed to protect them in his manga creation. He said, “I am a man. I have to protect them” (Jack, Interview, 21 November 2003). He pointed out, “Sometimes, the protagonist can be a way to get you to feel free from reality. It suffers for me in the picture through the imaginations. It represents me suffering but without hurting me in the reality” (Jack, Interview, 21 November 2003).

Jack commented his views on the relationship between images, sound, and texts as follow. “Of course, no doubt, images are more important than texts and sound, though they can enrich the effect of my
creation” (Jack, Interview, 19 December 2003). Jack’s attitude toward females was to ignore them. On page three of his final *manga* book (Appendix F (v)), Jack drew Pokemon and a girl who dressed like Pokemon and loved him. She complained that Pokemon ignored her love. However, Pokemon rejected her love and turned his back to her, leaving her alone.

2.1.2.2. Questionnaire

In the questionnaire, Jack asserted that his drawings “emerged from a fixed form of expression, for example, the fixed action and representation of Pokemon and the stereotyped form of the cap and facial expression” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). He wrote: “I am now trying to figure out and trying to fix the stereotyped problem. Some stereotyped expressions are important as the eyes and facial expressions” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). However, he emphasised that he had not been “influenced by any cultures” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Jack clearly stated that the meaning of Pokemon was to “see through the good and the evil sides of himself” by “re-creating Pokemon, but not imitating the images” so that he could understand his “strengths and weaknesses, and make changes for improvement” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). He understood what his creation was about. As he wrote, “It is about me, my world, and my views on people. It is a way of escaping through symbols and imaginations” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). He added, “Sometimes, I vent my unhappy feelings through drawing Pokemon. He will help throw them away for me” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). In terms of practicing drawing Pokemon, he wrote:

> It is an on-going process and never has an ending because it is what life is. Without this process, I cannot live anymore. (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)

Jack described his creation was “simple and without much detail” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). He wrote, “I will enrich the image and add more details once I learn skills in a higher level” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Concerning the relationship between texts, sound, and images,
he mixed Japanese with Chinese in the Pokemon stories because of the way the mix made him feel that he was “getting closer and have more understanding about his feelings” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). In response to the meaning of the Peaceful Town he created, he described that there was a strong connection with the outer world. He wrote:

Changing the views of people in the outer world is impossible. If it is impossible, then you must escape from them—going back to the inner Peaceful Town. (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Jack addressed that he understood the image of Pokemon as a perfect form of representation. He used the character of Pokemon to justify the definition of the “beautiful and ugly objects”. He wrote: “Pokemon is of beauty because of his good character and perfect form. Everyone without these is not beautiful” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). In response to the difference between his real life and manga stories, Jack stressed that the reality was “the foundation of manga stories” but manga stories were “the epitome of the reality” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). He added, “I am living in the manga stories as living in the real world” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

In accordance with the gender issues, Jack responded that they would not be the focal point of the creation because he emphasised that his manga creation was about him and he did “not consider the relationship between males and females at this moment”; however, in the story of Pokemon, he stressed that the only relationship between males and females was that of “the protector and the one being protected” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

2.1.3. Reasons for creating these images in this particular way

Jack’s expression on the image of Pokemon was consistent and persistent (R, Observation, 16 January 2004). He successfully connected the meaning with artistic expression. There were some particular styles found in Jack’s images.
2.1.3.1. Transcripts and artwork

Some of the faces of Pokemon were drawn as a neuter appearance like Appendix F (iv), and Appendix F (v). He implied, “I think this makes the image look lovely and seems innocent. All protagonists seen in the Japanese *manga* stories have these features. This is welcome by young adolescents. Drawing an image that looks like the real sex or close to the adult is no interest in *manga* creation at all” (Jack, Interview, 6 January 2004).

Jack revealed something important in the image related to the reason for creating images in such a particular way. In the session of “The Worst Day in My Life” (Plate 2), Jack demonstrated a story coming from his experience in staying home without doing anything. “The worst day in my life”, according to Jack, “is the day I have nothing to do” (Jack, Interview, 21 November 2003). Jack said that the smiling face of Pokemon seen was a kind of wry smile mixed with sadness (Jack, Interview, 21 November 2003).

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**Plate 2**  
“The Worst Day in My Life”—Jack

Jack explained why he loved to draw Pokemon without movement or action. Almost every image of Pokemon is standing in a wide space with a little motion and facial expression, facing in front of the reader. He described, “Pokemon must stand still to bear the force. If people misunderstand you, it makes the force. It is the destiny” (Jack, Interview, 12 November 2003). He stressed that the reason
for drawing Pokemon in such a position repeatedly was the problem of being there” (Jack, Interview, 12 November 2003). He said,

My problem is the contradictory of life, just like my personality. If you have contradiction in your personalities, it makes you draw Pokemon in a position standing still…the reason why I always draw him alone is that I am lonely. Pokemon is mature to face the reality that no friends can be counted. Life is full of difficulties…you have to go alone. (Jack, Interview, 12 November 2003)

In some of the drawings of Pokemon carried the bamboo sword and seemed ready to fight with someone like Plate 1 and Plate 3. He said, “I don’t like my classmates. They are too ‘skin-deep’. They behave like a child; they laugh and hit me at my back. Perhaps Pokemon could be my guardian, fighting against the evil, protecting girls and the weaker people. He protects me, carrying the weapons” (Jack, Interview, 26 November 2003).

Jack’s images were full of onomatopoeia that he used to present the power of Pokemon. Most of the onomatopoeias seen in his creation were written in Japanese. For better understanding of the stories of Pokemon, he learnt Japanese by himself and integrated the Japanese words in his images (Jack, Interview, 26 November 2003). In Plate 3, it showed how Jack integrated Japanese words into Chinese in his signature, dialogues, and descriptions. He said, “I do this to have better understanding
and integration the spirit of Pokemon” (Jack, Interview 26 December 2003). Jack gave his signature in some of his drawings seen as “Jack of Wind”. Jack of Wind, a term composed of half Japanese and half Chinese characters. It means “the motions as fast as wind” (Jack, Interview 7 November 2003).

2.1.3.2. Questionnaire

Jack described the reason he created was to understand himself and relieve pressure. He wrote, “I can understand my strengths and weaknesses, and make changes for improvement. Creating stories of Pokemon can relieve my stress from the reality” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). He mentioned the reasons for keeping Pokemon standing still and stressed on the relationship with the concept of beauty and the ugliness. He wrote:

All fabricated things are ugly because they are against the nature…The most beautiful position or gesture I think is standing still because I can have more time to think how to draw the image. (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)

Jack denied any cultural influences on his work though he often used Japanese words in his creation. He claimed that his works were “affected by peace” instead of Japanese culture (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). He also explained that his “destiny” droved Pokemon to be “alone and “lonely to protect females” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). In terms of appearances between drawing the male and female images, he mentioned about the phenomenon of the neuter appearance in his manga creation:

Although the face of Pokemon looks like a boy or girl, it doesn’t matter at all. The neuter appearance is an artistic expression in which it represents that he is lovely and popular. (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)

Jack believed that the manga creation had to “skilfully apply different layers of elements like texts or images; however, images are always the most important elements of all” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6
February 2004). In his *manga* stories, images were related to his thoughts and presented as a picture of “a wonderful, peaceful, and isolated land that I won’t bring any troubles into there” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Besides, Jack explained that the reason for the creation of the town was a “peaceful land” other than the “outer world” in which there were “full of pressures from studying and the troubles made by people” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Concerning Pokemon in action, he wrote: “Action is a symbol reflecting that I have to be brave to fight against the reality and shape my personality; however, it depends on sophisticated drawing skills to implement it” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

2.1.4. The way of interpreting the creation process

Jack could logically and clearly explicate the creation process. He mentioned that the drawing techniques learnt in each lesson could help him “improve the image to look more beautiful” so that his “personality or problems could be changed or solved” (Jack, Interview, 19 December 2003).

2.1.4.1. Transcripts and artwork

Jack might not be the best drawer in the group; however, he had his own drawing method. He stated, “I keep a distance to look like Pokemon, leave my problems to him, and transfer my problems to him” (Jack, Interview, 14 November 2003). He claimed, “Pokemon will solve the problem temporarily. However, the new problems come after. It’s never ending. The real lived problems are about the experiences of bullying” (Jack, Interview, 14 November 2003). He described the relationship between solving the problem and drawing Pokemon as below.

Keeping practicing drawing techniques becomes a way to understand myself. However, the final gate for the success is the attainment of the sophisticated drawing techniques. When the drawing skills and techniques are improved, my problem will be solved. At this
stage, I am working very hard to looking for the advanced drawings techniques but I still have no idea yet. I keep practicing the old techniques and hope I can find the new techniques and learn from it so that I can upgrade myself. I think it takes time to get an insight. (Jack, Interview, 14 November 2003)

Jack showed us an image from one of his notebooks that there were two Pokemen carrying various weapons, dressed in different colours, and facing each other (Plate 4).

![Plate 4](image)

Jack explained that they were the same person though they had different first name. He pronounced, “It was like introspection...sometimes you need to make a reflection on yourself” and “changing the weapons can enhance the power of making changes” (Jack, Interview, 28 November 2003). He described the scenario of Pokemon carrying weapons as,

Putting the fighting scenes into the *manga* stories makes me feel better and strong temporarily but the problems remain. However, to the real problem, there is no solution at all. It is life! (Jack, Interview, 5 December 2003)

In “A Pawnshop” session, Jack drew a story about exchanging something he did not want for anything he wanted. He decided to exchange his precious bamboo-sword for a “pair of wings” (Jack, Interview, 12 December 2003) (Plate 5). He explained why he was willing to exchange the most
important weapon to a pair of wings was because this was “an instrument for saving people” (Jack, Interview, 12 December 2003). According to the dialogue of the story, the wings could empower the force of Pokemon if he could use it appropriately rather than the “self-defence and killing weapon” (Jack, Interview, 12 December 2003).

Plate 5 To exchange a sword to a pair of wings—Jack

The projection of Jack’s personality through image was obvious. It indicated how the creating process linked with catharsis. He explained the importance of the images as follow.

I draw and write about manga stories or novel for catharsis, but many of the stories cannot finish. Writing and drawing are an on-going process for catharsis. I’m involved in the story and playing a dualistic role. The good or the evil character I play in the manga creation is not a matter. Good or evil is subjective opinion on a balance level. I’m in between them. (Jack, Interview, 5 December 2003)

Jack mentioned the cap seen in Plate 6 as “an instrument for enforcing the power” (Jack, Interview, 5 December 2003). To refine the image of the cap, he repeatedly revised it in his mathematics notebook. Jack said, “Drawing repeatedly is a process to improve yourself and make you better through continuous drawings (seen in Plate 7). Now, I leave the difficult parts and focus on drawing the cap and weapons. They are important because they represent magic.” (Jack, Interview, 5 December 2003).
2.1.4.2. Questionnaire

Jack used Pokemon to interpret his relationship to people. He wrote:

Pokemon has no friends like me. He has a pet called “Digital Dragon” (see Appendix F (vii). [It is from the character of the video game with the same name produced by Gameboy.] Digital Dragon has superpower and is accompanied with Pokemon for fighting against the evil. He is always helpful. They know and trust each other very much. (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)
Jack’s drawing did not show any relation to sound in his creation, except the half Japanese and half
Chinese signature. “Sound won’t affect my thought on the creation of the storyline. Text is important
because it can help understand the development of the storyline” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February
2004). He commented that he just put his “views on the world, not the popular culture” into his
manga stories (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Besides, Jack said, “I think sound is not related
to manga. It’s secondary.” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). In response to the question
whether he could have a better understanding of himself through manga story creation, he wrote:

By practicing drawing Pokemon, I can improve myself because I can see through myself
and be a better person. He is my ideal icon to follow. (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February
2004)

Jack addressed the significance of the Peaceful Town in his manga stories as “a peaceful land, unlike
the outer world where is full of pressures from studying and the troubles made by people” (Jack,
Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). He interpreted the creation of manga as a sublime matter in which
Pokemon played an important ideal role.

Pokemon is an ideal character. Through this perfect character, I can elevate myself by
following his behaviour and mind. Everything he does is good for us and for the world.
Ever time you practice drawing Pokemon, you will think about everything or everyone you
face and then you will think how to improve myself. Your spirit will be distilled. (Jack,
Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)

One particular idea about interpreting the relationship between the creator, the reader, and the work
drew attention. Jack wrote:

The creator is the father of the creation. The work of the father is some parts of the readers’
hearts. This heart is the key for the readers. The creator and reader is the one who solve the
problems. If you have problem, you can create the work. When you complete the work, you can leave it and read it. You may feel that you are talking to yourself. (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)

Jack still could not attain the advanced drawing techniques that were the final key for the improvement in his real problem. He wrote: “Yet, I have no idea how to master the advanced drawing techniques to draw Pokemon in detail as beautiful as I can. I even don’t know where the advanced techniques are. I still try my very best looking for the key. Now I keep practicing the old drawing techniques again, but I know it is not enough. I don’t know what’s wrong with it. But, I believe it takes time to master the techniques. Once I successfully upgrade my drawing techniques, my real problems will naturally be solved” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Jack connected his lived experienced with the imaginative world. As Jack reiterated, he clearly knew the process of making art starting as “imagination, taking reference, making decision, drawing some sketches, layout with pencil, layout with ink, and filling in colours” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Jack told the researcher that the drawing of Pokemon was in the proper order as: (1) eyes; (2) the cap; (3) the face; (4) the hair; (5) the body; (6) clothing; (7) hands; (6) legs and shoes; and (7) the weapons (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Jack described that the eyes, cap, and weapon were the most important parts of all” (Jack, Interview, 12 December 2003).

2.1.5. Summary of case one

There are two special images seen in Plate 8 and Plate 9. “They are about a feeling like falling into an endless hole and all the spiritual pets cannot do anything but watch me falling” (Jack, Interview, 16 January 2004). Jack asserted, “It was me” (Jack, Interview, 23 January 2004). Another similar image about the same feelings can be seen in Plate 8.
Jack’s drawings reflected that he was not a sophisticated drawer or even an intellectual drawer. The lines, shapes, and details of the images were too simple. The images he created were in a two-dimensional form of representation. He seldom used varying values or tone to depict the three-dimensional form of representation. He showed the intention to avoid drawing the complicated parts of the images like hands or fingers in details. The body movement was comparatively ill contrived. With reference to all his drawings, Pokemon was running and pushing his hand forward to fight against the evil with the Chinese invisible weapon—“Chi” (Plate 9). This was however the most active image in Jack’s drawing.
2.2. Case study two—Kei

2.2.1. General description

Kei is a 13-year-old female. Her drawing skills were comparatively better than Jack since she knew how to create the atmosphere in the drawing by extending the gesture of the body (R, Observation, 12 December 2003; Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 12 December 2003). She knew how to apply different tones and values to make the texture of clothing and the hair of the image (RA, Observation, 12 December 2003). She was good at using the angle of elevation to depict the powerful image of the male protagonist (R, Observation, 9 January 2004).

Kei created an image of a boy who was good at fighting as the protagonist in her manga creation. His name was “Dark” (Plate 10). Kei did not use the Japanese words in her drawings. Although she occasionally wrote some sentences by using English adjectives, most of them were written in Chinese (RA, Observation, 16 January 2004).

Plate 10  Dark—the first image created by Kei
2.2.2. Meanings of images through experiences of art creation

Kei said that the origin of Dark was “from a Japanese manga story” (Kei, Interview, 7 November 2003). She emphasised that she “did not copy from the original image, but changed the appearance, character, and even the name” (Kei, Interview, 7 November 2003).

2.2.2.1. Transcripts and artwork

Kei stated, “All my personalities are added to the male protagonist, including all the good and the bad” (Kei, Interview, 19 December 2003). Kei claimed that Dark had “the open and brave characters with orange hair; a little sharp tooth; and carries a sword” (Kei, Interview, 7 November 2003). She declared that the sharp tooth was “hidden to protect” Kei to “keep her away from being hurt” (Kei Interview, 7 November 2003). She explained, “These images can represent that Dark is an adventurer. Dark, as a male, can better represent my wishes, personalities, and imaginations.” (Kei, Interview, 7 November 2003). She hinted, “The function of the sword is to kill the evil—all the bad things about myself” (Kei, Interview, 7 November 2003).

In “A Pawn Shop” session, Kei propounded that what she wanted to exchange was “a new identity” since “the new identity” was a “symbol to me” (Plate 11) (Kei, Interview, 14 November 2003). She exchanged a boy named as “Big Zhu” to Dark. She supplemented that Dark attained a new identity that “contained two of my favourite genres—Big Zhu and Dark” (Kei, Interview, 12 December 2003). Big Zhu was written in Chinese; however, Kei said that Big Zhu came from a “Japanese name of a manga story without any essential meaning” (Kei Interview, 19 December 2003). She declared, “I don’t know much about Japanese (Kei, Interview, 19 December 2003). “Big Zhu represents all the good aspects of me while Dark represents all the bad of me”, she said (Kei, Interview, 19 December 2003). Kei replied that the new genres included “all the good characteristics and personalities” that she wanted to have (Kei, Interview, 19 December 2003). Concerning the word “dark” which might have any relation to the protagonist “Dark”, Kei contented, “They are coherently the paradoxical thing in relation to my lived experiences” (Kei, Interview, 12 December 2003).
Besides, Kie used a Japanese word “の” in one drawing (Appendix G (ii)). She replied, “It’s a very popular word to young adolescents without any meaning” (Kei, Interview, 19 December 2003). Kie stressed that she did not “imitate the image from the original story. Both the image and the story have been changed based on my lived experiences” (Kei, Interview, 19 December 2003). She mentioned about her contradictory experiences as follows:

Dark brings me the good and takes away the bad from me (Plate 11). The new Dark is lovely and hateful. It’s me, a character combining the good and the evil. (Kei, Interview, 19 December 2003)

About the aesthetic judgement, Kei acknowledged, “Beauty means to successfully draw a picture with high artistic skills and you feel the picture is natural” (Kei, Interview, 19 December 2003). She stated, “To draw a beautiful picture, you need to focus on drawing the details of the eyes, facial expressions, and the motions” (Kei, Interview, 19 December 2003). “The principle of drawing the eyes, hair or the facial expression to reach the beauty is”, she said, “following the stereotyped form seen in the Japanese manga because the form means beauty” (Kei, Interview, 16 January 2004).

Kei did not avoid drawing the part of hands or fists like images in Appendix G (i) and Appendix G (vii)). “To reach this goal, I practice drawing these details repeatedly and never avoid them” (Kei,
Interview, 16 January 2004). She drew Dark clenching his fist, while Jack had the intention to avoid drawing such difficult part. She explained, “The omission of the difficult part is not a good way because you will never improve your skills and solve the problems, so the only way is to continue to practice” (Kei, Interview, 26 December 2003).

In “The Worst Day in My Life” session, Kei described a story about her experience of being late to school, forgetting to bring her wallet to get on the bus, and being blamed by her teacher eventually (Plate 12). One particular way of expression found in the four-strip *manga* story was leaving an empty picture frame as the conclusion of the story. “The scene in which the teacher scolded me is too upsetting to be drawn, so I just leave it empty and to your imagination”, Kei said (Kei, Interview, 22 November 2003).

The wish to escape from the reality reflected in Kei’s drawing by leaving the picture frame empty (Plate 12). Kei described that she usually left “the empty picture frame” if she found “difficulties in depicting the image or too painful to depict some of her experience” (Kei, Interview, 22 November 2003). She thought that it was “a way of escaping from the unhappy things that happened (Kei, Interview, 22 November 2003). She believed that the empty picture frame functioned as a “gate of
protection” which could protect her from “getting hurt” (Kei, Interview, 9 January 2004). Kei said that she was concerned about what the peer’s responses to her work would be. She uttered, “Their appreciation means a significant recognition, proving that I am good. Because of this, I will be fully confident” (Kei, Interview, 19 December 2003).

2.2.2.2. Questionnaire

In the questionnaire, Kei denied the impact of the Japanese culture on her manga creation. However, she admitted that she would “use the critical thinking skills to change the original Japanese manga story and change the appearance of the original protagonist” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She wrote that Dark could “represent” her (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She pointed out that she could “understand herself more after the creation” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Kei emphasised that “the details of the eyes, facial expression, and the movement of the body of the images are important” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). “Although they are difficult to draw, I never give up trying to do my best” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). “The stereotyped form of drawing the eyes or face is stressed. It is the standard of beauty”, she wrote (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Concerning the interpersonal relationship between Dark in manga story and her in reality, she wrote: “There is a relation to each other in terms of characteristics” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). About the question of whether the relationship with males was the same as she treated males in reality, Kei replied that their relationships were “positive and sound” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). “In reality, people may think that I am a weak girl and cannot do anything. Dark can help me do anything as he is male” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

On the avoiding or omission phenomenon that occurred in her drawings, Kei wrote: “I won’t avoid drawing the difficult parts or the details; on the contrary, I see them as a chance for making an improvement in the drawing technique and personal development” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). About the neuter appearance found in some of her drawings (like Plate 10, Plate 11, and Plate 12) she wrote: “This specific artistic style represents how lovely the protagonist is. If the image is
drawn too masculine, he is not lovely. This style can be found in Japanese *manga*. No one loves to see adults image in the *manga*. Who wants to see the real cruel world in the *manga* again? Creating *manga* is not a cruel thing. It mixed reality with imagination” (Kei, Interview, 6 January 2004).

Regarding the concept of beauty, she emphasised that beauty meant “all the goodness” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She wrote: “The important parts of *manga* creation are the content related to your life, the artistic expressions, the imagination, and the drawing techniques that are worth learning. Without these, no one reads *manga* anyone” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She commented on her image created: “I am not copying the image, I change it based on my wishes. In the very beginning, it seems I am copying, but you will see the image will not be the same as the original anymore. I practice and add my personal experiences in the story” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Besides, Kei wrote: “I use symbols in the *manga* creation to make changes. It helps reflect and improve myself through these expressions” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). In accordance with the relationship between images, sound, and texts, Kei wrote: “There is a close relationship among them. Texts function as a tool for enhancing the visual effect, while sound like popular music can enrich the content of *manga* story” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

2.2.3. Reasons for creating these images in this particular way

Kei expressed her wishes related to understanding the self. As Kei indicated, “I can see through myself through the *manga* creation” (Kei, Interview, 16 January 2004). It seemed that *manga* to her was a tool for understanding herself.

2.2.3.1. Transcripts and artwork

In some of Kei’s drawings, Dark was described as a fighter practicing fighting skills or fighting with weapons (see Appendix G (iii), Appendix G (vi), and Appendix (x)). Kei did not draw the mouth in
some of the images of Dark like Appendix (iv), Appendix G (vii), and Appendix G (viii). She explained that it made “the image more focused on the eyes” (Kei, Interview, 30 January 2004). In general, the images of Dark created by Kei did not have many facial expressions. Most of the images were in motion, which were drawn from different angles and perspectives. Some images were presented as an unhappy appearance or even crying (Appendix G (v) & Appendix G (ix)).

Kei explained why she chose a male image to represent her, “Dark can protect me. His neuter appearance is lovely and beautiful as seen in the Japanese *manga* books” (Kei, Interview, 7 November 2003). There was only one picture of a female image found in her work (Plate 14). She explained, “A male could give you a strong impression. If you are strong, you can struggle with the reality and keep practicing to fight for your destiny”, Kei reported to the researcher (Kei, Interview, 30 January 2004). When asked why she liked to draw males rather than females, Kei replied,

I may be a girl and weak in reality, but I am strong in the *manga* creation. I am the only one in charge of my life. To draw Dark in motion or practicing fighting is the way to improve myself, increase my ability, and make me strong to survive in school. It makes me get rid of the troubles like the other student’s laughing, teachers blaming me on the low grade I attain in tests. Drawing Dark in motion can re-gain the confidence! (Kei, Interview, 30 January 2004)

Kei said that she drew because she wanted to “find a way to vent all the bad feelings” (Kei, Interview, 5 January 2004). However, *manga* creation was not only for releasing, but it also was “a learning matter because you must use language and images to create the meanings of the story such as those in Appendix G (ix) and Appendix G (x)” (Kei, Interview, 19 December 2003). Besides, she confirmed, “Dark helps fulfil my dreams that I cannot accomplish them in reality or they receive punishments for me, in which I need not be there” (Kei, Interview, 30 January 2004).

Kei drew an image about a tunnel named “Leaving the Dark World” (Plate 13). Kei wrote a caption under the picture: “The exit of the tunnel is a secret place. Can you imagine where it is?” Kei
explained that it was “about her situation now” (RA, Interview, 14 November 2003). She said, “The meaning of the tunnel referred to the way I’m going. I don’t know where it is. It’s like you are forced to do many things and like being told to do things or doing tests. You never have a choice” (RA, Interview, 14 November 2003).

Plate 13 “Leaving the Dark World”—Kei

2.2.3.2. Questionnaire

Kei could draw sophisticatedly with details or just draw some simple lines to present the figures. “It depends on the mood and feelings”, she wrote (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Kei realised the boundaries or limitations of manga. She wrote: “There are many things that can happen in manga which cannot occur in reality” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). However, she described that manga could not “replace and represent the real world” because “it is just a mirror to let you understand yourself. The contribution of manga creation is to offer you imaginings in the real world” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Kei indicated that she understood why she drew Dark in a particular way. “Dark represents me. I use Dark, a male image with power as a mirror to fight for my future”, she wrote (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Kei mentioned the reason for drawing was for catharsis. She wrote: “I create images because I need to relieve my feelings. They represent me and can take the pains away from me, then I can feel better through the process of creation” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).
Regarding the image of Dark, Kei responded, “The male image of Dark can better represent me instead of the female image because it seems the powerful female image is hardly accepted and looks so weird. Therefore, Dark is designed as a mixed image. The neuter appearance makes the protagonist more beautiful like what we see in Japanese manga” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). About the reason why she edited some captions in her manga story, she commented that manga creation could not only have “images without considering the texts, it creates atmosphere” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

2.2.4. The way of interpreting the creating process

Kei’s creating process was coherent with what she thought (R, Observation, 16 January 2004). Kei emphasised, “It was a transforming process like you are looking at and talking to yourself” (Kei, Interview, 16 January 2004).

2.2.4.1. Transcripts and artwork

Kei talked about the process of the selection of the protagonist. She remarked that once she found an image from a manga story, she would “create a new character, modify the original character, and develop a new storyline based on lived experiences and imaginations” (Kei, Interview, 9 January 2004). She declared that her manga stories were “associated with her everyday experiences” (Kei, Interview, 28 November 2003). Her process of manga creation process followed a logical visual thinking pattern.

I always follow a pattern to draw: I clearly know what I do before drawing, how I select and express my feelings. All the content is about the visual expression of my lived experiences, (Kei, Interview, 28 November 2003)

In the light of the connection with the psychological needs and the lived experiences, Kei pointed out as,
If I have a problem in reality, I draw it on paper. In drawing, I want to think how to edit the story with imagination and express my feelings. The creating processing is not an aimless planning. It’s a planning to understand who I am. It is a serious matter. The creating process is indeed a self-communication process. (Kei, Interview, 19 December 2003)

Kei addressed that she would benefit from the improvement in the drawing techniques. “The improvement in the drawing techniques is an indicator showing the progress of your hardwork. The benchmark is that you can draw the detailed objects beautifully. When you obtain the basic techniques, you reach the standard. Then, you have to find and learn from another advanced technique”, she said (Kei, Interview, 19 December 2003).

According to Kei, the relationship between the drawing techniques and the real problems depended on “whether the creator” could “attain the skills and techniques” and “when the creator” attained “those techniques” (Kei, Interview, 19 December 2003). She stressed, “When I acquire all the advanced drawing skills and techniques, all my problems will not exist any longer” (Kei, Interview, 19 December 2003).

Kei emphasised that the creation process was not just “throwing everything into the story” the creator had to “select what materials” are valuable to “tell your story” (Kei, Interview, 19 December 2003). Similar to Jack, Kei’s opinion on the drawing techniques taught in each lesson linked with the practical solution to her real problems. She explained, “I will of course try the new techniques learnt in lessons to enrich my image to be as beautiful as I can. Articulating the drawing techniques can effectively improve my personality. If I can improve and enrich the images, I can improve myself in terms of my characters or even solve my problems.” (Kei, Interview, 23 January 2004).

In “The mouthpiece” (Plate 14), Kei used the words of a popular song to describe a story about a painful love triangle. The words of the song, written by a popular Cantonese group singer, “Double
R”, told a story about two best friends who loved a girl at the same time. One of them gave up and became the mouthpiece to send her a message of love. He finally wished them a happy life though it was his destiny to be alone and sorrow. Kei assented, “Sometime I use the words of songs to create stories as they help me to imagine. If sound, images, and words are integrated together perfectly, the *manga* story will surely be a good one. But it’s a difficult learning process to integrate different things in the picture” (Kei, Interview, 5 December 2003).

2.2.4.2. Questionnaire

In the questionnaire, Kei pointed out that “the selection of the protagonist” decided if it could successfully “represent your idea and let you understand yourself” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She mentioned the creating process “must follow the steps as: (1) blinking eyes; (2) face; (3) hair; (4) body movement; (5) hands, arms, or fingers; and (6) legs” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). “The eyes, face, hair, and the action are the most important parts”, she wrote (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She noted that the creating process made her “understand and communicate” with her (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Kei wrote: “The improvement in drawing techniques means the improvement in my real situation; therefore, to acquire the basic drawing techniques and acquire the advanced drawing techniques are
essential” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She wrote: “Recently, I’ve tried to draw things in detail. It’s just like an insight, but I still need much time to practice. I think I can overcome it because I have thoroughly studied the advanced techniques.” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She wrote: “The improvement is also a learning process, learning how to add dialogue, use words or sentences to match the manga story” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She mentioned, “I will use the new techniques learnt in each lesson to enrich my picture. Drawing the most beautiful pictures is a benchmark for me” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She further wrote of the benchmark as follows:

When I reach the highest standard in drawings, my problem will be gone. Each success in attaining the drawing techniques is a mark to ensure the problem will be solved little by little. Now, I know what the advanced techniques are for the improvement of the drawing skill. I am working hard to head this goal now (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

She wrote: “The protagonist you select represents you including all the good and the bad aspects of your mind. The drawing process is a continuous process to improve yourself, revised your paces toward your direction” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

2.2.5. Summary of case two

Kei reflected a subjective opinion on the conception of aesthetics. She claimed that she had “the ability to distinguish the good quality of beauty from the bad one” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Besides, she described Dark as a powerful man who could bear everything from the harshness of the reality to represent her steadfast belief; on the other hand, she showed the weak side as well. In the group, she was one of the two female students who selected a male image to develop the manga stories. Her drawings reflected that she had dualistic and paradoxical attitudes toward dealing with problems: one was to face them with fighting images and the other was to escape from the reality with an empty picture frame. The next case was KH.
2.3. Case study three—KH

2.3.1. General description

KH and KW are twin sisters and are both 15 years of age. KH in the first lesson created a protagonist named as “Yin Sha”, which meant the “Silver Gauze” in Chinese (Plate 15). From observations, KH always had an effective conversation with the research team (RA, Observation, 7 November 2003; Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 30 January 2004). She was one of the most sophisticated drawers (Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 30 January 2004). She could freely apply various lines, shapes, tones, values, colours, and proper proportions to concisely depict the images, with bright personal styles (R, Observation, 30 January 2004).

![Plate 15 “Yin Sha”, the “Silver Gauze”—KH](image)

KH was familiar with using different drawing techniques like the wet-in-wet technique with ink and brush strokes. In comparison with the other students’ drawings, she had the highest ability and skills in
terms of designing the composition: she could concisely draw the images from different perspectives or in different motions (R, Observation, 23 January 2004; RA, Observation, 30 January 2004).

2.3.2. Meanings of images through experiences of art creation

KH’s protagonist was similar to herself. In Plate 15, KH wrote some information about the profile of the protagonist as below.

Birthday: unknown
Age: 15
To be good at: flying the broom (with magic)
Blood type: AB
Favourite: wind
Hates: insects
Personality: dual personality, sometimes very active but sometimes very quiet
Features: knowing magic, having silver hair and deep red eyeballs

Except the magic, silver hair, and deep red eyeballs, all the descriptions above matched KH (Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 7 November 2003). KH obviously had the intention to create an image to represent her.

2.3.2.1. Transcripts and artwork

KH uttered, “Yin Sha is a Japanese name originally from a Japanese manga. I changed the story, the appearance, and the character, adding my personality to edit the storylines to represent me” (KH, Interview, 7 November 2003). She reiterated, “Japanese manga stories are my favourite readings. They are cute and beautiful. Of course, Japanese manga affects me a lot, but not all the Japanese culture. I actually don’t like their culture, but Japanese manga can light my inspiration. But, you have to create it by yourself” (KH, Interview, 7 November 2003).
KH stressed that although the original image came from the Japanese *manga*, she almost changed everything. As she emphasised, “It’s a necessary step for the beginner to follow some beautiful image to learn how to draw. Yet, you have to give up copying after you attain the basic skills. After all, you have to create your stories based on your own experiences” (KH, Interview, 14 November 2003). Concerning the meanings of the magic besom, silver hair, and deep red eyeballs, KH contended, “They are my symbols reflecting my wishes and imagination. In reality, you can’t have these, but in *manga* the protagonist can have them” (KH, Interview, 14 November 2003).

KH described, “I feel I am releasing from pressures of doing homework, studying, and preparing for the exam…Every time I successfully draw a beautiful image, I feel I am free from stresses so I think drawing the beautiful things can help your stable state…maybe beauty is a symbol of projection that makes you settle down and feel at ease” (KH, Interview, 21 November 2003). She explained the relationship between the *manga* creation and the emotional relief. She alleged,

> I won’t draw *manga* stories for venting my feelings only. I draw for seeking imagination and the beauty. I describe beauty as something imaginative and cute like the big eyes and beautiful hair. I can learn from it. It can let me see the good. (KH, Interview, 21 November 2003)

KH said, “Beauty or cuteness is something that makes you see the good. It’s just like a supreme model worthy to learn and you know you can improve yourself a lot if you learn from it” (KH, Interview, 21 November 2003). She stated that she never avoided drawing the difficult parts of the images. Instead, she practiced drawing the difficult parts repeatedly until she felt satisfied. She expounded, “Little by little, you will attain the skills and know how to draw the difficult parts like eyes, faces, hair, hands, fingers, and legs. You have to overcome it. It’s useless to avoid because the problem still remains there” (KH, Interview, 7 November 2003). As KH addressed, “The eyes, the figure, and the motion are the difficult parts to draw. I always pay attention to draw these parts in details” (KH, Interview, 19 December 2003). Regarding the stereotyped expression of the images, she responded, “Images are
stereotyped as they are the crucial element defining what the beauty is’ (KH, Interview, 19 December 2003).

KH rejected “using Japanese words in her manga” (KH, Interview, 7 November 2003). “I think text and sound effects can enrich the manga stories. For example in the image of Plate 16, I consider putting the words of popular songs into my manga stories, but they must match my feelings”, she propounded (KH, Interview, 19 December 2003). In Plate 16, KH used a popular Cantonese song named “One good turn deserves another” to develop a manga story. The song was about a nice boy who fell in love with a girl but she finally pretended not knowing his story. She rejected him and chose the other boy who treated her badly. KH said, “It’s a challenge to me because you have to integrate different elements in the story. The new story is not a song or poetry anymore. Images play the most important part of all” (KH, Interview, 12 December 2003). Indeed, these pictures indicated that KH had carefully considered creating the atmosphere to express the lonely feelings of the boy in the last strip through using a spot light effect focusing on him (R, Observation, 12 December 2003).

In plate 16, KH intentionally utilised three different angles to make an artistic effect in each of the picture frames to highlight different emotions. She said, “Everything you see in this work was carefully considered: I used an overlooking angle in the first picture and highlight the girl’s hunger for love. In the middle strip, I changed the composition and focused on the boy emerging from the left side of the picture frame to highlight his anxiety. In the last strip, I changed the composition and added
a spotlight to highlight the sorrow and lonely feelings of the boy” (KH, Interview, 12 December 2003). There was no male character found in KH’s final manga book (Appendix H). She seldom drew male images throughout the sessions. She explained, “I seldom draw them because I think my creation is my personal thing. I only draw what I think is valuable.” (KH, Interview, 23 January 2004).

2.3.2.2. Questionnaire

Concerning the cultural influence on her manga creation, KH wrote: “I have the ability to make judgements and select which element of popular culture can be my materials for manga creation” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She emphasised that she was influenced by “the lived experiences with her peers rather than the socio-cultural factors” since “they made her “thoughtful and reflective” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). KH described: “The protagonist as the creator since manga” had “the implication and representation of the imagination of oneself” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). KH wrote:

Although the protagonist is unreal and cannot represent the real me, it’s made from my imagination within the real context. The protagonist is what I want to be. I add my thoughts and wishes into the character but I won’t use it as a ‘rubbish bin’ when I feel upset. Sometimes, the protagonist can represent the creator’s imagination. Sometimes the manga stories can represent parts of my life, but sometime the stories are just for imagination. (KH, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)

She responded to the conception of beauty as: “Beauty means cute that represents good. It’s a force to reflect my life” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). This conception could link with her personal feelings and become a learning model. As she wrote, “If I feel happy, I will naturally draw beautiful pictures. I clearly know what beauty means. The ugly refers to the images that do not have the quality of beauty like the shinning eyes, sweet face, and beautiful hair. I look for the beauty of protagonist and learn from the beauty” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).
KH described that imitating the original images in the very beginning would give her “satisfaction” especially if she successfully imitated “the most difficult part of the images like eyes, hands, or the spirit”; however, she realised that as a creator, she should “modify the storyline and the images based on the real lived experiences” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She wrote: “Although the changes like clothing or body gesture is needed, the stereotyped forms of expression like the eyes, hair, and the face should not be changed. They should look like the original image from the Japanese manga because the form is about beauty” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She mentioned the advantages of overcoming the difficult part of the image as “an achievement” and the best way is not to avoid it, learn from it” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She wrote: “The difficult parts, the details, and the uses of symbols are indicators for measuring whether you achieve the standard of beauty” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Concerning the relationship between images, the sound, and the text, KH wrote that they could help “communicate and let the reader understand the content of the story more easily”; however, they were “not a must in manga creation” because the most important was the “visual image itself” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). In terms of the gender issues, KH wrote: “I won’t consider these seriously. I draw my daily experiences. Although sometimes I create manga stories based on popular love songs, they are about me rather than talking about love” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

About the neuter appearance emerged from the images similar as Jack and Kei, KH wrote: “A neuter look makes the image lovely and cute. Like the artistic expression in many Japanese manga, the male or the female protagonists are always drawn like this. Don’t you think it’s what teenagers wish? Everybody loves to see images with neuter appearances? I think it’s a way for us to escape the adult world” (KH, Interview, 6 January 2004).

2.3.3. Reasons for creating these images in this particular way

KH mentioned different aspects about why she created the images in particular ways. These aspects mainly contained the issues of the identity and the relationship between the reality and the aesthetics.
In both the interviews and the questionnaire, KH emphasised the conception of beauty drove her to create continuously.

2.3.3.1. Transcripts and artwork

KH realised that she attempted to integrate images, sound, and texts. Among them, she thought, “All these things must be working together to show the beauty” (KH, Interview, 19 December 2003). She addressed, “Images are the most essential part showing the beauty visually through sound and text are also important. But the final product is the visual artwork”. She said,

My creation followed a pattern. Images are various sensory artefacts. When drawing, I carefully think how to integrate the image with sound and texts to enrich the visual image.

(KH, Interview, 19 December 2003)

The protagonist, Yin Sha, to KH was a projection reflecting her wish to be strong and to fight for her weakness. As she noted, “Drawing the beautiful image can make you ‘re-grasp’ the confidence, especially when I successfully draw a beautiful image” (KH, Interview, 14 November 2003). When asked whether she used manga drawing as a way for venting on her feelings, she claimed, “I won’t. The beautiful things should not be for venting” (KH, Interview, 14 November 2003).

In “The Worst Day in My Life” session, KH emphasised, “I am lacking confidence in many things and I know I must overcome it. I don’t know if I can get a good grade even I have already worked so hard.” (KH, Interview, 14 November 2003). Referring to Plate 17 and Appendix H (iii), she demonstrated, “The worst day in my life was an experience that happened when I was a primary student. In a masque for Halloween, the school held a ghost imitation contest. I was full of confidence and spent a whole day for makeup. When I got there, I was surprised by the other students’ decorations—they were good! I gave up, went home, and was very depressed” (KH, Interview, 14 November 2003).
In “A Pawn Shop” session, she depicted the experience of diffidence through a *manga* story (Plate 18). The story showed that what she wanted to exchange was her diffident self.

Unlike Kei, KH, she said, “I don’t prefer drawing male images. Gender is not an issue at all though sometimes I created the story based on the words of love songs” (KH, Interview, 19 December 2003).
About the popular cultural influence, KH wrote: “Japanese manga offers great opportunities to see what the beauty is” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). She pointed out that the protagonist selected from Japanese manga stories could represent “the identity and the personality of the copier” because “the copies” could “feel satisfied with the imitation” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). She added: “If you successfully draw the image exactly as what you see, you will be full of confidence. Then, you begin to be assured you are not a worthless person anymore” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004).

KH connected the selected images with “her everyday experiences” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). However, she stressed these were not about venting. As she wrote: “I draw not because I need a way to express my unhappy feelings though it’s very important, but because I look for beautiful images and use it to think how I can reach the standard. I think it’s a positive reflection” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004).

On the gender relationship, KH wrote: “Although I draw male manga stories sometimes, most of them are from my imagination or developed by the words of the popular songs” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). She mentioned about the mature image seen in Appendix H (i) as: “It maybe reflects parts of my wish that I want to grow up. When I grow up, I believe that I will be more confident” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). She wrote: “You can find the elements of texts or music in the composition of my drawings. Thinking how to organise the picture and creating a meaningful story are a matter of application of the use of various sensory” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004).

2.3.4. The way of interpreting the creating process

From the previous transcripts, KH mentioned about the relationship between the protagonist and the personal identity. In this part, she explored this relationship related to how she interpreted the creating process leading to the art product.
2.3.4.1. Transcripts and artwork

The manga creation process involved psychological and educational considerations. As KH stated, “As you lack confidence, you need to help yourself. To me, I look for beautiful images with sophisticated details to start to create. To create is to learn. I learn from it, analyse the details, the drawing techniques, and artistic styles. When I acquire the skills, I believe I will be transformed” (KH, Interview, 21 November 2003). She supposed, “The creating process is like a process of thinking in beauty and thinking how to beautify my experiences. This process is like having a communication with your mind” (KH, Interview, 21 November 2003).

KH drew a picture of a male wanderer with white hair (Plate 19), reflecting her wishes. She hinted, “He is free but feels very sad about his life. I think he’s me—I also want to have confidence and get good grades in school, but…” (KH, Interview, 14 November 2003). The composition of the image demonstrated that the design of the picture was drawn through a good planning and organisation in which she had carefully considered different ways of artistic expression including the integration of images, sound, and poetry.

Plate 19  A male wanderer with white hair—KH
KH described, “You can see the protagonist is heading to the left and leaving. The flower was in the upper right position and becomes the focus of the picture. It looks like voicing out the sound of the rage of the sea. The flower is quiet and soft, compared with the turbulent grass blown by the stormy. The arrangement and composition creates a sad atmosphere” (KH, Interview, 14 November 2003). She wrote a poem with this drawing as: “A flower is surrounded turbulent grass, indicating how important the flower is. Although it looks outstanding, he leaves it quietly” (KH, Interview, 14 November 2003).

Similar emotions and compositions are reflected in some of her artwork that can be seen in Appendix H (iv), Appendix (vi), Appendix H (vii), Appendix H (xiii), and Appendix H (xv). KH’s manga drawings were not created for catharsis though some of the contents were related to releasing her emotions like Appendix H (v) and Appendix (vi). “Rather, it’s a process of learning how to beautify your sorrow, not just for releasing the pressure”, she said (KH, Interview, 21 November 2003). She stressed, “Beauty elevates me to an upper level, re-grasps the self-confidence, and then solves my problem.” (KH, Interview, 21 November 2003). Moreover, attaining the self-confidence must “go through a beauty learning process” (KH, Interview, 21 November 2003).

In this aspect, practicing manga drawings became “a goal, belief, and a routine practice to achieve beauty; to re-grasp the beauty means to re-grasp the self-confidence, not a tool for the emotional relief” (KH, Interview, 21 November 2003). She then formulated, “Once you are familiar with the techniques and can use the protagonist to create your stories based on your free will, then you have full confidence. Now, I attain drawing techniques, like how to use line and colours and can draw the most difficult parts like legs and fingers, the next step is focus on studying the advanced techniques” (KH, Interview, 23 January 2003).

KH believed that the success for acquiring the beauty depended on powerful imaginings. She posited, “The powerful imagination is a positive attitude leading to the real problem-solving” (KH, Interview, 28 November 2003). She explained, “The strategy is that you must have extra-ordinary imaginations to link your real experiences with the protagonist selected to re-create, forms, and stories otherwise
your problems can’t be solved. All problems cannot be solved realistically, but cannot be solved through both the form and imagination” (KH, Interview, 28 November 2003). The creating process was “a process of learning from the beautiful image and thinking how to integrate different elements like sound and image”, she emphasised, “It’s a relationship between the real problem, the selection of the image, imitation, attitude, and solution” (KH, Interview, 28 November 2003).

2.3.4.2. Questionnaire

KH insisted that she did “not have the intention to imitate the manga from the Japanese stories”; however, she selected “the image worth learning” to develop her “own stories in relation to her “real experiences in everyday life context” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). She responded to the relationship between the protagonist selected, the drawing skills or techniques, and the real problems as:

I select a supreme image as a goal that can be a symbol worth learning. It sets the highest standard for me to follow and learn. Like an exam, it examines whether I am qualified. Through the exam, I have to prove that I can make it. (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004).

Referring to the relationship between the beauty of the image and the real problem, KH wrote:

As the image is so beautiful, I must take lots of time to study its artistic expressions, details, forms, and styles. I try my best to use all techniques to make it beautiful. Once I can draw it beautiful, it means a benchmark for me. Then, I feel I obtain confidence again and believe I can overcome the difficulties. After this, I will prepare for the next problem. (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004)

KH stressed the importance of the drawing skills and the details of the images. She wrote: “The sophisticated drawing skills and details are the only key to lead you to articulate the secret of beauty.
They are essential. The sophisticated drawing skills attained mean you have confidence in the improvement in the real problem. It’s also an identity matter” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). She wrote: “The improvement in drawing skills in the creating process will change your mind because it’s a way of making communication with your insufficiencies or weakness in reality” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). KH mentioned about her situation. She wrote, “Up to now, I think I can master the basic drawing techniques and can draw beautiful pictures according to my wishes. Because of this reason, I feel much confidence now. Next, I need to look to practice more advanced drawing techniques; otherwise, the problem of lacking self-confidence will be back again. I think it’s an on-going process to keep practicing” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

KH addressed that Japanese *manga* provided her with “a beautiful icon or the best learning method guiding her to establish a judgement of beauty and ugliness” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). The aesthetic judgement also linked with her “value or belief on the personal identity” and what she stressed was “the icon, not the Japanese *manga* stories” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004); however, KH further defined the beauty as:

> Beauty drives me to continue to improve myself, helping me to think about what I should do better and what I should do to make corrections to my mistakes made. The creator must have the courage to acknowledge it. (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004)

KH’s steps of drawing were: (1) eyes; (2) hair; (3) face including nose and mouth; (3) clothing; (4) hands and fingers; (5) body movements; and (6) legs and feet (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). She wrote: “The eyes, face and hair are the most important part and the difficult part to draw as they are the soul of the image. But, to the overall impression, the whole body is also important” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). She wrote: “Beauty hides in the eyes, the face, hair, hands, the fingers, the legs, etc. It is presented in facile lines, shapes, texts, rhythm, and the storyline” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). She wrote that drawing *manga* stories could “examine one’s ability to apply for different arts elements like sound and texts” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004).
2.3.5 Summary of case three

KH was a serious drawer and she regarded beauty as a serious matter. Similar to Jack, KH liked to practice her drawing in her mathematics notebook. However, she was concerned about practicing drawing from different angles (from Plate 20 to Plate 22).

Plate 20  A drawing in the mathematics notebook (1)—KH

Plate 21  Drawings in the mathematics notebook (2)—KH

Plate 22  Drawings in the mathematics notebook (3)—KH
KH wrote: “Practicing is a daily routine. Once I feel satisfied with the sketches and it looks beautiful, I will re-draw it on the manga book. The low-quality works will be thrown away. So, every piece of work you see in my manga book should be the most successful and perfect ones” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). The sketches demonstrated that KH had the intention to examine various artistic styles, to draw from different perspectives, and to present the images with various gestures and movements. Unlike Jack or Kei, each of the KH’s drawings was comparatively varying and full of complicated gestures or facial expressions.

Another specific point found in KH’s drawings was the neuter image presented in her manga stories. These images could also be found in the manga creation of Jack and Kei like images seen in Appendix (v) and Plate 14. This special phenomenon could be found in a drawing of an animal in her notebook (Plate 23) and some manga stories like the image of the male boss in the pawnshop (Plate 18) or the male image (Plate 19). The next case was KW, the younger twin sister of KH.

Plate 23  A drawing in the mathematics notebook (4)—KH

2.4. Case study four—KW

2.4.1. General description

KW, unlike her sister KH, created an unknown young male image as the protagonist to develop her manga story (Plate 24). She described the protagonist as a “brave cool boy with golden hair, wearing a
blue kerchief, and a red scarf, as well as being highly regarded of friendship” (KW, Interview, 7 November 2003). KW paid much attention to learn various drawing techniques (RA, Observation, 14 November 2003). Her finished *manga* book can be seen in Appendix I (i)—(xi). Like her sister, KW’s attitude toward the *manga* creation was serious. She was good at using simple lines to create the atmosphere and images in action (R, Observation, 21 November 2003; Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 30 January 2004).

![Plate 24 The first image created by KW](image)

In the *manga* book, KW indicated that she had the ability to organise the composition as her sister: she cut the picture in different shapes as the picture frame to organise the pages; she considered creating the atmosphere and images in action rather than the beauty of the images made by sophisticated skills like her sister did (R, Observation, 6 January 2004). She put in efforts to improve her skills in composition and practice drawings based on whether the atmosphere could “successfully be created” (KW, Interview, 2 January 2004) (R, Observation, 6 February 2004).
KW’s drawings skills, especially in using intense lines to make the contrast with black and white, was impressive and reflected that she had sophisticated artistic skills (R, Observation, 6 January 2004). Kei and KW also selected a young male as the protagonist to develop the manga stories while the other female students chose females images as the protagonist (R, Observation, 30 December 2003).

2.4.2. Meanings of images through experiences of art creation

KW reflected that she clearly understood what the meanings of the images were. Based on the belief, KW’s creation was consistent in terms of the overall style to the drawings (R, Observation, 6 February 2004; Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 6 January 2004).

2.4.2.1. Transcripts and artwork

KW suggested that the male protagonist could “give people an impression of strength” (KW, Interview, 7 November 2003). “This appearance and feeling is important to me as this may represent my psychological need—my real problems”, she explained (KW, Interview, 7 November 2003). KW dissented that the gender issue was a main issue in her manga creation. As she noted, “I am seldom concerned with this as a theme for my creation. I only draw the atmosphere and my thoughts. I sometimes draw about love stories, but to express the beauty is not necessary to draw love stories” (KW, Interview, 7 November 2003).

Regarding drawings the details of the images, she emphasised, “I won’t particularly draw the details of the particular parts of the images, but I think the eyes, facial expression, the hair, the overall figure’s movement and the atmosphere are very important” (R, Observation, 21 November 2003). Concerning the neuter appearance of the face in the male image (like Appendix I (i) and Appendix I (ii)), KW suggested, “This look makes him more beautiful and easier to be acceptable to teenagers” (KW, Interview, 6 January 2004).
KW admitted that Japanese *manga* influenced her creation; however, she thought, “I decide which images I can imitate from Japanese *manga*. I study the overall image, learn from it, change its appearance, and then add my stories and styles through my imagination. I won’t follow the original image and stories because they are not mine.” (KW, Interview, 7 November 2003). Concerning what stories she added, KW reported that they were “those in relation to the daily living in school such as studying, and preparing for exams” (KW, Interview, 7 November 2003). She further remarked as,

Japanese *manga* always surprises you because the images are always created so beautiful and imaginative! Japanese creators have sophisticated drawing skills and the stories offer you wide space for imagination. The beauty not only can be seen in the images like the eyes and face, it also can be found in the characters. Learning from the Japanese *manga* is a very good way to enhance the judgement and appreciation abilities. (KW, Interview, 14 November 2003).

KW addressed that the protagonist could represent her although she was a female. She said,

The male protagonist is another opposite, different, and imaginative me. In *manga*, everything is possible, beautiful, perfect, and wonderful. However, in the real life, everything is opposite. The protagonist tests everything for me without my presence. He becomes a model and represents the unknown. (KW, Interview, 14 November 2003)

In “The Worst Day in My Life” session, KW drew a *manga* story about an accident that almost killed her (Plate 25). It was about a day when she was late for school. She ran to a shortcut but carelessly fell down from the step. She rolled down to the road and was almost hit by a truck. When going back to school, the teacher scolded her. KW described that when she drew it again, she felt like “reviewing herself” (KW, Interview, 14 November 2003). KW hinted, “Now you know my experience through seeing these pictures. They reflect me. I don’t think drawing these is just for releasing me from the unhappy experiences, though releasing the stress through creating is important. Drawing is a positive learning process in which you see yourself getting better” (KW, Interview, 14 November 2003).
Appendix I (iv) and Appendix (vi) were examples that demonstrated that she created *manga* stories for self-reflection and the learning process rather than catharsis.

KW also mentioned avoiding drawing the difficult parts. She uttered, “I won’t, but I learn and try to practice repeatedly until I can manage them. The difficult parts are to manage the relationship between the actions and to depict the overall figure’s movement with simple lines” (KW, Interview, 14 November 2003). She claimed, “I care about the details of depicting; for example, using intense stroke lines in the background can express the feeling of moving. I won’t draw the detail” (KW, Interview, 14 November 2003). Examples of creating the atmosphere in the drawings could be found in Appendix I (iii), Appendix I (vii), and Appendix I (ix).

Both KW and KH carefully considered the application of different arts elements such as sound, text, and images in their stories. KW drew a *manga* story (Plate 26) similar to KH’s one (Plate 19). Their compositions and the symbols used were similar and their contents reflected the same sad feelings. KW wrote poetry about Plate 26 to express her feelings: “The flower is as lonely as a person. I am the only one in the picture frame. Besides the shining stars and the moon, there is nothing to accompany
them.” Concerning the stereotyped expression of the protagonist and the flower, she said, “At this stage, it needs to be a stereotyped appearance because I seldom draw flowers in details. I think I need to observe the details and practice drawing them. As to the protagonist, it has to be stereotyped. The eyes and face must be stereotyped because it means beauty” (KH, Interview, 14 November 2003). She added,

The protagonist you selected is representing your experiences through imaginations. I don’t think it’s stereotyped. If you take a close look, you’ll find each of the images have been modified different from the original images. They are not the one anymore. Besides, some stereotyped expressions are important to represent the beauty as the eyes, hair, and the face. The expressions that can be found in Japanese manga are common guidelines for us to learn the beauty (KH, Interview, 14 November 2003)

Plate 26 Lonely—KW

KW pronounced that the application of poetry and image could “help create the atmosphere successfully; however, they are not necessary. The visual image is always important and is not necessary to collaborate with the text and sound, though they may enrich the story” (KW, Interview, 14 November 2003).
Regarding the cultural influence on her manga creation, KW stressed in the questionnaire: “I imitate the beautiful images from Japanese manga. I learn from it, add my imagination, storyline, and change the appearances” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). She supplemented: “Imitating the image in the very beginning is necessary. I stop imitating and start modifying the image through my imagination after I can master the basic techniques” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). Also she wrote: “The beautiful image represents the beauty and perfect forms and minds” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). She addressed that the protagonist and the storyline were her “daily experiences and imagination” that reflected her “thoughts and feelings about life” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004).

KW denied that the meaning of creating manga stories was “to find an emotional outlet”; rather, it let her see what points she needed to “work hard to improve through imagination” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). KW emphasised that she had the “ability to make judgements of whether the image was of a good quality of beauty” and the ability was “not equal to imitating from the original image at all” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). Nevertheless, she admitted: “The eyes, face, and hair must be perfectly drawn and emphasised based on the image seen in Japanese manga because these are the fixed concept of beauty” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). In response to the symbolic expression, she wrote:

I sometimes create manga stories by combining the visual image with the poetry, text, or word of the popular songs. Each of them has different symbolic ways of presentation. To successfully mix them together to create a new meaning is interesting but difficult. The new visual image is an intellectual product that is full of symbols and has metaphorical meanings, telling my stories and my experiences (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004).

KW mentioned the concept of atmosphere many times. She utilised this concept to depict the relationship between the image, sound, and text. She wrote: “The integration of them is metaphorical.
Such integration needs the intellectual effort. If one of these is not good enough, the integration will fail. After all, it depends on the ability of the creator” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). About the gender relation in her manga stories, she wrote: “It’s not the point concerned though sometimes I draw a love story. The focus of my drawings is about my experiences” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004).

KW described that she would not avoid drawing the difficult parts of the images. She wrote: “The best way is not to omit or avoid them; you must practice continuously until you overcome the difficulties” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). On the overall expression of the image, she realised that she would not highlight any particular parts. Rather, she wrote: “I consider creating the overall atmosphere of the manga stories through the eyes, body movement, action, background, and the use of lines, etc.” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004).

2.4.3. Reasons for creating these images in this particular way

The reasons why KW created the images in a particular way were similar to KH. Both regarded the selected protagonist as a learning model leading them to self-identity rather than just for releasing from the stress, although both regarded drawing manga stories could be for releasing like Jack and Kei did.

2.4.3.1. Transcripts and artwork

KW regarded the selected protagonist as a “supreme symbol projecting the self-identity” (KW, Interview, 14 November 2003). She already stressed that she imitated the image, studied, and learnt how to draw it, and changed it finally. She emphasised that this process led her drawings to a unique artistic style. “It is”, she confirmed, “my style when I add my personalities and characteristics into the protagonist. The protagonist is happening to change to represent my identity; for example, I add my favourite storylines, the hairstyles, and clothing with my imagination” (KW, Interview, 14 November 2003).
KW stressed that “the beauty of image” affected her creation “rather than all the Japanese culture” (KW, Interview, 7 November 2003). She alleged, “The beauty of image impresses and inspires me to create stories related to my life” (KW, Interview, 7 November 2003). She did “not consider drawing manga as only a release from the pressure” (KW, Interview, 14 November 2003). “My drawings show various integrative arts patterns. For example, sometimes I write down some captions to express my views or feelings. I am satisfied with the mixed effect utilised” (KW, Interview, 12 December 2003).

In “A Pawnshop” session, KW drew a story about changing the polluted air for fresh air. In the two-strip manga (Plate 27), she used simple lines without any details to depict the image. She explained, “To design their appearances is an aesthetic decision. You need an aesthetic sense to balance the authenticity of the story and the artistic expression. The simple form of appearance can let the reader focus on the protagonist” (KW, Interview, 28 November 2003). Besides, some male images created by KW were neuters, like images in Plate 24 and Plate 27 (KW, Interview, 28 November 2003).

Plate 27  To exchange the polluted air to the fresh air—KW

Jack, Kei, KH, and KW embraced a particular conception toward the neuter appearance of the character. KW asserted, “This look becomes more close to us. Most male images in manga look like this. Perhaps we young adolescents don’t want to grow up, we want to be like this forever, perhaps we don’t want to be an adult, or perhaps it’s a good way to escape” (KW, Interview, 28 November 2003). She explained, “The protagonist has the neuter appearance because it looks more beautiful. It looks easier to be acceptable by teenagers” (KW, Interview, 12 December 2003).
KW agreed that the protagonist was “the supreme icon” for her “to learn and to obtain the identity” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 December 2004). She contended the influence of the Japanese culture on her creation; however, it only referred to the beauty of the image of Japanese *manga*. She wrote: “It refers to the beautiful eyes, face, clothing, lines, colours, shapes, backgrounds, techniques, etc” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 December 2004).

KW stressed “the overall atmosphere of the picture rather than the details of the image”; however, she admitted that the eyes, facial expressions, and the hair were also the parts that she would pay attention to draw because it reflected “the spirit of the image” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 December 2004). KW’s response to the connection between reality and aesthetics was similar to Jack, Kei, and KH. She wrote: “I expect the beautiful images I draw can somehow increase my confidence and lead me to a success in my life” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 December 2004). KW responded that the relationship between reality and the aesthetic expression was “close but different” as:

The story is about me. The artistic expression is not realistic. It’s from my imagination. Too real is not a good phenomenon. *Manga* creation should make people feel to have spaces and imaginations to get away from reality (KW, Questionnaire, 6 December 2004).

KW wrote: “Drawing *manga* can help relieve my bad feelings. However, there is another important thing the *manga* creation can do—an advanced learning process through which I can try to integrate different arts elements to create the image. When starting to draw something, you have to think about the connection with them” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 December 2004). According to this, she wrote: “Every piece of artwork is a test of your skills, abilities, and the sense of beauty” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 December 2004).
KW mentioned the particular way the neuter image is presented. The reason was mainly concerned with the conception of the beauty rather than the consideration of the gender. She wrote: “The neuter appearance like everything in the *manga* is not real, but it is real too. It’s real because of the stories related to your experiences. It’s unreal because the images were too cute and beautiful to be real. The neuter appearance is important because it can create imaginations for one to escape from the adult world. The neuter appearance is very common in the Japanese *manga*” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 December 2004).

2.4.4. The way of interpreting the creating process

To KW, the *manga* creating process was involved in the psychological, creative, and educational interpretations. She also mentioned issues about the pre-occupied thinking, the improvement in drawing skills, the transforming process in the *manga* creation, the learning of the application of the metaphorical and symbolic expression, and the planning of creation. They are all related to each other.

2.4.4.1. Transcripts and artwork

The creating process was concerned with pre-occupied thinking. KW said, “I have already had a plan demonstrating how to proceed and deal with the visual elements before starting drawing. It contains the psychological, educational, and creative aspects” (KW, Interview, 30 January 2004). She described the *manga* creating process as “an intention of making transformation process”, in which meant she continued “to learn, overcome, change, and improve” her drawing skills and herself (KW, Interview, 30 January 2004). Concerning the relationship between the improvement in drawings skills and the real problem, she stated,

> Although the improvement in drawing skills may not solve the real problem, I think it’s still important because it is the way to ensure your existence. As it turns out, I regain the confidence to face the problem (KW, Interview, 30 January 2004).
In a three-strip *manga* drawing, KW applied the words of a popular Cantonese song to develop the storyline (Plate 28). The protagonist of the story helped his friend to deliver his love to a girl. However, the girl did not accept his friend’s love because she was too addicted to listening to the songs of advertisement. Finally, his friend got angry with the protagonist. The storyline was similar to her sister KH; however, the artistic style and the symbol used were different, though they both were good at applying various arts elements in the *manga* creation. As she propounded, “The creating process involves in multi-metaphorical considerations like the use of the sign of love, symbol of arrow, text, visual image, and song. All contributes to the understanding of the hidden meaning of the image” (KW, Interview, 12 December 2003).

As mentioned previously, KW stressed the effect of the atmosphere was “the key for the judgement of the quality of *manga* stories” (KW, Interview, 12 December 2003). She further explained, “It is the most difficult part and the definition of a good picture. I think I have attained enough drawing techniques to achieve this goal. I know my work seems to lack detail, but I will upgrade my drawing skills and learn the advanced techniques. Nevertheless, it’s not only the matter of technique and skills, it also involves my self-reflection. When I get clearer about myself, I will be good at the advanced techniques” (KW, Interview, 12 December 2003). She stated that the reflections might “include something psychologically like the confusion and fear about the future or the examination” (KW, Interview, 12 December 2003).
KW responded to the selection and the processing of the protagonist for creating manga stories as the “educational, creative, and psychological matters” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). She wrote: “Starting drawing the protagonist and his related stories must be well organised. Drawing is like starting the process of the creativity. As the stories are related to my experiences, most are involved with my thoughts and wishes. So, creativity cannot live without considering what you are. You may make many mistakes and may not draw a perfect image, but you will always remember the most successful one. I think this is why the creation process includes the aspect of learning” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). About the interpretation of the creation process as an inner communication process, KW wrote: “Through the manga creation process, I know myself better than ever before. At least, it provides an opportunity to see and talk to myself. I feel happy to have a chance to improve myself through this” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). She wrote: “The outer world is a cruel world. But in manga, the world is mixed with the real and unreal. It’s a creative world demonstrating everything is possible and beautiful.” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004).

Besides, she regarded that “the process of the communication with the inner self” could “better understand” herself “in different aspects as the psychological stage, the weakness, and the strengthens” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). KW pointed out the importance of the responsibility during the process of the creation. She claimed:

The responsibility of the creator is not just to depict his feelings out on the paper. This is not the essence of the manga creation. When you finish a drawing, you have to ask yourself first: ‘Is it a good and qualified work?’ If you create something and you or your friends appreciate it very much, it proves you can do it and you are not a piece of trash! Because you want to be good, you must be careful and pay more attention to study and draw. Consequently, you will get the great improvement in yourself through the improvement in drawings. (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004)
The creator had to be responsible for his or her work since the improvement came from the positive responses and appreciation of the audiences as well as the personal judgement. KW also wrote: The visual image may benefit from the application of other arts elements” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004). Finally, the drawing steps of KW were: (1) eyes; (2) face; (3) hair; (4) clothing; (5) hands and fingers; (6) legs; and (7) the background or the atmosphere. The most important ones were “the eyes, faces, and the atmosphere” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004).

2.4.5. Summary of case four

There were some similarities and differences about the content, real problem, artistic style, and conception of beauty between KW and KH. For example, KH referred the concept of beauty as cuteness while KW referred it as the control ability of the overall atmosphere. They expressed the same feelings like the feelings about examination (Appendix H (xiii) & Appendix I (viii)) as well as raising the same philosophical question about life (Plate 19 & Plate 26). Based on the criteria of beauty, they both focused on creating images as beautiful as they could. Some of KW’s responses were similar to the other students like Jack, Kei, and KH in terms of the concept of aesthetics and the attitude toward the psychological aspect on her manga creation. The next case was Fish.

2.5. Case study five—Fish

2.5.1. General description

Fish is a 14-year-old female student. According to the observation in class, she was one of the best drawers in the group because she carefully and thoughtfully considered every detail in her drawings (RA, Observation, 12 January 2004; Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 7 November 2003). Although KH could draw sophisticated images as Fish, she focused on drawing feminine images while Fish focused on drawing exaggerated or distorted images; for example, images (showed in Appendix J (iv) and Appendix J (vi)) demonstrated that the head of the image took one-third of the body (R,
Observation, 6 February 2004). Besides, she never drew love stories and did not apply popular songs to develop her storylines (RA, Observation, 6 February 2004). KH was comparatively dedicated to the elegant lady as seen in Appendix J (i), while Fish was devoted to the vivid and lovely style of childhood as seen in Appendix J (iv) (R, Observation, 6 January 2004; Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 30 January 2004). The former images comparatively focused on the descriptions of the proportion of the body and the deportment of a fine lady, while the latter stressed the descriptions of the in-proportion of the body to present the vigorous personality (R, Observation, 30 January 2004). The finished *manga* book of Fish could be seen in Appendix J (i) to Appendix J (viii).

2.5.2. **Meanings of images through experiences of art creation**

In the first session, Fish created a young girl named “Di-Gi-Chara”, with the abbreviated name “Chara” (Plate 29). She mentioned that the origin of the name was from a Japanese *manga*. “I do not exactly know the meaning of the name. I take it because the rhythm of the name attracts me. However, the image of Chara is my own creation” (Fish, Interview, 7 November 2003). Under the picture frame, Fish wrote about the characteristics of Chara. Chara was described as a vivid and happy girl with big eyes and ears.

![Plate 29  Chara—the first image created by Fish](image)
2.5.2.1. Transcripts and artwork

Chara had profound meaning to Fish. As she declared, “The protagonist can provide me with an opportunity to learn and to think about myself. The protagonist can represent me, can change my attitude, and my thoughts” (Fish, Interview, 7 November 2003). She explained, “It works because beauty that emerges in *manga* drives me to produce an insight into the self-reflection of my life” (Fish, Interview, 19 December 2003). Fish acknowledged: “Chara is a bright girl. She has short brown hair. She loves to read *manga*. She has many friends” (Fish, Interview, 7 November 2003). Regarding the characteristics, Chara’s descriptions were Fish’s match except the short brown hair (Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 7 November 2003). Fish puts more focus on drawing the eyes of Chara in details. They looked shining and had reflections. “Eyes and hair can represent the most important spirit about what beauty is. If you want to draw the beautiful image, you should not omit these parts”, she commented (Fish, Interview, 7 November 2003). She stated, “I never avoid drawing the difficult parts. Rather, I keep practicing as often as I can” (Fish, Interview, 19 December 2003).

Fish talked about the socio-cultural impact of the Japanese *manga* on her creation. She contended, “My *manga* creation is influenced by Japanese *manga* books and cartoons on the television. The characters and the stories of them are fascinated. The images are beautiful, always mixing imagination and reality” (Fish, Interview, 7 November 2003). “The popular culture becomes popular because of beauty”, she continued, “however, one had to learn the judgement of beauty first and it is a learning matter” (Fish, Interview, 23 December 2003).

Fish suggested that the “stereotyped images” provided “great opportunities for students to learn, follow, and carefully study the secret of beauty—the eyes, hair, and smiling face”; however, “these opportunities” were “not offered and taught by schoolteachers” (Fish, Interview, 23 December 2003). She further explained, “In the very beginning, you can learn how to draw and feel the sense of beauty by practicing drawing and imitating from the original image. Once you are familiar with the basic drawing techniques, you should leave the imitation and learn the advanced skills” (Fish, Interview, 7 November 2003).
Fish realised that the use of metaphorical and symbolic meanings for expression was difficult. She established, “I do not describe my feeling and emotion through the text or sound. I always consider using the visual ways of expression like lines, values, tones, or objects carrying symbolic meanings in manga creation. Text or sound in manga creation is secondary but important” (Fish, Interview, 28 November 2003). She pointed to the images in Appendix J (vii) and Appendix J (viii), emphasising that manga creation “must consider ‘the visual-way-first’ principle. That means you should use less texts and sound effects. You should use the visual symbols as much as you can; otherwise, manga is not manga anymore” (Fish, Interview, 6 February 2004). Besides, gender issues were not a concern of Fish. She observed, “I never regard the relationship between males and females as an important issue. I draw for beauty, not for the relationship” (Fish, Interview, 16 January 2004). In fact, Fish only created two male images (Appendix J (iii) & Appendix J (vii)) and one mature female image in the sessions (Appendix J (i)). Compared with other images she created, the age of most images was close to Fish’s actual age.

2.5.2.2. Questionnaire

Fish responded that teenagers were “crazy about the Japanese manga culture since the images emerged in manga are always beautiful and lovely in terms of form and character” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She wrote that the form formulated “teenagers’ attitudes toward beauty” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Fish wrote: “The protagonist, as the essence of the story, contains the most beautiful, perfect, and imaginative elements. These elements are the eyes, hair, and clothing. These should be emphasised and should not be omitted” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Fish mentioned the relationship between the elements and the creator. She wrote: “The image is so perfect that you can count on by projecting yourself and examining yourself on this supreme model” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). The perfect image was “a stereotyped image” that provided “opportunities for the creator to follow and learn the judgement of beauty”; however, “the creator must
give up imitating the image someday to develop his/her own styles” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She described the importance of the stereotypical image as: “The stereotypical form of expression is important—the blinking eyes, smiling face, etc. These are the things that the creator must not change because they represent the beauty” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Fish regarded *manga* creation was “about the creation of mixing imagination and reality” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She realised that *manga* creation was “neither purely illusory nor purely realistic” because if it was “too illusory”, it would “lose the attraction” because “the readers” knew that “everything in *manga*” was “not real” and could “not relate to their everyday experiences” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). As she wrote:

> If it is too realistic, it will lose the space for imagination and the chance of escaping from the reality. The protagonist is not realistic if you look at her big eyes and appearance, but she is real if you look at the story. *Manga* creation is in between them. Imagination mixes with both and makes everything possible. (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Fish wrote her views on the metaphorical and symbolic application in *manga* creation:

> Every line, composition, action, dialogue, situation, or storyline you draw has symbolic meanings. Like songs, the creators express their views on something through the sound and words. But, I seldom use these for creation. I limit the text. I love to use the visual method to express the meaning. When using visual methods, the creators must think about how to use symbolic meanings through graphics to express the idea metaphorically. (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Fish mentioned that gender was not an issue in her *manga* creation. She wrote: “Although I get along with males very well, I seldom consider gender matters to develop the storyline. I think I am not heading for this as they are not my concerns” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).
2.5.3. Reasons for creating these images in this particular way

One of the most particular ways for the creation of Fish’s images was the exaggerated style of artistic presentation, which the proportion of the protagonist was distorted. According to Fish, the exaggerative presentation meant “lovely and beautiful” (Fish, Interview, 21 November 2003).

2.5.3.1. Transcripts and artwork

Fish posited that “the exaggerative phenomenon and the emphasis on the facial expressions such as blinking eyes, opening mouth, and smiling face” were “a method to present how lovely and beautiful” the image was (Fish, Interview, 21 November 2003). Concerning if they were presented in the stereotypical form, she responded, “Of course, they are stereotyped. They are the soul and the crucial factors to decide whether they are cute and lovely” (Fish, Interview, 21 November 2003). “Japanese manga often applied this method to create the lovely image”, she pointed to the image in Appendix J (iv) and continued, “Such a method can attract young adolescents to gain their identities because every teenager wants to be lovely and beautiful” (Fish, Interview, 6 February 2004). Fish explained that everyone had his or her own methods to be beautiful through drawings and she chose “the focus of the head of the image as the symbols of personal identity” (Fish, Interview, 6 February 2004). “The head means the eyes and hair. I want to draw it as beautiful as I can” (Fish, Interview, 6 February 2004).

The image she created connected the real situation she had. In “A Pawn Shop” session, she uttered, “I try to connect my experience or situation in my manga creation. For example, I want to exchange a poor grade in my exam to a fine grade” (Plate 30) (Fish, Interview, 28 November 2003).

Plate 30  To exchange a poor grade for a fine grade—Fish
Fish thought that drawing *manga* stories could be a way to “release you from tension and give you a wish” (Fish, Interview, 28 November 2003). She articulated, “Although sometimes I draw for making wishes or relieve my stress, I emphasise that drawing *manga* is a learning process rather than a method of the emotional relief” (Fish, Interview, 28 November 2003). Fish explained why she drew the image in the particular way. She assented, “It’s the standard of measuring the degree of loveliness, and beauty (Fish, Interview, 28 November 2003). About the neuter appearance of the image, she said, “The neuter look can also be seen in many Japanese cartoons and *manga* stories. The protagonists are always neuter and lovely” (Fish, Interview, 28 November 2003).

2.5.3.2. Questionnaire

Fish clarified the influence of popular culture on her *manga* creation and asserted that she was “inspired by the image of Japanese *manga*” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She reiterated that “beauty” was “a serious matter related to the personal identity recognised by the peers” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She described:

> The popular culture affects my *manga* creation. But, I don’t think I am not blind to accept all types of popular culture. You must select which parts of the popular culture that you think it may help you to improve. The selection criteria is based on the quality of beauty and the principle of whether the image is best fit for you, which means that it can represent your situation and personalities. You may say that the image of the *manga* can be you and cannot be you. I think it’s mixing. (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Fish negated that Japanese *manga* could represent the whole reality; however, she agreed that it could “represent the situation in which reality is mixed with imagination” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She admitted that “the mixed is too important” because she sometimes utilised *manga* to express her “unhappy feelings, thoughts or views on something or someone” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).
Fish also expounded that “the beautiful appearance and lovely character” found in Japanese *manga* could “attract and drive” her to “think and to imagine the impossible from reality” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She emphasised:

The fixed forms seen in the facial expressions in Japanese *manga* including the stereotypical eyes, hair, and smiling face mean the benchmark of the beauty. They are the essential and supreme model that we should learn. They are the most important and difficult parts to draw. They decide whether your work reaches the quality of beauty. (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)

On the neuter appearance phenomenon that emerged in some of the images, Fish alleged that this particular expression related to the “concept of beauty and loveliness” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She wrote:

The neuter appearance is recognised by young adolescents. The protagonist is mixed with both the male and female characters. With both the brave and gentle heart, the neuter look makes the character more beautiful and lovely. Over-emphasising drawing a male image realistically is not *manga* anymore (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

In the light of the way of expression between the sound, text, and image, Fish noted: “The main task of the text and sound is subordinate. The text and sound is to describe the situation. But, I think it’s unnecessary because I can use the visual ways to express it. Let’s says, using intense oblique lines to depict the blowing wind instead of writing the word ‘blowing’ in the picture frame” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Fish further expounded: “Although the creation of *manga* can use the text or sound, it mostly focuses on using the visual arts form of expression and better use the text and sound as lesser as you can. In the drawing of “The Freezing Winter” (Appendix J (vii)), I drew some circles to express the feeling of
freezing. Although I added some words in the drawing of “Listening to the Quiet Sound of the Ocean under the Freezing Weather” (Appendix J (viii)”, it’s just for enhancing the visual effect. Without adding the words, the drawing is still alright” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

2.5.4. The way of interpreting the creating process

Fish established several ways to interpret her creation process, in which some of them were similar to the previous students. For example, she mentioned the creation process as an important learning process for the self-improvement and creating process following a pre-occupied as well as logical thinking.

2.5.4.1. Transcripts and artwork

Fish’s ideas about manga creation revealed “an involvement in the psychological, educational, and self-directed behavioural aspects” (Fish, Interview, 16 January 2004). She said, “People think drawing manga is wasting time. I disagree with this point. Every drawing has it target and expectation. The target is whether the work can make you satisfy and can depict out your needs” (Fish, Interview, 16 January 2004). On the drawing of “Still Thinking” (Appendix J (vi)), Fish implied, “Drawing is a learning and a self-understanding process. The creator must already have thoroughly planned and must be thinking how to integrate the pass experiences in drawing to new work” (Fish, Interview, 16 January 2004). She remarked, “You use the techniques you’ve learnt to enrich the image. You must think how to arrange the storyline and design the character. Fish said, “Although the beautiful work created cannot solve the real problem, you feel you have confidence. This is an achievement.” (Fish, Interview, 23 January 2004). She assented that the process of making images was involved in a “multi-level symbolic or metaphorical learning process” (Fish, Interview, 5 December 2003). She took her work, “Merry Christmas” (Plate 31), as an example and expounded:

I didn’t write down anything in the picture but you know it’s about Christmas because of the organisation of the symbolic things like the snow and the Christmas tree presented in
the visual way. In this drawing, I tried three different drawing techniques—the dry brush, wet, and slope stroke to draw the background to express the mood. (Fish, Interview, 5 December 2003)

![Plate 31 Merry Christmas—Fish](image)

Fish propounded that drawing was “a personal commitment to self-improvement in dealing with the real problems psychological and consciously” (Fish, Interview, 23 January 2004). “Consciously means you have intentions to do the best for yourself”, she added (Fish, Interview, 23 January 2004). She pointed to the drawing of “The Boy Who Executes the Evil” (Appendix J (iii) and said: “I organise the positive and negative space to make the figure of the boy look spontaneously. This image is drawn under my expectation and control. The improvement in using the lines and adopting the perspective are obvious” (Fish, Interview, 23 January 2004).

2.5.4.2. Questionnaire

Fish formulated her manga creation process by following the order as: (1) eyes; (2) hair; (3) facial expressions; (4) clothing; (5) hands; (6) legs; and (7) background (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). The pre-occupied intention and concept affected her creation. She wrote: “I have already planned and had the concept of beauty before starting drawing (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). In the light of the learning process, Fish wrote: “The image creation process is also a multi-level learning process. Learning in manga not only cares about learning in the visual image, but it also concerns about learning how to transform the text or sound to the visual way of presentation” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). About the interpretation of the relationship between the image and understanding herself, she wrote:
Creating the image in *manga* can make me understand myself. It happens naturally because you can learn different views on the content of *manga* story. Through studying the sophisticated drawing techniques and capturing the sense of beauty emerged in Japanese *manga*, you can see the distance between you and supreme beauty. (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)

Fish admitted that “Japanese *manga*” set “a good example” for her to learn (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). In accordance with the advanced drawing techniques leading to the personal growth, Fish reiterated that the *manga* creating process indeed was a “self-directed, self-actualised or goal-directed communication process in which the creator must face herself—her problem—and look for solutions” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She commented: “This process gives a chance for me to understand the psychological aspect of myself, like looking at the reflection through a mirror or like making a communication with the inner me” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Although Fish agreed that the *manga* creation process was the same as the communication process, she referred to the drawing of Plate 30 and remarked: “Images can mix imagination with reality; therefore, your real problems are brought out and you can be released psychologically. The real problem can only be solved by working hard for practicing drawing” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

2.5.5. Summary of case five

Like Jack and KH, Fish used to practice her drawings in mathematics notebooks. She put “the most satisfactory image” of Chara on the cover of the mathematics notebook (Plate 32) and another black and white image of Chara inside the notebook was of the “high quality of image (Plate 33)” (Fish, Interview, 7 February 2004).
Compared with the image made by Jack in the notebook, Fish’s images were more sophisticated than Jack. As she said: “My attitude toward drawing is serious. I regard the notebook as an open exhibition to review rather than showing the sketches” (Fish, Interview, 7 February 2004). She emphasised that
the drawings in the notebook were a benchmark to her. “Every time I review these images is like to review myself, making me think again how to make it better. These give me much confidence” (Fish, Interview, 7 February 2004).

Fish regarded the images in the notebook as fine images, while Jack regarded his images as “practicing sketches” (Jack, Interview, 7 February 2004). Both images could reflect that Fish was an intelligent drawer with high drawing techniques and the spontaneous artistic ways of expressions. She cared about “the details of the image, with fully considering the various artistic ways of expression like using different colours to express the shadows or using different values and tones to express the textures of the objects” (Fish, Interview, 7 February 2004).

2.6. Case study six—Yin

2.6.1. General description

Yin is a 14-year-old female student. During the sessions, she worked hard to draw the details of the image; however, she hardly seemed to capture the essence of drawing skills and techniques (R, Observation, 16 January 2004; Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 16 January 2004). Similar to Jack, the avoiding phenomenon could particularly be found in her manga creation especially when she avoided drawing the hands by applying particular perspectives (R, Observation, 23 January 2004; Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 6 February 2004).

Yin put much energy to focus on drawing the eyes and hair; however, she neglected to focus on the other parts (RA, Observation, 30 January 2004). Her drawings indicated that she was excited in the stereotypical artistic style (R, Observation, 16 January 2004; RA, Observation, 23 January 2004). In comparison with Jack, Yin’s drawings reflected that she failed to control in the art medium (R, Observation, 6 February 2004; Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 6 February 2004). Jack worked hard to try different ways to look for explorations through continuously practicing, while Yin seemed to
withdraw from this (R, Observation, 6 February 2004). Yin’s finished manga book is in Appendix K (i) to Appendix K (xi).

2.6.2. Meanings of images through experiences of art creation

Yin created an image of an unknown female adolescent as the protagonist to develop her manga story (Plate 34). She wrote the description about the girl as a “cute, elegant but a bit stupid girl with big eyes, lovely and sweet face. The description matched the appearance and the characteristics of Yin in reality (Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 7 November 2003).

Plate 34 The first image created by Yin

2.6.2.1. Transcripts and artwork

Yin assented that her manga creation was “greatly influenced by Japanese manga” (Yin, Interview, 7 November 2003). However, the influence was “limited to the selection stage” (Yin, Interview, 7
November 2003). She said, “In the very beginning, I look for a pretty image in Japanese manga. I decide which image is best for me like this one (Plate 34). Then, I create the manga story based on my experience and I re-create the image” (Yin, Interview, 7 November 2003). Yin alleged that “the meanings of the image” were “to help you release from the pressure in the reality and to reflect who you are” (Yin, Interview, 14 November 2003). She admitted, “I feel better after creating manga because I can throw my unhappy feelings and stress into the characters of the manga story (Appendix K (vi)” (Yin, Interview, 6 February 2003).

Yin declared that the protagonist could represent some of her lived experiences. She said, “The protagonist can represent some of the realistic me. It can represent my views on issues. However, the protagonist cannot represent all about me because manga is fictitious but imaginative. When it is imaginative, it represents my dreams or my wishes. Like the work "You Can’t—Yin” (Appendix K (vi)), it mixed my real thoughts” (Yin, Interview, 6 February 2003). About the selection of the protagonist, she stated,

The image you selected from Japanese manga provides you the absolute guideline to follow. The selection reflected the judgement of cuteness. You follow the image and learn how to draw. For instance, this image comes from a young adolescent’s Japanese manga (Appendix K (iii)). I chose this because it is pretty and cute. I learn from it and change the original image by changing the clothing. Your creation must be developed on top of the absolute model. (Yin, Interview, 9 January 2004)

Yin combined the concept of the “absolute model” or “absolute guideline” with “cuteness”, “prettiness” or “beauty” (Yin, Interview, 7 November 2003). She noted,

*Manga* creation is about whether the image created matches the absolute model or guideline. The absolute model or guideline refers to cuteness or prettiness. Every images created must count on this principle. (Yin, Interview, 28 November 2003)
Although Yin stressed that the change of the original image was important, the stereotypical phenomenon emerged in her manga creation was obvious (R, Observation, 6 February 2004). It can be found in the facial expression and the body movement in Appendix K (iv), Appendix K (v), Appendix K (viii), Appendix K (ix), and Appendix K (x). Pointing to the image in "A smiling girl (1)" (Appendix K (iii)), she described that, “I emphasised drawing the fixed form of eyes and hair. I try to draw the image as cute and pretty as she looks. The method is adding some artistic expressions often seen in Japanese cartoons like using continuous lines to express the motion of the wave of enthusiasm” (Yin, Interview, 6 February 2004).

Yin acknowledged that she often utilised “integrative arts elements in her manga creation” (Yin, Interview, 14 November 2003). About the metaphorical or symbolic application, Yin claimed that she stressed “the mixed artistic effects by integrating the sound and text into visual images for the development of her manga story” (Appendix K (x) & Plate 35) (Yin, Interview, 6 February 2004). Yin said, “I use some symbols to present the sound effect (Appendix K (x). I use some visual symbols as love and flower shapes to present the feeling of happiness (Plate 35). I write: ‘What is happiness? Happiness is having a good meal and a good sleep.’ The sound and text can surely enrich the story, but they must be presented in the visual way” (Yin, Interview, 6 February 2004).

Concerning the gender issue, Yin confirmed that this was “not a topic for manga creation” (Yin, Interview, 19 December 2003). She had only one drawing about a love story developed from a popular Cantonese song throughout the session (Plate 36). The male image in this drawing emerged in a neuter
appearance. According to Yin, the neuter looking appearance represented “the young and cute generation, not the adult generation” (Yin, Interview, 19 December 2003). She supplemented this comment by saying, “This look makes the character more cute and beautiful, just as the characters seen in Japanese manga” (Yin, Interview, 19 December 2003).

Yin mentioned the exaggerated and stereotypical image. She transformed the human figure and proportion to a subjective way of expression where the head of the protagonist took one-third of the body’s proportion. This expression was similar to some of Fish’s images (Appendix J (vi) and Appendix J (viii)) (R, Observation, 6 February 2004). Yin said, “I have problems in drawing the details. Therefore, I omit or draw them as a stereotyped form especially the hands, the clothing, and the legs. I always skip drawing the details or draw them in an exaggerated way of expression” (Yin, Interview, 19 December 2003).

In “The Worst Day in My Life” session, Yin created a manga story to demonstrate the relief from the same pressure (Plate 37). “The best way is to avoid, to escape, and not to think”, she said, “I only draw if I have 100% confidence. I am so worry if I try to explore new techniques in drawings but finally fail” (Yin, Interview, 19 December 2003). The image of Plate 37 was developed based on her embarrassing experience. It was the day when she woke up in the morning and rushed to school. When she got there, she found that the school gate was closed because it was Sunday. In this four-strip manga creation, Yin left two empty picture frames and explained, “I don’t know how to draw the
situation in which I was getting on a bus and the bus broke down on the road. They are too difficult to
draw, so I leave them” (Yin, Interview, 14 November 2003).

Plate 37  “The Worst Day in My Life”—Yin

2.6.2.2. Questionnaire

Yin responded to the socio-cultural influence on her manga creation. She wrote: “People think that
young adolescents are influenced by the Western or Japanese popular culture. It’s wrong! It’s the
Japanese manga, not all Japanese popular culture influences our creation. But the first thing we do is
to select a good model or example to learn” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She agreed that the
process of selection of the protagonist was “a judgement of beauty” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February
2004). She wrote:

What you pick up is what you want after careful consideration. The selection is based on
your needs and the cuteness of the image. The images can be the best thing to represent
your identity or to project yourself. (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)

Concerning symbolic expression, Yin recorded: “The symbolic effect in manga creation should be
considered. Sometimes, I transfer the words of popular songs to develop the story. It is interesting but
also difficult because you have to consider how to express the best effect in picture frames” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). For aesthetics, Yin emphasised the importance of the stereotypical forms of expression. She wrote:

> Something must be emphasised when drawing an image: you should be concerned about drawing the eyes, the face, and hair as exactly as seen in the original image of Japanese manga. They are the best examples explaining what the beautiful and the ugly images are. The final work can distinguish beauty from the ugly images according to these criteria. (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)

Despite Yin mentioning the importance of the stereotypical forms in manga creation, she expounded that “the creator must try to add something related to herself to change the original image, like adding her daily experiences in school, mixing the things happened in reality with imaginations, or personal particular experiences” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). “Even though the creator makes the changes, she should not change the stereotypical forms of expression like the eyes and hair”, she wrote (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Nevertheless, she alleged: “The details of the image bit me now. I do not have much confidence in drawing the details as well as the other student do. I choose to draw the difficult parts in a stereotyped form or omit them. Right now, I focus on drawing the details about the eyes and hair, not the hands” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Besides, Yin asserted that “the gender issue” was “not the main theme of her creation” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She pointed to the middle image of the three-strip manga story seen in Plate 36 and indicated: “I don’t know what the big difference is between drawing boys and girls. Every boy and girl looks the same in a manga” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

2.6.3. Reasons for creating these images in this particular way

Similar to the other students, Yin’s images indicate a particular stereotypical way of expression in the depiction of the eyes, face or hair of the image. As discussed before, the reason for such expression was due to the conception of the stereotyped aesthetics found in Japanese manga.
2.6.3.1. Transcripts and artwork

Yin referred to the image in Appendix K (ix) and suggested that manga drawing was “a very good tool to release from the temporary pressure; however, it could “not really solve the real problem” (Yin, Interview, 23 January 2004). She implied, “The image is a half real and half unreal production which can connect both the reality and imagination. The work of “You Can’t” (Appendix K (vi)) was an example that indicated the mixed relationship (Yin, Interview, 23 January 2004).

Yin’s stereotypical phenomenon could also be found in the face and human figure. All of images that she created were presented in a stationary position and facing the reader with stereotyping facial expressions (R, Observation, 6 February 2004). All images created in her manga book were presented from the front position and depicted from one angle. She pointed to the image seen in Appendix K (iii) and responded to this specific phenomenon as,

> Beauty can be captured from the image of Japanese manga. It becomes the icon to represent your identity. Although I keep trying to practice drawing, I am so worried if I fail to draw an image beautifully. To avoid this feeling of hurt, the safe way is to draw the stereotyped image and repeat the form you are already familiar with. (Yin, Interview, 26 December 2003)

The application of popular songs in manga creation was mentioned earlier. In the work, “You Say You Love Me” (Plate 36) previously discussed, Yin used the words of a popular song, text, and visual image to depict the story. She said, “This song is about a girl who asked a boy to swear to love her forever. Most of the expressions depend on the visual. I often used different songs or edit different texts into the drawings and I am still learning how to express it as a whole” (Yin, Interview, 19 December 2003). On the neuter appearance of the boy in Plate 36, she stated, “I don’t know how to draw a male that looks like a male. But, I think the neuter look is fine. It’s cute and lovely anyway. It can be found in all Japanese manga” (Yin, Interview, 9 January 2004).
Yin responded to the cultural influence on manga creation as “setting a good sample for the creator to learn what cuteness and beauty is” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). “This is a serious matter because the more cuteness I can capture, the more identity I will get. Then, I can earn the recognition from my peers”, she explained (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She articulated that manga creation was about “mixing reality and imagination” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Besides, it could create space to “release from the stress” because it provided “space for everyone to imagine” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Concerning the neuter image and the gender issue in manga creation, Yin wrote:

The characteristics of the neuter look are big eyes with a cute face and long hair. Compared with the male or female image often seen in Japanese manga, can you find the difference between them? The answer is ‘No’. This is a fixed form of beauty and cuteness that everyone loves to see. It is truth and can be recognised by us no matter in different countries. (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)

Yin believed that using different arts elements could be “a good means to create a good manga story” since different arts elements could surely “enrich the content and the form of expression” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Therefore, she regarded “using different elements in manga as a learning process” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). As she wrote: “I believe various arts elements like sound and text can enrich the visual image and make people understand easily the meaning. But, it is not a must” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Yin interpreted her “creating process as the safe and releasing process” in which she enjoyed “the cuteness of the image” (Yin, Interview, 5 December 2003). As mentioned previously, Yin thought that
cuteness and beauty were important elements in her manga creation process. Therefore, “the process of image reproduction” could be regarded “as the creating process of the cuteness and beauty” (Yin, Interview, 5 December 2003).

2.6.4.1. Transcripts and artwork

Yin’s manga creation was “a learning process” in which she tried to “learn to use the symbols, text or sound from popular songs to create” (Yin, Interview, 30 January 2004). She described the creation process of the drawing “A Pawn Shop” (Plate 38) as a mixed process of “self-projection and reality” (Yin, Interview, 30 January 2004).

![Plate 38](image)

**Plate 38** To exchange the talkative me for good grades—Yin

Yin wrote down a dialogue as: “I am a talkative girl and wish to make a change. If only I could change this to good grades”. She said,

> After drawing the image, I feel released. My wish seems to come true. Although it’s not real because your grades are still poor, you at least see the situation clearly, what you need, and what you feel. It’s like talking to yourself. (Yin, Interview, 30 January 2004)

Yin also tried to connect the concept of cuteness with the personal transforming. She supposed that “the cuteness and beauty” became “the motivation of creating images” (Yin, Interview, 9 January 2004). She reiterated, “They are on the imaginative level. That’s why they are cute. With the imagination, manga drawing is a good way to escape from reality” (Yin, Interview, 30 January 2004).
She stressed, “I hope I can become better through continuous practice of the cuteness and beauty of the image” (Yin, Interview, 30 January 2004). However, the advanced drawing skills and techniques became a problem to Yin. She thought that the problem might come from the lack of confidence. This formulated the stereotyped form of representation in her *manga* creation. She stated,

My drawing skills and technique are poor. I cannot get much improvement in a short time as I am lacking confidence. I want to try to draw as good as I can but I don’t know why I cannot reach the standard. Capturing the stereotyped images, as a way of escaping, can make me feel comfortable and give me the confidence for a while. (Yin, Interview, 30 January 2004)

Yin pointed to her work of Plate 37 and remarked, “If I have skilful hands, I won’t leave these picture frames empty and don’t know how to draw” (Yin, Interview, 30 January 2004). She mentioned, “When drawing the familiar images, you don’t have to think of the real problem. If you don’t think, you won’t be hurt because you don’t have to face the cruel fact that everyone knows that you’re a poor drawer” (Yin, Interview, 30 January 2004).

2.6.4.2. Questionnaire

Yin noted that her drawing skills and technique were “comparatively poorer than the other students” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She wrote:

My observation skills are poor. My drawings are rough. These are the things I need to improve, but I still don’t know how. If I draw an image that is not cute or beautiful, I will totally lose confidence. I will never let it happen. Therefore, drawing stereotyped images are always safe. (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)

Yin posited that the improvement in her drawing technique could improve her real problem. She commented: “If my drawing skills are improved, my confidence will be back. Then, all problems are
gone. It’s to prove myself and is a self-identity matter” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She expounded the creating process as a process of communication with the inner self. She wrote: “It seems that you can talk to yourself through images. For example, when you select the protagonist, you add your characteristics, put your dreams, and expect the protagonist to fulfil your dreams. The protagonist can represent you” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She stressed: “Every protagonist can represent the real and imaginative you because images in manga are mixed with both” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Regarding the application of the sound and text as an effect in the manga creation, Yin asserted that “the combination of different elements” could “certainly enrich the visual effect” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). About the visual thinking in the creating process, Yin’s creating process followed an order according to the most important parts as: (1) eyes; (2) face; (3) hair; (4) clothing; (5) hands; and (6) legs (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

2.6.5. Summary of case six

Yin claimed that she drew the stereotyped images for an escape from reality. Although she tried to depict the image in the basic three-dimensional representation like the clothing of the images shown in Appendix K (vii) and the Appendix K (viii), as well as the balloon and hair of the images in Appendix (x), these images were apparently presented in a rough three-dimensional form.

Yin’s drawing of human figures showed that her images were based on the stereotyped concept. This phenomenon was also found in some images of the other students’ work as seen in Plate 26 of KW and Plate 31 of Fish; however, Yin’s case was different. First, the human figures in Yin’s drawings were presented as a stereotypical body form that was constructed by simple geometric shapes. Second, some important details about the shape of the clothing and the body parts were omitted intentionally. Third, it indicated that she had less observation skills than the other students. The next case was Nie.
2.7. Case study seven—Nie

2.7.1. General description

Nie was a 15-year-old female student. Throughout the manga creation session, Nie repeatedly mentioned the word “prettiness and beauty” to represent her consistent artistic style (R, Observation, 6 February 2004; RA, Observation, 23 January 2004; Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 6 February 2004). The social workers and teachers-in-charge informed the researcher that Nie had a problem in that she used foul language. In the first session, Nie created a female adolescent named as “Xiao Lin”, a Chinese name, as the protagonist to develop her manga story (Plate 39). She described the characteristics of Xia Lin as “a gentle and nice but careless girl who loves to help people, with the O blood type and is 159 cm tall.” The description matched Nie’s characteristics in reality, except for the issue of using foul language and being aloof (Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 7 November 2003). Nie repeatedly declared that the image presented in her manga creation was involved in psychological needs that were something she needed to overcome in reality (R, Observation, 26 December).

Plate 39   Xiao Lin—the first image created by Nie
The stereotypical phenomena found in the representation of the human figure and facial expression in Nie’s drawings was obvious and continuous; however, her drawings showed continuous improvement in her drawing technique and intention to attempt to make changes (R, Observation, 19 December 2003; Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 23 January 2004). Nie’s images created in the session can be seen in the finished manga book from Appendix L (i) to Appendix L (ix).

2.7.2. Meanings of images through experiences of art creation

Unlike other students in the group like Jack and Fish who chose a Japanese name to represent their protagonist, Nie chose a Chinese name “Xiao Lin” for the protagonist. According to Nie, Xiao Lin was her own creation and its meaning was to “give people an impression of being free from vulgarity” (Nie, Interview, 7 November 2003).

2.7.2.1. Transcripts and artwork

Nie said, “Young adolescents like me in this generation are crazy about Japanese manga. They are trying to imitate the stereotypical style from Japanese manga. However, I read but I also re-create the story about me. I modify both the image and the storyline of the original manga creation to relate to my experiences” (Nie, Interview, 7 November 2003). Nie insisted, “Xiao Lin (Plate 39) is not just an imitation of Japanese manga. Instead, I add the personal preferences in the image based on my aesthetic judgements and my favourite Chinese clothing style. I project my feelings, thoughts, and emotions onto the character” (Nie, Interview, 21 November 2003).

Nie hinted that the protagonist (Plate 39) was “a learning model” which was “absolutely beautiful, pretty, and supreme” (Nie, Interview, 7 November 2003). She mixed “the reality and imagination in her manga creation” (Nie, Interview, 26 December 2003). Pointing to the image in Appendix L (vii), she said, “In reality, I am not as pretty as she is. In really, I use foul language. But in manga, I am not” (Nie, Interview, 26 December 2003).
The relationship in the *manga* creation between the sound, text, and visual image was intimate. Nie described this relationship as “a company or kind of metaphorical and symbolic expression showing a pattern of emotional expression” (Nie, Interview, 30 January 2004). She took a *manga* story based on the words of a popular Cantonese song “Let go” by Jade as an example (Plate 40). The song was about a girl who loved a boy but the boy rejected her love. She was sad and lonely but she finally recovered from the hurt. Nie described,

I try to combine sound with the visual. In the first image, I use ink to highlight the joy of the expected love that the girl has. In the middle strip, I intentionally omit the face of the girl to show the hurt feeling of being rejected. A lonely leaf falling and the wind blowing from the window implies the sound of loneliness. In the last picture, I draw the sun climbing up the mountain to show that it is a brand new day for happiness. No matter the text or sound, all must be transformed to be visual symbols to tell the story metaphorically. (Nie, Interview, 5 December 2003)

Nie seldom drew male images throughout the *manga* drawing session. In fact, there was one male image found in Appendix L (iv). She explained, “I draw love stories sometimes. But, they are not the centre of my story. Males are not as beautiful as females in terms of appearance” (Nie, Interview, 28 November 2003). Nie pronounced that “the most difficult parts of drawing” were “the hands and legs” (Nie, Interview, 28 November 2003).
The stereotypical drawing method of the hand presented as a circle form could be found in Plate 40, Appendix L (i), Appendix L (iii), and Appendix L (vi). Another avoidance phenomenon was the omission by cutting the hand or leg in the picture frame like the images in Plate 40, Appendix L (iv), and Appendix L (ix). She claimed, “I omit the difficult parts by drawing a long dress covering the legs and feet or I directly omit them” (Nie, Interview, 7 November 2003). Besides these difficult parts of the human figure, Nie showed “concentration on the details of the eyes and hair” (Nie, Interview, 26 December 2004). Compared with other images like Appendix L (vii) and Appendix L (viii), they indicated that Nie attempted to draw the details about the hands. “It was a rough attempt to overcome the difficult parts”, she said (Nie, Interview, 6 February 2004).

2.7.2.2. Questionnaire

Nie recorded that her manga creation was “influenced by Japanese manga” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She addressed that Japanese manga affected “every aspect of the teenager’s life and experience”; therefore, it was “natural for the creators to select the image as the protagonist to develop their own stories about their culture and everyday life” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Although the image could represent her, Nie asserted that the “decision of the selection” was “carefully considered” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). “The selected image”, she wrote, “must be pretty, absolutely beautiful, and a supreme icon providing the creators for learning” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). “Learning from the image”, according to Nie, meant “learning from the perfect and absolute stereotypical beauty of the image, including the perfect form and artistic expression” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). “This kind of learning involved the ability of the judgement of beauty”, she recorded (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Nie mentioned that the stereotypical image “must be given up” once the creators fully obtained “confidence in grasping the essence of the beauty of image”, which meant that the creator needed to “re-create the original image to transform themselves” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She wrote: “Although the stereotypical sense of beauty like the eyes and hair can never be changed, the
storyline or situation can be changed to fit an authentic context. She wrote: “The image of the protagonist represents me once I use it as a symbol for me” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She propounded:

How to use the symbol is a question of how to express the symbol to say something about you, your views on issues metaphorically or symbolically. It’s a reflection on your life by mixing your experiences and imagination. (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)

Nie implied that “the most important parts of drawing” were “the eyes and hair and the most difficult parts of drawing” were “the hands and legs” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She posited that she could “overcome the eyes and hair now”; however, she still avoided “drawing the embarrassing parts—the hands and legs” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). To Nie, the gender issue could be a theme of her manga story; however, she wrote: “It is not necessary to be the essence of the creation” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

2.7.3. Reasons for creating these images in this particular way

Unlike the other students whose protagonists were always dressed in modern fashion, some of the images of Xia Lin like Plate 39 and Plate 40 were dressed in an old-fashioned style with an old-fashioned hair style popular in the Qing dynasties in China, except for some images like Appendix L (vii) and Appendix L (ix) where she was dressed in a modern style.

2.7.3.1. Transcripts and artwork

Nie described the image dressed in an old-fashioned style because the image could “match her characteristics” (Nie, Interview, 12 December 2003). She said, “It mixes the real with the imaginative me. This appearance can perfectly represent me” (Nie, Interview, 12 December 2003). Concerning the issue of using foul language, she described,
The image of the protagonist is so perfect and beautiful that I cannot allow myself to make it imperfect. The perfection makes me stop speaking foul language. What I draw is contradictory to what I am. But, beauty can help you change yourself. (Nie, Interview, 12 December 2003)

Nie declared that she usually used this “paradoxical method in drawing some pictures to balance her impulse of speaking foul language like Appendix L (vi) and Appendix L (ix)” (Nie, Interview, 12 December 2003). She drew beautiful images and said, “The ironic presentation method is also paradoxical. Xia Lin, the perfect image, should be proud of her beauty. Unlike me, she won’t speak foul language. She is pretty. But, I am not pretty and speak foul language in reality” (Nie, Interview, 12 December 2003). Pointing to the image in Plate 40, Nie expounded, “Manga stories tell of people’s experiences. I feel better after creating images since they help release me from pressures because I project my emotions on the drawings” (Nie, Interview, 16 January 2004). She explained that “the integration of sound, text, and visual image” indicated a “multi-sensory imagery learning process”. As she stated, “The process makes the creation interesting and challenging, formulating the story presented in the particular visual form of representation” (Nie, Interview, 6 February 2004).

Concerning the gender issue, she negated that it was “neither the essential issue nor the theme in her manga creation” (Nie, Interview, 6 February 2004). However, an example about love could be found in Appendix L (iv). Although there was a male in the picture, his appearance was like a female. Compared with the eyes, nose, and face of the female, they were no significant difference. Nie said, “The appearance of the male is the same as the female. It makes the male more attractive and beautiful. To me, the drawing method and the expression of beauty in both sexes have no difference” (Nie, Interview, 19 December 2003).

2.7.3.2. Questionnaire

Nie wrote about the influence of the Japanese manga. She addressed: “Japanese manga provides us with an absolute sense and concrete form of beauty. We can grasp them from the eyes and hair of the
image. Therefore, we can obtain our identity from the supreme icon through learning from the beauty” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Nie supposed a reason why she created the image as manga stories could “reflect her real lived experience due to the projection and the relief of her stress from reality” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Nie posited: “Imagination is like a medicine. It mixes with real experience and creates the story about myself” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Besides, Nie wrote: “Beauty must have some metaphoric or symbolic meanings in response to the creator’s psychological needs” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She alleged that “most of the meanings” were “related to the creator’s personal experiences” that sometimes were even “painful” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). The personal and painful experience was about “speaking foul language” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She defined the “beauty as a connection to something beyond the form of visual expression” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She wrote:

Images of beauty may relate to the sound and text. However, even I draw an image without putting any sound effect or editing a word, I can still see the beauty inside. These elements can be found in an image that simply draws by simple lines. The line itself has rhythms. The line is like poetry full of rhythms. (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)

In “A Pawn Shop” session, she exchanged herself to be a princess (Appendix L (vii)). She commented: “It demonstrates how I want to be transformed to a perfect person” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Nevertheless, Nie realised manga creation as a “multi-sensory and imaginative learning process” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

In the description of the gender issue, Nie wrote: “Drawing love stories is not my concern. But, I transform the words of the love song to visual images. I depict male images without any difference from females—they also have big shining eyes with long hair” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).
2.7.4. The way of interpreting the creating process

The psychological factor was Nie’s important consideration for *manga* creation. Nie described her creating process as a “process of changing the self through the continuous enhancement and improvement in drawing the pretty image” (Nie, Interview, 16 January 2004).

2.7.4.1. Transcripts and artwork

To Nie, the image creation process meant a psychological transformation and a personal enhancement process. As she stated, “The pretty image gives me a hope of transforming since it corroborates with my problems in reality and my imagination. Through imagination, I can make any changes possible” (Nie, Interview, 26 December 2003). “Looking at the image (Appendix L (ix)) is like looking at the inner me” (Nie, Interview, 26 December 2003).

Nie implied that “the improvement in drawing techniques and acquiring the advanced drawing skills” would “certainly benefit from solving the real problem” (Nie, Interview, 26 December 2003). She referred to the image (Appendix L (iii)) and said, “I believe the pretty image can make me change. My problem will be solved upon attaining the method of creating the beauty” (Nie, Interview, 26 December 2003).

Nie mentioned the importance of being appreciated by her peers. She said, “I am labelled as a girl who speaks foul language, but in *manga* stories, I am a pretty girl, pure and clean. I really care about how people think about me. If I draw a petty image and they appreciate it, I’ll be very happy. Perhaps they will change their attitudes toward me” (Nie, Interview, 28 November 2003). Therefore, the creation process was a “process of receiving the peer’s recognition through sharing and appreciation of the image” (Nie, Interview, 26 December 2003). She explained, “Drawing a perfect and pretty image is eventually the goal and to gain appreciation from the peers” (Nie, Interview, 26 December 2003). She established, “I believe what I create is of beauty and pretty because I have confidence in it” (Nie, Interview, 6 February 2004).
Nie’s creation process reflected thoughtful and careful planning before she started drawing. She took the image (Plate 41) as an example and explained that she had “already organised how to use various arts elements and what visual effects would come out before drawing including words extracted from a popular Cantonese song and the depiction of stars with symbolic meaning of happiness” (Nie, Interview, 26 December 2003).

![Plate 41 A girl—Nie](image)

The storyline was: “I don’t care if someone laughs at me because I am ugly. I do well with no evil. Why don’t people understand? I believe I will be beautiful and everyone praises me finally”. She explicated, “All these elements organised create a picture or metaphor telling about my story. This example shows that the creation process is not just about drawing. It relates to the “development of the metaphorical and symbolic meaning” (Nie, Interview, 26 December 2003).

2.7.4.2. Questionnaire

Nie’s drawing steps followed an order. It was: (1) eyes; (2) face; (3) hair; (4) clothing; and (5) hands, in which the most important parts were “the eyes, face, and hair” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Nie stressed that “the continuous practice drawing” was an “improvement process leading to success” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She wrote:
I believe I can draw beautiful faces and eyes, but I cannot draw hands and legs beautifully. There is room for improvement. I believe I will make great improvement through continuous practice of drawing these. Then, the problem of using foul language will be solved because beauty transforms me. (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Nie mentioned the creating process must “consider and balance the creator’s psychological needs” since “the manga creation” was “a communication process” (Nie, Questionnaire, 36 February 2004). She wrote: “The creator relied on the self-autonomy to actualise the transformation process” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). The whole creation process was “about understanding myself, communicating with myself, and self-learning from the beauty” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Nie addressed that the learning process was not “easy” because “the concept of beauty” was “the metaphorical and symbolic thing” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She explored the statement by writing: “My problem is speaking foul language. I propose this as an issue of the ugly. It seems there is no relation between manga creation and such a problem. However, it does. I think imagination can create beautiful thing. It harmonises and balances my real problem. That’s why the expectation of solving the problem depends on the beauty” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

2.7.5. Summary of case seven

Nie’s created images were less exaggerated. The proportion was correct except some images were presented in a cartoon’s style like Appendix L (i) and Appendix L (viii). Besides, she seldom drew images from a side position: most images were depicted as facing in front of the reader like Appendix L (iii), Appendix L (vi) and Appendix L (vii). The stereotypical phenomenon was also obvious in Nie’s drawings. Unlike the stereotyped representation of the human figure of Fish’s images, Nie tried to use different drawing techniques like Plate 40 and Plate 42 to depict the image and showed volume of the image like Appendix L (vi). Some of the drawings were creative. One example could be found in the image of Plate 40, where she used the omission of the face to express the lonely emotions. The other one was the images demonstrated in the “The Worst Day in My Life” session (Plate 42), which she created a four-strip manga story about her experience.
The story was: Nie went to an art supply to buy a drawing pencil. She forgot to bring money; therefore, she went home again. However, when she went back, the shop was closed. The next day her teacher blamed her for this. In this manga creation, she used direct lines and ink with a large brush stroke to draw the image of Xiao Lin. She even did not make a sketch before drawing (R, Observation, 14 November 2003). As she said, “This work can show my confidence” (Nie, Interview, 14 November 2003). The last case was Yin.

2.8. Case study eight—Yan

2.8.1. General description

Yan was a 15-year-old female student. According to the teachers-in-charge, Yan had experienced stress from the anxiety of examinations. She was one of the sophisticated drawers in the group: her drawing skills and techniques were beyond standard in comparison with other students (Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 30 January 2004). Both KH and Yan had the ability to control the lines and shape to depict the human figure and the gesture spontaneously (R, Observation, 6 February 2004). Yan’s images created in the session could be found in the finished manga book from Appendix M (i) to
Appendix M (xv). Images created in her final *manga* book presented various drawing perspective, such as the image created in the same horizontal plane as the viewer’s perspective (Appendix M (ii)) and in the bird’s-eye view (Appendix M (ix)), which made her drawings different from the other students (R, Observation, 6 February 2004). Except the drawing perspectives, one particular artistic expression, which obviously distinguished her from KH, was the variety of the movement of human body. For example, the image of Appendix M (iii) explicates how she uses the shifting focus to capture the viewer’s eyes to focus on the story (R, Observation, 30 January 2004). She was good at applying storylines to develop her drawings like Appendix M (iii). The composition indicated that she had carefully considered how to deliver the message to the viewer through different perspectives and visual effects including the combination of the sound, text, and visual image (RA, Observation, 30 January 2004; Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 6 February 2004).

2.8.2. Meanings of images through experiences of art creation

Yan created a female image, “The Precious Dream”, as the protagonist to develop her *manga* story (Plate 43); however, the female image was not the only protagonist. For instance, male images seen in Appendix M (viii) and Appendix M (x) often emerged in Yan’s *manga* stories.

Plate 43  The Precious Dream—the first image created by Yan
2.8.2.1. Transcripts and artwork

Yan described the protagonist as: “a happy girl with long hair, who always smiles to face the unhappy” (Plate 43). The description and appearance of the image matched Yan’s characteristics and actual age in reality (Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 7 November 2003). She asserted that “the protagonist” could “represent her” and she would “project everything onto the protagonist” (Yan, Interview, 7 November 2003). Although she loved Japanese manga, the protagonist was her “original and imaginative creation specifically for the manga creation session” (Yan, Interview, 7 November 2003).

Yan addressed that Japanese manga affected her in terms of “beauty” (Yan, Interview, 7 November 2003). She admired the “concept of beauty established by the Japanese manga” because it let her “clearly understand the meaning of beauty” (Yan, Interview, 7 November 2003). She said, “The image in Japanese manga is so beautiful that everyone likes it and regards it as a learning model. Although I create this image (Appendix M (vii)) by myself, I think the overall appearance still has a shadow of the artistic style found in Japanese manga” (Yan, Interview, 16 January 2004). “Perhaps I have already accepted the style of Japanese manga as a part of my life and allow it to guide me to be good”, she said, “The image (Plate 43) created is something worth learning” (Yan, Interview, 16 January 2004).

Yan regarded that the judgement of beauty was an essential issue. She believed that she had “the ability to make the judgement” (Yan, Interview, 16 January 2004). While making the image (Plate 43), she responded, “Creating manga is a process of learning from beauty. Learning from beauty is about learning how to judge the image whether it is beautiful or ugly” (Yan, Interview, 26 December 2003). She expounded the definition of beauty as,

Beauty means the blinking eyes, beautiful face, long hair, and perfect human figure. They present as a stereotypical form like this image (Appendix M (xiii)). It is the principle of beauty that must be emphasised. (Yan, Interview, 23 January 2004)
Yan not only mentioned about learning from the stereotypical concept of beauty, she also stressed to be against the stereotypical beauty. She said, “Something like the eyes, face, and hair style cannot be changed. They are the united forms that mean the beauty. But, the story, the clothing, the appearance, and movement should be changed to represent you. Taking this image as an example (Plate 43), I add my characteristics but the eyes and face still follow the stereotypical form. You cannot just copy the image without modifying. You need to add something about you” (Yan, Interview, 19 December 2004). Yan noted that “to dispatch the beauty in manga creation must depend on the symbols and metaphors” (Yan, Interview, 21 November 2003). Pointing to image of Plate 44, Yan commented,

This picture is about freedom: I want to be free from the stress. However, the question is how I can express such complex feeling within a picture frame. If you fail to use the symbol to express this feeling metaphorically, you’d fail in the manga creation. (Yan, Interview, 21 November 2003)

Yan wrote poetry under this drawing (Plate 44): “At night, everyone sleeps. There is no one but I am still flying in the sky. But, I am not alone because the scene is particularly beautiful” (Yan, Interview, 21 November 2003). Yan implied that manga creation was “both the reality and imagination”. She described that the metaphor contained “the use of symbols and imagination to tell the real story unrealistically and metaphorically” (Yan, Interview, 21 November 2003). According to the image, Yan addressed,

I use simple visual effects in this picture. I use black and white contrast to highlight the protagonist—me. This visual effect makes the viewer feel that the story occurs at night. The white wings make the viewer feels that I am really flying. The twinkle stars help create the rhythm. The full moon that represents a hope, creating the mood, showing the direction for me, and leading the viewer to think. When the viewer looks at the image, she feels like the music solely playing at night. All elements including the poetry and sound are symbols that create the metaphor about my experience and imagination. (Yan, Interview, 21 November 2003)
The gender issue seemed to be one of the main contents of Yan’s manga creation, for instance, images in Appendix M (viii) and Appendix M (x). She declared, “I do not have the experience about love. Love is a hot theme in the Japanese manga, but I just drew about something that can create the beauty. It’s not about depicting love…The way I draw the female image is exactly the same as the male image—they also have big shining eyes and beautiful faces” (Yan, Interview, 6 February 2004).

Furthermore, on the avoiding phenomenon, no particular images found demonstrated the omission. However, she said, “I won’t avoid drawing anything. I can do better in drawing the hands, especially the details of the fingers. I can depict the hands but the representation of hands is still too rough” (Yan, Interview, 23 January 2004). Examples could be found in Appendix M (xiii), Appendix M (ix), and Appendix M (vii).

2.8.2.2. Questionnaire

Yan hinted that the meaning of the beauty referred to the stereotypical form formulated by the socio-cultural factor. She wrote, “The stereotyped beauty is formed by Japanese manga culture. It is an
art form that young adolescents accept and recognise in their everyday life. It means that the society recognises this kind of beauty although we are Chinese” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Yan wrote:

The Japanese *manga* is popular because the image can represent young adolescents. *Manga* stories are half real and half imaginative. Because of this, they provide us good opportunities to fulfil their dreams and escape from reality. When they fail in reality, we can get back to the imaginative world for temporarily escaping and prepare for fighting back again. (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)

Yan emphasised that “the stereotyped beauty” referred to “the eyes, face, and hair” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Yan recorded that “the beauty of image” could be a “learning model” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She wrote: “Beauty can be learnt and can transform you. Therefore, drawing *manga* is a learning process to make a transformation” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She alleged:

Beauty is about judgement. This judgement is not only a personal issue, it is also a social issue accepted by peers. It is personal because you are not just copying the image. You have to create your story and describe the situation with adding different symbols and visual effects in drawings. Everyone tells her different stories and expresses her feelings metaphorically. (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)

Yan described the relationship between the real problem and *manga* creation. She wrote: “Although images in *manga* stories project you, they cannot help you solve the problem realistically. However, they let you see your situation and your potential to make up your mind to do some changes to solve the problem” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Yan propounded that the *manga* creation was “creative” because the creator “must think how to apply different arts elements like sound, text, or medium to present the image” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).
Yan argued that “to omit the difficult parts of the image and to give up trying to practice the drawing techniques” were “nothing but escaping” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). “The only way is to face and overcome them”, she wrote (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Concerning the gender issue mentioned previously, Yan wrote: “There is no big difference between drawing male or female images. The crucial parts of drawings males or females are always the eyes, face, and hair. The neuter or feminine appearance of the male image makes it close to the beautiful image emerged in Japanese manga” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

2.8.3. Reasons for creating these images in this particular way

Several main reasons why Yan created the image in the particular way could be found as identity, establishing the relationship between the reality and imagination, releasing the stress, creating multi-sensory learning method, and the expression of neuter aesthetics.

2.8.3.1. Transcripts and artwork

As mentioned previously, to Yan, images could represent the relationship between the projection and identity. She described, “Once the creator projects herself on the manga. It’s an identity issue because she really cares about whether the viewer recognises her work. The viewer will examine her work to see whether it fits the criteria of beauty. Besides, the creator will seriously regard the viewer’s critical response to her work to ascertain her identity” (Yan, Interview, 26 December 2003).

Referring to the drawing finished in “A Pawn Shop” session (Plate 45), Yan said, “I had failed and got a ‘0’ in a Maths exam. My teacher and parents scolded me...If only I could exchange a medicine that could make me get good grade in Maths” (Yan, Interview, 28 November 2003). Yan claimed that the work could “project her wish, connect imagination with reality, and release her from stress” (Yan, Interview, 28 November 2003). One particular artistic expression was the application of a one-point perspective. In Plate 45, Yan used simple lines and different drawing techniques to depict the cabinet and the floor, distinguishing her from the other students. The background was depicted based on the
careful observation rather than the imagination. She responded that “such visual effects” could “make the story more realistic”; however, she also rejected the drawing to be “too realistically” (Yan, Interview, 28 November 2003). When asked why the face of the protagonist still looked unrealistic if she wanted to shape the realistic image, Yan replied that “the stereotyped image must not be changed because of the united form of beauty” (Yan, Interview, 28 November 2003). Yan used both male and female images to represent her, like images seen in Plate 45, Appendix M (i), Appendix M (iv), Appendix M (v), and Appendix M (xi). She stated, “Gender is the same to me in terms of the appearance. In the manga world, it is normal” (Yan, Interview, 6 February 2004).

Plate 45  To exchange the ‘0’ Grade in Maths to a medicine that makes you get a good Grade—Yan

Yan took the image in Plate 44 as an example to explicate the reason of creating images in the multi-sensory way of expression. She said, “Creating image is not just drawing the form of image. It’s about thinking how to put different arts elements together to tell a story visually. That’s why I learn to integrate different things and create the image on a multi-sensory level” (Yan, Interview, 16 January 2004).

2.8.3.2. Questionnaire

Regarding the socio-cultural impact on manga creation, Yan stressed that she was only influenced by “the sense of beauty found in Japanese manga, not all the form of Japanese culture” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She commented: “Because the image in manga stories is both
imaginative and real, the stereotyped beauty can comfort us by providing us with a learning method to
fulfil our dreams that they hardly come true in the reality” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). About the gender issue, Yan reiterated that “the focus of drawing” was on the “beauty of the image, not the love story” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She wrote:

The love story is fabricated. The character is fictitious…The focus is not on depicting the relationship between lovers. The important thing is to draw beautiful images. (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)

Yan agreed that drawing manga could “relieve the creator’s feelings”; however, she suggested that this was not “the goal of creating manga stories” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She wrote: “The manga creation involved in the organisation and application of different arts elements. As the final product is a visible image that combines sound, poetry or text, drawing itself is a process of learning how to organise and apply these elements” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

2.8.4. The way of interpreting the creating process

Yan’s interpretation of the creating process contained aspects of personal transformation, self-communication, and self-improvement. She also emphasised the creating process similar to the learning process and application of the metaphor presented in the visual form of expression.

2.8.4.1. Transcripts and artwork

Yan regarded her finished work as “a work close to perfection and beauty” (Yan, Interview, 12 December 2003). Yan kept drawing and made corrections to her work (RA, Observation, 12 December 2003). She said, “I always analyse all visual effects and consider the drawing method in my mind before starting (Plate 45). I often make sketches in my mind first, not on the paper. I wish each of the finished works would be perfect” (Yan, Interview, 12 December 2003). “Therefore”, she continued, “a detailed planning of how to draw the image from different angles like this one (Plate 46) must come to
my mind first to eliminate the fault and avoid any possible mistakes as well as to confirm the work of
good quality when it is finished” (Yan, Interview, 12 December 2003).

Yan believed that “the creation process” included “both the transformation and the
self-communication processes” (Yan, Interview, 9 January 2004). As she addressed,

The creation process has no different from the process of communication. Drawing the
image is like talking to yourself. Through the drawings, you clearly understand who you
are. Like these images (Appendix M (iv) & Appendix M (v)), they are in-depth
reflections on my thoughts and behaviours. Through these images, I can better understand
myself. You may say that creating images are a psychological game. (Yan, Interview, 9
January 2004)

On the improvement in drawing techniques identified by other students, Yan agreed that the
improvement could “give the support to the creator” (Yan, Interview, 16 January 2004). She said, “The
improvement in drawing techniques means that you grasp the confidence. Your attitude will be
changed and you become brave. You seem to re-grasp the identity lost before” (Yan, Interview, 16
January 2004). Yan posited,

My problem is the stress from the Maths exam. I know if I can keep drawing the image as
beautiful as it is, I can be assured that I can do better in Maths as well. As to the manga

Plate 46 Lovely Mei Sha—Yan
creation, I still have problems in drawing the details like hands, though I have improved a lot. Although there is no relation between the improvement in drawing techniques and solutions of the real problem, it is a psychological expectation and the power of creation.

(Yan, Interview, 16 January 2004)

The creation process was also a learning process of how to apply symbols to depict the metaphor. Yan pointed to the image (Plate 44) and suggested, “This is a metaphor-based image. In the creation process, you must consider how to visualise poetry and tell the story visually. Besides, you have to consider how to use simple lines, together with black and white as symbols to create an abundant image with rhythm” (Yan, Interview, 23 January 2004).

2.8.4.2. Questionnaire

Regarding the concept of beauty, Yan mentioned “the beauty of the image functioning as a self-transforming tool” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She expounded that “the images creation process as the psychological and educational processes leading to self-transformation” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). Concerning beauty, she wrote: “The united form of beauty of the image creates a force to drive you to be autonomy. It makes you change” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

Like other students, Yan’s drawing steps followed an order: (1) eyes; (2) face including the nose and mouth; (3) hair; (4) clothing; (5) hands; and (6) legs, in which the eyes, face, and hair were extremely important (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). However, her visual thinking did not only reflect on drawing, it also was significant in the organisation of the arts elements to depict the creator’s story metaphorically. She wrote:

Manga creation process mixed reality and imagination, formulating the way for the creator to reflect his/her situation or tell her story metaphorically. To successfully express the ideas, the creator needs to apply various arts elements as symbols; therefore, the
organisation of arts elements plays an important role in deciding how to present them in a picture frame. To me, the creation process is a metaphorical or symbolic learning process.

(Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004)

The metaphorical learning process and the creation process to Yan meant “making communication with myself” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She wrote: “The communication is throughout the *manga* creation process. It will not disappear because our problems come and go forever” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She suggested that “convicting yourself that the real problem would be solved if drawing skills and techniques were acquired and could draw beautiful images eventually” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004). She wrote: “Similar to some kind of ritual, it makes you believe that you are qualified to make beautiful images. It sends a message to let you know that you are capable to overcome the problem. Afterwards, your attitude changes and you feel full of confidence” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

2.8.5. Summary of case eight

Yan and Kei also created male images. Both images had a neuter appearance. However, if compared with Kei’s male image like Appendix M (x), one could hardly tell the difference between the male and female image. Their appearance including the eyes and facial expression were the same. The quality of the images created by Yan reflected a direct and mature visual thinking method behind the production (R, Observation, 30 February 2004).

Yan was capable of showing the quality of volume in her images like Appendix M(x) and Appendix M(vii); however, Yan’s images were mainly made by simple, long, and spontaneous lines (R, Observation, 6 February 2004; Teachers-in-charge, Observation, 6 February 2004). She could create an image in an exaggerated and distorted way of expression like Appendix M (xiv) or in a realistic way of expression in the human figure like Appendix M (iii) (R, Observation, 16 January 2004; RA, Observation, 16 January 2004).
3. Summary of the chapter

The data presentation about the eight cases responds to the research questions proposed by the matrix, which clearly reflects a picture of the meaning of the image, the reason for creating the image in a particular way, and the way they create. The students’ transcripts and artwork indicates that they have already known what they created, why they created, and how they created. From observation, they are serious and dedicated to the concept of beauty as well as manga creation.

Some points suggested by the student are paradoxical; however, they are logical. Image creation reveals visual thinking. The visual thinking generates a general principle that the student recognises as the stereotypical beauty. The concept of the stereotyped beauty is far more complex than we think. It involves various aspects as the real problem, story in context, application of integrative arts elements, imagination, symbol and metaphor, learning process, psychological needs, self-transforming, and self-improvement. Besides, the stereotypical form of expression influenced by Japanese manga formulates the depicting of the neuter appearance.

All students agree that manga creation combines reality with imagination. They expect that through learning from the image may facilitate them in solving a real problem. The suggestion of the improvement in the drawing skills and techniques leading to re-grasp the identity and confidence is remarkable. The data demonstrates the connection between practicing drawing skills and the solution of a real problem; however, it turns out to be the avoiding and omission phenomena for some cases. Yin not only regards stereotyped expressions as a guideline to lead to the benchmark of beauty, she also uses these as a way of escaping from stress. Another example can be found in the omission phenomenon in Yin’s case.

According to the students, the concept of beauty can be divided into two phrases: The stereotyped beauty and the non-stereotyped beauty. Although they are contradictory with each other, they play an essential role in understanding images created by young adolescents. They also reveal the student’s prudent and round consideration including the socio-cultural factors like the impact on Japanese
manga culture. The data demonstrates the particular idea of the relationship between the dualistic beauty and the individual psychological needs. These complex factors and needs are fused together, creating a fantasy picture mixing reality with imagination. The improvement in the drawing skills and techniques leading to re-grasp the identity and confidence is suggested. The data demonstrates the relationship between practicing drawing skills and the solution of the real problem. The next chapter, Analysis: Explication and Interpretation, focuses on explication, interpretation of findings, and explores the discourse on the issues presented in this chapter.
Chapter Nine

Analysis: Explication and Interpretation

1. Introduction

This chapter analyses the data presented in Chapter Eight in relation to the research questions propounded in the matrix. The organisation of the chapter is first, to analyse themes and ideas according to the research questions; and second, to explicate and interpret the phenomenon, as well as the theoretical structure of understanding the matrix. According to the data presentation of the eight cases, similarities and differences of themes and ideas are demonstrated in a variety of categories. They imply essential meanings to respond to the matrix.

This chapter proposes to reconceptualise and restructure the meaning made. The establishment of the scaffolding of the categories is based on the main research questions proposed in the matrix—the interrelationships of the images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents. From the main research questions, three important subordinate questions explore and reveal the key to understanding the matrix. They are: (1) the meanings of the images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents through the experiences of art creation; (2) the reason for creating these images in the particular way; and (3) the way of interpreting the creation process.

2. Scaffolding and principle of analysis

Referring to the Order of Fundamental Questions (Table 1.2) discussed in Chapter One, the scaffolding of the matrix is established from three different but coherent phases. The matrix starts with the most important fundamental question of what since this question provides the content and context of the young adolescents’ lived experiences. Influenced by the first research question of what, the next question of why in the middle phase goes to look at the reasons for the formulation of such a particular artistic expression indicated in manga creation based to the students’ lived experiences. Following the
second research question of why, the final question of how in the third phase examines their ways of interpreting. This is the order designed to present the data analysis.

The data abstracted from the presentation part not only reveals different individual experiences, but it also explores the commonalities. If we see the commonalities as macro data, the differences are the micro ones. Both the macro and micro data are important to be examined since they can establish a comprehensive perspective on the structure of understanding the matrix. Therefore, the principle of analysis is to combine both perspectives based on the commonality and the difference of the themes or ideas instead of analysing the data on an individual case basis. According to the principle, themes or ideas are gathered under various categories and demonstrated in the following table (Table 9.1).

### Table 9.1 The categories of the themes and ideas related to the matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Themes/ideas (commonalities and differences)</th>
<th>Evidence given</th>
<th>Case</th>
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</table>
| 1. What are the meanings of the images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents through the experiences of art creation? | 1.1. The impact of socio-cultural and peer culture on young adolescents’ everyday experiences in art creation | Transcripts | * * * * * * * *
|                    |                                             | Artwork        | * * * * * * * *
|                    |                                             | Questionnaire  | * * * * * * * *
| 1.2. The protagonist as the creator | 1.2.1. The ideal icon chosen as the supreme learning model | Transcripts | * * * * * * * *
|                    |                                             | Artwork        | * * * * * * * *
|                    |                                             | Questionnaire  | * * * * * * * *
<p>| 1.3. The judgement of beauty: the aesthetic meaning of the representation | Transcripts | * * * * * * * * |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Transcripts</th>
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<td>1.3.1.</td>
<td>The stereotyped aesthetics</td>
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<td>1.3.2.</td>
<td>The counter-stereotyped aesthetics (modifying the original stereotyped images and adding personal feelings; applying drawing skills and techniques based on personal needs and views on aesthetics)</td>
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<td>1.4.</td>
<td>Psychological reflections on metaphorical and symbolic expressions</td>
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<td>1.4.1.</td>
<td>Projection phenomenon</td>
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<td>1.4.2.</td>
<td>The mixed emotional-and-realistic experience: mixing the reality with the imagination</td>
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<td>1.4.3.</td>
<td>The avoidance and omission phenomenon: applying the visual ways for escaping from depicting the difficult parts like the hands and fingers due to the lack of confidence or the reason for a specific visual effect like omitting the face for creating sad feelings metaphorically</td>
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<th>1.4.4. Emphasising the details of the particular part of the image like the blinking eyes, the weapons, or the clothes</th>
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<td>Artwork</td>
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<th>1.5. The trio-relationship pattern between images, sound, and texts in <em>manga</em> creation</th>
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<th>1.6. Gender issues including sex, the relationship with males and females, and stories about love</th>
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<th>2. Why are they creating these images in this particular way?</th>
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<td>2.1. Projecting themselves onto the ideal icon recognised by peers under the socio-cultural background as personal identities</td>
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<td>Transcripts</td>
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<td>Artwork</td>
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<th>2.2. Images connecting and establishing the relationship between the reality and the imagination through the particular way of aesthetic expression: distinguishing the imagination from reality</th>
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<td>Transcripts</td>
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<td>Artwork</td>
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<th>2.3. Drawing <em>manga</em> for a release from everyday pressures</th>
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<td>Artwork</td>
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<th>2.4. The <em>manga</em> creation as the multi-layer and multi-sensory imagery creation and learning</th>
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<td>3. How do they interpret the creation process?</td>
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<td>3.2. Creation processes as the inner communication, self-understanding, self-enhancement, or therapeutic process through the image creation</td>
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<td>3.3. Creation process reflecting the pre-occupied visual thinking process</td>
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<td>3.4. Creation as an allusionary-based learning method</td>
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<td>3.5. The improvement of the drawing techniques as an interaction with cognition and psychology, that are cognitively equal as the psychological indicator of the confidence, self-enhancement and self-achievement against the real problems faced by individuals in reality</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes the related evidence provided
Each category shown in the table is based on the related research questions. The table consists of four major parts: (1) the main research questions (the interrelationships of the images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents including the three subordinate research questions); (2) themes/ideas (commonalities and differences); (3) evidence given; and (4) case. Evidence given is from different sources, divided in transcripts, artwork, and questionnaire. A “*” sign is used to identify evidence of a particular theme or idea against the case.

All cases have the common themes or ideas, while some of them show a range of differences. The different themes or ideas presented in this study are of the “Counter-stereotyped Aesthetics (1.3.2.)” under the category of “Judgement of Beauty (1.3.)” and the “Avoidance and Omission Phenomenon (1.4.3.)” under the category of “Psychological Reflections on Metaphorical and Symbolic Expressions (1.4.)”. Both categories are related to the first research question of what proposed in the fundamental phase of the matrix. In case six, Yin’s data does not indicate the commonality of the theme or idea, while in case two (Kei), three (KH), four (KW), five (Fish), and eight (Yan), data do not demonstrate the latter. These cases are regarded as the differences.

All themes or ideas are intimately consistent with the phenomenon described later in this chapter. They concatenate together to formulate the conceptual meanings and response to the research question. When describing a phenomenon, themes or ideas should be regarded as clutches of ideas and should not be examined independently since the meanings are constructed by the interrelationship and interaction with each other. To understand the image created by young adolescents, connecting the correlated themes or ideas and analysing the interrelationship between them is essential.

Through this process, we can clearly see the holistic picture and examine the themes or ideas, as well as the linkage between them. Under the framework, themes or ideas are regarded as an integrated, consistent, and co-related focus elucidating the interrelationship and connection against the research question. Themes or ideas gathered in the study combines macro and micro perspectives to propound the phenomenon related rather than making independent descriptions and interpretations.
3. The analysis

The analysis part is to resolve the themes and ideas. Themes or ideas of each research question are analysed with a fused scope. The focus of analysis is on the interrelations among the correlated themes and ideas to depict the phenomenon. Following the analysis, theoretical scaffolding is established for interpreting the matrix in the end.

According to Table 9.1, there are 23 big themes or ideas presented in this chapter, in which 13 of them are under the category of the “Meanings of the Images of Popular Visual Culture Created by Young Adolescents through the Experiences of Art Creation” (research question one in the fundamental phase), five under the “Reason for Creating these Images in this Particular Way” (research question two in the middle phase), and five under the way of “Interpreting the Creation Process” (research question three in the third phase).

The themes or ideas related to the Meanings of the Images of Popular Visual Culture Created by Young Adolescents through the Experiences of Art Creation toward the first research question are: (1) the impact of socio-cultural and peer culture on young adolescents’ everyday experiences in art creation (1.1.); (2) the protagonist as the creator (1.2.), including the ideal icon chosen as the supreme learning model (1.2.1.); (3) the judgement of beauty: the aesthetic meaning of the representation (1.3.), including the stereotyped aesthetics (1.3.1.) and the counter-stereotyped aesthetics (modifying the original stereotyped images and adding personal feelings; applying drawing skills and techniques based on personal needs and views on aesthetics) (1.3.2.); (4) psychological reflections on the metaphorical and symbolic expressions (1.4.), including the projection phenomenon (1.4.1.), the phenomenon of mixed emotional-and-realistic experience (mixing the reality with the imagination) (1.4.2.), the avoidance and omission phenomenon (applying the visual ways for escaping from depicting the difficult parts like the hands and fingers due to the lack of confidence or the reason for a specific visual effect like omitting the face for creating sad feelings metaphorically) (1.4.3.), and emphasising the details of the particular part of the image like the blinking eyes, the weapons, or the
clothes (1.4.4.); (5) the trio-relationship pattern between images, sound, and texts in *manga* creation (1.5.); and (6) gender issues including sex, the relationship with males and females, and stories about love (1.6.).

Themes and ideas related to the reason for Creating these Images in this Particular Way toward the second research question are: (1) projecting themselves onto the ideal icon recognised by peers under the socio-cultural background as personal identities (2.1.); (2) images connecting and establishing the relationship between the reality and the imagination through the particular way of aesthetic expression: distinguishing the imagination from reality (2.2.); (3) drawing *manga* for a release from everyday pressures (2.3.); (4) the *manga* creation as the multi-layer and multi-sensory imagery creation and learning (2.4.); and (5) the particular conception or perception of artistic expression toward the gender issues like the neuter appearance of the male or female images (2.5.).

Concerning the third research question, themes and ideas related to the Way of Interpreting the Creation Process are: (1) the image creation process as the integrated process of psychological needs; cognitive thinking; educational learning; and the self-transforming and self-actualising processes toward the ideal icon with the intention and planning (3.1.); (2) creation processes as the inner communication, self-understanding, self-enhancement, or therapeutic process through the image creation (3.2.); (3) creation process reflecting the pre-occupied visual thinking process (3.3.); (4) creation as an allusionary-based learning method (3.4.); and (5) the improvement of the drawing techniques as an interaction with cognition and psychology, that are cognitively equal as the psychological indicator of the confidence, self-enhancement and self-achievement against the real problems faced by individuals in reality (3.5.).

According to the principle of analysis, correlated themes or ideas synthesise to three main themes or ideas: (1) socio-cultural influence and the meaning of the protagonist; (2) aesthetic account of the meaning of the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped phenomena; and (3) metaphorical meaning of the image.
3.1. Socio-cultural influence and the meaning of protagonist

The above-mentioned issues include correlated themes and ideas as the socio-cultural influence and the meaning of the protagonist, the aesthetic account of the meaning of stereotyped and counter-stereotyped phenomena, and the metaphorical meaning of the image respectively. These issues are related to the three research questions. Hence, the analysis lays stress on the analysis of the interrelationship with them. The data presented in Chapter Eight indicates the significance of the socio-cultural influence in manga creation in this study. However, the socio-cultural factor that affects the creators is limited. We learn from the data presented that the artistic form of Japanese manga culture including video games or cartoons, can undoubtedly affect students in their creation. However, surprisingly none of the students demonstrate the influence of the Western manga culture in their creation. The students’ dedication to Japanese manga becomes a common phenomenon in the study.

Behind this phenomenon, it reflects issues of the recognition and the acceptance of the concept of popular Japanese aesthetics on young adolescents’ manga creation. Although Japanese manga has a great impact on the students’ creation, this particular socio-cultural influence does not include all Japanese culture. Students accept Japanese manga culture only in the conceptual level, not the cultural content itself.

In a word, they accept the concept of aesthetics that Japanese manga suggests instead of admiring Japanese culture. It reflects that students look for a particular aesthetic interest; however, they do not mean that they should look for the culture. It also reflects that students have the ability to distil and distinguish from the socio-cultural content and context. They show interest in the form of aesthetics rather than the cultural issues. This specific form of aesthetics can be connected to a particular conception of the stereotyped aesthetic significantly found in Japanese manga and the student’s individual psychological needs, which will be analysed in detail later in this part.

The concept of Japanese manga aesthetics directly affects the student’s artistic form of expression. However, the particular aesthetic form suggested by Japanese manga rather than the content of the
Japanese manga story apparently attracts students. This can be seen from the eight cases in the study in which all the manga stories created are intimately related to students’ lived experiences. All the contents are about their life in context. It means that students localise the context, changing the original content with editing their daily life into their manga stories.

The localisation is an autonomous behaviour, connecting the students’ psychological needs. It also balances the artistic expression and students’ real world problems. Students not only accept some important socio-cultural influences that may help their creation, but they also can be autonomous to reject them. In this view, students apply their free-will to accept and/or reject the socio-cultural influence. It means, therefore, the social cultural influence is a choice in which students make their own decisions instead of following the cultural trend.

This phenomenon reflects that students are capable of distinguishing the Japanese aesthetic from the Western aesthetic in terms of manga creation, make decisions on the selection between them, and abstract the useful parts for the development of their creations within the specific aesthetics. From this perspective, the autonomy itself can be regarded as a consciously self-decisive and intellectual activity governing the mechanism of the selection within the socio-cultural context. For example, Yan responds to the socio-cultural effect on manga creation by stressing that the influence only happens to the sense of beauty indicated in Japanese manga. She rejects other forms of culture except the Japanese one, as she believes that Japanese manga can certainly provide a learning pathway for the stereotyped aesthetics. Besides, Yan also believes that manga creation that mixes reality with imagination can definitely formulate a way for her to reflect her situation.

In manga creation, we understand that there is a mixing phenomenon occurring in between the purely illusive imagination and reality. The students’ transcripts indicate that manga creation is neither purely illusive nor purely realistic. As suggested by Fish, the over-illusive content results in a decline in the reader’s attraction, while the over-realistic content causes the limitation of the space for the imagination. In addition, manga creation provides spaces for students to escape from reality. It seems, therefore, the image creation adopts a balance of views on both sides.
From the aesthetic perspective, the socio-cultural impact can be examined in two aspects: one is the selection of the image of protagonist from Japanese *manga*; the other is the processing of the image. These two aspects reflect that students are not reckless creators. Instead, they hint at significant sophisticated considerations behind them. For the selection of the protagonist, the socio-cultural influence only applies to the condition that students find connections with the image related to the creator’s lived experience. In other words, students in the study only select and create what they relate to themselves.

Selecting the image as the protagonist related to their lived experiences is understandable. However, selecting it from the Japanese *manga* needs more in-depth inquiry into understanding the specific meaning of the particular account of the aesthetics. If students accept the Japanese *manga* and reject other foreign *manga*, it appears that they recognise the artistic elements of Japanese *manga* aesthetics that has important meaning to them; otherwise, students will not continue to make images based on their selections. With reference to the students’ response to this issue, this particular socio-cultural impact sets the common criteria for the selection of image in which students can reflect their authentic situation and develop stories through *manga* creation.

There are two criteria found for both the selection and processing. For the first, the characteristics of the protagonist must be the same as the creator, which means that the protagonist can reflect the real character of the creator. In this respect, the creators are the protagonist. As to the second, the characteristics of the protagonist may or may not be the same as the creator, which means it is an imaginative character or a dream character.

Whichever character it is, the selection process must go through the expectation of the creator. This expectation generally comes from the student’s individual psychological need that is opposite to him or her in reality, which means the opposite characteristics of the creator. In this respect, the creator is not as the protagonist. In fact, these criteria can be separated or merged at the same time. This view of contradiction indicates that the criteria and processing presents as a dualistic and paradoxical
relationship. One point should be highlighted that both the selection and the processing of the image are autonomous.

In the eight cases, most of the students reflect the first criterion, while the rest indicates the combination of both. In addition to the selection issue, the socio-cultural factor on the formulation of the stereotyped aesthetic concept influences the student’s image processing. For instance, Kei creates a strong male image to project her wish to become strong, while Nie projects her wish of not using foul language onto the purity of the beauty of image.

Both of the protagonists selected and created can actually reflect their real characteristics and wishes in reality according to the teachers-in-charge. Although they have different experiences and wishes, similar stereotyped artistic expression of the image depicted can be found. The dual relationship of the protagonist is not only established by the integration of the creator’s characteristics, but also the recognition of the particular aesthetic from. Concerning the issue of the stereotyped aesthetic, the detailed analysis are explored later in this chapter.

The students’ selection behaviour itself implies a mechanism of the universal recognition of the artistic form of expression and the consensus reached by the creators in the light of the acceptance of the socio-cultural influence. However, students’ views on the world and their problems reflected in images are rather important than the influence of Japanese popular culture. In other words, the socio-cultural influence of the popular visual culture is only on the selection of the particular artistic form of aesthetics rather than the original content and culture. With this understanding, what is the meaning of the protagonist to the creator? The following reviews the details about this issue.

3.2. The protagonist as the creator

The selection and creation of the image of the protagonist representing the creator contains a variety of meanings. Therefore, understanding the protagonist as the creator is significant. It reflects a pre-occupation with the conception of aesthetics projected onto the image created, the ability to make
judgement on such aesthetics, the connection between the creator’s life experience and the aesthetics, the entity combining the reality with imagination, and the issue of the attainment of the sophisticated drawing skills and techniques in the process of image creation. The details of the above-mentioned issues will be analysed later in this chapter. First, the discussion starts with the basic image—the protagonist.

The protagonist as the creator plays an important role as an ideal icon. The socio-cultural factor influences the creator’s choice on the ideal icon, which includes aspects of understanding the icon aesthetically, the wills of re-structuring the original manga story relevant to the creator’s life, and the sufficient space that the ideal icon gives to the creator to upload his/her imagination. Although the socio-cultural factor influences the selection of the ideal icon, a quiet evolution occurs afterwards.

According to the students’ artwork and transcripts in this study, the socio-cultural factor apparently decreases upon starting the creation process and the ideal icon finally evolves to be a pure personal icon without connection with the original image. It gradually turns to focus on the creator’s psychological needs. At this stage, however, the stereotyped form of artistic expression remains in the image. It is not a popular socio-cultural icon anymore. Instead, the ideal icon becomes a personal image concerned with the psychological state issue about the creator since the separation. It reveals that the original socio-cultural content is not the concern of the creator, but the artistic form of expression is.

The ideal icon chosen by the student as the supreme icon has significant meanings to them. One of the meanings is the learning model. Another meaning may relate to the gender or sex issue. Below is a table of the selected protagonist (Table 9.2), demonstrating that among the eight cases, there are two female students who selected male images as the protagonists. The ideal icon chosen reflects that the selection criterion is not necessarily constrained by the student’s sex. It means that the image selected can represent their characteristics, but not the sex. This view can only be examined from a psychological reason that the chosen image matches the personal psychological needs of the creator, without necessarily considering the sex of the ideal icon.
The ideal icon indicates similar meanings applicable to all students. It represents their characteristics, wishes, and personal psychological needs. These meanings formulate the selection criteria for the ideal icon. With applying these selection criteria for creation, creators initiatively organise, connect, and seek possible ways to transform the particular aesthetic form of the ideal icon to their real life problem. Therefore, the whole transformative process starts with the selection. There is no question that the selection itself is a cognitive activity. All students clearly understand what to select, what to transform, why to choose, and how to proceed to the ideal icon abstracted from Japanese manga.

The selection mechanism not only reflects the cognitive aspect, but it also demonstrates the psychological consideration of each student. In the study, the cognitive account of the aesthetic presents as a common phenomenon. Students have similar reflections in experiencing the particular form of stereotyped aesthetics. They recognise, believe, and elevate the stereotyped aesthetic, being willing to approach the particular aesthetic concept with a consensus utilising the terms as “beauty”, “absolute beauty”, “cuteness”, “lovely”, or “prettiness” as suggested by Fish, Yin, and Nie.

These specific terms have an essential meaning to them, representing a self-enhancement and growth rather than the artistic stage development in teenagers. If we apply the perspective of the children’s artistic stage development to review the image creation of the students, the result may be
disappointing. The study does not indicate significant evidence on issues related to the artistic stage development. On the contrary, it shows a complex structure of understanding images created by young adolescents, which is not related to the said issue.

The ideal icon is shaped by both the creator’s characteristics and imagination. It mixes the creator’s real characteristics against the real world, with the stereotyped form of aesthetics. Students apply the stereotyped concept to perceive a state in which the protagonist mixes their imagination with reality. This view is also common for all students. For instance, Yin indicates that the protagonist can reflect her views on certain issues and can represent some of her realistic characteristics by putting her lived experiences into manga creation. Although there is an imaginative component in manga creation, students can distinguish reality from imagination. They understand that the protagonists cannot replace all the realistic aspects of themselves since manga itself is fictitious and imaginative. When we regard manga creation as being imaginative, it can represent students’ dreams and wishes. However, not all the dreams and wishes proposed are sweet; some of them are even bitter according to the student’s individual experience.

Although students apply both genders to create their protagonists, the sex of the protagonist created is not necessary to match the creator’s sex. Jack, Kei, and KW use a male protagonist to represent themselves, while the rest use a female image as the protagonist. In KH’s case particularly, she uses a mature female to represent the imagination of the creator, while Jack creates Pokemon and an imaginative male and animal to represent his characteristics. In Henderson’s research (1999), she discusses the experience of the young adolescents between the ages of 12 to 14 years who use animal imagery of the natural world abstracted from a calendar. She elucidates that the reasons for choice reflect some kinds of symbolic thoughts, providing both cognitive and affective thoughts in art. These metaphorical thoughts, which are unconscious but offer the important aesthetic considerations in art therapy, demonstrate the value of themselves.

The metaphorical expression is important to young adolescents. According to Moon (1998), metaphor is “a mental picture of something not actually present”, and “a tangible, visible, or aural
The image adolescents make are the meeting ground of their outer and inner vision. The outer vision explores the world around them; the inner vision explores themselves. In literature a metaphor describes one thing in terms of another. The purpose of this is to shed new light on the character of an object or idea” (p. 9). The reason for young adolescents applying metaphors to express is because images with metaphorical meanings “have an inherent quality of comparison in which one thing (the art object) is used to shed new light on the character of the adolescent artist” (Moon, 1998, p. 180). A similar viewpoint suggested by Riley (1999) declares that young adolescents “are constantly using their own individualized metaphors. They would much prefer to find their way in this mode, than to be confounded by adult grammatical rules. Metaphors are another aspect of their creativity applied to communication” (p. 44).

The ideal icon has an aesthetic character. It not only represents the specific concept of stereotyped aesthetics conceptually, but it also turns its concept to perceive to be an art medium connecting the aesthetic concept and the real world by adding the psychological factors. In this respect, it is a practical approach to transform the concept to implementation. The ideal icon which emerges in a stereotyped form of aesthetics is a phenomenon that can reflect the creator’s psychological need formulated by his or her imagination and real problem.

In this way, it functions as projection, connects the concept of stereotyped aesthetic, and the real lived experience. Once the connection is complete, the ideal icon is not a conceptual entity anymore. Rather, the creator’s real experience fuses with the stereotyped aesthetics to be a new entity. The new entity has offered the opportunities for the creators to transform their life.

In summary, the ideal icon functions as: (1) a space or a platform for the imagination; (2) a learning platform for students to learn and think; (3) a projection; and (4) a transmitter that the students can transfer their feelings and thoughts to a recognised physical and socially accepted form for self-expressions. The ideal icon appears as both the supreme model and the imaginative unity co-exists in a highly sophisticated form. The form provides possibilities for the students to consign and allow them to transmit their thoughts and feelings in such a socially acceptable and realistic way.
The meaning of the image of the ideal icon is like an idol, rather than a tool for catharsis based on the students’ responses in the study. For those students like KH and KW, who have higher abilities, advanced drawing skills and techniques, and sophisticated thinking in an art medium, they seem not to regard drawing *manga* as a tool for catharsis. It indicates that students with lower ability to acquire the sophisticated and advanced drawings skills and techniques tend to regard drawing as a tool for emotional release.

The ideal icon and the processing of modifying the ideal icon are similar to a self-transformation process. In the beginning of the transformation process, the ideal icon from the original *manga* story functions as a facilitator or a coach to the student. Afterwards, the student rejects the original content of the ideal icon except the conception of stereotyped aesthetics. The decision of abundance is made under careful consideration, which demonstrates a detailed planning. From this perspective, the icon selection and processing is an intellectual behaviour that shows the balance of the intelligence, cognitive thinking, and psychological needs behind it. Once the ideal icon is set, students will firmly develop a cooperative relationship with it until their real world problems are solved. Their determination to transform themselves through the ideal icon is a commitment.

This relationship is like an invisible but adjustable agreement based on the student’s practical situation and context. Once the agreement is formulated and authorised, it validates and revalidates through upgrading students’ drawing skills and techniques that students believe that these may lead them to capture the sense of beauty. This agreement only makes responses to the student himself or herself. The processing, therefore, is an inner communication with the self, with no involvement of the external world. It means that the responsibility of making communication with the self depends on the student. Such processing is similar to a rite. According to Y. Y. Li (1996), the meaning of a ritual refers to “a set of norm behaviour through a indirect related means and objectives” with the application of “symbolic” and “unrealistic meanings”, in which “the behaviour is always intentional” (p. 207). According to this, the selection and the processing of the ideal icon emerge in a norm.
3.3. Aesthetic account of the meaning of the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped phenomena

In this part, the focus is on the analysis of the essential concept of the aesthetics account and its influence in the student’s *manga* creation. Particular concepts of aesthetics toward the image of the protagonist in *manga* creation will be reviewed. The study suggests concepts of the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped aesthetics for analysis, discussion, and interpretation of the artistic form of expression in the matrix. The closely related counter-stereotyped aesthetic representation will have an in-depth discussion. Both the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped aesthetics are related to the issue of the aesthetic judgement in *manga* creation.

This aesthetic account can be an evaluation tool for students’ learning. In KH’s case, she evaluates her drawings based on successfully applying the sophisticated drawing skills and techniques in depicting the protagonist. It gives the evidence on her improvement realistically and psychologically. It is realistic since her drawing skills and techniques have been improved; it is psychological as she believes that her real problem will be solved due to the improvement.

Although the improvement task will not end and will be continuous as long as the students’ new problems exist, the temporary achievement to the students mean that they are qualified for heading to the next advanced level of practicing drawing. The similar situation happens to KW who utilises the image of protagonist to inquire into the unknown self. KW knows the solution to her real problem and expects to head to the next advanced level as well. From her transcripts, she also demonstrates the process of self-evaluation.

From the student’s description, the aesthetic judgement lays stress on the judgement of beauty. The concept of beauty, according to the student’s different needs, can be different. In the study, Jack’s concept of beauty refers to the powerful weapon created and the illusory and isolated life in the Peaceful Town separated from reality. Kei, KH, Nei, Yan, and Yin regard beauty as cuteness or prettiness in relation to imagination through the symbolic expression in terms of depicting the difficult part and detail of the image. KW views beauty as the ability to control the holistic atmosphere of the
drawing through imagination. Fish sees beauty as loveliness emerged from the image driving the creator to produce an insight into the reflection of the creator’s life. Whichever approach the students have, they all believe that learning through beauty can transform their personalities.

The aesthetic representation can be perceived as a symbolic form like the image of the cap and the sword of Pokemon by Jack, which has important meaning to the creator, but does not necessarily have meaning to other students. Another example is Kei who knows what her goal is and knows how to achieve this by continuously practicing drawing. She keeps drawing a boxing boy as a symbol to imply the power of overcoming the real world problem. Such specific images are only given their meanings to the particular students. In this respect, the aesthetic consideration is indeed a mixed concept of socio-cultural, individual, and psychological issue.

From the image creation, students concern about whether both the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped form of aesthetics can be accomplished since they represent the benchmark for a successful self-transformation. Hence, the meaning of self-transforming refers to the resolution of the real world problem. According to the differences of the individual psychological reasons, the student’s ultimate goal in terms of the self-transforming, of course, will not be demonstrated the same. This psychological factor not only also affects their selection of the ideal icon, but it also affects the approach to the artistic form. For example, KW emphasises the creation of the atmosphere of the picture, while Yan attempts to shape the background of the picture in a three-dimensional representation.

Referring to the transcripts, the stereotyped concept is established by the peer culture, peer appreciation and criticism, as well as formulated by the socio-cultural influence. The mainstream of the stereotyped aesthetics, in the student’s word, means the fixed artistic form of the depiction of the eye, hair, mouth, nose, and facial expression. It also can apply to the image of an animal, like the image of Appendix F (vi) by Jack. The following table is a comparison of the stereotyped depiction of the face including the eyes, nose, mouth, and hair among the eight students (Table 9.3), which are often seen in their manga creation. In order to clearly focus on the details, the detailed part of the
image is highlighted and the non-relevant part erased. These images imply how they depict the image, reflecting their intentions to create images in a particular artistic form constrained to the stereotyped concept of aesthetics.

Table 9.3 A comparison of the stereotyped depiction of the facial expression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The stereotyped facial expression of the protagonist</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case</td>
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<tr>
<td>The image</td>
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<tr>
<td>Source</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The deconstruction of the details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mouth</td>
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<td>Face</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hair</td>
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The drawing sequence may or may not be an essential issue to look at due to the slight difference of the drawing order of each student. Instead, the most important issue should be the part of drawing that
the students emphasise. After the deconstruction of the face of the protagonist, several main ideas about the stereotyped aesthetics, toward the facial expression, are pointed out here for further discussion. According to the transcriptions, the first is the most important part of all—the eyes, demonstrate a strictly stereotyped form of artistic expression.

The stereotyped eyes are depicted as the round or almost a circle (case two, three, four, five, six, and eight), semi-circle with a rectangle (case one), and semi-circle with a watermelon-seed shape (case seven). They are bright, sparkling, and shining eyes, which appear like stars twinkling in the sky, reflecting the light, or having teardrops in the eyes. However, the male’s eyes of the protagonist created by Jack and the female’s eyes of the protagonist by other students have no significant difference. They all take about half of the proportion of the face. Apparently, gender differences of the facial expression are not a consideration.

In addition to the eyes, the depiction of the nose, mouth, and face appears to be in a stereotyped form. The representation of the nose is simplified as a point (case five), short lines (case one and eight), long lines (case three and seven), and an arrow shape (case two, four, and six). This simplification of depiction can be seen in the mouth and the outline of the face. Looking specifically at the mouth of the protagonist, students apply short lines (case one and two), long lines (case four and seven), almost a circle (case five and eight), and an upside down triangular (case three and six) to express the feeling of happiness.

In the light of the depiction of the outline of the face, one image appears to a semi-rectangular (case one), three images as round (case four, five, and eight), and four images present as an upside down triangular shape (case two, three, six, and seven). Students apply similar signs to depict the face of the protagonists. These signs are stereotyped and functions as symbols demonstrating the norm of the stereotyped concept of artistic expression. In the part of the hair depiction, there are four images with short hair (case one, two, four, and five). Although the hair of the protagonist created by Jack maintains wearing a cap to cover the hair, the rest of the cases are images with long hair (case three, six, seven, and eight). All hairstyles appear to be natural hair styles that are straight, full of texture,
and looking healthily without artificial treatments. As indicated in the transcript of the students in the study, the hair colour does not need to be black, even the colour can be green, KH for example. Besides the hair, the student neither highlight the nationality issue related to the hair colour or emphasise the foreign character in the transcripts though some of them mention that the original image of the protagonist abstracts from Japanese *manga* stories like Kei and Yin.

Compared with the other parts of the face of the protagonist, the representation of the nose, mouth, and outline of the face have less detail and are less important. If we look for significant meanings of such stereotyped expressions of the nose, mouth, face, and hair, the result may be disappointing. In fact, although the eyes, nose, mouth, face, and hair are depicted as the stereotyped form of expression, the students take much time to depict the eyes among them. They put much energy into depicting the eyes that comparatively needs much more sophisticated drawing skill and techniques to finish.

Although all the depictions of the face are constrained to the stereotyped artistic form of expression, the eyes become the most important part within the stereotyped aesthetic. The eyes depicted are more sophisticated than any other parts of the stereotyped expression in spite of the fact that they imitate the image from the original one. In other words, the eyes are the essence of stereotyped aesthetics. The drawing of the eyes is particularly important in *manga* creation among them since it shapes the quality of the beauty. In addition, this phenomenon can apply to all students.

The hair depictions rely on similar sophisticated drawing skills and techniques though both the transcripts and the artwork of the students in the study indicate that it is of secondary importance than the eyes. Within the stereotyped parts, besides the eyes, the hair style is comparatively difficult to draw than other parts not because it needs more comprehensive drawing skills and techniques to articulate but because it represents the quality of the stereotyped aesthetic, as the student’s term, the beauty.

Both drawing and thinking in the stereotyped artistic form of expression reflect that *manga* creation involves a collectively cognitive activity in which the concept of the stereotyped form of artistic
expression that is generally acknowledged and accepted. This phenomenon reflects that a particular aesthetic and cognitive value brought to the student through manga creation. This value has significant meaning to them. On one hand, the stereotypical form of expression provides a common method for the student to attain; on the other hand, it indicates the value of the popular visual culture and its influence on the student’s aesthetic conception.

All images are constrained to the stereotyped form; however, not all the representations of the image of the human figure created match the requirement of the realistic style in which the proportion and volume depicted are based on their objective observation and realistic considerations. Some human figures of the images are exaggerated and distorted, presenting a cartoon-like style. The human figure is depicted realistically based on careful observation; however, the face is not like that except Yin’s case. This phenomenon explores an important meaning that the students emphasise the stereotyped aesthetic of the face including the eyes, nose, mouth, hair, and hair more than the human figure. In other words, the face is not only more important than the body parts, but it also is constrained to the stereotyped aesthetics.

The drawing of the eyes, nose, mouth, face, and hair emerges in a significant form of stereotyping. They are the soul of the image. Nevertheless, compared with the stereotyping form of expression of the eyes, the drawing of the human figure becomes more flexible. Like the depiction of the eyes, it also reflects that there is a common value toward the aesthetics of popular visual culture. The artistic expression of the human figure and its clothing seem to be depicted in a free style. The human figure is changeable, turning to a spontaneous form of expression that is based on the student’s individual intelligence and artistic ability. For example, students can transform the clothing of the image created to a favourite old-fashioned Chinese clothing style as shown in Nie’s case or transform the human figure of the image to an exaggerated body as shown in KH’s case.

This particular aesthetic is contradictory with the stereotyped aesthetics. This phenomenon is against the stereotyped aesthetics. In here, the term “counter-stereotyped aesthetics” is applied to describe this phenomenon and the specific form of artistic expression. The depiction of the eyes, nose, mouth, hair,
and face are still contracted to the stereotyped rule. Nevertheless, this inconsistent artistic style of the head and body turns out to be integrated as a whole and presents in the same image. The two different artistic styles live together paradoxically. If we regard the eyes, nose, face, and hair as the head and human figure as the body, then the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped forms appear to an image of a centaur. The centaur is a half human and half animal creature that the two different parts are well integrated with the body. Applying this image to describe the phenomenon, it means that the image is structured with the stereotyped head and the counter-stereotyped body. The head is the foundation of the body, playing a leading role and providing the element for growing. It is the basis of the stereotyped aesthetics.

The artistic way of expression is constrained to the rule. However, the body part is secondary so that the creator can add his or her personal emotions, feelings, experience, preferences, and spontaneous artistic styles in the image of the protagonist selected, in which it is influenced by individuals. In other words, the centaur is a half stereotyped and half counter-stereotyped structure forming the image of protagonist in manga creation. It also means a struggling experience in which the creator needs to integrate the dualistic aesthetic concept to perceive in drawings by applying sophisticated drawing skills and techniques.

Spontaneous artistic expression means a successful integration in the dualistic artistic style according to the particularly dualistic aesthetic concept. It is surprisingly that such a strange combination does not make any conflict. Instead, what it indicates is a compromised and fused idea about shaping the ideal icon with the account of both aesthetic concepts. This compromise can be viewed as a product of the socio-cultural consensus toward the concept of aesthetics. This socio-cultural aesthetics also offers a learning platform for young adolescents to imitate and transform.

Both the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetics integrates the student’s lived experience into the individual psychological need. It seems that they are the two different things: the former manages the socio-cultural issue, the latter focus on the individual problem projected psychologically. However, they interact paradoxically but naturally through such integration. The form of integration of the
stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetics presents as a transition loop starting from the student’s real world problems to imagination, finding the solution to the problem, and returning to the new problem.

Within the transition loop, the role of learning in the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetics energises the transition process through combining the socio-cultural influence with the individual psychological need. The transition process is complete through the successful integration, leading the creator to implement the self-transforming process through the stereotyped aesthetic and the counter-aesthetic journey with reference to the consideration of the creator’s individual psychological needs concerned with his or her real problem. In this view, this transition process is complete once the creator successfully transits himself or herself to a centaur. In other words, the centaur is a benchmark for transition and the key leading to self-transformation.

The concept of the integration of the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetic in the real-and-imaginative psychological state does not mean that the concept only plays an instrument role for serving the modification of the behaviour in the transition process. The transition arouses the self-transformation process, which may finally lead to the behavioural changes. The transition and transformation indicates the importance of an autonomous process of both the cognitive learning behaviour and the psychological needs. We do not know whether this autonomous process will result in modifying the student’s behaviour.

It is uncertain whether Nie will change her behaviour of using foul language eventually. It may have a connection between the possibility of the autonomous process and the behaviour changed in the research study. However, there is no significant evidence on the result. This study concretely indicates that there exists a potential relationship or a connection in manga creation process directing to the student’s intention to have his or her behavioural changed. In the study, this aspect is regarded as a learning process, not a result. The result of the process is not the focus of the study. Further evidence to support this issue needs longitudinal studies.
The stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetics embodied in the image of the protagonist has an educational meaning. Students utilise the ideal icon to examine and perceive the aesthetics. They try out and practice, look for the unity and the different artistic forms of expression. Learning through and in the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetics of the ideal icon can also reflect the transition process. The transition process mentioned previously needs the autonomy of the creator in terms of learning, which means that the transition itself is an autonomous learning process governed by an educational goal. Learning through and in both the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetics engages in the account of the aesthetic judgement. The stereotyped aesthetics is constrained to the universal form of artistic expression, while the counter-stereotyped aesthetics concerns about the breakthrough of the form. However, they both represent the account of the aesthetic adjustments.

The stereotyped aesthetics relies on the socio-cultural view on the judgement of beauty. Nevertheless, it does not mean that students lack critical thinking in the stereotyped form. According to the transcripts and artwork in the study, students indicate that learning in the stereotyped form reflects the goal, learning method, process, and self-evaluation. They study and learn from the stereotyped artistic expression by keeping practicing. In fact, these processes are similar to the ordinary learning process. On the contrary, counter-stereotyped aesthetics lays emphasis on the individual psychological needs and looks for spontaneous expression. These two different issues regarding understanding the image from an educational perspective are more complicated than understanding learning through and in the arts since understanding images involve in both the socio-cultural influence of popular culture and the psychological consideration of individuals.

The socio-cultural perspective on the particular concept of aesthetics shapes the ideal icon. This perspective has already been pre-occupied by the aesthetic concept of Japanese manga, presenting in the stereotyped form of artistic expression. The image of the protagonist becomes the symbols representing the stereotyped form recognised by the young adolescents, providing a platform for the students to transform themselves. It reflects that the concept of the stereotyped aesthetic is shaped by the socio-cultural factor, while the particular artistic interest of the counter-stereotyped aesthetic is formulated by the creator’s individual story, image, personal psychological needs, and expectations.
Both concepts of aesthetics shape the ideal icon by offering the space for imaginations, transmitting, transforming, and evolution to the creator.

Adding the personal psychological needs to modify the image of the ideal icon can be the way to represent the state of the student for the time being. This modification closely relates to a self-transforming matter. The issue of transforming the ideal icon does not only reflect a consideration on psychological reason, but it also reflects the issues of cognitive thinking and understanding. It means that students have already known the essential issue about the image before processing the image creation. They know what the image means to them, what their problems are, why they create \textit{manga} in this particular way, and how they present their images.

The whole creation process is full of cognitive and aesthetic considerations. These can be found in how students think in applying the art medium to depict the image or how they interpret their image creation in the study. It seems that the cognitive thinking through and in art is a necessary means to start the transformation process. Cognitive thinking and understanding governs the selection of the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped artistic forms, which decide when the stereotyped form should be broken and transformed to the counter-stereotyped one.

It is arguable that the phenomenon of stereotyped aesthetics and counter-stereotyped aesthetics co-exists in terms of the importance of the development of the image of popular visual culture. Although the counter-stereotyped aesthetic form of aesthetics seems to become a principle or an aesthetic reference for students, one important issue must be highlighted that students must maintain the stereotyped form of artistic expression in depicting the eyes and face including the mouth and nose, hair in the counter-stereotyped aesthetic form of the human figure.

Even some important equipment or tools are constrained by the stereotyped expression. One obvious example is Jack who adds the Chinese invisible weapon, the "Chi" as the counter-stereotyped aesthetic expression that cannot be seen in the original story of Pokemon because of a Chinese martial arts context. Other examples are KH and Fish, who modify and enrich the original protagonist by
exploring various gestures, movements, and motions; however, they also maintain and emphasise the fixed form of the eye, face, and hair.

The principle of counter-stereotyped aesthetics can be applied to all cases except Yin’s case whose artwork does not show the quality of counter-aesthetics. Yin’s case is unique because she shows the resistant and withdrawal phenomenon in which she maintains the stereotyped aesthetics for the artistic expression. Yin case reflects a failure in transition from the stereotyped aesthetics to the counter-stereotyped aesthetics. She fails to be autonomous. Her image created indicates a withdrawn phenomenon. She omits the details of the protagonist and insists on her stereotyped form of human figure expression, without knowing how to face the problem of attaining the advanced drawing skills and techniques. Consequently, she locks herself into the stereotyped form for a psychological safety reason.

Unlike Yin’s involvement in the resistance, Jack turns to modify the stereotyped form of Pokemon. In Jack’s case, the new image of Pokemon after being transformed is no longer the original character abstracted from Japanese manga. To him, the continuous practicing of the weapons and caps of Pokemon, and thinking how to elevate the advanced drawing skills and techniques in terms of enhancing the action and movement of the protagonist become a symbol of the resolution to the real problem though he is still looking for the criteria for the attainment of the advanced drawing skills and techniques.

Similar to Jack, Yin is facing the dilemma; however, she has not learnt about that method and criteria as well as is not willing to make changes in case of being ridiculed by the peers. Consequently, she chooses to avoid drawing the difficult parts of the images and is constrained to the stereotyped artistic expression of Japanese manga despite the fact that she knows the counter-stereotyped aesthetic is a process necessary for upgrading herself. Of course, not every student emerges with the avoidance or omission phenomenon. However, the students in the study recognise that there is an intimate relationship between the issue of avoidance or omission, their real world problems, and the aesthetic concept of manga creation.
The ideal icon appears to a non-stereotyped form. After the ideal icon fulfils the requirement of the student’s psychological needs, more free and personal artistic styles are examined and suggested to break the stereotyped form through *manga* drawing. Every success in the breakthrough sets an indication to lead to a great progress and makes a further step to the final solution of the real life problem.

To achieve the goal, students rely on the sophisticated drawing skills and techniques. Drawing skills and techniques becomes a means for students. Every time students learn the drawing skills and techniques from the lesson, they will apply these for the improvement in the quality of their images; for example, KW uses various lines, tones, and values to enhance the visual effect of the images. Consequently, the overcoming of the drawing techniques is an essential benchmark for improvements. The improvement in the drawing skills and techniques can be regarded as the cognitive and psychological interaction with self-enhancement against the real problems.

The students consider the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped form of artistic expression, as the way of problem solving. Their responses to improvement in the drawing skills and techniques in relation to the solution to their real problem are like a ritual. They believe that they can transfer their problems to the ceremony. Within the ritual, each student’s improvement in drawing skills and techniques is different; for example, Jack begins to add movements and motions to Pokemon, while Kei begins to use different perspective to draw. Since they believe this improvement will take advantage of their life and strengthen their wills, they are willing to try out the techniques taught in class.

3.4. Metaphorical meaning of the image

The metaphorical meaning relevant to this study is about the aesthetic account and its meaning to the image. It involves various aspects such as selecting the image of the ideal icon, creating the meaning of *manga* stories, and shaping the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped artistic expression. As discussed previously, the aesthetic account in the study refers to the mixed concept combining the
socio-cultural aspect with the personal psychological consideration. This part will interpret this issue according to these two main considerations.

As discussed previously, the definition of aesthetics, according to the student in this study, means beauty. In contrast, the way of making interpretation to the aesthetic concept of the traditional fine arts domain is less complex since it involves the individual psychological consideration of each student in the study. However, the concept of beauty is a dualistic concept. From the student’s interpretation, they simplify the aesthetic account to imply the image that is “beautiful” and “ugly” to describe the essence of the image by examining whether the image created reaches the aesthetic quality. According to this, the judgement of aesthetics is constrained to lay stress on the judgement of these concepts.

The beautiful and the ugly can exist in both the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped aesthetic states. These concepts govern the artistic form of representation. In addition, all students in the study respond that this particular aesthetic concept can be learnt through the creating experience to lead them to self-transformation. In this way, beauty is a means for self-transformation. From the students’ transcripts and artwork, we understand that they use the concept of beauty to interpret the stereotyped aesthetics in the depiction of the eyes, face, or hair. The question is how the concept applies to make metaphorical meaning.

The protagonist who represents the creator and the manga story only tells the story related to the students’ experiences. Both the protagonist and the story reflect the beliefs of the creator. The characteristics of the protagonist and the story that emerged from manga are created based on such beliefs and their real characteristics in real life, with adding their own imagination, wishes, and psychological needs. It is coded and can only be decoded by the creator in terms of interpreting the meaning. These wishes and needs shape the metaphorical meaning of the image by utilising the symbols. In this way, the representation of the protagonist and the story itself is a metaphorical communication, in which they only speak and respond to the creator through the relationship between the self and image.
The relationship between the self and the image of popular visual culture are intimate. They develop a relationship in which they can transcend, transform, and integrate into one. Such a relationship formulates the metaphorical meaning. This relationship allows them to continuously communicate with each other. It functions when the student thinks in the image, he begins to re-collect the self and project himself or herself onto the image. Then, the self of the creator and the image reacts and integrates together. Finally, they become one.

According to this, the communication process indicates a dialogue producing process between them. Wilber (1977, 1980) sees the self as “I” and the image as “it” and the relationship of the self and the image can be understood as a self-transformation or self-integration process through the transition from I to it and from it to I. Therefore, to understand the metaphorical meaning of the image, one needs to learn about the inside-out and outside-in process first. This whole process needs an open mind, awareness, and an insight into the communication with the inner and outer self.

The metaphorical meaning revealed by the image can be viewed as a positive learning process rather than a personal painful experience in real life. In art therapy, as discussed previously, the resistance and stereotyped phenomena in children’s drawing can be seen as a sign of lacking in self-confidence. Nevertheless, this study indicates that these phenomena reflect a systematic learning process in which students have the intention to implement the stereotyped artistic styles by continuous practicing for self-enhancement.

Significantly, it is not an issue of lacking in self-confidence. Rather, it is serious matter of learning from the particular aesthetics. This learning process is applicable to all students. Even the sophisticated drawers like KH and Fish, do not give up applying the stereotyped form of expression to depict the eyes, nose, mouth, and hair. From this perspective, it is irrational to state that all stereotyped forms of expression refer to the symptom of the insufficiency of self-confidence.

Besides, it is not just simply to interpret that the stereotyped image reflects that students lack in creativity. The study shows that the production of the stereotyped images passes through a
sophisticated learning process in which the creators carefully examine, consider, and evaluate their artwork by measuring the distance between their ultimate goals and their real situation, showing creativities by transforming the original image. In the study, students demonstrate this intention obviously. To review the evidence in such a sophisticated learning process, we can examine the way that students depict the head and the human body of the image with reference to the centaur concept mentioned previously.

3.4.1. The centaur phenomenon and its meaning

In the discussion of the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped aesthetics previously, the concept of the centaur is applied to describe the particular split form and phenomenon in which the student presents his or her image. The findings explore and examine this concept in a deeper way from metaphorical and allusive perspectives suggested to explain this phenomenon in terms of learning process.

The centaur is a mixed entity combining the real and imaginative part. It is a paradoxical but a united entity, projecting the creator’s conception toward the stereotyped representation of aesthetics and the counter-stereotyped representation of aesthetics. It is a reflection and an evaluation of the creator’s state through which the creator can examine whether he or she can transform himself or herself by the recognition of the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped form of representation.

The centaur is an important issue of the self-transformation as its successful aesthetic integration means to the success in seeking a solution to the student’s real world problem. This paradoxical entity exists harmonically, metaphorically, and allusively in revealing the meaning of the image. The upper part of the centaur, known as the hands, represents the stereotyped representation of aesthetics, while the lower, known as the human figure, represents the counter-stereotyped representation of aesthetics in which the human figure usually appears as a realistic form. Comparatively, the realistic form of the human body needs more intelligence and the sophistication of drawing skills to depict. Below is the table illustrating the centaur phenomenon (Table 9.4).
Making a comparison with the head and the human body by separating the centaur, two different artistic styles are significantly found to co-exist at the same time in the same image. The head image maintains the stereotyped artistic style of expression in which the eyes are exaggerated and almost takes one-third of the proportion of the face.

With reference to the artistic form of expression of the head of these images, there are several main characteristics found. First, the artistic style of the head image is comparatively simple and constrained to the stereotyped concept from Japanese *manga*. In the head, some important parts like the nose and mouth, is intentionally simplified as a dot or drawn by simple lines. In contrast, students are much concerned about the expression of the details of the eyes and hair. The outline of the hair and face is depicted clearly. The hairstyle of each protagonist created presents as a long and natural style with the depiction of the detail of the hairspring. All these symbols become the criteria for the quality of the stereotyped representation of beauty.
On the contrary, the depiction of the proportion of the human figure is comparatively objective, spontaneous, and realistic, which seems to follow the real human figure proportion and the proper measurement of the six to eight heads height against the body. However, Yin’s case is an exceptional one. Her images are almost constrained to the stereotyped facial and body expression in accordance with the exaggerated cartoonist’s style.

Even though Yin does not follow the proper proportion to depict all images of human figure realistically, she also tries to show her intention to do the best in some of her drawings like Appendix K (iii), Appendix K (iv), and Appendix K (v). The above image shown in the table appears to an unfinished state of the human figure image of Yin. The depiction of the hand of the image reflects a result of lacking in observation of the detail. Compared with other images, she realistically depicts the breast part of the image, indicating her attempt to have the objective observation on the body part.

The stereotyped artistic forms from which the student perceives indicate in the facial expressions according to Japanese *manga*. The stereotyped eyes, hair, and smiling face mean the benchmark of beauty. As the most important and difficult part to depict, they are the essence of the ideal icon that can be achieved through learning. It is autonomous that the student can design the learning planning of reaching the quality of beauty. The depiction and representational method of the image are strictly constrained to the stereotyped aesthetics that must not be changed due to its representation of the concept of beauty.

Although the head image cannot be modified, the human figure can be changed based on the individual intelligence and wish. Even though we know some students like Jack and Yin, who show less intelligence in depicting the image, they still try to inquire into the method. For example, although some parts of the image created by Jack like the cap, the eyes, and clothing are depicted by following the stereotyped forms in order to capture the original spirit of the story, he tries to demonstrate some breakthroughs through drawing the details based on observation as illustrated in Appendix F (vi) and Appendix F (vii).
The depiction of the head is strictly structured under the socio-cultural consideration that is less affected by the creator’s psychological factors, while the depiction of the human body relates to the individual’s ability and learning from observation and practicing that can be affected by an individual psychological state. Comparatively, the measurement of the quality of the counter-stereotyped expression of the human figure is the spontaneous artistic style. Maslow (1968) describes the importance of the spontaneity. He states, “Pure spontaneity consists of free, uninhibited uncontrolled, trusting, unpremeditated expression of the self, i.e., of the psychic forces, with minimal interference by consciousness. Control, will, caution, self-criticism, measure, deliberateness are the brakes upon this expression made intrinsically necessary by the laws of the social and natural world, and secondarily, made necessary by the fear of the psyche itself” (p. 197).

Such spontaneous expression requires the creator to show his or her confidence in the depiction of the image. However, for instance, Yin’s resistance and avoidance phenomenon happened to the depiction of the hands of the image reflect the psychological influence of the insufficient self-confidence on her drawing. From this example, we can see the various degrees of impact of the psychological factor on shaping the centaur. In addition, compared with the body, the head seems to be the most important part of all. Most of the images made by Yin hint at her failure in depicting the human body eventually though she comparatively succeeds in depicting the head of the protagonist in the stereotyped artistic expression. Her failure in such a depiction indicates the lack of capacity of managing the counter-stereotyped aesthetics against the stereotyped expression of the body.

The following table (Table 9.5) illustrates how the spontaneous artistic expression of the human body presented is different from the stereotyped form of expression of the head. Images are selected from those created by each student based on the most spontaneous and counter-stereotyped expression criteria. The criteria are set based on the action, body gesture, or movement. This table indicates that a variety of ways of human body is shaped based on the creator’s objective observation, experience, realistic style, spontaneous expression, and imagination.
Table 9.5  A comparison of the counter-stereotyped expression of the human body

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>The image</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (Jack)</td>
<td>![Image](Plate 9)</td>
<td>Plate 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (Kei)</td>
<td>![Image](Appendix G (vii))</td>
<td>Appendix G (vii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (KH)</td>
<td>![Image](Appendix H (xv))</td>
<td>Appendix H (xv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (KW)</td>
<td>![Image](Appendix I (iii))</td>
<td>Appendix I (iii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (Fish)</td>
<td>![Image](Appendix J (iii))</td>
<td>Appendix J (iii)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (Yin)</td>
<td>![Image](Appendix K (xi))</td>
<td>Appendix K (xi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (Nie)</td>
<td>![Image](Appendix L (vi))</td>
<td>Appendix L (vi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (Yan)</td>
<td>![Image](Appendix M (xiii))</td>
<td>Appendix M (xiii)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Among these images, Nie’s and Yin’s images illustrate a particular gesture. Yin is constrained to the stereotyped expression, while Nie depicts her image in a stationary position. Within the picture frame, we can see Nie as a girl quietly standing, holding her left arms tightly. She avoids drawing the details of both hands instead of depicting them as a simply form as a ball. The still position reflects Nie’s intention to make the image in the particular way, reflecting that there is cognitive thinking behind the result of such depiction. She also shows concern on the depiction of the elegant post of a fair woman rather than an image in motion.

According to Nie’s transcripts, it is understandable that she created the elegant image as a symbol to tell the metaphor of fighting against the problem of speaking foul language. Nevertheless, Nie comparatively demonstrates the spontaneous expression than Yin. From Nie’s image, it shows some aesthetic qualities in thinking about the art medium. Unlike the image designed by Nie, however, Yin shows her attempt to depict a girl waving her arms fast to refer to an action or a continuous movement. Yin’s image demonstrates her failure in looking for breakthroughs. It results in depicting the image in the cartoonist style by maintaining the stereotyped form of expression.

The criteria for producing the quality of the head is strictly subject to the stereotyped form of Japanese manga, while the human figure follows the realistic and spontaneous expression, as well as the influence of the individual psychological factors such as the lack of self-confidence. In this respect, manga creation is the integration of the cognitive understanding and psychological activity. Upon putting the finished image of the head and the body together, students examine it as a whole image. The definition of a fine image created refers to a successful result in integrating the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped aesthetics in re-creating a new image.

This new image gives a significantly therapeutic meaning to the creator in manga creation. It not only implies that they can re-grasp their self-confidence, but it also proves that they finally seek the solution to their real world problem. As discussed previously, the study does not show whether the student’s problem could be solved due to the re-creation of the image; the possibly problem-solving
issue in this study refers to a psychological satisfactory state rather than a real experience. However, as
the creation process engages in cognitive learning in the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped
aesthetics, the centaur is not purely based on the psychological consideration. Therefore, the centaur is
a mixed entity combing the cognitive understanding, learning, and the psychological aspects.

There is a connection between learning in the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetics and
seeking the solution to the student’s real problem. This study suggests that the practical drawing skills
and techniques is the answer to this essential question. The eight cases demonstrate a similar attitude
toward the connection between the problem and the advanced drawing skills. To reach this goal,
continuous practice of the advanced drawing techniques becomes an indication of the solution to the
problem.

For instance, Jack understands that there is a connection between his problems and the drawing skills.
In the study, he perceives that the only method to reach the form of beauty is to acquaint himself with
advanced drawing skills and techniques. He believes that once the advanced drawing skills are
attained, his real problems will be literally gone. On one hand, he insists on maintaining the
stereotyped form of expression of the eyes, caps, or the facial expressions in his drawing; he tries to
depict some details to enrich the image through the careful observation on the other hand. This is a
common phenomenon found in the study. For example, Jack tries to depict Pokemon as same as Kei
does.

Based on the transcripts, the students relate the issue of self-identity to the concept of beauty. From an
holistic view, the centaur is a self-identity matter. Although the split phenomenon happens to the head
and body, it does not mean that the self-identity will collapse. On the contrary, it shows a perception of
the self-identity formulated by the dualistic aesthetic form. We can define the self-identity as a product
created by the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped aesthetic artistic form and the spontaneous
artistic style, as well as the individual psychological needs. Below is the figure demonstrating how this
complicated relationship finally shapes and integrates itself to be the self-identity according to the
centaur, the aims, artistic expression, and the features (Figure 9.1).
From the above figure, there are several important ideas: (1) the centaur is a paradoxical entity of the integration of both the head and body image; (2) the aim of the head image is to look for united form, while the body image is to seek the individual; (3) although the depiction of the centaur plays a crucial role in the transformation process, the student is autonomously in charge of the transformation process, which means that the progression depends on the student; (4) the head image is constrained to the aesthetics of Japanese *manga*, while the body image is devoted to the individual’s spontaneous artistic style; and (5) both of them eventually becomes a united entity representing the student’s self-identity. The self-identity is an experience of being recognised by peers, aesthetic inquiry, and problem solving issue.

The paradoxical forms reflect that drawing showing both the concept and percept. McFee (1998) defines that, “A *percept* is an impression of an object obtained by the use of the senses. A *concept* is an idea about an object, generalized from previous experiences with the object” (p. 116). According to Maslow (1971), both the concept and percept can exist; however, his ideas about them puts emphasis on two lengths: The first is a universal type of consciousness “in which the whole of the cosmos is perceived and everything in it is seen in relationship with everything else, including the perceiver” (pp.
252-253), while the other means that “the percept becomes the whole of the cosmos” (p. 253). According to this, both refer to a state of integration.

In this study, similar states can also be used for description. The stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetics is the aesthetic concept from Japanese manga, while the transformation process is regarded as a perception on this concept. The identity, as a metaphor, represents the integration of the conflict between the stereotyped form of aesthetics (the head) and the non-stereotyped form of aesthetics (the human body), perceiving the solution to the student’s problem. Besides, the perception of the identity is the projection of the dualistic aesthetic concept.

The centaur functions as a symbol and a pathway to the solution of the problem. The perfect integration starts with the depiction of the head and body, directing to the final solution of the student’s real problem. With reference to the issue of the advanced drawing skills and techniques, the attainment of that not only reflects a success in artistic expression, but it also a self-identity issue because such achievements, from a psychological perspective, are symbolised as overcoming a real problem. With this relation, the self-identity is in line with the real problem. Therefore, the self-identity becomes a socio-cultural and a psychological issue.

3.4.2. Sex, gender relationship, and romance

The sex and gender issue mentioned in the study seems not to be a serious issue, revealing that subject matter is about the student’s everyday life. It also reveals that imagination about love or other gender related issues is limited. In the study, the issue of love or romance is regarded as a socio-cultural concept formulated by Japanese manga. Manga creation does not present a real love relationship since the students in the study do not have such an experience though love is a hot theme in Japanese manga. It is not necessary to relate to the student’s real experience about love, which means that the love concept does not perceived in reality, but in the imaginative manga world. Also, this experience does not necessarily relate to the sex of the creator, which means that the sex of the image created is not constrained to the real sex of the creator.
3.4.2.1. The visual-narrative pattern in romance

The love content in the study emerges from a certain form or pattern: (1) the translation form; (2) the universally symbolic visual pattern; and (3) the narrative form. The translation form refers to the condition that students directly translate the words of popular love songs like the stories in Plate 14 and Plate 16, or translate some Japanese or English words to edit into the captions in the manga stories like Plate 28 and Appendix L (iv). The universally symbolic visual pattern means the symbols applied represent love. It usually appears to a stereotyped image like the heart shape seen in Plate 14, Plate 16, Plate 36, and Appendix L (iv). The narrative form refers to the dialogue among the characters in manga story telling the love story like images in Plate 14, Plate 16, and Plate 28. The content of the story need not relate to the love story. Even when students conduct a story related to the romance subject, it does not mean that they actually depict the romance in manga creation. Instead, it demonstrates a stereotyped thought, and stereotyped artistic expression of the love image.

The form of representation of love adopts the stereotyped form across the students. The students’ responses in the study demonstrate that words of the popular songs are not necessarily related to their lived experiences. They realise that the text only plays a subordinate role in the manga creation process. Students transform the words of popular songs, excluding the stereotyped representation of the love content and presenting it as a stereotyped form of visual expression. For the translation form, the story can be regarded as a translator like the image shown in Plate 14 by Kei, Plate 16 by KH, Plate 28 by KW, Plate 36 by Yin, and Plate 40 by Nie. They are constrained to the stereotyped words of the popular song, most of which are Cantonese songs, to visualise, describe, and shape the scenario in context. Students neither create the new stories nor the new characters. In this respect, the visualising process is similar to a translation process.

Nevertheless, students regard reading and creating images as an interdisciplinary and multi-sensory learning approach. They have the ability to translate and transform their favourite popular songs into their manga stories within the picture frames. Sound is regarded as the background music, which can
make them more focused on drawing rather than as a facilitating tool for imagination. Furthermore, images related to the love issue in manga creation interact with the visual symbol, language, and sound. Among them, however, the study demonstrates that the visual is the most important way to integrate these elements to depict the meaning of the story. It means that students use visual thinking in depicting the narrative form: the love story is created visually rather than narratively. To present the story in a visual way, it depends on the stereotyped and symbolic form of expression. Although the visual form plays an essential role in the interpretation of the love story, it does not affect the content or subject matter.

In this respect, the meaning of the story lays stress on the stereotyped visual form itself, not the subject matter or the content. For example, the images in Plate 36 by Yin and Appendix L (iv) by Nie demonstrate a stereotyped love-shaped pattern that is universally recognised across different cultures. Love stories are from personal experiences, but the universally symbolic form of visual depiction is definitely not. In other words, the love story that is mainly constructed, told, and presented by the visual sense and the visual expression only gives the formal meaning to the story.

Students visualise the love stories instead of telling the stories in a narrative form. This narrative structure can be presented as a plate narrative story or statement like the image in Appendix F by Jack, metaphorical image like the image in Appendix G (x) by Kei, Appendix H (vi) by KH or even a poet like the image of Plate 44 by Yan. Although they are a narrative form, they are subordinate to the visual image. In this way, the manga story presents as a visual-narrative form of expression, reflecting that the meaning structure is constructed visually.

This viewpoint makes us carefully consider the relationship between the sound and linguistics in formulating the integrative arts form in manga creation. The form of presenting the meaning of the story is the focus of the essence of the depiction of a love story. Therefore, the meaning of the story is not about the content, but about the integrative arts form. This phenomenon expounds that the stereotyped form of aesthetics not only governs the artistic form of expression of the image, but it also constitutes the presentation of the gender and love issue.
3.4.2.2. The neuter appearance

In this study, some images created tend to have a neuter appearance. The neuter appearance refers to the image created by students that is neither masculine nor feminine like the images in Plate 10, Plate 11, Plate 14, and Appendix G (iii). Such perceptions can be seen in the depiction of the image of both sexes. In particular, some male images created appear to be feminine, while some female images are neuter. Both forms reflect the influence of the stereotyped concept of beauty that is unnecessary to relate to the sex of the creator. This particular appearance does not necessarily relate to the love content in the manga stories. Rather, it is constituted by the subjective perception of the stereotyped aesthetics.

These forms of expression reflect that the appearance is a formal production. It metaphorically represents the aesthetic belief of the creator. In the study, students show concern about the depiction of the neuter image according to the formal consideration. From the transcripts, students respond that this specific form of expression comes from Japanese manga, in which the neuter or feminine protagonist is often seen representing beauty against the institution established by the adult world. This expression can be interpreted as a way of escaping from reality. It is a symbol of rejecting growing up. Therefore, understanding gender issues in the study should not focus on the subject matter. On the contrary, they are the perception of the stereotyped form of artistic expression influenced by Japanese manga.

Toward the neuter appearance, the head and figure emerges in a split state in terms of artistic expression. Some students in this study select a male image as the protagonist to represent himself or herself like Kei and KW; however, these images are presented in an appearance in which the sex of the image is not clearly depicted. Other examples are that both Jack’s and Kei’s male images emphasising the masculine body movements carrying a figure of neuter appearance. However, Kei emphasises the details of the eyes just like what other student do, while Jack puts more focus on developing the details of the weapon and the cap of Pokemon. No significant feminine body gestures and feminine appearances are found in Kei’s manga creation. Comparatively, KH and KW on one hand maintain the
stereotyped expression of the face, on the other hand they show the significant expression of the feminine body gestures and appearance.

The neuter and/or feminine appearance is particularly emphasised on the part of the head of the image. In the light of the depiction, the eyes, nose, mouth, facial expression, and the hair are constrained to the neuter appearance. What is the metaphorical meaning of such expression as the head of the centaur? Why do they cognitively shape the image in this particular way? In respect to these questions, let us first review the image of the head. The following is a comparison table of the head image of both sexes, which are selected and abstracted from the original image created by the students in the study (Table 9.6).

**Table 9.6  A comparison of the head image of both sexes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>The male’s image</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>The female’s image</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Appendix F (v)</td>
<td>Jack</td>
<td>Appendix F (v)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kei</td>
<td>Plate 14</td>
<td>Kei</td>
<td>Plate 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>KH</td>
<td>Plate 18</td>
<td>KH</td>
<td>Appendix H (xiv)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>KW</td>
<td>Plate 24</td>
<td>KW</td>
<td>Plate 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>Appendix J (iii)</td>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>Appendix J (iv)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to the table, some images are depicted with long straight hair, which is the stereotyped symbol to represent the female; however, it is not always represented in this way. For instance, Jack and KW use short hair as symbols to represent females. The stereotyped method of depiction of the eyes, hair, and facial expression seems to govern the representational appearance of the image in both sexes. According to this, the above images are hard to distinguish from male to female if the feminine feature like clothing does not identify the sex clearly. As discussed previously, the sparkling eyes are the soul of the head image. Would the eyes tell the sex differences? Apparently, the shining eyes demonstrated in the table are not the crucial element to distinguish the sex difference because both sexes have these blinking eyes, too.

Looking at the depiction of the nose, mouth or facial expression, we still cannot find a significant difference according to the stereotyped aesthetics. If the stereotyped symbol such as the short hair and blinking eyes of the image cannot become criteria for the identity of sex, then what makes the difference? The distinction of the sex of the image is vague, subject to the student’s subjective interpretation. It is neither subject to the realistic consideration of the real sex of the student nor the stereotyped rule such as the short hair image representing the sex of male. In fact, the stereotyped head image reflects that the student does not look for unique and individual expression, but the united form of expression influenced by Japanese *manga* aesthetics and the student’s psychological need.
Therefore, the successful united form depicted in both sexes is a proof of the attainment of the stereotyped aesthetics.

The neuter phenomenon has significant meanings to the students according to the student’s transcripts and artwork. This neuter phenomenon can be understood as a significant symbol of rejecting the adult world as well as a projection of the student’s psychological need for having strong protection from the outer world. From this connection, the stereotyped aesthetics is like a shelter to the student. Under the umbrella, they apply the specific forms to separate themselves from the adult world. Although this unclear appearance makes it hard to tell the difference of sex, the student still can distinguish from one to the other based on subjective interpretation. The depiction of the sex of image does not depend on how the image looks like based on the sex. Rather, it relies on a complicated psychological underlined reason.

3.4.3. Creating a protagonist as therapy

As discussed earlier in the chapter that the protagonist reflects the personality and characteristics in terms of the psychological need of the student, a therapeutic perspective on the idea of creating a protagonist as therapy is herewith suggested. It is suggested that the particular stereotyped and counter-stereotyped expression reflects the therapeutic meaning through the metaphorical and symbolic expressions, as well as self-reflection.

Taking into account the students’ collection of manga creation, it demonstrates that the content of the mainstream story only reflects or makes a narrative about a single incident of his or her everyday experience. The story may be a projection of the student or just simply for releasing the student’s pressure on some important issues; however, storytelling cannot facilitate the self-transforming. It means that the narrative form of expression does not necessarily have a therapeutic function.

The therapeutic function starts with the continuous practising of the image of the protagonist in the visual way, depending on the quality of the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped form of aesthetic
given to the metaphorical meanings to the student. In this respect, the image creation process is also an inner communication process that is similar to the therapeutic processes since both of them rely on making and interpreting meanings through and in images. Within the communication process, students speak to the images and the image projects on the students’ states to understand. The transformation is made through the continuous dialogues in the image creation. This dialogue provides the opportunities to reflect and make changes. For example, Yin interprets her creation process as the safe, continuous, and emotional release process in which she enjoys the conformation of the attainment of the cuteness and beauty from image creation.

In the communication process, projection is a common method for students to transfer their images to a third person image. The third person in here is similar to the “double” or “mirror”, which refers to the image of the protagonist. According to Blatner (1991), this term is used as a method in psychodrama to help people seeking their creativities and ways of problem-solving through the role-reversal technique. Hence, the third person is not only regarded as a medium for projection, but it is also a cognitive learning method for inner communication.

The projected image reflects the student’s psychological states in reality. Looking back to the image in Plate 1, Pokemon seems to start going to the left but suddenly stops and turns his head to the viewer, without rich facial expressions depicted at all. Even the artistic styles of Pokemon are simple in contrast with other students. Pokemon projects the world of Jack, standing alone in a large space and holding a bamboo sword to protect him from the bullying experience in reality. The artistic expression is formed and fixed with the creator’s cognitive thinking in such a particular experience. Like Jack’s case, other students suggest similar reflections on the individual unhappy experiences, too.

Students realise that the creation of the image of the protagonist can temporarily release the pressure from reality, but cannot solve their real problems. Nevertheless, students continuously express their feelings and make communication with their inner self through practicing and creating images. Images, in this way, function as a mirror reflecting the way of knowing. It shows the way to understand the situation with a positive attitude toward problems. The protagonist and the storyline not only provide
the students with wishes through imagination, but they also point to a practical way of self-transformation through learning in drawing. Their problems are in line with the psychological belief in terms of solving the problems through drawing the beauty out. Although this has positive meaning to creators, it can be a way to temporarily escape from the harshness of reality. Such escaping can be understood as a resistance as we mentioned previously. The escaping form found in the study is related to the avoidance or omission phenomenon. The following is the details about this particular issue.

3.4.4. The avoidance phenomenon and its meaning

There is one significant phenomenon about the escaping issue found in the study—the avoidance or the omission phenomenon, which is related to the resistance issue. This is an important issue, as it involved not only the psychological aspect of the creation, but also the behaviour of the student. Although all students mention about this phenomenon in their transcripts, such phenomenon can only be found in the artwork of Jack, Yin, and Nie. It happens especially when students lack in sophisticated drawing skills and techniques as well as having insufficient intelligence in managing the drawing problem. Except the two cases, the rest of the students choose to face the problem instead of escaping. Typical forms of the phenomenon perceived are to omit or avoid drawing the difficult parts like hands and fingers.

Several types of avoidance phenomenon can be found in the study. First, it is about exaggeration or distortion. The distortion phenomenon includes both the exaggerated and distorted proportion of the human figure like images seen in Appendix K (vi) and Appendix L (i). To understand the avoidance phenomenon must rely on careful examination on the creation’s psychological reason for this effect. Not all the avoidance reflects the symptom of the behaviour of lacking in confidence. In fact, there are two specific types of distortion: one is to copy the stereotyped image directly from the original image without thinking in the art medium; the other is to cognitively distort the image based on the creator’s free will. For the first type of distortion, according to Riley (1999), it is understandable that this phenomenon reflects a psychological withdrawal in case of being afraid of the exposure of the
creator’s deficiencies. For the second type, on the contrary, distorted aims at enhancing visual effects, which needs the courage and intelligence of the creator because every change needs an in-depth thinking in the both the art form and medium.

Such exaggerated or distorted phenomenon is often seen in Japanese cartoons or manga; however, of course, it is not necessary to interpret that the exaggerated or distorted phenomenon found in Japanese manga is the result of lacking of sophisticated drawing skills and techniques. For example, to some students with sophisticated drawing skills and techniques like KH and Fish, they intentionally exaggerate some of their images to capture the cuteness of the image sometimes. From the student’s response to such a phenomenon, represents the lovely or beautiful characteristic.

The second type of avoidance phenomenon is omission, which is closely related to the psychological reason. Omission phenomenon does not imply the careless mistakes made by the creator in image creation process; on the contrary, sometimes it is, like the exaggerated or distorted proportion of the image, just a visual effect made by the creator. Some drawings, like Yin’s image of Appendix K (iii) and Appendix K (v), do not present the hands. She knows how difficult for her to draw both hands and finally decides to reduce the paper size by cutting some of the edges out to avoid showing the hands of the figure. Yin intellectually avoids the embarrassing parts. She even cuts the hands out of the image to avoid these imperfect hands to be exposed and ruin the sense of beauty.

The description of the artistic development found in the study like Jack’s Pokemon (Plate 1.1), Kei’s Dark (Plate 1.11), and Fish’s Chara (Plate 1.29) was similar to the schematic stage suggested by Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987). According to Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987), children at this stage presents the human representation as: (1) repeated schema for person; (2) a body usually made up of geometric shapes; (3) arms and legs show volume and are usually correctly placed; (4) exaggeration, omission, or change of schema shows effect of experience; and (5) proportions depend on emotional values (p. 476). According to this, their views on the schematic stage are not a natural conceptual form of artistic expression related to children development; instead, it is their intention to avoid or omit the difficult parts of drawings. The avoidance phenomenon on the formal concept is shaped based on the
socio-cultural influence like the Japanese aesthetics in *manga* and the personal psychological needs like in-confidence factors.

In some cases, the way of depiction apparently reveals an intention of the student to utilise visual ways to escape from drawing the difficult parts of the image like hands or fingers of the images. One significant and typical case is Yin. Most of Yin’s images are completed with the stereotyped artistic style, for instance, the image in Appendix K (vii) and Appendix K (viii). The images of Yin’s drawings are flat and stereotyped. All these indicate that she fails to practice the images to show volumes. She gives up drawing the image in a realistic way, especially omitting the depiction of both hands. She even tries to depict both hands realistically in Appendix K (iii) and Appendix K (iv), the drawing style obviously reflects that she lacks abilities in detailed observation and advanced drawing skills and techniques.

Although images in Plate 34, Appendix K (iii), Appendix K (iv), and Appendix K (v) are presented differently since she tries to lay stress on depicting the clothing and body in details with noticing the relationship between the proportion and the human figure, the facial expressions and the omission phenomenon on avoiding drawing the difficult parts are still remarkable. Compared with Yin who still stays in the stereotyped artistic stage, Nie’s distortion of the hands and body of the image seen in Appendix L (viii), show the difference in terms of reflecting a visual effect made by careful visual thinking in art medium.

If explicating that the neuter appearance of the image is one of the avoidance phenomena, the study has no significant evidence to interpret such phenomenon in relation to the psychological resistant reason. The transcript of the student clearly indicates that this particular phenomenon on the neuter appearance is the result of the artistic expression in relation to the stereotyped conception of aesthetics from the Japanese *manga*. It reflects an intention of aesthetic knowing. In other words, the stereotyped aesthetics from Japanese *manga* provides inspiration for creating the artistic style of neuter or feminine appearance of the image. The neuter appearance is an artistic style, not a result of self-resistance due to the lack of confidence.
Yin’s responses to give up drawing the details of images are constrained by the psychological withdrawal and resistance. She stresses that she does not have enough confidence to depict the difficult parts at this moment since these depend on advanced drawing skills and techniques to be finished. The avoidance phenomenon sends an important message through the images, which is like a statement as, “I am not ready to take this”. Therefore, she chooses to stay back to maintain the stereotyped form and believes that this could secure her at that moment.

Once again, omission could be an avoidance phenomenon, but it is not necessarily always negative. Omission could be a specific visual effect designed for the metaphorical and symbolic expression depicting the quality of the mood, for example, the image of Plate 40. This is a result of the positive cognitive thinking, like Yan’s and Nie’s cases that reflect a kind of artistic and cognitive considerations for the avoidance phenomenon. It shows an intention, not just an escape.

Besides Yin, similar avoidance phenomenon can be found in Jack’s and Nie’s cases. They both omit drawing the difficult parts—the hands of the protagonists. Images in Appendix F (iv) and Appendix F (v) illustrate Jack’s intention to omit drawing the hands by hiding the hands and putting them into the Pokemon’s pocket. Although image in Appendix F (vii) demonstrates a more detailed depiction of Pokemon’s hand, it is not often seen throughout his manga creation. Usually, he avoids drawing hands by depicting them as a ball shape as seen in Plate 5 and Plate 9. Nie’s images in Appendix L (vi) and Appendix L (ix) demonstrate the similar phenomenon as Jack though she has several images that are successfully depicting the hands like images in Appendix L (vii) and Appendix L (viii).

The cause of the avoidance phenomenon has a concrete reason by the students. Jack’s explanation to the cause of the avoidance lays stress on his never-ending problem of bullying, while Nie refers to her serious problem of speaking foul language. They both clearly understand how to use stereotyped symbols to make the avoidance effect visually, though they choose omission as a way to escape. In other words, it is a cognitive understanding and indicates an intention to do so. The reason is not simply because they lack in confidence but because there is a schedule already set for improvement.
They both realise that their problems must be solved and understand that they can only be solved by overcoming the depiction of the difficult parts of images. From this aspect, it is arguable that the avoidance or omission phenomenon only reflects negative psychological aspects of the creators. If we carefully examine other parts of their images, we find that except the hands, they try hard to enrich and demonstrate sophisticated artistic expressions as seen in Appendix F (iv) and Plate 39.

3.4.5. The meaning of being sophisticated in image depiction skills

This study shows that the creation of images reflects the student’s identity. It also indicates that every student connects his or her problems to the artistic problem through manga creation process. The realm between the realistic problem and the artistic problem is vague; even if it is confused because thinking in art medium and thinking in realistic problem-solving method are basically two different things. However, all students regard the attainment of drawing skills and techniques as equal to a promise of the attainment of beauty. They believe that their realistic problems can only be solved through practicing drawing skills continuously. In other words, they relate the problem-solving skills to the recognised art method suitable for everyone. They transform this physical attainment to the solution of the psychological problem.

Being sophisticated is an essential issue. Students demonstrate different sophisticated levels of drawing skills and techniques required for capturing the beauty of the images. However, in terms of the basic drawing skills and techniques, they are different according to different cases. For instance, KH refers the basic drawing skills to the meaning of the abilities to apply simple lines to create the atmosphere and depict the image; but to Yin, it means the sophisticated copying skills from the original image.

Nie points out the importance of the improvement in drawing skills by connecting them to the real problem-solving skills. Unlike the other students in the group, she uses contradictory questions, dialogues, or statements demonstrated in her manga to question what the prettiness is, Appendix L (iii) for example. She is confident in creating fine images and believes what she creates is the perception of
beauty; however, she has not enough confidence in her *manga* creation, being afraid of being recognised and appreciated by the peers.

Not only the students who have lower drawing abilities like Jack and Nie cannot depict images in detail, but also other students expound upon a linkage between their problem and the improvement of the drawing skills and techniques. They believe that once their drawing skills are improved and depict beautiful images, their real world problems will certainly be solved. According to this belief, they develop their own improvement planning. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the improvement in drawing skills and techniques indicates a schedule that is set by individuals according to their psychological needs. To some students like Jack and Yin, they still look into criteria of improvement, but to other students like KH, KW, and Yan, they are on the way to practice the advanced drawing skills and techniques.

The sophisticated drawing skills and techniques can be examined in the space representation found in *manga* creation. The representation of the space emerges from various artistic forms or styles, reflecting the inspiration of the individual intelligence. The study finds the three-dimensional expression as seen in Appendix F (iv); particular perspectives on depiction in Appendix F (vi); volume representation in Appendix J (i); tone and values organisation of human in Appendix I (viii); flat effect as Appendix K (iv); symbolic form in Appendix L (v); surrealistical style in Appendix I (x); and an integrative form with sound and text as seen in Appendix M (xiii).

Whatever the form or style of the space representation appears, it indicates the close relationship between the image and the background related. It reflects that students create the image through a serious consideration of the physical environment with an awareness of transferring their imaginings to the paper. The whole process of developing the sophisticated drawing skills and techniques implies thorough planning.

There are two particular artistic ways of expressions mentioned in the study regarding the relationship between the protagonist, the space, and the background. The term “figure” describes the image of the
protagonist and the term “ground” to depict the background or scenario in which the protagonist exists and acts. Most of the images focus on depicting the details of the figure itself—the eyes, face, and hair of the protagonist—rather than its relation to the ground. The ground illustrated in the artwork documentation is significantly depicted as a flat, simple, or even empty space with no relation to the figure, like images in Appendix F (vii), Appendix G (iii), Appendix H (x), and Appendix M (vii). In these images, some of the backgrounds are presented as a stereotyping form like the stereotypical cloud shape seen in Appendix K (vii), love shape in Appendix L (iv), and the flower shape in Appendix L (v).

Some of the images mentioned before are presented as a three-dimensional form with the application of the perspective drawing techniques; however, according to the difference of the attainment of sophisticated skills and drawing techniques, the expression forms and styles are varying. For example, Jack uses the simple perspective techniques to depict the three-dimensional train station as seen in Appendix F (iv), while KW applies intense lines or a perspective drawing technique to depict the space like the images in Appendix I (iii) & Appendix I (xi)). Compared with Jack’s image in Appendix F (vi), Yan’s approach to express the relationship between the figure and ground in her image of Plate 45 seems more accurately and realistic than other students, in which reveals different abilities and intellect of both the observation and the representation skill.

The students’ drawings look like a drama performance in that the story is continuously happening. Their drawings can be viewed in a single strip story basis, in which each individual image presents as a perfect form and becomes a perfect piece in a space within the picture frame without consideration the context. The background seen in the picture frame is roughly presented. In contrast, the human images are sophisticated carefully depicted. Students comparatively do not spend much time in dealing with the space. Also, they do not care much about the relationship between figure and ground. Although not every part of the body is equally important and deserves to be drawn due to the avoidance phenomenon caused by individual psychological reasons, all the energy they put is to focus on the head and body representation of the image. It elucidates that they regard that the image can represent them as a first priority, reflecting some kinds of visual logic thinking.
The omission of the representation of space and background is a decision made by the students through a careful considering of the art creation process in which students can put more focus on depicting the most crucial parts of the image—the eyes, face, and the hair. In this respect, the sophisticated drawing skills and techniques depend on sophisticated visual thinking and intellect applied to art medium. It means that to achieve sophisticated depiction skills need the creator’s sophisticated mind. From this perspective, the sophisticated mind relies on the intention of the creator. Although the creator can intentionally focus on depicting the beauty of the stereotyped image irrelevant to the objective representation of space and background, the relationship between figure and ground is decided by students’ intention which governs the space representation in manga creation.

3.5. The trio-relationship between the image, sound, and text

The communication between the protagonist and the student involves seeking the metaphorical meaning through a ritual combing the reality with imagination. This metaphorical meaning only makes responses to the individual creator, which is closely related to the individual psychological aspect. For example, to Jack, the invisible weapon created can no longer be seen in reality; however, he relies on such a magical image to start his transformation—a rite associated with the psychological and cognitive processing through the real and imagination. Through the rite, he can be released from reality and recovered from obtaining the power of transformation. There is no doubt that the invisible weapon has numerous meanings to Jack; it has no significant meaning to other students, however. Therefore, the ritual can only be interpreted by the creator himself or herself since it only and directly responds to individuals.

Another form of communication lays stress on creating the metaphorical meaning through the construction of the image with the sound and text. It means that the meaning of the image is in line with the metaphorical meaning or artistic form hinted by the words of the popular song, poetry or a plate statement. Apparent examples can be found in Plate 26, Plate 40, and Plate 44, in which the creators not only translate the text or sound effect to the visual form, but they also create the
metaphors within the images through which they interpret and express their views and emotions of particular feelings through integrating different art forms.

The metaphorical meaning is an allusionary base in relation to learning. According to Broudy (1987), the allusionary base means “the conglomerate of concepts, images, and memories available to provide meaning for the reader or listener” (p. 18). He suggests to apply this concept to refer to the “direct” and “indirect” form of imagery learning in which “the direct form is illustrated by the immediate perception of patterns of sounds, shapes, colours, motions that convey meaning”, while the indirect form is about images that “influence language, concepts, values, and ideas by association” (Broudy, 1987, p. 18). Some images are presented as multi-layered and multi-sensory patterns in which images are integrated with the sound and text to create the philosophical meaning relevant to the student. For example, this integration can be seen as the atmosphere created by the visual, sound, or text as seen in images of Plate 8, Plate 16, Appendix I (vii), and Appendix M (xiii). Another sound effect can also be integrated to supplement the visual-dominated narrative story by combining the poetry, text, word of popular music, and visual image.

Students create manga images, leaving and reviewing them as a mirror. We understand that the students adopt a third person role to communicate with themselves through the creation of protagonist, which means that the protagonist speaks for the students. This communication method can only be understood in a psychological way. With reference to the students’ manga creation, they depict the protagonist based on both their real and imagined characteristics. The appearance of the protagonist does not need to physically look like the creators themselves though most of the ages of protagonist match the actual ages of the students.

Not only are all the protagonists the same age as the students, but also they have the same difficulties or wishes as the students. The gender of the protagonist is contradictory to the students, indicating that students modify the images by adding parts of their personalities and dream characters into the protagonists. Concerning the speech applied in manga stories, all dialogues in students’ manga stories are direct speech, implying that the story adopts the direct form of narratives. However, the
protagonist is an indirect form of existence, which means the form of the protagonist and the form of speech is not a consistent existence. The protagonist then becomes the double image in order to speak for the student. Through the indirect speech, students hide behind the scene of the story, mastering the protagonists to play for them. This double image of expression between the first person narrative and the third person image representation paradoxically exist.

Besides the speech, the dialogue presented in the manga stories in the study not only indicates what the protagonist confronts in the stories, but it also represents the student’s experience outside the stories. The concept of inside-out and outside-in seems to be the important representation and narrative forms of storytelling. Students apply their imagination and project their real experiences to interpret their lived stories, examining their states through the inside-out and outside-in transition in the internal and the external images.

The direct speech and indirect image of the protagonist plays an essential role to interpret the personal experiences. In other words, manga stories developed by students begin with a third person image (the protagonist) with the direct narrative form of storytelling. The shift between them gives the opportunity for the student to look at his or her problem, making the student involved in the self-reflective process. The transition process provides a safety environment for the student to make retrospective dialogues with themselves.

In light of the application of onomatopoeia, students in the study seldom utilise mixing words to describe situations or to produce dialogue in manga stories. However, there are some exceptional cases. For examples, Jack often uses Japanese words mixed with Chinese to write the stories like the images shown in Appendix F (iv), Plate 3 and Plate 6, while the other students only use Japanese words as a preposition like Appendix J (vii), an English word in Plate 18 or a simple English sentence like Plate 42 for presentation. The application of such mixing languages or words can usually be seen as the preposition, simple word, or simple sentence in the study. However, the above usage will not affect the original meanings because the meaning of the manga story is only constructed by the visual image. Linguistic form and sound play a role of enriching the manga content in which the text and
sound plays a subordinary role to help enrich the meaning. Therefore, applied onomatopoeia does not have a significant influence in the construction of the meaning.

Onomatopoeia and its implications as well as the meanings that lay claim to the creation of the sound effect presented as a visual form of representation like the image of Appendix G (vii) are not common in the study. Chinese language is the main communication form applied to interpret the meaning and create dialogue in manga creation, despite the use of other foreign languages like Japanese and English that may be applied to enhance the conjunction of the sentence or sound effect of image. The sound and words of the popular songs seen in this study do not have significant meaning. Rather, they play a role of enriching the visually metaphorical meaning. The study does not show any connections between these words and the images created except this. To interpret this issue, we herewith take the creation of love story in the study as an example for more details. Of course, the images are created by following the stories presented by the words of the popular songs; however, if we carefully examine the representation form of each image created in each love story, students still show their interest in depicting the images according to the stereotyped artistic form rather than interpreting and expressing sound.

As discussed earlier, students apply the words of the popular songs to create their love stories instead of being based on their personal experiences about love. When dealing with the love theme in manga creation, they tend to follow the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped principle to visualise the text and sound to create the visual-dominated metaphorical meaning. In terms of narratives, they literally use the first person as the narrative form for storytelling about their daily experience, so do the love stories emerged in manga stories. Some students like Kei, KH, and KW are accustomed to developing their love stories by taking reference to the words of popular Cantonese songs. The storyline does not necessarily relate itself to the student’s real experience in love, which is separated and presented as a form of fiction. Although images about love illustrated in manga stories are not necessarily contained to the students’ real experiences in love, but the words of the popular songs are contained to relate to the theme. Hence, both sound and text play a role as a narrator who outlines the background of the story, while visual images play an essential role of interpreting the meaning.
Under such circumstances, what is the attitude of the students in the study toward the application of sound and text? Students do not depict the love story. Instead, they play and think in the triangular-relationship between sound, text, and visual image, integrating them to create new visual images with an interdisciplinary form. More accurately, they visualise the image according to the information provided by sound and text. From this perspective, the image can be viewed as the visualised text and sound contributing to the construction of the meaning of the visual metaphor.

4. Concluding analysis: Cone-shaped model for interpreting the experience and understanding the matrix

Understanding images of popular visual culture created by young adolescence involves various perspectives on examining the matrix. As shown in the study, understanding here means to inquire into the interrelationship and structure of the matrix. The study demonstrates the complex structure of the matrix constructed by socio-cultural influences, particular aesthetic and cognitive experiences, educational purposes, and individual psychological reasons, in which we can interpret these issues in many ways. The socio-cultural approach to understanding the images contributes to the dualistic conception of the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetics that formulates the self-identity.

The cognitive experience demonstrates that both the creation motivation and the creation process are a cognitive understanding matter full of careful considerations as well as intelligent insights into image. The psychological approach shows us a mind map of how the dualistic aesthetic concept being in line with the perception of the creator’s realistic problem and the self-transformation. The educational approach opens the doorway to explain how the creation process links up with the cognitive learning activities in which the creators seek ways to solve their problems through the inquiry into the attainment of the advanced drawing skills and techniques.

The above ideas contribute to the understanding of the matrix which illustrates that the image creation is a socio-cultural, cognitive, psychological, and educational activity. According to this, the matrix is
suggested as a ritual that appears to a psycho-cognitive inquiry-based structure illustrating a learning process leading to problem solving. It is a ritual, as we discussed previously, because the drawing problem concerning the practical graphic problem does not physically connect the individual psychological problem. Therefore, it can only be understood from a philosophical or a psychological stand. Once we regard this issue as a ritual, we can find the rationale of such idea.

The students start with their real problems and end in obtaining the self-identity or self-transformation. The centaur plays an important role of self-transformation—the turning point. When the students obtain the basic drawing skills and learn from the stereotyped artistic expression in depicting the head, they will break the stereotyped form and look for the advanced level of drawing skills and techniques to depict the difficult parts of the body based on individual needs. Afterwards, the stereotyped aesthetics of depicting the head will continue, but the counter-stereotyped aesthetics in depicting the body will turn to be the focus of spontaneous drawing. In short, in between the real problem and the self-identity journey, there is a transforming process as: (1) the self-projection on the ideal icon; (2) practicing the centaur; and (3) the improvement in drawing skills and techniques similar to improvement in real. The details are described as follows (Figure 9.2).

Figure 9.2  The psycho-cognitive inquiry structure of the matrix
The above figure indicates several significant issues of understanding the image of popular visual culture created by young adolescents. First, it demonstrates the logic of how the student’s real problem relates itself and communicates with the self-identity issue through self-projection as well as the continuous process of practicing. The result of self-identity is not only a self-transforming issue, but it is also a socio-cultural and a personal issue influenced by the concept of the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped aesthetics.

The psycho-cognitive process, the stereotyped, and counter-stereotyped concept affect the transforming process when practicing the centaur, reflecting an individual psychological state mixed with the autonomous learning behaviour. Third, according to the above-mentioned, images indeed have their own characteristics formulated by the socio-cultural, psychological, and educational factors. Next, it is the attainment of the advanced drawing skills and techniques from learning in the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetics that finally transform the students through the centaur experience. Finally, a new matrix is established starting from the next real problem, which is like a constant loop that maintains the transforming process similar to an ecological system. Although the study is not designed to be therapeutic, the transforming process is described as a therapeutic one based on the students’ statements. The study argues that this ecological system established in the matrix functions as a type of self-therapy. Also, the matrix significantly depends on the self-actualising process according to the student’s different problems, favourites, and psychological needs.

Maslow (1970) defines the term “self-actualization” as "the full use and exploitation of talents, capacities, potentialities, etc." (p. 150), which is an ongoing process rather than a passive state. The process of self-therapy begins with the image creation process in which the self-actualising and autonomy process leads the role for transformation. The self-actualising also creates motivation for personal changes; however, it depends on the individual’s determination. Taking Yin’s case as an example, she fails to make changes in the stereotyping form of expression and does not explore the advanced drawing methods in her manga creation.
The images projected show her attempt to terminate the inner communication and dialogue with herself. The resistance on rejecting images reflects a phenomenon of being unwilling to start the self-actualising process; thus causing her a real world problem that can no longer be solved. From Yin’s images, the childish styles and un-matured scribbles explicitly disclose this view. Therefore, rejecting images means to reject the self-transformation; at the same time, rejecting the self-transformation means rejecting self-therapy. The door for the self-actualising process only opens for the one who is prepared to make the change.

Japanese manga provides an absolute aesthetic form of popular visual culture for the student to follow. To these students, the Western cultural impact on manga creation is less than the Japanese one. This particular aesthetic form sets the ultimate criteria for the distinction of the beauty, loveliness, and cuteness. When experiencing the aesthetics, students are explored and surrounded in the socio-cultural context. It is similar to a net, they are immersed into it (Figure 9.3). In this study, it is suggested as a surrounding exterior net woven by the psychological and cognitive interlacement of consciousness in understanding the socio-cultural influences in the image creation.

![Figure 9.3](image)

**Figure 9.3** The surrounding exterior socio-cultural net of psychological and cognitive interlacement of consciousness

The net indicates how the exterior world of the socio-cultural environment influences the image creation, particularly in the influence of the stereotyped aesthetics from Japanese manga, which informs the creator of sufficient knowledge of such stereotyped aesthetic expression. The matrix is established within the net that penetrates through and fully covers the matrix, making communication between the inner and outer world as well as processing the self-transforming process. The matrix inside makes responses to and interacts with the outside world.
The philosophical considerations, as discussed in Chapter One, lay stress on three fundamental questions—what, why, and how. These three essential questions also formulate the matrix and explore how we understand images of popular of visual culture created by young adolescents through the matrix (Figure 9.4). In interpreting the interrelationship among the three philosophical questions, the study suggests a cone-shaped structure established for the matrix.

The structure of the matrix is described as a self-constructed, self-actualised, and sophisticated entity, being constructed by three structural stratifications in which each philosophical consideration is embodied. The fundamental base concerns the meaning of the image against the individual real world problem, serving the research question of what. The middle phase that emphasises the transforming of the image creation through the particular artistic expressions and the centaur experience.

Figure 9.4  The cone-shaped structure for interpreting the matrix
The top of the cone-shaped structure plays a crucial role for self-actualising from transforming the attainment of the advanced drawing skills and techniques to the “peak experience”, presenting the individual interval toward ways of transformation. According to Maslow (1962, 1971), the peak experience refers to an occurrence, the most wonderful or happiest moment, or a longitudinal state that “looks as if any experience of real excellence, of real perfection” (p. 175). Maslow (1964) connects the peak experience to the religions for further interpretation. He claims: “To the extent that all mystical or peak-experiences are the same in their essence and have always been the same, all religions are the same in their essence and have always been the same” (p. 20). In the study, this religious experience is similar to what the study suggests as the ritual experience.

In this cone-shaped structure, a double-side arrow inside the matrix shows the transforming process in which the improvement in self-growth depends on the self-actualised mechanism. It also shows the possibilities of vicissitudes of the transforming process, which depend on the autonomous mechanism as well. On the left, are the three main considerations presenting the stratification in the matrix, revealing different consideration focus of each phase. They are: (1) the psychological consideration in the base; (2) the cognitive consideration in the middle; and (3) the psycho-cognitive consideration on the top. As discussed previously in this chapter, the individual real world problem of each student is viewed as a psychological-based problem causing the transforming process whatever the problem could be of the lack in confidence or the fear of being bullying. In other words, the self-actualised and self-transforming processes cannot be run without the emergence of the real world problem.

The middle phase of the structure indicates the reason why students create their image in the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped styles, as well as its relation to the self-transforming process. In this phase, students are required to learn from the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped artistic expression. They need to learn and implement the particular aesthetic, as well as experience the centaur. According to this, the focus of this phase is cognitive knowing and learning. In the discussion of the concept of the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped aesthetics, we have mentioned about the centaur experience to describe the importance of the transforming process in which the particular dualistic form of expression leads the student to the self-identity or self-transforming.
In the self-transforming process, students are required to experience the centaur at this stage. The centaur experience is not only a cognitive learning experience, but also the essence of the *manga* creation leading the student to find the final solution to their real world problems. Students need to learn from this paradoxical artistic expression. The learning itself is also a cognitive behaviour, reflecting on the continuously practicing drawing behaviour. Because of this, it becomes the most difficult phase for the students since they need to do lots of practice and study the advance drawing skills and techniques. Besides, they need to overcome the psychological difficulties such as resistance. Cognitive knowing and inquiry into the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetic transforms to a learning and daily practicing behaviour. The psychological problem through this behaviour, as it turns out, to be integrated in the ritual demonstrating the universal belief that the real problem can be solved once the advanced drawing skills and techniques are attained. Once a student goes through the particular aesthetic experience, he or she will be elevated to the top stratification—the peak experience.

The peak experience is the self-identity or self-transforming experience in which the psychological and cognitive consideration is integrated. It is a particular aesthetic experience through which the students believe that their real life problems will be solved through the ritual experience. Experiencing the peak has a significant meaning indicating how the individual interval proceeds to the self-identity and self-transformation. Besides, the peak experience not only provides psychological comfort in terms of self-confidence, but it also offers a practical solution to the student’s problem.

Afterwards, the transforming loop will start over again until the next problem is solved. In this respect, the matrix is structured as a task or problem base, combining the psycho-cognitive consideration with individual problem, making the issue of understanding the image of popular visual culture complicated. Although the matrix is an independent, continuous, and autonomous entity, it is affected by the surrounding exterior socio-cultural net of psychological and cognitive interlacement of consciousness as mentioned previously. Below the relationship between the matrix and the net presented in a three-dimensional form is illustrated (Figure 9.5).
The socio-cultural impact of the matrix is mainly on both the conception and the perception of the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped on the account of the meaning of the image. Such influences should not simply be regarded as an exterior context; on the contrary, it becomes an important part of the component of the matrix. Affected by the context, this structural stratification embodied formulates the philosophical consideration of the reason for creating images with the specific artistic way of expression.

From this figure, the influence of the socio-culture is not only external, but also internal. It provides the specific environment with the ecological system where the young adolescents are immersed in. Although the internal socio-cultural influences the conception and perception of the student in terms of understanding the stereotyped expression, it encourages students to break through it for the self-transforming by practicing spontaneous drawing and learning through the counter-stereotyped aesthetics.

By examining the matrix, we can more clearly articulate why some of the students have problems in confronting particular phases and staying in particular phases, while some students starting their transforming process and being elevated to next level so fast. Yin is an example showing that her
failure in learning the counter-aesthetics expression drives her to go back to the stereotyped stage for seeking psychological safety. Unlike Yin, KH, and KW, Yan indicates that she elevates herself from the middle phase to almost reach the top of the peak. She regards the counter-aesthetic experience as one of the significant indications of progress. The following table illustrates the self-transforming state of each student according to the matrix (Table 9.7). Comments are given as evidence to support the idea.

**Table 9.7 The transforming state of students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>The matrix against the peak experience</th>
<th>Comments by the students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Yet, I have no idea how to master the advanced drawing techniques…Now I keep practicing the old drawing techniques again…Once I successfully upgrade my drawing techniques, my real problems will naturally be solved” (Jack, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>“When I reach the highest standard in drawings, the problem will be gone. Each success in attaining the drawing techniques is a mark to ensure the problem will be solved little by little. Now, I know what the advanced techniques are for the improvement of the drawing skill. I am working hard to head this goal now” (Kei, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>“The sophisticated drawing skills and details are the only key to lead you articulate the secret of beauty…The sophisticated drawing skills attained mean you have confidence in the improvement in the real problem. It’s also an identity matter…The improvement in drawing skills in the creation process will change your mind because it’s a way of making communication with your insufficiencies or weakness in reality” (KH, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Because you want to be good, you must be careful and pay more attention to study and draw. Consequently, you will get the great improvement in yourself through the improvement in drawings” (KW, Questionnaire, 6 January 2004).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Images can mix the imagination with the reality; therefore, your real problems are brought out and you can be released psychologically. The real problem can only be solved by working hard for practicing drawings” (Fish, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

“My observation skills are poor. My drawings are rough. These are the things I need to improve, but I still don’t know how. If I draw an image that is not cute or beautiful, I will totally lose the confidence… Therefore, drawing stereotyped images are always safe…If my drawing skills are improved, my confidence will be back. Then, all problems are gone. It’s to prove yourself and is a self-identity matter” (Yin, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

“I believe I can draw beautiful face and eyes, but I cannot draw the hands and legs beautifully. There is room for improvement. I believe I will have great improvement through continuous practice of drawing these. Then, the problem of using foul language will be solved because beauty transforms me” (Nie, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

“Similar to some kind of ritual, it makes you believe that you are qualified to make beautiful images. It sends a message to let you know that you are capable to overcome the problem. Afterwards, your attitude changes and you feel full of confidence” (Yan, Questionnaire, 6 February 2004).

With reference to the above demonstration, we understand that students not only create images within the matrix, but they are also involved into the matrix cognitively and psychologically. It means that they are a part of the matrix. Comparatively, students in the matrix are involved in the fundamental and middle stratification with no significant difficulties at all; however, not every student encounters the peak experience though students have made their efforts already. Jack and Yin are still struggling with the dilemma in which they fail to find the way to elevate to the top level through attaining sophisticated drawing skills and techniques. The failures result in staying in the middle phase and maintain the stereotyped artistic style. It means that they cannot transform themselves through the centaur experience.
According to this reason, they are constrained to repeat practicing the stereotyped images. Although Nie’s drawings are not sophisticatedly made, she understands how to articulate the drawing skills through the continuous practicing process. The sophisticated drawing skills and techniques are the physical evidence to the students since it substantially indicates the progress of the students. Besides, it also provides the psychological evidence to them, in which they obtain self-confidence. In other words, the advanced practical drawing skills and techniques play an essential role toward the peak experience.

Finally, the structure of the matrix is theoretically established. It reveals an essential frame of reference in terms of the scaffolding of understanding images created by young adolescents about popular visual culture. This matrix also reveals an interrelationship among the three important research questions by offering the knowledge of the meaning of the image, the reason of the creation with applying particular aesthetic concept, and the way of interpreting the image. The next is the final chapter, which will focus on the essential points and further questions raised from the findings and interpretations. Implications of the matrix and its meaning to the subject knowledge will be highlighted for the final conclusion.
Chapter Ten

Concluding Discussions

This chapter is the conclusion of the study, providing the resolutions of research questions. It concludes and critically responds to the arguments relevant to the matrix based on the findings and interpretations in the previous chapter. This study demonstrates a matrix for understanding images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents. It explores the interrelationship with the three main research questions suggested in the matrix: what the meanings of the images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents through the experiences of art creation is, the reason why students create these images in this particular way, and how they interpret the creation process.

The focus of this chapter is on the discussions of the implications of the matrix as well as its contribution to the body of knowledge in visual culture, art education, and art therapy. Before making a conclusion, some essential concepts of the matrix are highlighted as follows. In response to the contribution to the body knowledge, this study reveals a particular and important aesthetic communication form to understand the image of popular visual culture created by young adolescents—the matrix.

In understanding images of popular visual culture created by young adolescents, the cone-shaped matrix has been proposed. To transform the self and capture the identity, young adolescents have to encounter the matrix experience. The matrix is affected by the exterior socio-cultural context as a net. Inside the net, there exists the matrix constructed by three different stratifications. Both the external and internal environment forms the autonomously ecological system for self-transformation. The bottom stratification is constructed by the young adolescents’ real lived problem which presents as the individual psychological needs against the real world projected.

In the middle stratification, young adolescents encounter the centauric experience, in which it is constructed by the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetics. The centauric experience that is a
conflict experience demonstrates a transitional state of integrating the images of the head to the human body, in which the young adolescent struggles with the different artistic forms of expression between the stereotyped and the spontaneous expression. The head image is strictly constrained to the stereotyped aesthetics of Japanese *manga* as the representation method, while the human body appears to be a free and spontaneous artistic style according to the creator’s abilities and artistic intelligence.

This dualistic aesthetics herewith is suggested as an intimate relationship with the transformation from the stereotyped aesthetics of representation to the counter-stereotyped aesthetics of representation. This relationship forces the creator to actualise the self-transformation. In this phase combining the individual psychological problem with cognitive learning in the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetic expression, young adolescent experience the conflict between the two different aesthetic concept and struggle with looking for integration. Besides, this stratification also emphasises the cognitive learning in the art medium.

After the completion of the centauric experience, young adolescents are elevated to the top stratification and encounter the peak experience in which they transmit the individual psychological problem to the practical drawing problem. This final transition depends on the integration of the psycho-cognitive understanding, which is a dualistic transition. It is extremely important for the successful self-transformation. The key for a successful self-transformation replies on the sophisticated drawing skills and techniques. On reaching the peak experience, young adolescents transfer their real world problem to the perfect artistic form and dissolve their problems. The transference of aesthetic representation and the conception of beauty into their artwork go throughout the creation process. The matrix experience is both self-actualising and the visual-metaphorical constructed processes in which young adolescents are only responsible for themselves by applying images as a transforming tool.

Understanding in the study is suggested as a psycho-cognitive process of the self-identity or self-transformation and makes connection. Young adolescents consciously select images from Japanese *manga* as a blue print to follow in the very beginning. They relate their problems to the
images. They intentionally practice the same image repeatedly and look for improvement through imitating the image and examining new drawing techniques to construct their images and transform it into their real life as a method for problem solving. All these demonstrate that manga creation is a learning process to cognitively understand a psychological issue. Young adolescents not only talk about the image, but also their life in the image creation. In this respect, it is an inner communication process as well.

The factor of socio-cultural influence on the cognitive understanding of the aesthetic value is apparent. However, the sociological perspective on the interpretation of children’s art is criticised for putting too much focus on studying the children and the deconstruction phenomenon of the art but not the expressive image created by them (Dorn, 2003). Dorn (2003) declared that the result of the school art policies shaped by “the philosophical, aesthetic, political, and sociological ideas” would “diminish” the important value of the meaning of the expressive art” (p. 3). He criticised the interference of these perspectives on art education especially the sociological one, was an action that did not “respect art on its own term” and finally the sociology approach would put “the end of arts education” (Dorn, 2003, p. 3).

However, this perspective cannot let us see the whole picture; the meaning of the young adolescent’s art work is far more profound than that. Young adolescents are influenced by their peers, Japanese manga, their real world problems, and the impulse of being self-transforming. In this study, we see the interrelationship among these and how young adolescents interpret the meaning of their image creations. According to different lived experiences and real problems, they learn to understand the image by continuously working on a specific image—the protagonist. They are constructing an individual matrix of knowing through a process of making connections with images, their minds, and their worlds. The connection among them is a psycho-cognitive activity that allows young adolescents to understand, learn about their problems, communicate with their inner self, and make possible actions for further improvement. That is why understanding images should not exclude the socio-cultural, psychological, communication, and educational considerations.
The image creation process shows a concrete process and a structured method for understanding through creating the image. Moon (1998) indicates, “Making art is an expression of hope. In an entirely unspoken way, engaging in creative activity is an act of self transcendence: i.e., a giving to others beyond the self” (p. 186). They become an effective inner communication method by applying personal codes and symbols to present their real situation metaphorically, without no relation and involvement in other people. “Creating art is a process of constantly moving back and forth between order and disorder, spontaneity and composition, chaos and structure” (Moon, 1998, p. 183). Each of the young adolescent develops his or her interrelationship with the matrix by making dialogues with the inner self. As a method of making interpretation to the self, young adolescents make their interpretations differently according to their different lived experiences.

Young adolescents’ image creation can reflect their everyday life and problem. It is true; however, this point can be made in other ways. In fact, they need not depict themselves in the picture. This study indicates that the student uses the protagonist as a third person to tell their experience, in which therapy is autonomously through internal-external transition. In transition, the storyteller becomes the protagonist, not the creator, driving the creator to keep a distance to make communication with the self. The position changes from the creator, which means the “I”, to the protagonist, which means the “it”. This transition process from the first person to the third person provides the opportunity for the creator to review his or her situation, making the self-therapy possibly within the inner communication process.

There is an issue raised in this study concerning images transforming. Can young adolescents have the ability to transform their lived experience into images presented in their manga story books creation, and on the contrary, can they have ability to transform these images into their lived experience? The answer is positive. Young adolescents have the ability to transform a manga book into images of the world and aesthetics in the form of stereotyping. The process of creation is like the process of their understanding of the world. In addition to transforming, they have the ability to filter and select the suitable image; however, this cannot happen in real life.
The matrix is an individual journey to the accomplishment of the ritual—the peak experience. The peak experience is the key for self-transformation, a state of unity that integrates the solution to the real world problem and the attainment of the sophisticated aesthetic artistic expression. This unity is similar to the “I” and “It” self-transformation theory suggested by Wilber (1995). He states, “The only requirement for attaining integrated existence is that one has an ego that is strong enough to reunite with the ground”, in which the ego refers to the subject and the ground as object (Wilber, 1995, p. 248).

The subject and object relation causes a split phenomenon in the transpersonal development and needs unify (Wilber, 1980), which is similar to the unification phenomenon through the transition process of the “I” and the “It” relations suggested in the middle phase of the matrix in the study. They both see the integration of the self as an important self-identity matter of the transcending self in the transpersonal experience.

Young adolescents make self-transformation with the centauric experience. To all of them, the key for transforming lays focus on the attainment of the advanced drawing skills and techniques that become a turning point for self-transformation. The image creation process is an integrated process that combines the psychological, cognitive, and educational aspects with individual problems. The peak experience followed by transition in the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped aesthetics suggested in the study has significant meanings to young adolescents. It engages the achievement of the supreme aesthetic reflecting on the images created and transforming this achievement to a solution to their real world problem. In between them, it demonstrates cognitive learning in the arts.

Young adolescents put more energy to improve their artistic skills and techniques rather than understanding the cultural issues behind the images. They improve their skills by looking back on their imperfect images seriously to make further improvement. Their achievements are not attained from the understanding of the culture, but the satisfaction and pleasure of the sophisticated and perfect forms imitated from Japanese manga. The socio-cultural content and the context do not interest students to create their images, but the perfect forms presented in Japanese manga do. They do not critically think in these factors in image creation; on the contrary, they critically review the particular aesthetics.
The art medium seems to be one of the main concerns for young adolescents in *manga* creation. They intentionally elevate the value of the art medium and believe that being sophisticated in the art medium will certainly lead them to the self-identity through the peak experience. They spend lots of time to practice drawings continuously and think in the art medium to capture the absolute form of beauty through sophisticated drawings, transferring the sophisticated physical form emerged from the drawings to the resolutions of the psychological real world problem. From this perspective, being sophisticated in the attainment of the art medium is equal to lead to self-transformation.

Besides the physical consideration of the art medium, young adolescents interact with the aesthetic conception of beauty, as a particular term applied to interpret the quality of the aesthetics of the young adolescent. Although what concerns students is the particular stereotyped artistic form of representation in their drawings, they deal with social issues at the same time since Japanese *manga* images are indeed a cultural production. In Visual Culture Art Education (VCAE), it emphasises that the importance of the critical thinking in the social contents and context through or in the arts; however, the reality reflects that it may not fit the student’s need in the study. This approach may reconsider more concerning the psychological aspect of these young adolescent and the value of thinking in art medium in connection with the self-transformation. The critical method of learning emphasised in VCAE approach may need to balance the psychological need and the socio-cultural content.

The socio-cultural factors influence the selection of the protagonist as the supreme icon from whom they learn and project their psychological needs and fulfil their dream. The socio-cultural realm only limited to Japanese *manga* culture, neither includes all the popular visual culture nor the Western popular visual culture. Japanese *manga* creation provides a supreme principle for the student’s self-transforming process. The creators project their real world problems onto the supreme icon, with adding their fears and wishes. They develop their own stories, neglect the original one, and expect that the attainment of the advanced drawing skills and techniques as the benchmark for the breakthrough as well as to solve the real problems psychologically.
Personal preferences are added in the artistic style. The stereotyped aesthetic and artistic expression is consistent with Japanese *manga*, becoming the standard for the judgement of aesthetics. The concept of the aesthetic and the judgement method are simplified as the dualistic aesthetic concept of representation. The dualistic aesthetic concept constitutes the self-transforming process that reflects that young adolescents have the abilities to make the judgement of what beauty is by setting criteria based on the concept about aesthetics.

The projection of the supreme icon from the recognised socio-cultural images abstracted from Japanese *manga* is the personal identity issue. Images can connect and develop the relationship between the reality and the aesthetics. The real world is different from the *manga* world; the *manga* world cannot represent the real world. However, the *manga* can provide imaginings and an adventure of imagination even though theses cannot change the reality. In *manga* world, everything is possible since it is a fabricated world constructed by the psychological need, imagination, and reality. It cannot replace the real but as a necessary element for the self-growth and understanding, it indeed opens up a possible way to go, escape temporarily, reflect, learn, share, communicate, listen to inner voices, make revisions, and make judgements when facing the difficulties.

In the matrix, the aesthetics penetrates the journey of transformation. The journey of beauty, used as the student’s term to depict the image of popular visual culture in this study, has complex and even paradoxical meanings:

- Beauty is dualistic, including both concept and percept.
- Beauty is a reality-and-imagination mixed issue.
- Beauty is a subjective and objective issue.
- Beauty is both the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped artistic expression.
- Beauty is shaped by the socio-cultural influence of Japanese *manga* and the individual psychological need.
- Beauty is related to the avoidance phenomenon and the peak experience.
- Beauty is imaginative but realistic.
• Beauty is a universal recognition by young adolescents and personal identity issue.

• The beautiful and ugly is a cognitive and psychological issue that is cognitive understanding and a psychological self-agreement or commitment to the self.

• Beauty is the self-therapy and self-transforming process.

• Transforming from the beautiful and the ugly image requires thinking in an art medium and an activated intellect.

• Learning in beauty presents as an allusionary-based and a visual-dominated integrative arts form.

• Beauty is a ritual.

• Beauty shows a psycho-cognitive state, with no significantly relevance to the children’s artistic development stage or schema. Instead, it is based on personal intention and commitment to the self-planning and implementation toward the peak experience.

• The attainment of the beauty shows a schedule that has already been set by individual young adolescents.

Reading and drawing *manga* can be a cognitive learning behaviour. Young adolescents only select what they claim to be the most beautiful image from the original Japanese *manga* and only extract the images from the original Japanese *manga* stories to develop their *manga* drawings. They imitate the original image and recreate it. They abstract the image to develop as the protagonist to represent them, leaving the irrelevant parts like the ground or other characters behind. They even ignore the original storyline and edit a new story closely related to their lived experiences in which the dilemma or situation about them is metaphorically presented.

Young adolescents’ drawings designate a common favourite of the human figures, demonstrating familiar understanding of the aesthetic quality. In this respect, drawing to them means drawing the human figure, which is not necessary to clearly present the space relationship between objects. The behaviour of the selection of the perfect icon reflects that they already have the criteria made by cognitive understanding, social-cultural, and psychological reasons. The power of the image goes to a common belief to the young adolescents that the original image can project their authentic situation on the paper. In other words, they intellectually and consciously extract the fine images from the original
Japanese *manga* to connect with their psychological needs in their life experiences. Therefore, the selection of image is also a purifying process.

Although the aim of this study was not to examine the children’s artistic development, the findings may contribute to acknowledge this area. Wilson’s (1997b) studies in children creating *manga* in Japan, provide strong evidence that children’s drawing designates their problems in reality and reflecting their everyday life experience in their drawing. In this study, young adolescents all particularised their problems confronting in their everyday life.

However, the way they present it is far more complex than what a drawing can describe. They not only depict their real problems on the paper, they also try to solve their real problems through a systematic transformation process in an ecological system—the matrix formulated by the particular aesthetic concept. Through the peak experience, young adolescents believe that they can eventually solve the real problems. In accordance with the transformation, they hide their problems underneath the image and present their problems in a visually metaphorical way. The meanings of the image are hidden and needs to be decoded differently. The whole creation process reflects that they have the intention to make the self-transformation.

The narrow interpretation on children’s art development applies both the “Western-culture-specific interpretation of what constitutes child art and by linear conceptualization of development in the artistic realm” (Kindler, 1997, p. 5). Besides, Kindler and Darras (1997) suggest that the child’s artistic development is a “phenomenon which occurs in an interactive social environment and that artistic learning involves a social component” (p. 20). The study has found evidence in the socio-cultural influence of Japanese *manga* in the image creation; however, such influence is only limited in the selection and creation of the protagonist of the image as well as the consideration of the aesthetic criteria formulating the stereotyped artistic style. In other words, the study draws the line to indicate the limitation of the socio-cultural factors affecting the young adolescent’s image creation of popular visual culture, which may drive us to reconsider the socio-cultural impact on art education in both the global and local context. This may be a question left to future researchers to examine the implications
for the young adolescent’s development in popular visual culture in education, though the study is not concerned with this.

Perspectives on discussing the meaning of visual culture and its implication to education, like Wilson and Wilson (1977, 1984) taking a socio-cultural perspective on interpreting the relationship between the creation of visual culture and student’s real life and Kindler’s child’s artistic development stage (1997), articulate that the understanding of the image of popular visual culture is not just about the socio-cultural impact on children’s artistic developmental stage. Also, the findings do not show a specific schematic stage since the drawings and creation process do not reveal the developmental stages referring to this study. Rather, the study demonstrates an integrated state combining the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped aesthetics as well as individual psychological problems throughout the image creation process.

The study does not provide any concrete evidence showing that young adolescents demonstrate an artistic development stage. Instead, it indicates a matrix instead of a particular stage. The matrix is a self-actualising, ecological, and self-controlled system established by the individual creator. The socio-cultural influence has its significant position towards the creation of popular visual culture by contributing the conception of stereotyped expression in the protagonist; however, it cannot govern the advanced level of development of artistic expression. The socio-cultural perspective seems to not be concerned with the importance and fails to response to the therapeutic aspect.

Another argument about the stereotyped artistic expression raised by this study lays stress on the imitation issue. Although the study indicates an essential concept of the stereotyped aesthetics and its therapeutic possibilities, it is inevitable to engage with the image imitation issue. The imitation is generally realised not to be allowed in art education since it is against the assumption of the creative learning in the arts (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). According to Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987), “children should not copy anything. The arts are supposed to be a means of one’s own expression and not a superficial copy of someone else’s thoughts and ideas. Copies for the most part are done with no understanding of the structure or meaning of what is imitated” (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987, p. 179).
The rationale for rejecting imitation in art education lays emphasis on the argument of the incorrect intelligence applied to the superficial qualities of the original art object during the art making process. Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) complain,

> It is not an easy thing to transform an actual three-dimensional shape onto a two-dimensional surface. However, it is an intellectual challenge that most youngsters confront without question. Where to place parts, the space to be utilized, the quality of line to be used, the parts to be emphasized or left out, all make this a serious mental challenge. A copy is merely a duplication from one surface to another without the involvement of the problem-solving capacities of the mind. (p. 180)

Nevertheless, this study has found that learning in the stereotyped aesthetics and the avoidance phenomenon reflects the intellect challenge as well as problem-solving issues in terms of the resolution of the problem of visual effect. Hence, imitation can establish a basic platform for cognitive understanding leading to the counter-stereotyped aesthetic experience. It is not necessary to assert that the imitation activity reflects the negative aspect; in contrast, this issue can be viewed as an opportunity for starting an improvement if we regard the imitation is one of the necessary processes for the self-transformation within the matrix experience. Unfortunately, there is a misunderstanding that we too often view this issue at one point, without fully considering the centauric experience. This may be a field for art educators to explore.

In addition to the imitation, one of the greatest obstacles to understanding the image is misunderstanding the stereotyped form of artistic expression and the negative meaning of the avoidance or omission in this study. As discussed in the previous chapter, the avoidance or omission phenomenon refers to the student who avoids drawing the difficult part of the image in order to escape from the failure in reality or intentionally distorted the images for artistic considerations. This phenomenon particularly appears when they face the centauric experience. They need to raise the cognitive understanding of the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetic to transfer it into
practical, physical, and sophisticated drawing skills and techniques applying to the image creation to cope with their psychological problems. This transition is a self-autonomous transference from the physical state to the psychological state. Besides, as discussed earlier, even if the young adolescent in this study intentionally avoids drawing the difficult part, he or she still is required to consider how to present it with visual effects in a two-dimensional picture frame. From this perspective, the avoidance or omission is both a psychological and cognitive phenomenon.

Nevertheless, the view of avoidance or omission sometimes is explicited as a regression of the artistic behaviour. Malchiodi (1998b) refers to this as “a sudden phenomenon” in which “children may progress to another stage of development and, just as suddenly, regress to an earlier form of artistic behaviour” (p. 57). His description matches the regression theory suggested by Lowenfeld and Brittain (1987) and Gardner (1979, 1980) that children will go back and forth between different schematic stages of the artistic development without an obvious reason. For example, images of Jack show a ritualised and repetitive way of expression in which the character appears repeatedly. There are little bodily postures changed in his manga creation. Some of the Pokemon’s images are depicted in a stationary position. The image of the character created by Jack is strongly defensive no matter the appearances of the bodily image or the weapon carried. It is a symbol of resistance against the outer world.

McNiff (1981) declares that such phenomenon is caused by the reason that the “muscular defenses against expression” in which creates the “permanent bodily postures” (p. 53). The researcher is not certain about this point; however, it is believed what McNiff describes is similar to the avoidance or omission phenomenon found in the study. The findings of the study disagree with McNiff’s viewpoint that the avoidance or omission phenomenon, as discussed previously, is a defence against the expression. In fact, it is an intentional visual effect made through intelligent considerations. It is not just a defence against the expression; on the contrary, it is an intentional decision and a cognitive learning matter. The study significantly indicates that there are cognitive and psychological reasons for that.
In this study, the image embodied in both the socio-cultural aesthetic concept and the creator’s individual psychological need. These embodiments make visual culture in art education a therapeutic consideration. The relationship between the image creation, interpretation, and therapeutic art can be interpreted as the creation process as interpreting as therapeutic process. During the creation process, young adolescents experience the matrix, in which they realise their weakness and make serious improvements in drawing skills. According to Arnheim (1974), the perfect form of art is autonomous. This view seems to be true since young adolescents in this study are self-actualising and autonomous to seek the stereotyped aesthetics as the perfect form of expression. The autonomy can even be applied to the young adolescent like Yin who has low ability to make high quality art; however, at least, she is still concerned with the improvement in her image.

The image of popular visual culture is not only socio-culturally constructed, but it also is psycho-cognitively constructed. Manga drawing to them is not only a matter of aesthetics, but also a self-therapy matter. Through the image creation, young adolescents continuously interpret their inner self with the selected protagonist shaped by the socio-cultural context and the personal psychological need, facilitating them to make transformation, clear up their confusion about the reality, self-actualizing to clarify their understandings, and help them understand what their situations are.

Furthermore, it raises an augment that young adolescents acquire the particular concept of aesthetics and perceive in two-dimensional images by editing their personal everyday experiences for self-transformation, which is the whole process similar to the self-help or self-therapy process. There are differences between self-help and self-therapy disclosed by the study, though they both emphasise the importance of self-actualising and autonomy. The therapy process reveals an intimate relationship established between the client and the therapist through art creation and its interpretation; however, in the study, they do not indicate such a therapeutic relationship. Rather, what young adolescents demonstrate is that they only establish the relationship with the image to which they make a response and interpretation.
Young adolescents create images to separate their real problems and to wait for disposing of them. This negative image provides opportunities for the creator to transform himself or herself. However, young adolescents in this study only create images of beauty, not for the sake of atoning for sins or separating the good from the bad for fear that the bad will destroy the good self. They neither prepare for atoning for sins nor make a distinction between the good and the bad quality of the self. Instead, they look for and elevate the beauty and the ideal icon of the protagonist in the image creation process.

Negative images as violent images can be found in this study. For instance, Jack creates an image of a fighting animal (Appendix (F (vii)). Besides this image created, the protagonist of Pokemon always carries weapons including both the visible and invisible ones, having super power, challenging the legitimacy of the institution. Kei also creates fighting images and her responses to these images; however, this study does not show significant evidence to support McNiff’s comments on the issue. It has no significant evidence for this type of images that may produce negative influence. Besides, there is no concrete relationship between them.

According to McNiff (1981), the monster image is common “projection of the many elements in nature that are beyond the control of the child, as well as a representation of those qualities of physically larger adults that arouse the child’s fear” (p. 46). From this aspect, Jack’s monster image should be explicated as violent and negative. More seriously, it could be viewed as taking a “political position by expressing things that are not socially accepted” (McNiff, 1981, p. 47). On the contrary, it may not be true as they express positive attitudes toward creating such images, feeling comfortable and satisfied with making communications, showing the learning and self-reflective process rather than challenging the institution with these images.

Another theory suggested by McNiff is about the killing image emerged from the drawings. McNiff (1988) tells a story about an experience of art therapy in his writing through “killing” to “resurrecting” the father image (p. 99), demonstrating how art therapy functions through creating a killing image. It actually is a transforming experience indicating how the emotional liberation establishes a new relationship with the father or mother image through the deconstruction to reconstruction process. The
result of self-transforming, as described by McNiff (1988), is a killing of the past. McNiff (1988) describes that the killing image is a universal metaphor that can be found in the forms as “stabbing”, “downing” and “blowing up” (p. 99) in the artwork. In addition, he refers to the killing itself as the “conscious and deliberate action” (McNiff, 1988, p. 101).

Back to the study, Jack’s images show a scenario in which Pokemon engages in fighting a battle. Although there is no father or mother image and no killing scenario that emerged in his manga story, this deconstruction and reconstruction relationship may be truly described the self-transforming situation suggested by McNiff. However, further studies on this concept may be necessary.

Young adolescents have equal contents and representations in the presentation of their manga creation. Their contents reflected in their images do not necessarily relate to real world issues, but do relate to their real problems. They do not show concern about the social issues; instead, they do care about whether the contents and the aesthetic forms match their situation. In this respect, popular visual culture like manga becomes a self-communication tool.

In art education, however, the story may be different: art teachers assume what students should learn whether it takes a discipline-based or a VCAE approach. In fact, students can identify what, when, and how imaging is being depicted, as well as what kinds of learning methods are applied. With sophisticated drawing skills and techniques, they can freely depict what is underneath the images and combine the allusionary-metaphorical method to send out their messages and make possible self-evaluation in the self-transformation process. Such a process and method are similar to therapeutic process as well. In this sense, young adolescents apply a special but common human-understanding communication method to make connections between the fictitious life and the real lived experience through manga creation.

On the other hand, this elucidates a different way of thinking in art teaching. In teaching, art teachers emphasise identifying ways students perceive and cognitively understand. In reality, nevertheless, these are not what they are concerned with. It is, therefore, suggested to have more psychological
supports and guidance except the emphasis on cognitive learning in art class. Art teachers should be aware of this aspect. Rosen (1977) points out that the socio-environmental factors also affect the effectiveness of interpersonal communication. As metaphors that are mainly associated with the stereotyped aesthetic meanings are fluently wide-ranged in students, the communication method is always metaphorical and is even cross-cultural—the stereotyped artistic expression in Japanese manga can be understood, appreciated, and elevated as a cross-cultural learning model by Chinese young adolescents. Young adolescents borrow Japanese manga to establish a metaphorical platform based on visual, sound, and linguistics to critically review their states. On the platform, young adolescents see their situation and express their life experiences through reproducing new images and encountering aesthetic experiences.

Both genders are not identical and particularised in drawings. The sex of the protagonist is not related to the creator’s sex. The study has not only found that young adolescents look for the unity of the stereotyped artistic expression in their image creation in this study, it has also found significant evidence showing the stereotyped drawing content based on their sexes. According to Golomb (1990), the sex of the creator demonstrates a stereotyped pattern of creation. He stresses, “The spontaneous productions of boys reveal an intense concern with warfare, acts of violence and destruction, machinery, and sports contests, whereas girls depict more tranquil scenes of romance, family life, landscapes, and children at play” (Golomb, 1990, p. 158).

Nevertheless, this study does not indicate such a pattern. In contrast, it indicates that there is no relationship between the sex of the creator and content developed as mentioned above. For example, female students do not necessarily create female protagonists and Cantonese love songs or the words of the songs which inspire the romance images created by students in the study do not have to relate to the students’ real experiences about love in reality.

The question of whether the sex of the creator may connect to the behaviour pattern in manga creation is also arguable. Gardner (1982) observes the difference between boys and girls in the image creation process. He describes when creating art, girls tend to sing; mix with various gestures; do symbolic
play; apply mixed media, three-dimensional forms, and narrations; however, when creating art, boys applies single-medium, projecting fascination onto a superhero character. As discussed earlier in Chapter One, the study does not examine the creator’s behaviour; instead, it adopts an art-based method to put the image as the study focus irrelevant to the consideration of the creator’s behaviour. According to this, the study does not demonstrate a relationship between the behavioural patterns in image creation.

Some studies in the drawing subject, theme, or characteristics relate the results to the cause of gender or sexual content in children’s drawings. Levick (1997) realises that the sexual content of the children’s drawings are mainly affected by television, videos, and the Internet, in which the themes are “gender-related” (p. 186). The study demonstrates this influence, indeed; however, it is more likely to indicate that young adolescents are only constrained to Japanese manga and affected by this two-dimensional media rather than other visual media.

Levick (1997) and Silver (1997) claim that boys tend to draw about males, while girls draw about females. Malchiodi (2003) declares that “the content and themes of the adolescents in this particular sample may have been strongly influenced by the beliefs and values about gender roles in the community in which they were raised” (p. 190) and “children’s perceptions of gender roles in society are often communicated to them by adults (parents, caretakers, teachers, and others) and influenced by what children see on television and movies, and read in books” (p. 191). He concludes, “Society and culture certainly shape what boys and girls draw, and children’s art expressions are formed, to some extent, by traditional gender roles and images of gender in the media and literature and impacted by the gender values and beliefs of adults with whom children come in contact” (Malchiodi, 2003, p. 185).

Nevertheless, this view is arguable. In this study, what has been found is that young adolescents, like Jack and Kei, select the male image to develop the protagonist and the story according to their everyday experiences, not based on how they are affected by the gender values. What they look for is a strong image projected based on their psychological needs. Another example is that a female creator
is unlikely to be constrained to create female protagonists according to the sex of the creator. Based on the student’s interpretation in the study, they depend on whether the image can offer them opportunities to reflect themselves when selecting and recreating the image rather than considering the gender. The reason for Kei and KW to create a male image as their protagonists for the development of their manga stories is not because of the influence of television, videos, or their sex, but because of their wishes to be stronger against the reality.

As mentioned previously, students in the study pay much attention to the learning in the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped artistic forms rather than expressing the content about gender issues. In a word, their contents in drawings are related to their lived experiences. Therefore, more factors on the socio-cultural influence, individual psychological need, and cognitive learning issue should be put into consideration when discussing the content issue. In conclusion, in addition to the influence of the content, the individual psychological need plays an important role than the pre-occupied assumption of the stereotyping conception of both sexes.

We understand that young adolescents interpret their creation by connecting and exploring the relationship between the real world problem and the particular aesthetic form of expression. The creation process is also a visual interpreting process that provides a consistent method for them to implement their solution planning through art making. This interpretation method presents as a spiral loop in which a longitudinal process shows a pattern for self-transforming. The loop starts with the individual real problem, through which students take references from the particular aesthetics and seek solutions to their problems through the continuous image creation. When the old problem is fixed, the new one will go on and the process starts again. Such an interpretation method successfully informs the students of the connection between the real world problem and the artistic expression.

The interpretation of the meaning of art in image creation connects the concept of aesthetics with the individual lived experience in different aspects. It involves values and reality considerations. Aesthetics can be explicated to the concept of beauty or goodness. Kolnai (1977) suggests an approach to understand the aesthetic through the interpretation of the “experience of beauty” and the value of
“goodness” (p. 189). In Eaton’s theory of aesthetics (1989), the aesthetic meaning refers to the value of meaning of life. Dray (1993) explores Eaton’s theory about the value to which she connects the aesthetic with the development of character. She believes that aesthetics can “contribute to our sense of identity, and significantly affect our concept of a good and meaningful life” (Dray, 1993, p. 4).

In these respects, the aesthetic informs the meaning of human experiences. This idea is constructed by the philosophy that the “aesthetic is a human activity in which we search for beauty and goodness, because it brings a sense of order and integrity to our lives” (Dray, 1993, p. 2). It works because the aesthetic activity contains “awareness, disposition, experience, reflection, and understanding”, which the beauty or goodness reflects the “perfect composite of goods for human beings” (Dray, 1993, p. 12). The relevant evidence like the awareness, experience, reflection, and understanding is demonstrated in the study; however, the findings of the research study does not give any evidence to support the idea of the disposition in understanding images created by young adolescents. The disposition, compared with the other issues mentioned, is not a significant consideration for understanding images in the study. Instead, the socio-cultural context and psychological factors, as well as the cognitive in the arts are likely to be the main component of the aesthetic activity.

The existing local Visual Arts Curriculum emphasises the importance of cultivating the aesthetic learning in art in context, art appreciation, and art creation; however, we seldom point out the psycho-cognitive and self-actualising aspects as an important issue that become the missing point to be considered for a comprehensive art education in the 21st century. As one of the major art and cultural forms, popular visual culture is still regraded as a supplementary learning content in the local art curriculum that excludes it from the mainstream art content. It can be anticipated that the gap between the authentic situation and the assumed curriculum will become bigger. The matrix is against the existing pre-occupied assumption of the art learning, no matter if it is the creative-expressive approach to art education or discipline-based. Besides, the creation process implies a pre-occupied psycho-cognitive visual thinking process. Today’s art education should reconceptualise this missing link and reconsider these issues seriously.
R. A. Smith (1989) defines the term aesthetics as perception, the sense of experience, as “the perception and contemplation of things rather than their creation—looking, listening, or reading rather than making” (p. 4). However, the images in the study not only reflect both the concept and percept, they also reflect the creation according to particular aesthetic artistic expression. The aesthetics involves concept, percept, and the art making, which are important component for interpreting the meanings of the image. The aesthetic developed by the young adolescents in this study reflects a significant factor of the human’s control throughout the image creation process.

According to Eaton (1989), the control is a subjective and objective attitude toward a psychological condition of the aesthetic experience. It is about the judgement of beauty, combining the rationality and the emotionality in their image creation experiences, regardless of the level of their sophisticated skills or intellect in drawing. In the study, the beauty indeed indicates a certain quality of control in terms of the aesthetic concept and percept. Nevertheless, it is debateable that this control is not related to the sophisticated skills or intelligent in the depiction of the image.

The fact that has been found in the study is contradictory to Eaton’s theory, however. As discussed earlier, the sophisticated drawing skills and techniques are physical evidence of the integration of the artistic, cognitive, psychological, and intelligent qualities for the young adolescent to understand the improvement in the self-transformation process. Even the young adolescent who has lower artistic abilities like Yin, still keep trying integrating various arts elements to speak for her by creating images visually and metaphorically. The sophisticated skills and techniques are important because it measures the standard toward heading the peak experience in the matrix.

Broudy (1958) realises that the aesthetic experience can do nothing except realise the attainment of the sensuous characteristics of the percept. He states, “In aesthetic experience we perceive objects in order to grasp their sensuous characteristics and not primarily to further knowledge or useful enterprises” (Broudy, 1958, p. 69). However, the findings in this study do not support such an idea. Images of popular visual culture can be a visual and transcending form of language. This form not only emerges from the integrative arts form applied in image creation, but it also connects to the self-transformation
experience. It is transcending because the creation process itself is a psycho-cognitive process directing the creator to the peak experience through the transforming centauric experience.

The centauric experience provides the creator to integrate the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetic concept into making images. In the study, the concept of the centaur is established to explicate the split state of the creator in terms of the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped aesthetic concept in the image creation process. Wilber (1977) uses this term to describe the separated self in the spectrum of consciousness and realises the importance of being united in self-concept. Although the similar separated concept is applied to review the certain state of a person, the concept between that of Wilber and the one suggested in this study is different. The former sees the centaur as an experience caused by instinct. The latter regards it as a psycho-cognitive learning process leading to the peak experience.

Young adolescents in creating an image need to face the paradoxical centauric experience to encounter the aesthetic transition from the stereotyped and the counter-stereotyped aesthetics. This is not an easy task indeed since it is mixed with various difficulties affecting them like the psychological factor as the individual need and the abilities to be a sophisticated image creator. Suppose it is one of the most important experiences leading to the peak experience to their understanding of the images and their self, teachers in art class should facilitate the students to go through such processes. However, teachers may misunderstand the stereotyped artistic expression as a negative issue in terms of the learning in the art and the creative art development.

The value of the matrix contributes to the art educator to recognise the importance of the cultivation of an attitude toward visual culture in art education that is not only for students, but also for teachers. It is a serious educational matter from the perspectives of the socio-cultural, psychological consideration, and cognitive learning. Concerning the matrix, with understanding the conflict at the centauric stage, art teachers can be a facilitator to help students establish an individual improvement plan. They can teach students various advanced drawing skills and techniques in order to help them to be a sophisticated image creator according the student’s different artistic level.
Besides, the study demonstrates an imagery learning and sensory pattern with diversity in the creation process through the integrative arts form of expression. It provides an opportunity to reconceptualise the visual-sound-text relationship in popular visual culture. It also explores a relationship among the sound, text, and visual image, indicating that the creation follows the visual thinking logic in the representation of images. It demonstrates a multi-layer sensory inquiry pattern in which the visual, sound and text presents as an intimate trio-relationship to interpret the meaning. Young adolescents’ creation processes are allusionary-based, full of the metaphorical meanings significant to them, and related to their everyday experiences. Integration in the arts as a role of metaphor across various art forms is related to the structural and expressive qualities of feeling and pattern. These elements can only be examined and constructed by complex transformational processes in terms of psychology (Ash, 1986). However, the integration in this study not only relates to the art form, it also relates to the cognitive understanding through learning in the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetics. Therefore, the role of images is as aesthetic reproduction as interpreting as educating as therapeutic process.

It is arguable that sound has its purity and is not related to other meanings, which means that its essence is as it is and can hardly be integrated with other arts forms. According to Mursell (1934), “Music paints no picture, tells no story, stands for no system of articulate concepts. It does not directly symbolize anything at all beyond itself. It is design in sound. Often it seems to be just itself, and nothing else, and to have no outer meaning whatsoever…Thus music is the most purely and typically emotional of all arts. Here we find its essence” (p. 35). The Russian painter Kandinsky firstly explains the relationship between the visual and audio in the arts. Kandinsky (1912) states that the fundamental elements in abstract painting could be collected to music. Visual art and music, though they have their own models to be presented, can be integrated, collected and run as a cross-modal transfer. This is why he explained that his abstract paintings could be collaborated with music according to his theory.

In this study, young adolescents construct their images through the visual, sound, and linguistic metaphor; however, each metaphor plays its role differently. The integrative arts form of
representation depends on the sophisticated skills in combining all different arts elements into a form of visual literacy. The image created, in other words, is a socio-cultural and psycho-cognitive visual product, though it is integrated with elements other than the visual. In this respect, young adolescents not only read, write, and listen to the image, but they also visualise it with a multi-sensory ways to depict their situations in their stories metaphorically. Therefore, the trio-relationship between the sound, text, and visual image is related to the exploration of the emotional qualities, in which the process involves “decision making”, “imagination”, and “sensitivity” (Reimer, 2003, p.137).

In this sense, visual arts become the core to make connections with other sensory patterns. However, young adolescents only regard sound as background music that can make them more focused on drawing, rather than a facilitating tool for imagination. When they draw, they even forget about the words in the song instead of focusing on developing the visual forms. There is an argument about the connection between music and image in the process of their manga story drawings in this study. Music does not necessarily create visual imagination in the drawing process. Under the visual-dominated image creation, therefore, the trio-relationship in the creation process is similar to a visual image visualising process.

During the creation process, the sound and text play a subordinate role and have no significant meanings contributing to the images. Researchers in the Harvard Graduate School of Education like Davis (1992), and Davis and Gardner (1992), state that music creates visual imagination; however, there is no significant connection between music and image in the creation of the image of popular visual culture. In fact, in this study, sound does not necessarily create visual imagination. What sound does to the young adolescent toward the creation of the image of popular visual culture is to make them focus on their visual form of artistic creation. It provides a relaxed atmosphere for the visual creation in context, with no significant evidence in this study showing that music facilitates the visual expression.

The process of image reproduction is also a process of imagery learning. Learning in this study means to understand, make connections, and make self-therapy as possible as they can. The meaning of the
image is constructed by a method of allusionary-based imagery learning. To Broudy (1987), images have sensory patterns that are “directly and indirectly related to allusions, concepts, values, ideas by association and languages” (p. 11). Making art means using sensory patterns to deal with concepts. It is understandable, but the role of image in learning is not necessary to be associated with language, or even sound. It is undoubtable that young adolescents make meanings and interpret the images mostly through formalised (stereotyped) visual patterns when creating art, in which sound and language are secondary. Although young adolescents sometimes make their images in an integrative arts form, images are mainly visually presented. Images and forms of visual culture presented by young adolescents can transform their perception on understanding the world and aesthetics.

Imagery learning in visual culture is diversified and based on sensory patterns suggested by Broudy (1987). According to this, the creation of manga story drawing is a process of interdisciplinary modes of learning, appearing in a cross-transfer model. In this learning process, visual-sound-linguistic metaphors establish a foundation of allusionary-based learning model. This essential view not only contributes to the learning in the arts specifically in the application of the multi-layers metaphorical expression, it also suggests a method to collaborate the arts with other art forms. In addition, art teachers should take the advantage of the allusionary-based learning and implement it as one of the goals in art curriculum. This is too important for young adolescent since they are living in a global and local mixed context confronting a world mainly constructed by visual symbols and metaphorical meanings in the postern era.

In terms of communication, Reimer (1992) argues that the aesthetic encounters a cognitive level of knowing far beyond than the factual knowing only by emphasising that the former that concerns “the knowing of or within” the meaning structure (p. 34). He also argues that the content of the art certainly makes important influence in the form of art (Reimer, 1992). With reference to the images created in the study, the researcher recognises his viewpoint if relating the content of their work to the psychological needs and socio-cultural impact on the aesthetic. However, it is contended to state that the content affects the art form. On the contrary, the study has also found how the stereotyped aesthetics influence the content of the image in the study. Therefore, the study has no significant
evidence to interpret that such cause-and-effect relation in the study starts with the content. What the study has found, rather, is an interaction with each other and the interrelationship between them.

The study suggests an inner communication process toward the revelation of the meaning in the arts similar to the one suggested by Reimer. In Reimer’s model (2003), the process of the communication in the arts is mainly divided into “the person communicating” and “the person receiving” (p. 137). Art, as a message, first is formulated in the communicator’s mind. This message is encoded as various forms like words, numbers, or gestures, and transmitted to the receiver. As a receiver, he or she needs to decode the message and directs to be reformulated in the receiver’s mind. Throughout the process, the importance of reformulating the message in the receiver’s mind is highlighted. It means that the meaning in the arts needs to go through the formulation and reformulation processes. However, the study demonstrates a more complex matrix which engages with the stereotyped and counter-stereotyped aesthetics, individual psychological needs, real world problems, the centauric and the peak experiences. It reveals the dualistic relationship between the reality, the aesthetics, and the representational and counter-representational aesthetics. Reimer’s communication model apparently is affected by the social learning and communication theories; however, it is difficult to interpret the meaning of the image of popular visual culture because the main contribution of Reimer’s model is to explicate how arts are understood through an internally ecological system.

All these can be factors affecting the stability of the model causing unexpected result. In the study, the message formulated by the communicator’s mind refers to the pre-occupied Japanese stereotyped aesthetics, while the one reformulated by the receiver’s mind goes to the peak experience structured by psycho-cognitive understanding according to the matrix. Although Reimer’s model can be used to interpret how the creator responds to the art and how the communicator creates the meaning in the arts, as well as how the receiver receives the meaning, it is just an assumption of explaining the message sending and receiving structure from a communication perspective.

In conclusion, the study establishes the structural matrix interpreting the interrelationship with the image of popular visual culture created by young adolescents through their image creation experiences.
as well as responding to the matrix. The matrix is contrary to the existing pre-occupied assumption of the art curriculum particularly in the art curriculum design and the assessment in the arts. The stereotyped, counter-stereotyped, and peak experience is an important psycho-cognitive understanding and learning issue that has been neglected. If ignoring these socio-cultural and psycho-cognitive factors and just simple looking at their work, we never understand the meaning of their images. When constructing meanings through the image creation, young adolescents have to go through different layers of psycho-cognitive process. On the other hand, the matrix reveals an interrelationship which demonstrates how young adolescents create the meaning of the image of popular visual culture, the reason for creating in the dualistic artistic forms of expression, and the way they make interpretation to the creation process. Its implications to art teachers lay stress on the three level of understanding students’ art and the diverse considerations of the student’s art in terms of the art curriculum design and assessment.

Within the Hong Kong inclusive education context, this study explores the profound meanings of the image created by the young adolescents who have comparatively lower academic abilities. It delivers an important message that the meaning of the image creation of popular visual culture also has the advantage of the particular group of student in local context without considering their academic abilities. To the local context, the importance of the meaning of the particular aesthetic concept is a unique phenomenon. However, whether young adolescents studying in different banding secondary schools can benefit from the value of the matrix is a further research consideration.

From the acknowledgement of the matrix, art teachers teaching in an inclusive context can encourage students to be self-actualised to create their own images and hopefully, through the creation process students encounter the peak experience for the sake of healthy mental development. Also, art teachers should rethink the values of teaching visual culture in education in the local context. This study demonstrates the essential meaning of the matrix, though we realise that it is difficult to implement this idea in local context. Nevertheless, we hope that we can encourage further research studies in this area.
The matrix revisits the allusionary-based learning and contributes to the conceptual scaffolding and the practical implication method for the aspect of therapeutic art. It fuses with art education and art therapy through the image creation of popular visual culture in a classroom environment. Under this circumstance, image creation can contribute to both areas. The matrix integrates various arts forms to create meanings to them visually and metaphorically. It shows how the visual metaphors are constructed and how the sound and text are integrated to create meanings in a visual form of expression. Art teachers may encourage students to interpret their images and help them to go through the centauric state. In this respect, integrative arts may be considered to deeply collaborate with the existing art curriculum. Also, art teachers can encourage students to apply various arts element to create metaphorical meanings.

There are many critical and negative comments on the socio-cultural and stereotyped aesthetics influence in image creation; however, the matrix shows more concern on the positive perspectives on these effects. It reveals that the educational, psychological, and cognitive learning values in image creation, contributing to the body knowledge of understanding the popular visual culture. Furthermore, the matrix challenges the existing theories of the artistic development stage and the gender issue in manga creation. It does not serve the artistic development; on the contrary, it contributes a new perspective on viewing the meaning, the reason for the particular artistic expression, and the way of interpreting the art process toward the artistic representation.

The matrix reveals the relationships among creation, interpretation, imagination, and therapeutic art. It articulates that images creation process as aesthetic reproduction as interpreting as educating as therapeutic process. In terms of revisiting the concepts of art curriculum, as one of the main forms of popular visual culture, we know that manga creation can be the effective and socially acceptable form to young adolescents to interpret and seek meanings as well as the identity through the self-therapy and self-transformation process. With this rationale, the art curriculum can become a visual culture art therapy education model, which may be widely accepted by young adolescents. Art educators should consider this specific art form and develop it as a part of learning content in the curriculum. Besides manga, the matrix can further examine other forms of popular visual culture to see whether young
adolescent’s creation follow the same visual logic. More exploration in this area may be required. The matrix provides the springboard and inspiration for understanding the meanings of the young adolescent’s images and its implication in art education in the visual culture era.

In this study, young adolescents talk about images, their artwork, their life, and most importantly, they talk about the matrix which they create to interpret the meaning of images. They connect the matrix to their real life, opening a gate to let us see through the secret of the images of popular visual culture. The matrix is not only established by the outside environment, but also the young adolescents themselves. What is important about the study is to understand how young adolescents construct the meanings of the images of popular visual culture. It is significant since the findings can substantially contribute to art education, art therapy, and studies in visual culture. They not only broaden perspectives of understanding the meanings of the images of popular visual culture in educational settings through an approach combining elements of visual culture and art therapy, they also enrich and reconceptualise the body knowledge on images of popular visual culture within the socio-cultural context.
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APPENDIX A: Formal questionnaire for the in-depth interview with the students

1. Describe what the popular culture is? Please give an example.
2. Describe what kinds of popular culture that you reach in your daily life are.
3. Describe how the culture may affect you and your artwork? Please give an example.
4. How does the culture reflect you and your work?
5. How do you transform your favourite popular culture like music to your manga creation?
6. Describe what the beauty is and what it is not. Please give an example.
7. What are the criteria for making a distinction between what the beauty is and what it is not?
8. What does it mean to you in relation to the manga creation?
9. Describe the perfect and the imperfect parts presented in your manga drawings.
10. What are the most important parts of the images created? Why?
11. How do you depict them?
12. What does manga mean to you?
13. Why do you read and create manga stories?
14. What do you feel when you draw a beautiful or ugly picture in manga creation?
15. How and why do you improve it if you are not satisfied with your drawings?
16. What are the most important parts in your manga stories? Why?
17. Describe the steps of your creation? Why?
18. Do you use critical thinking skills in manga book creation? Why? If yes, describe how you use it?
19. Can manga story project what you think about the real world? Why?
20. What is the difference between the real life and the manga story?
21. Do you use the manga story to tell the daily experiences? If yes, how and why?
22. In your manga story, which character do you think that he/she/it can represent you? Why?
23. Are the characteristics related to what you are in reality? Why or why not?
24. How can the character represent you?
25. Describe the character’s relationship with the male/female and describe why you depict it in this way.
26. Do you put any persons you dislike or bad things into the storyline? Why/why not? If yes, how do you do it?
27. What do you understand in your manga creation? Describe it.
28. How do you respond to the other students’ manga stories?
29. How do you respond to what the other students’ attitudes toward you and your work?
30. Describe the experience of whether the manga creation may help you grow? If it may, in what aspects and why? If not, why?
31. What are the changes made to you in this manga-story-creation unit?
32. How are you changed?
33. What are the meanings of the sound and the text emerged in the manga creation?
34. Describe their relationships in terms of creating manga stories?
35. What are the relationship between the creator, the artwork and the reader?
36. What I feel is…
APPENDIX B: Approval of a research project involving human subjects by the RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee


Dear Chung Yim,

Your amended Ethics application was approved by the chair of the Faculty Human Research Ethics sub-committee on 14/01/2004, and has been ratified by Faculty Board.

This now completes the Ethics approval process. However you are required to submit an Annual report 12 months from the date of this letter. A copy of the form can be located towards the back of the Ethics application.

We wish you well in your research. Should you have any further questions regarding your application please do not hesitate to contact Associate Professor Heather Fehring on 9925 7840 or email heather.fehring@rmit.edu.au.

Yours sincerely

Heather Porter
Secretary FHREC
for

Assoc. Prof. Heather Fehring
Chair
Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services
Human Research Ethics Sub-committee

cc: Assoc Prof David Forrest
HREC Form No 2b
RMIT HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
(Australian Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Human Research Ethics Committee)

Prescribed Consent Form For Persons Participating In Research Projects Involving Interviews, Questionnaires or Disclosure of Personal Information
(個人參與研究計劃，包括晤談、問卷或個人資料公開規定同意書)

FACULTY OF (學院): Education, Language & Community Services (教育、語言及社區服務學院)
DEPARTMENT OF (學系): Industry, Professional and Adult Education (工業、專業及成人教育學系)
Name of Participant (參與者姓名):
Project Title (研究題目): Visual Culture Art Education and Art Therapy: An Approach to Understanding Images Created by Young Adolescents in a Classroom Environment (視覺文化藝術教育與藝術治療：瞭解在教室環境下青少年的影像創作研究)
Name(s) of Investigators (研究員): Mr. Lau, Chung Yim (劉仲嚴)
Phone (電話): Mobile (手提):

1. I have received a statement explaining the interview/questionnaire involved in this project. (本人有收到一個解釋有關該研究的晤談/問卷陳述。)
2. I consent to participate in the above project, the particulars of which - including details of the interviews or questionnaires—have been explained to me. (本人同意參與上述研究計劃，特別是包括晤談或問卷細節，都已經向本人解釋。)
3. I authorise the investigator or his or her assistant to interview me or administer a questionnaire. (本人授權研究者或其助理向本人進行晤談或問卷調查。)
4. I acknowledge that (本人承認):
   (a) Having read Plain Language Statement, I agree to the general purpose, methods and demands of the study. (在閱畢“清晰語言聲明”後，本人讚同該研究的一般目的、方法和需要。)
   (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied. (本人已被知會可在研究開始的任何時間退出，以及撤消任何早已提供而尚未經諸處理的資料。)
   (c) The project is for the purpose of research and/or teaching. It may not be of direct benefit to me. (本計劃只作研究及/或教學之用，本人並不會因此而直接獲取利益。)
   (d) The privacy of the personal information I provide will be safeguarded and only disclosed where I have consented to the disclosure or as required by law. (本人所提供的個人資料將獲得安全保密，並且只有在本人同意公開或法律要求下才能公開。)
   (e) The security of the research data is assured during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to Mr. Lau, Chung Yim. Any information which will identify me will not be used. (在研究中或研究完成後，資料會被確保安全保密。研究中所收集的數據資料可用作出版，而研究計劃的結果報告將歸於劉仲嚴所有。任何將指出本人的資料均不被採納。)
   (f) The sessions will be video recorded. Pre-interview and post-interview with the participants are to be conducted and videotaped. The participant’s process of making artwork and the art product will be videotaped as well. (課堂將會被錄影。研究參與者在課堂開始前和後都會進行晤談，晤談過程亦會被錄影。參與者的藝術創作過程和藝術作品亦將會被錄影。)
   (g) I have been informed that the teacher-in-charge and the social worker select the students. (本人已被告知學生將由班主任和社工徵選。)

Participant’s Consent (參與者同意)
Name (姓名): ___________________________ Date (日期): ____________
(Participant 參與者)
Name (姓名): ___________________________ Date (日期): ____________
(Witness to signature 簽署)

Any complaints about your participation in this project may be directed to the Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, University Secretariat, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001. The telephone number is (03) 9925 1745. Details of the complaints procedure are available from the above address. (如有任何有關參與是次研究計劃的投訴，可直接與澳洲皇家墨爾本理工大學人類研究倫理委員會秘書聯絡。地址：The Secretary, RMIT Human Research Ethics Committee, University Secretariat, RMIT, GPO Box 2476V, Melbourne, 3001。電話：(+613) 9925 1745。有關投訴的詳細程序，可向上述地址查詢。)
I, Lau Chung Yim, am undertaking research for a Philosophy of Doctor degree within the Department of Industry, Professional and Adult Education of Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT University). My research project title is “Visual Culture Art Education and Art Therapy: An Approach to Understanding Images Created by Young Adolescents in Classroom Environment”. Dr. David Forrest, Associate Professor in the Department of Industry, Professional and Adult Education of RMIT University, is my supervisor.

The purpose of the study is to understand the meaning of the image of visual culture created by adolescents with lower self-concept and social difficulties in classroom environment. The potential benefits to both the participant and contributions to the general body of knowledge are mainly to examine the visual culture art education and art therapy approach to raising adolescents’ awareness in classroom environment.

In this study, 12 students in Year 8-10 or same Year level, at The Church of Christ in China Tam Lee Lai Fun Memorial Secondary School, 10, San Wo Lane, San Hui, Tuen Mun, Hong Kong, will be selected by the teacher-in-charge and the social worker. Students are free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied. The researcher decides a continuous teaching unit for about 12-14 lessons in this study. The program will be implemented in the form of a serial teaching and learning activities of comic stories creation. Students will participate in pre-and-post interviews. The project is for the purpose of research and/or teaching. It may not be of direct benefit to the researcher.

The privacy of the personal information provided will be safeguarded and only disclosed where the parents or guardians consented to the disclosure or as required by law. The teacher-in-charge and the social worker will select the students. The sessions will be video recorded with the parents’ or guardians’ explicit written consents. Pre-interview and post-interview with the participants are to be conducted and videotaped. The participants’ process of making artwork will also be video recorded. The security of the research data is assured during and after completion of the study. The data collected during the study may be published, and a report of the project outcomes will be provided to Mr. Lau, Chung Yim. The sessions will be video recorded. Any information which will identify the participant will not be used.

Thank for your coordination.

研究聲明
Plain Language Statement (Chinese Version)

本人(研究者)劉仲嚴(香港教育學院藝術系講師),現於澳洲皇家墨爾本理工大學,工業、專業及成人教育系就讀哲學博士學位。博士研究題目為「視覺文化藝術教育與藝術治療：瞭解在教室環境下青少年的影像創作研究」，研究指導教授為該系副教授 David Forrest 博士。

本研究目的在理解青少年在教室環境中所創作的作品的意義。藉本研究，希望能對青少年所熟悉的視覺藝術形象有所了理，亦希望能建立一種結合藝術教育和治療的新方向，以增進青少年學生對自己的瞭解。

本研究於中華基督教會譚李麗芬記念中學(香港屯門新墟新和里十號)進行，對象是經由學校班主任和駐校社工選出共十五名青少年學生人作研究。被選學生可以自由隨時停止參與是項計劃及提供相關研究資料。研究人員將設計十至十二節課堂作連貫性教學，以漫畫故事創作作為中心進行創作。計劃本身只作研究或/及教學用途之用，而研究結果並不一定對研究者產生助益。

個人資料方面將會保密，只有在父母或監護人的同意下或法律要求下才可把個人資料公開。在徵得父母或監護人的同意下，學校班主任及學校社工會選出學生參與本研究。教學前後與學生的晤談，以及學生創作過程將會被錄影，作品會被攝錄作資料用途。研究數據在研究過程中和過程完成後將會得到安全保密，並作為研究者本人(劉仲嚴)研究論文結果及出版之用，任何有關能指認出學生身份的資料將不會被採用。

謝謝合作！祝安！

劉仲嚴 謹致

二零零三年九月二十五日

研究員簽名：劉仲嚴 (Signature of the Investigator: Mr. Lau, Chung Yim)
BA, Nat Taiwan Normal University; CertArtsAdmin, Grant MacEwan Community College; MVA, VCA, Melbourne
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<tr>
<th><strong>Investigator</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Name:</strong></td>
<td>Lau, Chung Yim</td>
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<td><strong>Qualifications:</strong></td>
<td>BA National Taiwan Noraml University; Cert. in Arts Administration Grant MacEwan Community College; MVA, The University of Melbourne</td>
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<td><strong>Name:</strong></td>
<td>David Forrest, Associate Professor</td>
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Dear Mr. Lau:

Approval Letter to Undertaking Research in The Church of Christ in China
Tam Lee Lai Fun Memorial Secondary School

This letter is to approve that the research study you are conducting for a PhD at RMIT can be implemented at The Church of Christ in China Tam Lee Lai Fun Memorial Secondary School (10, San Wo Lane, San Hui, Tuen Mun, N.T., Hong Kong). Having read the Plain Language Statement, I agree to the general purpose, methods and demands of the study. For this research study, fifteen students will be selected by the teacher-in-charge and the social worker to participate in an art program. The program will take 8-10 sessions to be accomplished.

Project Title: Visual Culture Art Education and Art Therapy: An Approach to Understanding Images Created by Young Adolescents in Classroom Environment

Investigator: Mr. Lau, Chung Yim, BA; CertArtAdmin; MVA
Department: Industry, Professional and Adult Education
Supervisor: David Forrest, Associate Professor; PhD
Department: Industry, Professional and Adult Education
Campus: Bundoora

Thank you for your attention.

Yours faithfully,

Pong Shun Yuen (Mr. J)
Principal

Pong Shun Yuen
Principal
APPENDIX F (i): The Peaceful Town (or the Oasis Town)—The cover of Jack’s finished *manga* book

APPENDIX F (ii): The preface—Jack

Jack wrote:
“There was a peaceful town called the Oasis Town (Peaceful Town) in between the boundaries of two places. This oasis is different as it is the oasis of soul…

-- The following is the line drawn --

Kazw M Kiru (Jack of Wind) [Japanese name in English]
This is a small town, a soul town. I put everything that I have ever seen in my life in the story. There is always something that attracts me and I will put this in the story as well. At the same time, the small town will grow up, like the legend of MaLa in the legend of the Holy sword…Ha Ha [sound of hearty laughter]—so this is what I cope and make changes from the story…Pokemon is the first thing I put in the story because he is my greatest love of all…Ha Ha.

-- The overview of the town --

The origin of this small town was an important military base. It was abandoned after the war. In a summer many years later, travellers who were frightened were selected. They finally settled in the ruins. Gradually, the ruins were rebuilited and became what you see now—the Oasis Town. (The background is the central fountain of the Oasis Town.)"
APPENDIX F (iii): The storyline—Jack (p. 1)

Jack wrote:

“The Oasis Town #1.
There was a peaceful town called the Oasis Town (Peaceful Town) in between the boundaries of two places. The town was not in the desert. This was a soul town... In this town lived the people who had been banished, escaped from war and reality, and escaped from the loneliness...

僕江 川上 良 [Japanese name in Chinese characters]

I was in the Po Lin castle. Of course, I was doing business.

‘Boss, I need 10 boxes of ADV. At least three boxes of ADV1 to ADV3, 13 boxes of E, and two boxes of Jin Kei Deck 2.’ [All are weapons]

‘Fine. Wait a second...’

Evey smart person knew that I opened a shop selling game cards.

‘Hello, Baka and Jack! Let’s play for one round’, said the senior female student at school, the evil electric dragon.

‘Oh? Fine. I have time anyways.’

‘Alright! The electric lamp attacks!’

‘The mountain penetrating rat!’

Finally, I used the blue dragon to fight against the evil electric dragon and won the game...

The blue dragon used one of the fighting techniques that it cast the coin to impede the attack. It attacked the enemy with the card number 20. After the continuous attack at five times and attacking with the card number 60, the evil electric dragon was lost and dead.

To be continued.”
APPENDIX F (iv): Pokemon—Jack (p. 2)

Jack wrote:
“Why...Why do you act like this...You seem to stop me doing anything?...I am not your puppet...So...Goodbye.”

川上 良 [Japanese name in Chinese characters]
APPENDIX F (v): Pokemon and a girl—Jack (p. 3)

Jack wrote:
“The girl: I like you, so what… You seem to ignore me… 川上 [Japanese name] … Can you answer one question for me…”

風間 薇 [Japanese name in Chinese characters]
APPENDIX F (vi): Falling into the gulf—Jack (p. 4)

Jack wrote:
“The wind of grassland
A group of five creatures in the Oasis Town
Bottom: the Terrestrial Bird
Bottom left: Piccachu
Upper left: Polly
Upper right: the Variant Sparrow
Bottom right: the Star Monster of Snow—工乂 [Japanese name in Chinese characters] (mini version)
The five non-world creatures in Oasis Town: FF, Pokemon, RO, Sparrow, and the Star Monster controlling the future weather.”
APPENDIX F (vii): Pokemon and his pet, the Digital Dragon—Jack (p. 5)

Jack wrote:
“'clothing A’ of 川上 良 [Japanese name in Chinese characters] plus Strange Boy (奇異仔 [Chinese name and characters]) ♂ . Practicing the imitation plus Stanger Boy.”

Stanger Boy—萌え [Japanese name and characters]--♥
APPENDIX F (viii): Pokemon and the Digital Dragon transforming into a chicken—Jack (p. 6)
APPENDIX F (ix): A green apple and the iced Poly—Jack (p. 7)

Jack wrote: “Green apple and water Polly.”
APPENDIX F (x): The back of Jack’s manga book with his signature
APPENDIX G (i): The cover of Kei’s finished *manga* book
Kei wrote: “My name is Kei. I don’t know why my father gives me the name. I put lots of time and energy into this *manga* book, so please do appreciate my effort.”
APPENDIX G (iii): Untitled (1)—Kei (p. 1)
APPENDIX G (iv): Dark fighting with a sword—Kei (p. 2)
APPENDIX G (v): Sometimes I need to think—Kei (p. 3)

Kei wrote: “Sometimes I need to think.”
APPENDIX G (vi): Untitled (2)—Kei (p. 4)
APPENDIX G (vii): An iron hammer (p. 5)
APPENDIX G (ix): I cry when I feel sad—Kei (p. 7)

Kei wrote: “I cry when I feel sad.”
APPENDIX G (x): I need to work hard to raise my ability—Kei (p. 8)

Kei wrote: “I need to work hard to raise my ability.”
APPENDIX H (i): The cover of KH’s finished *manga* book
APPENDIX H (ii): The preface—KH

KH wrote: “The writer dares to say that this is a so called a manga book. In the very beginning I did not think that I needed to ‘finish’ it, I did not think that I could do it ‘right’, and I did not think that I would separate the images from black and white to colours! It is just a coincidence.”
APPENDIX H (iii): “The Worst Day in My Life”—KH (p. 1)
APPENDIX H (iv): The stars—KH (p. 2)

KH wrote: “There are many beautiful things that we see; however, they are still ordinary things.”
APPENDIX H (v): Telephone and smile—KH (p. 3)

For the upper image, KH wrote: “Is telephone the only tool to maintain friendship?” For the lower image, she wrote: “I can’t find any happiness in your smile. If you want to cry, then cry! We are standing by you.”
APPENDIX H (vi): The grave—KH (p. 4)

KH wrote: “I feel so lonely without you.”
APPENDIX H (vii): The emptiness—KH (p. 5)

KH wrote: “Can you fill my emptiness? I wish if there would be a chance.”
APPENDIX H (viii): The broken angel—KH (p. 6)
APPENDIX H (ix): Selling buns—KH (p. 7)

KH wrote: “The fresh and hot buns taste really good!”
APPENDIX H (x): A dancing girl—KH (p. 8)
APPENDIX H (xi): A girl—KH (p. 9)
APPENDIX H (xii): A girl in black dress—KH (p. 10)
APPENDIX H (xiii): Examination and revision—KH (p. 11)

KH wrote: “Examination…revision…examination…revision…examination…revision…what’s this for?”
APPENDIX H (xv): Awaiting—KH (p. 13)

KH wrote: “Sitting and waiting is useless. Action!”
APPENDIX H (xvi): Perfume—KH (p. 14)

KH wrote: “Perfume is used to hide the real self…”
APPENDIX I (i): The cover of KW’s finished manga book
KW wrote: “The creator says: ‘Hello! This is the creator of this small manga book! My name is KW. This is the first time I create a manga book. I do not feel so good…but please give me suggestions for my improvement. Please appreciate it!’”
APPENDIX I (iii): Hitting the baseball—KW (p. 1)

KW wrote: “I will hit this ball to prove myself! I must fight bravely!”
APPENDIX I (iv): Changing my timid personality—KW (p. 2)

KW wrote: “I must change my timid personality…open my way…”
APPENDIX I (v): The puzzle—KW (p. 3)

KW wrote: “There are many puzzles among which one must connect with the ‘truth’.”
APPENDIX I (vi): A falling leave—KW (p. 4)

KW wrote: “Is the leave falling down because of the chasing wind or the unwilling detention of the tree? Learn to treasure and give up…”
APPENDIX I (vii): Enjoy today as one can—KW (p. 5)

KW wrote: “To value the time…enjoy today as one can!”
APPENDIX I (viii): I can’t stand it anymore—KW (p. 6)

KW wrote: “Studying is too hard! I can’t stand it anymore!”
APPENDIX I (ix): Basketball is my life—KW (p. 7)

KW wrote: “Basketball…is my life!”
APPENDIX I (x): I am the worldly angel—KW (p. 8)

KW wrote: “I…am the worldly angel…”
APPENDIX I (xi): Sometimes violence is necessary—KW (p. 9)

KW wrote: “Sometimes, violence is necessary!”
APPENDIX J (i): The cover of Fish’s finished *manga* book
APPENDIX J (ii): The preface—Fish

Fish wrote: “Hello everyone. This *manga* book is not good enough. Please excuse me…Which one of the pictures do you like most?”
APPENDIX J (iii): The boy who executes the evil—Fish (p. 1)

Fish wrote: “The boy who executes the evil.”
APPENDIX J (iv): Di-Gi-Chara—Fish (p. 2)

Fish wrote: “Di-Gi-Chara.”
APPENDIX J (v): The cake tastes better than…—Fish (p. 3)

Fish wrote: “The cake tastes better than…”
APPENDIX J (vi): Still thinking?? —Fish (p. 4)

Fish wrote: “Still thinking???”
APPENDIX J (vii): The freezing winter—Fish (p. 5)

Fish wrote: “The freezing winter.”
APPENDIX J (viii): Listening to the quiet sound of the ocean under the freezing weather—Fish (p. 6)

Fish wrote: “Listening to the quiet sound of the ocean under the freezing weather.”
APPENDIX K (i): The cover of Yin’s finished *manga* book
Yin wrote in the preface: “Hello, I am Yin! This is my first *manga* book. I feel…good and interesting! I am sorry for my poor drawings. I hope you do not mind.”
APPENDIX K (iii): A smiling girl (1)—Yin (p. 1)
APPENDIX K (iv): A smiling girl (2)—Yin (p. 2)
APPENDIX K (v): A smiling girl (3)—Yin (p. 3)
APPENDIX K (vi): You can’t—Yin (p. 4)

Yin wrote: “You can’t! You can’t cheat a person out of his/her feelings. You can’t cheat a person out of his/her friendship. You can’t cheat a person out of his/her love. You can’t cheat a person out of his/her money.”
APPENDIX K (vii): I’m angel—Yin (p. 5)

Yin wrote: “To alter!!! To alter!!! To alter!!! I’m angel.”
APPENDIX K (viii): Cool—Yin (p. 6)

Yin wrote: “To fan the air. Cool…”
APPENDIX K (ix): Be confident—Yin (p. 7)

Yin wrote: “To become a person, you must be confident. Stick out the chest.”
APPENDIX K (x): Smile—Yin (p. 8)

Yin wrote: “The elephant smiles and the world becomes wonderful. Smile.”
APPENDIX K (xi): Bye—the back of Yin’s *manga* book
APPENDIX L (i): The cover of Nie’s finished *manga* book

Nie wrote: “A *manga* book.”
APPENDIX L (ii): The preface—Nie

Nie wrote: “It is my first time drawing manga stories. Although there are defects found in the artwork, I do hope that you would appreciate it. Thanks.”
APPENDIX L (iii): Am I pretty?—Nie (p. 1)

Nie wrote: “Am I pretty?”
APPENDIX L (iv): Twins? 2R?—Nie (p. 2)

Nie wrote: “Twins? 2R? This is XXX. Is it good?”
Nie wrote: “A timetable of the four seasons.”
Nie wrote: “Pretentiousness—staring at people with an arrogant attitude.”
APPENDIX L (vii): Princess?—Nie (p. 5)

Nie wrote: “Princess?”
Nie used harmonics to refer a metaphor. She wrote: “Strong and imposing/crazy and drenching?”
APPENDIX L (ix): Is she pretty?—the back of Nie’s *manga* book

Nie wrote: “Is she pretty?”
APPENDIX M (i): The cover of Yan’s finished *manga* book
APPENDIX M (ii): The preface—Yan

Yan wrote: “The creator statement: Hi! My name is Yan. This is my manga book. Inside this book, you can see lots of my pictures. Please appreciate it!”
APPENDIX M (iii): Life—Yan (p. 1)

Yan wrote: “Human being was born to be happy and unhappy. When the time for happiness comes, do smile. When the time for unhappiness comes, do cry! This is natural psychology!”
APPENDIX M (iv): Even though—Yan (p. 2)

Yan wrote: “Even though you are the smartest person, there is something that you can do!!”
APPENDIX M (v): Self-reflection—Yan (p. 3)

Yan wrote: “Sometimes I do wrong, self-reflection is necessary!”
APPENDIX M (vi): Bathing—Yan (p. 4)

Yan wrote: “I love…bathing!!” (Upper image)
“Be a friend with me.” (Lower image)
APPENDIX M (vii): A girl with a rabbit hat—Yan (p. 5)
APPENDIX M (viii): A bad guy and a girl—Yan (p. 6)

Yan wrote: “Even though he is a bad guy, he is still shy.”
APPENDIX M (ix): Falling asleep—Yan (p. 7)

Yan wrote: “Falling asleep.”
APPENDIX M (x): Lost the way—Yan (p. 8)

Yan wrote: “Lost the way.”
Yan wrote: “When having a bad mood, don’t hide and cry! Get someone to talk!”
APPENDIX M (xii): Dreaming or real—Yan (p. 10)

Yan wrote: “Am I dreaming or it is real?”
APPENDIX M (xiii): The popular singers—Yan (p. 11)

Yan wrote: “The popular singer…The words of the song: The next station and standing in front of ‘Big Zhu’.”
APPENDIX M (xiv): Thank you for your support!—Yan (p. 12)

Yan wrote: “Thank you for your support!”
APPENDIX M (xv): The back of the *manga* book—Yan