

# **Art & Empathy: A conquest for character development through exercise and experience.**

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## **Research Stream**

Arts-based research

## **Key words**

art, empathy, arts-based research, visual thinking strategies,

## **Abstract**

Art experiences and exercises that involve acts of imaginative meaning making, possess the potential to foster the development of empathy. In recent publications highlighting that positive character traits help contribute to long-term success, empathy was recognized as an underlying developmental component. While many important reasons exist for including the arts in education, very few studies have been conducted to explore how arts can be used to nurture the development of empathy. This study intends to utilize arts-based research methodology to explore empathy in relation to art experiences and exercises as they are associated with the concept of migration and diasporic movement. This study will examine empathy using Batson's *Eight uses for the term empathy* as a guide to interpret empathy among student participants as they are engaging in art exercises and experiences. Visual thinking exercises are followed by the experience of creating imaginative migratory birds, which upon completion will be exhibited. Seated in Constructivist theory this study intends to capture empathetic phenomenon as it manifests itself during active learning. The representational stage of the research project will include a documentary video on empathy comprised of interviews, artworks, and video footage collected throughout the project. The outcomes of this study intends to provide education policy

makers and educators with an awareness that the arts play an essential role in promoting positive character development. It will enlighten educators to the power education through art asserts in cultivating empathetic development as well as its crucial role in contributing to the long term success of students living in times of massive diasporic movement and rapidly changing communities.