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# International Journal of Advanced Research

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## REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-57618

Title: Soul Collage® With Social Workers: A Visual Essay on Self-Care & Collective Care.

### Recommendation:

Accept as it is .....

**Accept after minor revision.....**

Accept after major revision .....

Do not accept (*Reasons below*) .....

| Rating         | Excel. | Good | Fair | Poor |
|----------------|--------|------|------|------|
| Originality    | √      |      |      |      |
| Techn. Quality |        | √    |      |      |
| Clarity        |        | √    |      |      |
| Significance   | √      |      |      |      |

Reviewer's ID: JPR- 212

### Detailed Reviewer's Report

#### Summary of the Manuscript

This paper presents a visual essay documenting a continuing education workshop that used the SoulCollage® process with social work students and professionals. The workshop aimed to support both self-care and collective care for social workers, who are at risk for compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, vicarious traumatization, and burnout. The paper provides background on these risks and the profession's emphasis on self-care, defines collective care, describes the SoulCollage® method developed by Seena Frost (2001, 2010), and presents five SoulCollage® cards created by participants along with their "I Am One Who..." narratives. The workshop took place in March 2026 (Social Work Month in the US) with 11 participants plus the facilitator. The paper concludes that SoulCollage® allows for both scientific and artistic exploration, centers self-exploration, and can be conducted collectively to support mutual aid and organizational sustainability.

#### Overall Assessment

This is a **charming, creative, and genuinely original** contribution to the literature on social work self-care. The visual essay format is appropriate for the subject matter. The paper is clearly written, ethically grounded, and demonstrates authentic engagement with both the SoulCollage® method and the needs of social work practitioners. The author provides sufficient descriptive detail about the workshop structure and participant composition. The inclusion of actual participant cards and narratives adds valuable qualitative richness.

However, the paper in its current form reads more as a **practice reflection or program description** than as a full research article. It lacks: (a) explicit research questions or aims, (b) a systematic methodology section, (c) any form of data collection or analysis (beyond the author's observations), (d) participant feedback or evaluation data, and (e) discussion of limitations. The paper is also quite short and leaves the reader wanting more depth. With minor but important revisions—particularly framing the paper appropriately and adding evaluative data—this could be a valuable published piece.

**Recommendation: Accept after minor revision.**

#### Major Concerns Requiring Revision

##### 1. The Paper Lacks Explicit Research Questions or Aims (Moderate Concern)

The paper describes what was done (a workshop) and presents examples of participant work, but it never states what the paper is trying to find out, demonstrate, or argue. The closest we get is the final sentence of the abstract: "Engaging in the SoulCollage process in community allows social workers to engage in both self-care and collective care." This is a claim, but the paper does not specify how it will support that claim.

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**Required Revision:** Add a clear statement of purpose or research questions early in the paper (end of introduction or after literature review). Examples:

- *Research aim:* "This paper aims to explore whether and how the SoulCollage® process, when conducted in a group workshop setting, supports self-care and collective care among social work students and professionals."
- *Research questions:* "RQ1: How do social work students and professionals describe their experience of the SoulCollage® process? RQ2: What themes related to self-care and collective care emerge from participant-created SoulCollage® cards and 'I Am One Who...' narratives?"

### 2. No Systematic Methodology Section (Moderate Concern)

The paper describes the workshop procedures (introductions, shared agreements, presentation, card making, "I Am One Who" exercise, sharing) but this is presented as narrative description rather than as a formal methodology. Missing elements include:

- Whether any data were formally collected (e.g., surveys, interviews, feedback forms, observation notes).
- How participant consent was obtained for sharing their cards and narratives.
- Whether the project received ethics approval (institutional review board / research ethics committee).
- How the author analyzed the visual and textual data presented (e.g., thematic analysis, interpretive description, reflexive thematic analysis).
- Whether the author's role as both facilitator and researcher was explicitly acknowledged and managed.

**Required Revision:** Add a "Methodology" section (or rename existing narrative as "Workshop Design and Methods") that includes:

- Statement on ethical approval and informed consent.
- Description of any data collection instruments (if none, state this clearly: "No formal evaluation data were collected; this paper presents the author's reflective account and participant-created artifacts shared with permission").
- If participant narratives were analyzed, describe the analytic approach (e.g., "Narratives were reviewed for recurring themes related to self-care and collective care using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)").
- Reflexivity statement acknowledging the author's dual role as facilitator and researcher.

### 3. The Paper Does Not Present Any Participant Feedback or Evaluation Data (Moderate Concern)

The paper presents five beautiful SoulCollage® cards and their accompanying "I Am One Who..." narratives. These are evocative and meaningful. However, the paper does not include any direct feedback from participants about whether they found the process helpful for self-care or collective care. Did participants complete an evaluation form? Were they asked about their experience? Without such data, the paper's central claim ("SoulCollage allows social workers to engage in both self-care and collective care") rests entirely on the author's interpretation of participant artifacts and the author's own observations.

**Required Revision:** Add at least one of the following:

- Brief quotes from post-workshop participant reflections (if collected).
- Summary of workshop evaluation data (e.g., "On a 5-point scale, participants rated the workshop's usefulness for self-care at 4.8/5").
- If no formal evaluation was conducted, acknowledge this as a limitation and reframe the paper's claim accordingly (e.g., "This paper illustrates the potential of SoulCollage® to support self-care and collective care, based on participant-created artifacts and facilitator observation. Future research should systematically evaluate participant outcomes.").

### 4. The Paper Lacks a Limitations Section (Minor but Important)

Any research or practice paper should acknowledge its limitations. This paper has several that should be named:

- Small sample size (11 participants).
- Self-selected participants (those who chose to attend a SoulCollage® workshop may already be inclined toward creative or reflective practices).
- No control or comparison group.
- Potential facilitator/researcher bias.
- Lack of longitudinal follow-up (was any effect sustained?).
- Generalizability concerns (single workshop at one time and place).

**Required Revision:** Add a "Limitations" paragraph before the conclusion.

### 5. The Conclusion Is Brief and Could Be Strengthened

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The conclusion (one paragraph) references Cozolino (2013) on social work as art and science, reiterates that SoulCollage® allows for both, and quotes Frost (2010) on balance and dualisms. While the quote is lovely, the conclusion does not:

- Summarize the key insights from the participant cards and narratives.
- Explain how these insights illustrate self-care or collective care.
- Offer recommendations for other social work educators or practitioners who might want to use SoulCollage®.
- Suggest directions for future research.

**Required Revision:** Expand the conclusion to include: (a) a brief synthesis of themes from the presented cards (e.g., "Participants expressed needs for peace, trust, joy, steadiness, and freedom—all consistent with self-care and collective care goals"); (b) 2-3 practical recommendations; (c) 1-2 directions for future research.

### 6. Inconsistent Citation of Frost (2001 vs. 2010)

The reference list includes Frost (2001) *SoulCollage®: an intuitive collage process for individuals and groups* (Handford Mead), but the text primarily cites Frost (2010). The 2010 work appears to be a different book (referenced on p. 2 and p. 7 with page numbers 99 and 181-182), but it is not in the reference list. This is a citation error.

**Required Revision:** Add the 2010 Frost source to the reference list. Either: Frost, S. B. (2010). *SoulCollage®: An intuitive collage process for individuals and groups* (rev. ed.). Handford Mead. (Or correct the in-text citations to match the 2001 reference if the page numbers align.)

### 7. Typographical and Minor Errors

- Page 2, line 49: "the them was" should be "the theme was."
- Page 2, line 68: "rite if you are journaling" should be "write if you are journaling."
- Page 6, line 115: "The Sunflower Path" is not clearly attributed to a participant. Is this the title of the card or part of the narrative?
- Page 7, line 137: "They need sustainable practices that tend to both their personal and professional development" – "tend to" is awkward; consider "attend to" or "support."
- Reference format inconsistencies: Some references have DOIs, some do not. Neenan & Whelan (2025) appears to be a book chapter but the citation is incomplete (missing editors, publisher location?).

**Required Revision:** Proofread carefully and standardize reference format.

### 8. The Paper Could Benefit from a Brief Discussion of SoulCollage® Training and Fidelity

The author states they are a "trained SoulCollage® facilitator." This is good. However, for readers unfamiliar with SoulCollage®, it would be helpful to know what this training entails (e.g., duration, certification requirements, whether the author followed the standard SoulCollage® workshop protocol or adapted it). A sentence or two would suffice.

**Required Revision:** Add a brief note: "The author completed [X]-hour SoulCollage® facilitator training through [organization name] and followed the standard SoulCollage® workshop protocol as outlined by Frost (2010)."

### 9. Missing Information on Workshop Length and Setting

The paper describes the workshop sequence but does not state: How long was the workshop (e.g., 2 hours? half-day? full-day)? Where did it take place (e.g., university classroom, community center, online)? Was it offered for continuing education credit (implied but not explicit)?

**Required Revision:** Add workshop duration and setting in the workshop description section.

### Minor Concerns (Can Be Addressed Quickly)

- **Visual quality of images:** The SoulCollage® card images in the PDF are low resolution and difficult to see clearly. For publication, higher resolution images should be provided.
- **Missing alt-text for accessibility:** If publishing online, the journal may require alt-text descriptions of the visual images for visually impaired readers.
- **The title specifies "visual essay" but the paper includes both visual and textual content.** This is fine, but ensure the journal accepts visual essays as a format.
- **The paper would benefit from a brief explanation of why March 2026 is specified** (Social Work Month theme "Uplift. Defend. Transform.") – this is contextually interesting but not essential.

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### Summary of Required Revisions for "Minor Revision"

| Priority      | Revision   | Estimated Effort |
|---------------|--|------------------|
| <b>High</b>   | Add explicit research questions or aims  | Low              |
| <b>High</b>   | Add methodology section with ethics statement and consent information                    | Low              |
| <b>High</b>   | Fix Frost citation inconsistency (add 2010 to references)                                | Low              |
| <b>Medium</b> | Add participant feedback or evaluation data (or acknowledge its absence as a limitation) | Low to Medium    |
| <b>Medium</b> | Add limitations paragraph  | Low              |
| <b>Medium</b> | Expand conclusion with thematic synthesis and recommendations                            | Low              |
| <b>Low</b>    | Proofread for typographical errors   | Low              |
| <b>Low</b>    | Add workshop duration and setting  | Low              |
| <b>Low</b>    | Add brief note on SoulCollage® facilitator training                                      | Low              |

### Overall Verdict

This is a **genuinely original and creative paper** that addresses an important topic in social work: sustainable self-care and collective care for practitioners at risk of burnout and compassion fatigue. The visual essay format is well-suited to the SoulCollage® method, and the participant cards and narratives are evocative and meaningful. The author writes clearly and demonstrates authentic engagement with both the method and the profession.

The paper is **not a traditional empirical study**, and it should not be judged as one. It is a practice reflection / visual essay / program description. As such, many of the concerns above (e.g., lack of systematic data collection, small sample, no control group) are less relevant than they would be for a hypothesis-testing study. However, even within the visual essay genre, the paper would benefit from: (a) explicit framing of its aims, (b) a brief methodology section, (c) acknowledgment of limitations, and (d) corrected citations.

**Recommendation: Accept after minor revision.** The revisions required are modest and can be completed within a few hours. Once these are addressed, the paper will be a valuable, publishable contribution to the literature on creative approaches to social work self-care and collective care.

### Confidential Comments to the Editor:

This is a refreshingly different submission. It is short, personal, creative, and clearly not a standard social science paper. I recommend publishing it as a **practice note, creative work, or visual essay** rather than as a full research article. The journal should ensure that the formatting and peer review criteria are appropriate for this genre. The author appears to be a social work practitioner-educator with genuine expertise in SoulCollage®. The paper is ethically sound (participant permission for sharing cards/narratives is noted). With the minor revisions specified above, it is ready for publication. I enjoyed reviewing this paper