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This dissertation, ART TALK/CREATIVE TALK TIME (C.T.T): A FRAMEWORK FOR USING STUDENT-TEACHER CONVERSATION AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL TOOL, by ERICA MARIE HICKS PENDLETON was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Education, in the College of Education & Human Development, Georgia State University.

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**ART TALK/ CREATIVE TALK TIME (C.T.T.):
A FRAMEWORK FOR USING STUDENT-TEACHER CONVERSATION AS AN
INSTRUCTIONAL TOOL**

by

ERICA PENDLETON

Under the Direction of Dr. Melanie Davenport

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to use arts-based inquiry through portraiture methodology, observation, artmaking and group discussion to explore the contents of student conversations while artmaking. Using Bakhtin's conversation theory to define the activity as verbal interaction which is dependent on response and often reflects a relationship between the participants of the conversation, my goal was to isolate and develop specific student-teacher, conversation-based engagement strategies that foster rapport through the integration of student-centered themes of conversation while they made art using collage self-portraiture. Reflective of Moll and Amanti's (2006) funds of knowledge, research included the observation and examination of both academic (conversation related to art and art instruction, and scholastic matters) and non-

academic (content unrelated to art, art instruction or other scholastic matters) patterns of conversation, uncovering and connecting their identities, experiences and meaning-making through portraiture, and the ways in which those elements showed up in their conversation during artmaking. My research questions were:

- (1) What topics emerge during student conversations while engaged in collage portraiture?
- (2) What topics/questions prompt positive student-teacher interactions that build rapport as an instructional tool?
- (3) What conversation-based strategies might promote student-teacher engagement/Art Talk in the art room?

Using participant observation methods and portraiture methodology, a micro-ethnographic approach was used as my participants were of a particular social/cultural group. My research utilized a qualitative research process and product with the goal of procuring a cultural interpretation of language, conversations, patterns and themes (Wolcott, 2008). While I conducted my research within my own art classroom, I intentionally delved into student conversations to look for themes that took me out of the role as just their teacher. I also assumed the role of micro-ethnographer, as I looked for meanings within the conversations and artworks of my students, and how our conversational exchanges reflect their identities, what their interests were, and what they value (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992).

INDEX WORDS: AFRICAN-AMERICAN, ART, ART EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EQUITY, ELEMENTARY, IDENTITY, MALE, SELF-PORTRAITS, PORTRAITURE, PORTRAITURE METHODOLOGY, SOCIAL JUSTICE

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ERICA PENDLETON

A Dissertation

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Degree of

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in

Curriculum and Instruction

in

The Department of Middle and Secondary Education

in

the College of Education & Human Development

Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA

2020

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DEDICATION

I give God and The Universe glory and thanks for guiding my steps, making my purpose clear, and for conspiring in my favor. I thank my mother, Lenora, for teaching me the most beautiful, enriching and important lessons about how to care for, speak with, love, and respect children. I thank my most impactful teachers--Ms. Wiley, Ms. Nocho, Mrs. Geiger, Ms. Curry, and Ms. Maimon--for always teaching with a clear, powerful and effective interlacing of love, personal connection and instruction. My thanks go to my wife, Megan, for her tireless love, support and encouragement through this journey. We have truly walked this path together. To my dear sisters, Jasmine and Jessica, and to my closest friends that are my family--thank you for keeping me lifted and moving forward. To The Beaver Moon crew-you scholars have all kept me inspired and motivated so much more than I have had time to express. I am honored and overjoyed to be connected to such amazing human beings that unapologetically and regularly share our brilliant, Black and queer excellence with our students, communities, and world. We are necessary. To my students, thank you for pouring into my life in ways that I never imagined I could experience as a teacher. On many days and in many ways, you've saved me. Finally, to the student that inspired this journey, Kyle--thank you for teaching me the importance and relevance of this work, more than any pre-service or professional development could. I owe you.

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Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES.....	iv
LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of Purpose.....	1
Research Questions.....	1
Introduction: Kevin.....	2
2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	11
Theoretical Frameworks.....	12
3 METHODOLOGY.....	27
Portraiture Methodology.....	29
Arts-Based Research.....	31
The Study Site.....	32
Participants.....	37
Data Collection Methods.....	42
Procedures.....	44
Data Analysis.....	52
Study Parameters.....	58
4 FINDINGS.....	60
5 THE COLLAGE SELF-PORTRAITS.....	119
6 DISCUSSION.....	131
7 IMPLICATIONS.....	139
Suggestions for Further Research.....	148
REFERENCES.....	151
APPENDICES.....	160

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.....75

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. KL, week 2.....	120
Figure 2. KL, week 3.....	120
Figure 3. KL, week 4.....	120
Figure 4. KL, artist statement.....	120
Figure 5. MS, week 2.....	122
Figure 6. MS, week 2.....	122
Figure 7. MS, week 3.....	122
Figure 8. MS, week 4.....	122
Figure 9. MS, artist statement.....	122
Figure 10. JV, week 2.....	124
Figure 11. JV, week 3.....	124
Figure 12. JV, week 4.....	124
Figure 13. JV, artist statement.....	124
Figure 14. LD, week 2.....	126
Figure 15. LD, week 3.....	126
Figure 16. LD, artist statement.....	126
Figure 17. KH, week 2.....	128
Figure 18. KH, week 3.....	128
Figure 19. KH, week 4.....	128

Figure 20. KH, artist statement.....128

Figure 21. EP, week 4.....129

Figure 22. EP, artist statement.....129

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to use arts-based inquiry through portraiture methodology, observation, artmaking, and group discussion to explore the conversational contents of students while artmaking. As an art specialist for the past fifteen years, I have both witnessed and experienced the impact of positive student-teacher rapport on effective engagement and its contribution to academic achievement. Bakhtin (1986) defined conversation as verbal interaction that is dependent on the cycle of response and often reflects a relationship between those engaged in the conversation. My goal was to isolate and develop specific student-teacher, conversation-based engagement strategies that foster positive relationship building through the integration of student-centered themes of conversation while my student participants created collage self-portraits. Data collection included participant observation and examination of both academic (conversation related to art and art instruction, and scholastic matters) and non-academic (content unrelated to art, art instruction, or other scholastic matters) patterns of conversation, identities, experiences and making meaning through portraiture, and the ways in which those elements show up in their conversation during artistic creation. My research questions were:

- (1) What topics emerge during student conversations while engaged in collage portraiture?
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- (3) What conversation-based strategies might promote student-teacher engagement/Art Talk in the art room?

Introduction

I remember how I hated my own first few days of school. As an only child and a “mama’s baby” in a single parent household, my mother was my world for the first five years of my life. She was my protector, my best friend, my favorite person. She was kind, familiar, loving, fun -- she was the best. So, when she dropped me off for my first day of Kindergarten, I was completely bewildered and felt utterly betrayed! I do nothing now but chuckle as I recall my feeling a five-year-old’s level of anxiety at the time, but the anxiety was quite real and a big deal for me. I had been thrust out of the comfort of my own home, and personal circle of family and friends, into a room filled with many small, unknown people and two older adult women whom I could only identified as strangers. I didn’t know these people, so why was I being left there?! Of course, I recalled precursor conversations and images about school -- what it was, who would be there, what it would look like, and what would happen there. It seemed fine conceptually; but the reality of what felt like loving abandonment by my mother was overwhelming.

For the first several days of kindergarten, I would wilt, whimper, and just softly cry parts of the day away. My mother would pick me up at noon, at the end of the school day, to find my eyes red and puffy. She would chat with my teacher, Mrs. Howell, about my behavioral progress. I was clearly struggling with the transition from home to school, and my still-developing coping mechanisms hadn’t quite kicked in enough to get me through my day successfully.

Thankfully, a teacher *saved* me. My teacher saved me! Her name was Mrs. Wiley, and she was a co-teacher for Mrs. Howell. My memories of my early interactions with Mrs. Wiley are blurry, but one of those interactions with her, for me, became the most important interaction I believe I would have with any of my teachers, although there have been very many positive

student/teacher experiences. What happened between Mrs. Wiley and I changed the way I would see school forever; or so it seemed to my five-year-old mind.

I don't remember how we got to the stairwell outside of my classroom, nor do I recall what happened immediately beforehand. However, I vividly remember Mrs. Wiley lowering herself to sit on the top step of staircase and gently guiding me to sit next to her. I remember her smile, her kind tone, her light-brown skin, her wire-framed glasses, and her short, loosely curled, light brown hair. I remember her telling me that until I made some friends, *she* would be my friend. She opened her hand to give me a puffy Cabbage Patch Kids sticker with two colorful Cabbage Patch figures with the words "My Best Friend" written above the figures. She gave me a warm, one-armed hug, and we went back into my classroom. I pasted that sticker on my navy-blue book bag, and I never cried in school again.

In fact, I began to love school. I still love school. Mind you, there have been days I've felt like crying, even throughout the academic journey of my adulthood. However, time, maturity, and much stronger coping mechanisms have helped me through those moments, as well as a hearty respect for the value of education and learning. Still, I believe that Mrs. Wiley's single act of kindness-which was undoubtedly driven by her observations, interest, and awareness-healed me.

Teachers have healing powers. However, we may not all be aware of our ability to make or break our students' educational experience by the way we treat them, how we respond to them, and how we build relationships with them. For the past fifteen years of my teaching career, I've worked primarily in a high-needs school, with many students who have needed some extra help with healing in a myriad of ways. From dealing with trauma to simply getting some attention and the interest that they need, especially from the key people in their lives, I've found-

and would like to believe that I know for sure-that students learn best from teachers with whom they have a reciprocal respect and positive rapport. In general, we human beings like people that like us in return. That awareness and feeling creates a sense of ease and level of comfort in which our students can learn, fail, explore, triumph, and blossom.

No other student has taught me this lesson more than one student that I'll refer to as Kevin. I was introduced to Kevin in 2011. My best friend was a first-grade teacher in the school that I service, and Kevin was the bane of her existence for the entire school year. Kevin had serious behavioral issues. While he had the capability to excel at conceptual comprehension (as often assessed verbally), his lack of self-control prohibited him from following classroom norms, active listening, executing certain assigned tasks, and focusing for extended periods of time. He constantly distracted his classmates through outbursts and unsolicited physical contact. While his classroom teacher was excellent at classroom management, Kevin struggled in her class, and she struggled with his behavior. Kevin struggled with the same challenges in every class, including art class, my content area. My main issue with Kevin in the art room was that his endless energy, curiosity, and desire to communicate with his classmates would often result in distraction of others while we were learning or working. Kevin enjoyed creating art, but once he became disinterested, he set his targets on other students to divert them from their work. Or he'd run around the room. Or he'd start with verbal outbursts. And he'd refuse or ignore redirection. This was Kevin, in every classroom setting, but especially in his homeroom and in his special education classroom. He was constantly being removed from these classes by administrators, so much so, he was a regular guest in the front office.

Kevin arrived at our school when he was six, and he continued attendance until the middle of his fifth-grade year. He had so many suspensions by this point that it had been

recommended for him to transfer to a self-contained classroom setting which was being offered in a neighboring school. I regret that he didn't get to end his fifth-grade year with us, to walk down the cafeteria aisle during commencement with the rest of his peers. I also wish I had gotten to know him better, sooner.

However, while Kevin did attend our school, I eventually became known as his only advocate within our building. He became one of my favorite students and THE impetus for starting my doctoral journey. While I struggled with Kevin through first and second grade art, our relationship, his learning, his behavior, and my classroom instruction changed for the better when he reached third grade. It all started with a conversation about music.

Kevin had been put out of class (as usual) and wandered through the halls to my room and knocked on the door. I let him in, as his teacher had asked if he could "cool off" in the art room (as usual). At the time, I was preparing for my next class, and I asked him to help me distribute materials onto the tables. I happened to be playing some music, and he told me that he liked what was playing. So, I started to converse with him about his musical tastes. I asked him what his favorite songs were. To my surprise, he told me that his favorite song was one by the 70's funk group, *Parliament*. Amazed, I asked him how he knew about that genre of music, let alone that particular group. He told me that his grandfather listened to it, and that he spends a lot of time with him. Somehow, within the ten minutes that he helped me prepare for my next class, we talked about music, fishing trips, his grandfather, and that he was in his fifth stint in foster care. His fifth.

This revelation about his recurring shifts of stability in the foster care system enlightened me about some of his struggles with behavior and needs for attention. I was pleasantly surprised that he seemed to really enjoy and respond to our conversations--not being talked *to*, but being

talked *with*-about things of interest to him. So, I became intentional about talking *with* Kevin whenever I saw him. Mostly in my classroom, but even in the hallway, I chatted with him about both academic AND non-academic things. I asked him how things were going with his teachers, and how things were going at home. We'd discuss what we had for dinner the previous night, or how we were feeling that day, what our plans were for the evening, what we did on the weekends. The more I conversed with him, the more I discovered about his personal interests and who he was as a young *person*, not only as a student. I would purposely integrate his interests into our chats, which often led him to excitedly converse with me. Many times, I'd find connections between our interests and lives, and talk about our similarities with him. Even if he was sent to my room for disciplinary purposes, I tried more restorative and redemptive strategies that centered on more talking, usually about and through what got him in trouble in the first place, and ways to think about fixing things.

Mind you, many of these chats were fairly quick, because they'd happen in an active classroom filled with students making art, usually post-instruction while my students were working on their projects. Sometimes the conversations happened while crossing paths in the hallway, or while I was teaching a class that wasn't his own. In a relatively short time, I saw a notable transformation in Kevin's behaviors in my classroom, and an increase in his focus and an improvement in his artwork. He distracted his classmates less and was paying attention more. He found ways to help others during class and excitedly sought out opportunities to lead and assist. Yes, he still had outbursts; but not nearly as frequent. And he was finishing his projects with levels of mastery that he hadn't exhibited during first and second grade art, as his limited focus often compromised his ability to complete project-based assignments. Kevin showed marked behavioral improvement in my class, but based on his teachers' reports, in my class *only*.

I was described as Kevin's only friend at my school; and his teachers began to send him to me regularly instead of to the office or our administrators, if he experienced disciplinary issues. I tried to share with my colleagues that maybe Kevin was positively responding to our conversations; and that it was a strategy worth trying in their own classrooms. Sadly, that advice was a hard sell. It was no coincidence that our rapport was helping Kevin with his behavior, with his socializing, with his focus, and, ultimately, with his achievement in the art room. It's no secret-whether empirically proven or through experience-that students learn best when they feel liked, loved, comfortable, respected, that they matter and are supported by their teachers (Love, 2019). That support and care is often communicated through our interest in knowing our students and communicating with them positively. So much of our communication in the classroom is verbal, and our conversations with our students have the ability to inform them of our feelings towards them, our interest in them, and our belief in their capabilities. I believed in Kevin and wanted him to always know that I was on his team, even while reminding him of his responsibilities to his other teachers, myself, his classmates, and himself.

Kevin's story has been replicated through many other students that I've served since then. I've become an official mentor to several students over the years who have had similar paths, similar skin tone, usually boys, who often don't get as many chances as others to redeem themselves in order to behave better, learn better, and do better. Our positive, reciprocal conversations during their artmaking have played an integral role in our rapport-building endeavors. The role of social context, verbal interaction, and conversation offers rich questions for the study of learning and cognition. Our first experiences with communication are related to oral interaction. Even prior to our exposure to the written word, humans acquire communication skills-inclusive of comprehension, interpretation, inference, and response-through being spoken

to (Applebee, 1996). Language develops through practicing sound and word identification, encouraging the ability to speak and working on communicating with a level of understanding required for conversation or discourse (Massey, 2004).

In the academic realm, teacher-student conversation is integral to creating connection and rapport, and stimulating learning through idea exchange, mutual inquiry, and exploration, as well as developing critical thinking skills (Van Bramer, 2003). As the study of the visual arts is grounded in visual literacy, critical thinking, and creative problem solving, language is also an integral component of early artistic development and is vital in nurturing visual expression and creativity (Thompson, 1988).

Creativity itself is a phenomenon whereby something new is formed, born out of change, with value tethered to it. The created item may be in the realm of the intangible, such as ideas, theories, musical compositions, or humor. The created item may also be an original physical object such as an invention, a literary work, or a piece of artwork. The K-5 visual arts curriculum is driven primarily by project-based assessment, requiring students to produce an original piece of art; demonstrating standards-based content comprehension. As the arts engage students' affective, intuitive, and emotional sides (Milbrant, 2011), encouraging these psychological elements to support productive creativity can be augmented by verbal discourse (Thompson, 1988).

While academically based conversations between student and teacher create opportunities to further understanding of educational content, expectations, and guidance, non-academic discourse between teacher and student allows deeper understandings of personal interests to develop, enhancing the responsive connection between student and teacher (Nichols, 2014). This kind of real talk (Bacon, 1993) fosters appreciation of student perspectives, opinions, topics of

interest, and develops critical thinking skills (Bacon, 1993). While working in silence is a tradition of the academic classroom, in the process of artmaking, students tend to talk, either about their artistic process or matters of a personal nature, or both (Thompson, 1988). A talkative student is often the target of disciplinary action, as loquaciousness is stigmatized through its connection to distraction and insubordination; particularly, students of color experience hyper-vigilance and inequitable discipline for such behavior patterns (Soumah, 2013). However, in the art room, I believe that conversation may help me further understand the nature of the student as an individual and artist (Sparling, 1973). Focusing on the importance of conversation between adult and child as the young child engages in artistic activities, Sparling (1973) asserted that different kinds of conversations appropriate for art education facilitate cognitive development and results in increased artistic motivation, creativity and productivity (Sparling, 1973).

With that, another goal of my research was to propose that encouraging students' natural tendency to converse during the creative process of making art can be a stimulus for creative and critical thinking and collaborative idea exchange. Use of language is essential to student cognition, artistic development and creativity, and a student's personal connection to their created product and rapport with their teacher supports student learning. However, the problem lies in the underuse of this form of rapport building through discourse as a pedagogical tool. The purpose of this study was to discover the conversational interests and habits of a particular subset of students that are common targets of disciplinary action during in-class, post-instructional conversation: male, African-American, 5th graders (Bennett, 2017; Soumah, 2013). Art educators' efforts to understand the context of student discourse and the individual nature of their students during their creative process may foster student achievement by enhancing my ability to join in the dialogue. Being present in such dialogue through which students think, inquire,

defend, initiate, and pursue the creation of visual form could establish deep, linguistic connections that support cognition, creativity and productivity (Sparling, 1973).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to explore the conversational contents of students while they engaged in the artmaking process, this study used arts-based inquiry through portraiture methodology, the use and processes of the collage medium for self-portraiture, participant observation and group discussion. My goal was to discover themes and to develop strategies using these themes in both formal and informal student-teacher conversations as instructional tools to build rapport with my students in the art room. Using Bakhtin's (1981) conversation theory to define the activity as verbal interaction that is dependent on response and often reflects a relationship between the participants of the conversation, I aimed to develop and isolate specific student-teacher engagement strategies that foster rapport which are based on this type of interaction. These findings will be used to create and support pedagogical strategies that build rapport and positive relationships through the use of teacher-student discourse, including culturally relevant language (Garner & Rubin, 1986; Smith, 2013). I believe that these strategies could serve a purpose, as well, in academic/behavioral interventions.

For the purpose of this research review, the creative process was generally defined as student processes and products based on critical thinking and visual problem solving, originality, task initiation and sharing, and appropriate medium manipulation (Kandler, 2016). The following review of literature will briefly discuss the underlying theories that are guiding this study, and address research and theoretical works related to themes that I explore through the research process. These themes include language and conversation, classroom discourse, creativity and conversation, and conversation as a disciplinary issue.

Theoretical Frameworks

Epistemology questions what counts as knowledge, how knowledge claims are justified, and what the relationship is between the researcher and those being researched (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2009) suggests that knowledge is gained through engaging with the subjective experiences of people and attempting to minimize objective separation (Creswell, 2009). This paradigm supports researchers getting as close as possible to the participants being studied in field research. As a researcher, my advocacy-based worldview provides the foundation for working within a transformative framework. As a teacher, my role as an advocate for my students and the inclusion of their voices in responding to their instructional and academic needs is paramount. The transformative paradigm with its associated philosophical assumptions provides a framework for addressing inequality and injustice in society using culturally competent, qualitative methods (Mertens et al., 2007).

While a pragmatist perspective supported efforts to create or adjust realistic pedagogical practices regarding the use of improved discourse and rapport between student and teacher, working under this view alone did not focus on the empowerment of the particular group of student participants that were researched. With that in mind, allowing a transformative-
emancipatory lens to guide my research promoted the exploration of the voices of my participants, in hopes of increasing their utilization in curricular design, content, and rapport building. Therefore, the use of participant-observation, discussion, artmaking, and portraiture methodology to excavate conversation themes through verbal/visual storytelling and identity exploration, reflected a transformative philosophical structure and supported a qualitative, ethnographic path of research (Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999).

The way an individual approaches research is reflective of his or her perception of human existence and how knowledge develops contextually (Merriam, 2009). As a proponent of social learning and Vygotskian sociocultural theories, I believe that our environment, the people that we interact with, as well as life events, ultimately makes a profound impression on how we exist in our spaces, how we develop, how we build relationships, and how we communicate with each other. This study was also grounded in critical sociocultural theory, which considers issues of power, equality, and social justice in learning and focuses on knowledge acquisition and meaning making through interactions (Lewis, 2007). Common to other social learning theories, knowledge is considered to be constructed socially and is dependent upon the context. Unlike cognitive theory, which places emphasis on the mind, sociocultural theory explores beyond biology to explain phenomena and provides insight into how learning is connected to the environment and to the cultural composition of individuals. In pedagogy, sociocultural theory examines how learning and development is indelibly connected to the social context that surrounds individuals or groups, and how learning is both socially and jointly constructed as a result of the interaction with the environment and people in it (Derry, 2013). Learners perpetually bring their cultural knowledge to learning situations, including values, and language-both formal and casual/conversational (Addams, 1924).

Bahktin's (1981) discourse theories support language and conversation as socially constructed, reflective and reliant on the utterances of oneself and respondents. Defining conversation as expression (words and utterances) in a living context of exchange, these words and utterances hold a place for individuals as the main unit of meaning-making in social contexts. These meanings are formed through a speaker's relation to others, their words and expressions, and the lived cultural environment. Always embedded in a history of expressions by

others in a chain of ongoing cultural and political moments, our words are marked by what Bakhtin terms *addressivity* and *answerability*-words are always addressed to someone, and the speaker anticipates and can generate a response or answer. Bahktin's dialogic theory describes discourse as the chain of words or utterances that are fundamentally and historically contingent on social and cultural constructs of community, places, people, and events. Since it exists as part of a cultural environment, Bahktin uses the terms *heteroglossia* (the words and expressions of others), and *polyphonic* (incorporating many voices) to describe the nature of discourse (Bahktin, 1986).

Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez' (1992) work on funds of knowledge lends validity to the idea that conversation is socially constructed. Developed by Luis C. Moll through his field studies surrounding bilingual literacy within Latino households, the theory advocates for re-imagination of how dysfunction is defined and assessed based on deficit models. Through the discovery of intellectual resources of human participants in their local households and communities, the research conducted within their personal/social circumstances creates a more complete understanding of their identities, which are often influenced by their surrounding environments and social constructs. Emphasizing that intellectual capacities built through household/community resources may not be supported in traditional classroom settings, the capacities that may show up in students' conversational interests can be incorporated into student-teacher conversation, as a meaningful tool of instruction and pedagogical culture.

Language and Conversation

Bahktin (1986) posits that any understanding of words becomes inherently responsive, and the listener becomes the speaker in alternating cycles. With that is the assumption that real

understanding is actively responsive and expectant of response beyond a simple duplication of what was uttered. Further, the speaker talks with the expectation of agreement, sympathy, objection, and inquiry. Hence, the unique experience of conversational expression of each individual is developed through the continuous and constant interaction with others and their utterances. With our speech continuously being informed by our interactions, the conversations in which we engage regularly reflect the ideas and knowledge of those in our immediate social environments (Bahktin, 1986).

The role of social context, verbal interaction, and conversation provide rich resources for the study of learning and cognition. Applebee (1996) suggested that our first experiences with language are relayed orally, reflecting the inherently social nature of language acquisition. Before being exposed to written word, humans learn to communicate with a reliance on skills inclusive of comprehension, interpretation, inference, and response through conversation (Applebee, 1996). Learning to communicate is characterized by early interactions with sounds, followed by sound mimicking, word repetition, inquiry, storytelling, and narrative exchange. Language development is enhanced through sound interpretations and word identifications that create meanings for us, encouraging our ability to speak and to communicate with a level of understanding required for conversation or discourse (Massey, 2004). Since adults are the first and main deliverers of sound and words, children learn to adopt verbal and vocal patterns in the creation of their own portions of dialogue (2004). According to Vygotsky (Connery, John-Steiner, & Marjanovic-Shane, 2010), language is both a symbolic system of communication and is used to transmit culture and history, and play becomes an essential component of both language development and a child's understanding of the external world.

Through the analysis of conversation, it is possible to uncover connections between individuals, and in the realm of research, answer questions posed by the researcher. In a study conducted by Roulston (2004) on talk-in-interaction between music teachers and their students, close examination of conversation helped to discover how topics of discussion were formulated. Looking at the kinds of student-teacher interactions that are commonly found in the classroom, Roulston analyzed three years' worth of transcripts to search for patterns that define different aspects and sequences of talk. Her transcript analysis revealed examples of initiation-response-evaluation sequences that tended to lead the dialogue between the teacher and students during music instruction. These sequences illuminated patterns of indirect and direct verbal direction by the teacher that gave cues to the students on how they should respond, and how certain questions posed by the teacher garnered certain and expected modes of answering, such as raising hands, verbal pauses denoting turn taking, and whole class response, as well as silences that accompanied insecurity in student response. Contending that relationships, roles and identities impact sequences of conversation between individuals or within groups, Roulston (2004) supports the idea that the role of social context is a key component of communication. Teachers are at the helm of establishing these connections through dialogue in the classroom; their role as initiator is often at the forefront of instruction and in the social context of the classroom, with talking accompanied by interaction being a vital part of establishing connection with students.

Classroom Discourse

The role of conversation between students and their teacher is vital to the development of strong rapport and relationships. Conversation creates an incitement for learning through open and mutual inquiry, content exploration, idea exchange, and development of critical thinking skills (Van Bramer, 2003). As Massey explained (2004), adults are often the main sources of

sound in the classroom. Yet, when children are found at play, eating, reading aloud, working collaboratively, having imaginative conversations, or engaging in question and response, they are put in the positions to be the actual sustainers of language development and growth in the conversing (Massey, 2004). When children converse with other children in their classrooms, the boundaries are stretched regarding who dictates or directs the noise and sounds. Massey questioned how teachers can use this classroom chatter to create opportunities for learning through conversation. Conversation can be used as an instructional tool, often at several points during the school day when conversation between students is more likely to occur. These include times when students are greeted at entry, circle or station time, organized playtime, and during inquiry-based learning facilitation.

While academically based conversation between student and teacher creates an opportunity to further understand educational content, expectations, and guidance, non-academic discourse between teacher and student allows conversation of personal interest to develop, enhancing the responsive connection between student and teacher; a mutual and willing participation in conversation. Nichols (2014) questioned what could happen in classrooms when times for authentic conversations about content as well as personal interest were intentionally created. While extensive, collaborative conversations that allow understanding to unfold over time can become unstructured, allowing students to wrestle with complex content and ideas can become lively opportunities for conversational equity between teacher and students. Nichols recommended the examination of possible classroom examples that could illustrate some problems and solutions in relation to the integration of rigorous academic discourse in the classroom. “What should the teacher/facilitator do when everyone tries to talk at once, when students don't listen to one another, when some students dominate the conversation, or when

other students remain silent?" (p.73). Nichols encouraged teachers to avoid asserting control; rather to focus on guiding the conversation or establishing expectations for the path of conversation.

With the goal of having our students negotiate and navigate through their own and each other's student perspectives through conversation, a teacher's challenge is to maintain trust-laden, safe spaces for personal expression within their classrooms. To engage students in genuine conversation that reflects their personal expression (Bacon, 1993), thoughtfulness, responsiveness, support, and mutual trust between student and teacher must be at the forefront of such discourse. With a focus on abolitionist teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy, Love (2014) also emphasizes the creation of classroom spaces that promote expressive, authentic discourse. As space for real talk becomes a part of the daily fabric of their classroom life, the goal is to develop collaborative skills, routines, and practices that will prepare students to engage with a complex world. The traditional initiate-respond-evaluate pattern of classroom verbal exchange would need to be abandoned, because that cycle of talk-and-response positions the teacher as the authority and main source of sound and focuses student effort on answers instead of ideas.

As an alternative, Nichols (2014) suggested the use of questions that open the conversation to a range of possibilities, and then teachers accept and prod instead of evaluating the responses. Open-ended questions regarding students' thoughts, examining possibilities, and establishing connections encourage students to work with one another's ideas and begin to move the conversation forward on their own (Nichols, 2014). This commitment by the teacher to encourage and guide authentic conversation demonstrates appreciation of student perspectives, opinions, topics of interest, and develops critical thinking skills (Bacon, 1993). Facilitating such

dialogue through which students think, inquire, defend, initiate, and pursue the creation of visual form establishes deep, linguistic connections that support cognition, creativity, and productivity (Sparling, 1973).

Creativity and Conversation

Creativity is a unique occurrence in which a new thing of value is formed or developed (Kandler, 2016), with the potential source of that creativity being anything that involves the human mind inclusive (Robinson, 2005). These new things can be intangible in nature, such as ideas, theories, musical compositions, and humor (Sternberg, 2011). The created item may also be an original physical object such as an invention, a literary work, or a piece of artwork, and can be the product of an individual, or group generated (Clapp, 2014). In the wake of the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001, Milbrandt and Milbrandt (2011) drew attention to a growing concern that the “convergent, one correct answer mentality that our educational system is encouraging in students results in an inability of students to seek, confront, and solve non-linear, divergent, open-ended problems” (p. 8). The imbalance in educational experiences and competencies encourages a gap in the preparation of future citizens and leaders, because complex problem solving and critical thinking skills are not able to be cultivated, due to focus on test-taking skills. Leaders in various fields from economics and psychology, to art and media, are calling for sharper imaginations and abilities to synthesize complex understandings essential to construct a more successful collective of future leaders and producers (Milbrandt and Milbrandt, 2011). Because the arts engage students' affective, intuitive, and emotional sides, these psychological elements are encouraged through artmaking. These elements that support productive creativity are augmented by verbal discourse (Milbrandt and Milbrandt, 2011).

According to Veneema, Winner, Sheridan and Hetland (2007), art creation helps to activate specific cognitive dispositions within the realms of lessons and learning. Referred to as studio habits of mind and thinking inclinations, these cognitive habits add value to arts education for all students. These habits are:

- Engaging and persistence (learning to embrace pertinent problems and foster the level of focus needed to complete tasks)
- Envisioning (learning to work with mental pictures to discern the physically unseen and possibilities)
- Expression (creating works that convey an idea, feeling or personal meaning)
- Observation (looking closer than ordinary to see more and deeply)
- Reflection (the ability to question oneself and one's own work, explain it to others, and evaluate the work and their own process, as well as the work of others)
- Exploration (learning to challenge oneself, work instinctively, learn from mistakes and look for opportunities) contributes to student cognition through artmaking (Veneema et al., 2007).

Research and literature reviewed by Thompson (1988) supported the proposition that language is an essential component of early artistic development that is foundational for these cognitive dispositions and is crucial to the nature and nurture of visual expression. Thompson studied young children and found that they frequently accompany drawing activities with descriptive, reflective, and social conversation, verbal monitoring, supplementing, and sharing the progress of their marks.

Thompson discussed four themes: (1) the role of talk in the transition from the nonrepresentational exuberance of early scribbles (marking) to the intentional symbolization of

objects and events (drawing); (2) the impact of adult presence and involvement on the drawing processes of young children; (3) the possibility that young children exhibit particular styles of talking about their art; and (4) the recommendations offered by researchers and theorists concerning ways to engage children in dialogue about their art. Thompson proposed encouraging young children's natural tendency to talk about the process of making art as a foundation for teaching art in the early years. Adults' efforts to understand the nature of children's art and further children's development would benefit from recognizing and joining in the dialogue through which children name, ponder, initiate, and pursue the creation of visual form. Research supports the intentional tethering of creative activity, language, and conversation (Thompson, 1988). Because the study of the visual arts is grounded in visual learning, critical thinking, and creative problem solving, language is also an integral component of early artistic development and is indelible in the nurturing of visual expression and creativity (Thompson, 1988).

Communication through Portraiture

Rolling (2013) purported that creativity is often borne of mutually beneficial human thought and action that is instigated by a common story, whether the group of collaborators are small in numbers or many en masse. Regardless of whether that story is fictional, mythical, familial, scientific, cultural, political, or economic, the truth is that every one of us carries multiple motivating stories in our heads that help to create a picture of who we are. Gerstenblatt (2013) studied the intersection of storytelling and portraiture as she studied an African-American family's experiences around the creation and destruction of an art installation on their family property. Gerstenblatt gathered interviews with three family members regarding their participation in the installation constructed at the site of the family homestead that burned to the

ground in the late 1960s. Using socio-cultural narrative thematic methods to gain insight into the significance and meaning of the art installation, Gerstenblatt integrated arts-based research methods that resulted in the expansion of her study to include the production and use of collage portraits as a method of analysis. While the results of the art installation study were integral for understanding the lived experiences of the family that created the installation, Gerstenblatt's focus on collage portraiture methodology for data collection and analysis enhanced understanding of the impact of this art project on the family, and the story that the art told.

Using interviews, hand-written notes, and highlighting portions of the text, Gerstenblatt (2013) integrated printed text selections, archival documents and photographic images to create collages that told the story of each of the interviewees. Common themes that emerged from the interviews were their perceptions of art and working on the installation, their connection to the land and family, history, and transformation/change. Two sub-themes that also emerged were one participant's reflections of her life and another's profound reverence of the family land. The themes sometimes overlapped, with evidence of a strong connection to the family, shared ground with history of the black community. Working together and connection to the family were synonymous for some participants. The themes were interchangeable and often converged in the stories of the participants. Transforming the land, resurrecting the home into a symbolic structure, and engaging in a collaborative process of creating an art installation wove the common themes which became visible in the collage portraits. Revealed at the same time was the unique personal aspect of each person's story -- their memories, recollections of their families and events, and their reverence of and deep connections to their family land.

Identity is a theme that can also be explored in its relation to who we are, what we talk about, and what our stories are (Zoss, Smagorinsky, & O'Donnell-Allen, 2007). In a study of

three high school senior adolescent males, who each created a face mask based on their sense of self during an instructional unit about identity, Zoss, Smagorinsky, and O'Donnell-Allen examined and applied a Vygotskian, sociocultural framework to analyze the participants' compositions in terms of their project goals, medium choices, educational and instructional settings, as well as the psychological tools they employed to produce the masks. With the goal of exploring and developing their personal and socially situated identities, each participant used the mask-making as a vehicle for visually sharing his experiences, beliefs, and emotions while making connections to the textually based written component of the same project. With elements of portraiture serving as substructure for this research, the findings of the study connected artmaking and literacy through mask-making, with themes about belonging, cultural influences, and personal experiences and reflections that impacted the participants' writing and their art.

In a similar art-based research by Chilton and Scotti (2014), collage was used to explore and create narratives for participants that navigated through their personal experiences and reflections of healing and growth through art therapy, and to explore the similarities in art therapies and arts-based research through collage making. With the premise that therapists and clients use art for healing and growth, both the researchers and participants used similar materials and methods to generate new knowledge and examine the connections to find out how collage could be used as a research practice in art therapy. To create visual and textual dialogue, each participant created one collage per week over a period of four weeks. The participants exchanged descriptively written letters and digital photographs of their weekly collages, viewed each other's collages and written narratives, and dialogued via e-mail/video conferencing. Both the researchers and participants found that letter writing helped to communicate and articulate their thoughts and feelings about the collage imagery and their insights about the arts-based

research that the imagery generated. Analysis uncovered patterns across the works and letters, with three emergent themes about the use of collage. The medium was found to (1) enable integrate layers of theory, artistic and subjective knowledge, (2) enable the development of the arts-based researcher, and (3) embody exploration and discovery through tactile experimentation.

Portraiture as Storytelling

Using arts-based research and portraiture methodology allows inquiry into personal identity, as it involves creating the personal story of the participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). While the stories that I revealed about my participants during the course of my research in the art room holds centrality in their/our conversations while artmaking, a significant component of their stories were in the artwork produced during these conversations. Lowe and Medina (2010) supported the place of social theory in the incorporation of storytelling in artmaking spaces to excavate and explore student voice. In tandem with artmaking, Lawrence-Lightfoot (2016) sustains that with portraiture methodology, we seek to combine systematic, empirical description with aesthetic expression, blending art and science, humanistic sensibilities and scientific rigor. The methodological portraits are designed to capture the richness, complexity, and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, conveying the perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experiences. The portraits are shaped through dialogue with the portraitist and the subject, each one participating in the drawing of the image. The encounter between the two is rich with meaning and resonance and is crucial to the success and authenticity of the rendered piece (p.5).

When in the field, Lawrence-Lightfoot (2016) encouraged researchers to document as much as possible, never discounting any piece as too trivial to record. She emphasizes using physical and sociocultural contexts as the best resources for investigating the language,

conversations and actions of people. “We do not know the intentions and motivations attached to people’s behaviors unless we see them embedded in context.” (p. 22)

Because the goal of my research was to hear more fully the voices of my students, through rapport building conversations during art class, I felt that the use of collage as the basis of the project would create space for their voices to be expressed in a very personal way (Chilton & Scotti, 2014). Collage is recommended as a medium for arts-based research, as it involves gathering and selecting imagery-which serves as data-as well as analyzing, synthesizing, and presenting the results of these processes. Collage joins multiple visual or textual items together to create a focus for connections and synthesizes different ways of knowing (Chilton & Scotti, 2014)

Conclusion

The research that I have reviewed suggests that the use of conversation as a learning tool can be effectively integrated into the curricular structure as a way of building connectivity to content, to the teacher, and between students. As a tool in the art room, student-teacher and student-student discourse provides opportunities to explore meaning, inquiry, and creative processes. However, there seems to be a body of research that is missing regarding the specific use of both academic and non-academic discourse as a learning tool, specifically between teacher and student, and particularly in conversation with African-American male students,

Moving forward, a further examination of this particular strand of conversation may help to draw clearer conclusions regarding non-academic discourse, and its inclusion in student-teacher discourse as a pedagogical tool to increase relationality-an identifiable personal connection-between teacher and student, in efforts to support learning in both the art room and the classroom. As a researcher and educator, my stance reflects the need for student voice when

considering curriculum and pedagogy, and this voice can be examined through the study that I have done. In order to contribute to the research regarding the conversational interests of the particular student sub-group of focus—African-American, 5th grade male students- while they made art in the art room, my study was guided by the following questions:

- (1) What topics emerge during student conversations while engaged in collage portraiture?
- (2) What topics/questions prompt positive student-teacher interactions that build rapport as an instructional tool?
- (3) What conversation-based strategies might promote student-teacher engagement/Art Talk in the art room?

In the next chapter I discuss the details of my study, as well as limitations and my timeline.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

It is my belief that for a study of this nature, the methodology must be intimately rooted in the human experience, rather than seeking to objectively quantify behaviors. Therefore, this research was conducted utilizing a qualitative methodology. Creswell (1994) suggested that qualitative research is a means of understanding human experiences within their natural environment through the perspective of individuals. Merriam (2009) suggested that qualitative research is concerned with comprehending how people construct meaning and connection to each other through life experiences. These definitions embodied my approach to understanding the content of conversations among African-American male students engaged in artmaking.

Qualitative researchers identify factors within an environment as specialists and strategically adopt the position of learner in order to uncover their perceptions (DeMarrais, 2004). As investigators, qualitative researchers expect the narrative to play out through the words and mannerisms of participants (Merriam, 2009), and this characteristic informed my approach to the study. Using socio-cultural theory promoted the examination of the important contributions that society makes to individual development (Marjanovic-Shane, John-Steiner & Connery, 2010). This theory stresses the interaction between developing people and the culture in which they live and supports the qualitative methodology that was used to conduct this research. Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory holds particular significance as it purports the importance of social interaction and how it plays a critical role in children's learning (Skudrzyk et al., 2009). Parents, caregivers, peers, and the dominating culture are responsible for the

development of higher order functions. Imitation, guided learning, and collaborative learning are essential components of development.

Human advancement results from dynamic interactions between individuals and environment/society, and people then effect society (Derry, 2013). The role of social context, verbal interaction, and conversation provide rich resources for the study of learning and cognition. Prior to exposure to the written word, humans acquire communication skills -- inclusive of comprehension, interpretation, inference, and response-through being spoken to (Applebee, 1996). Language development enhances through sound and word identification, encouraging the ability to speak, and to communicate with a level of understanding required for conversation or discourse (Massey, 2004). In the academic realm, the role of teacher-student conversation is integral in creating connection and rapport, and creates a stimulus for learning through idea exchange, mutual inquiry and exploration, and development of critical thinking skills (Van Bramer, 2003). As the study of the visual arts is grounded in visual literacy, critical thinking, and creative problem solving, language is also an integral component of early artistic development and is indelible in the nurturing of visual expression and creativity (Thompson, 1988).

Ethnography is frequently used by the anthropologists to explore communities of people and their culture. Ethnography as a body of methods analyzes a specific culture from the viewpoints of members of a certain cultural group (Downey, 2012). This study examined the conversational habits of young, African-American male students within a high-needs school. While working in silence is a norm of the academic classroom, in the process of artmaking, students possess a tendency to talk-either about their artistic process, matters of a personal nature, and/or a melding of both (Thompson, 1988). A talkative student is often the target of

disciplinary action, as loquaciousness is stigmatized through its connection to distraction and insubordination. Particularly, students of color experience hyper-vigilance and inequitable discipline for such behavior patterns (Soumah, 2013). However, in the art room, conversation is encouraged in order to further understand the nature of the student as an individual and artist (Sparling, 1973). Various conversations appropriate for art education are encouraged, on the assumption that such talk facilitates cognitive development and results in increased artistic motivation, creativity and productivity (Sparling, 1973).

Portraiture Methodology

Portraiture is a method of inquiry that distinctively blends art and science to capture both the complexity and subtlety of human experiences. The goal of the portraitist is to search for, participate, observe, record and interpret the perspectives of their participants, with a focus on finding *the good* (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997). Portraiture methodology emphasizes personal context for the researcher and the participants while aiming to make clear the views of both (Given, 2008). While the term *portraiture* is also used to label the traditional genre of visual art created to represent the essence of a person, people, or oneself in self-portraiture (West, 2004), arts-based research has incorporated the elements of the genre as qualitative data sources. Portraiture as a methodology combines art and science to create a textual, in-depth image of an individual, individuals (or an organization), and aims to capture the dynamics of their experiences or organizational life. Portraiture methodology also reflects Vygotskian sociocultural learning theory, experiential learning through social/environmental exchanges and influence. My framework development for discovering themes of student/student and student/teacher conversation while engaged in the artmaking process was supported through this methodology as well. Reliant on dialogue between the researcher and subject, this method of data collection

allowed for introspection and self-narrative; it helped to place and identify the researcher/portraitist's/subject's social and cultural environment, and documents/interprets the knowledge, insights, and wisdom of the subject.

Inspired by her own portrait sitting experience, Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot (1997) created and developed the framework for portraiture methodology as a form of qualitative research. Initially used for her research of six high schools, Lawrence-Lightfoot aspired to use the reflective qualities of portraiture within her writing to both artfully and accurately capture the culture and character of the educational institutions she researched. Acknowledging that while the mode of inquiry was intended to bridge science and art through observation and dialogue, Lawrence Lightfoot and Davis (1997) described both the techniques and limitations of the method while supporting the foundations based on recording and interpreting the experiences and perspectives of the people being studied. While maintaining scientific rigor and empirical description, portraiture methodology promotes the combination of rigorous description with aesthetic expression and humanistic sensibilities.

In *The Art and Science of Portraiture* (1997) Lawrence Lightfoot and Davis outlined the techniques, imitations, and the mode of inquiry in this methodology, and how the strategies of the process are used with the intent of creating a dialogue and connection between art and science. Lawrence-Lightfoot's (2005) narratives used portraiture methodology as a basis to encourage an intersection and expansion of boundaries that set a path for the inclusion of portraiture into a range of creative, arts-based genres including poetry, photography, performance and visual art.

Arts-Based Research

Creative arts therapist Shawn McNiff (2008) supported the use of art therapies to promote means of expression that could not be conveyed through conventional language. Within arts-based therapy, researchers began to apply this rationale to research (McNiff, 2008). As these research methods began to draw attention from other fields, arts therapists began a path of inquiry that showed a readiness to meld the arts with traditional methods of research (McNiff, 2008). Well noted proponents of arts-based research, Eisner and Barone (1997), introduced the concept of arts-based educational research as a chapter in the book *Complementary Methods for Research in Education*. This chapter centered on the contributions of the literary arts in educational research and helped to lay out a theoretical framework for arts-based research, describing the qualities of arts-based texts (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008).

As writing is foundational in the presentation of research, many preliminary works of arts-based research focused on the use and analysis of literary art forms in the human sciences, music, and visual arts (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008). However, within the decade, the field has opened to a variety of visual, performance-based methods and theories, with art-based practice ever evolving with advances in technology and the expanding access to information that contributes to such theories and methods. Over the past decade, the field has been opening to a variety of visual, performance, and literary-based theories and methods. This history is still being written with arts-based research practice. Advances in access to technology are allowing more forms of arts-based research to be available (Knowles & Cole, 2008).

Arts-based research and aesthetics

Aesthetics is central in the production and evaluation of arts-based texts. Leavy (2015) suggests that there are two main avenues for addressing aesthetics in arts-based research, through

theory and method. She suggested that the emergence of new arts-based methods has required a re-evaluation of what defines truth, knowledge, and beauty. Further, Leavy encouraged the research community to expand the concepts of quality within art and research to accommodate the methodological practices used within arts-based research (Leavy, 2015).

On a methodological level, Leavy went on to assert that arts-based practices have been developed for all research phases, including data collection, analysis, interpretation, and representation; and that there are many diverse arts-based methods being used. Arts-based researchers, such as a/r/tographer Rita Irwin, have also argued that arts-based research needs to constitute its own research paradigm, separate from quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Irwin & Springgay, 2008). Arts-based inquiry models require methods of research based in reimagining traditional scientific research, supporting a framework for reconceptualizing curriculum and related educational research (Dockery, 2014).

In the practice of arts-based methodologies, methods are based in discovery, with emphasis on understanding (Rolling, 2010). Since portraiture methodology relies on the telling of stories, interpreting experiences, and dialogue between the researcher and participants, and Eisner and Barone (1997) describe art-based research as an enhancement of perspectives, I have collected multiple sources of data, with collection founded through the artmaking processes of my participants, to explore their interests, narratives, and personal experiences while they create visual works that reveal their personal stories and identities.

The Study Site

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) advise researchers against performing research within one's familiar or immediate environment to avoid potential ethical conflicts that may alter the direction and outcomes of the study. However, this course of study required on-campus inquiry which

arguably posed benefits to data collection through the possibility of enhanced rapport, communication, the capacity to gauge the trustworthiness and accuracy of responses, and the likelihood my participants would be more comfortable sharing personal details of their lives to someone familiar to them (Hockey, 1993). Therefore, I conducted my study within my home school, inside of my own art classroom. My school's population consists of predominantly African-American students, and is situated in a low-income, urban community. As it is a Title 1 school, most students qualify for free or reduced-price meals. While the majority of the school's students are bused from their local homes, some students arrive and depart by car, or are able to walk to and from school based on the proximity of their homes. Being a fairly intimate community, most students are very familiar with each other and each other's families. Many students maintain relationships outside of school with each other, often engaging in social/recreational activities with one another.

I observed and studied a familiar set of students, so protecting the integrity of this research is paramount. An attribute to building familiarity with my students is that, as a specialist, I encounter the same students for multiple years in succession. I have had the benefit of knowing and building relationships with many of the students, some since when their attendance began in Kindergarten. It was of utmost importance that my student subjects feel comfortable expressing their thoughts; and I was able to capitalize on my existing positive rapport with them to offer them assurance of confidentiality (Prior, 2003). As a familiar teacher, my challenge was to avoid utilizing previously acquired personal information about these students. However, performing in the role of an outsider during class observational time and conducting interviews allowed me to collect data with validity and accuracy, and allowed me to observe the art room experience through a different lens.

The students of focus were African-American male students within the art classroom, and their community is also predominantly Black. As this study was micro-ethnographic, it was of great importance that my site of study be located in a community where students are also residents of the neighborhood. Home, community, and especially local socializations were significant influences in their topics of conversation, so understanding this aspect of the students' backgrounds was integral to presenting a holistic portrait.

The observation site, as of September 2019, had a population of 443 students. Demographically reflective of the community, the student body is 82% African-American, 13% Hispanic, 3% Caucasian, and 2% two or more races. A one-story building, the school has four to five homerooms for each grade level, excluding pre-kindergarten which operates within two classrooms. The community holds a low socio-economic status, and so the school qualifies for Title I funding, with 100% of students receiving free breakfast and lunch. Each student from Kindergarten to fifth-grade attends specials classes, including visual art, music, and dance once a week. Students attend physical education classes twice a week.

The elementary art program at Northland Elementary correlates with county standards, which are derived from national standards for visual arts education and instruction. The major assessment tool for this course of study is artmaking, and most projects are required to be project-based. Projects at the elementary level emphasize an examination of the elements and principles of art, art history, art language, art in daily life, and art as a form of communication and expression, as well as exposure to and use of a variety of artistic mediums. Art classes held at this observation site are scheduled for forty-five-minute sessions for each homeroom. Units of study in visual art span nine weeks, with one to two project-based assignments that are reflective of county visual arts standards and learning objectives. Along with project-based assessments,

formative and summative, written and oral tests are a regular method of addressing student learning and achievement.

The art room environment

There are two doors that lead to the interior of the art room. One door is typically used for classroom entrance and the other door is typically used for exiting purposes. The entrance to the art room leads to a sink and storage areas housing primarily media such as paint cans and supplies used for those mediums such as paint brushes, brushes, and cups for holding water, all organized within baskets on the counter top of the sink. The perpendicular cabinetry that is adjacent to the sink houses a variety of art related printed media-textbooks, an art book library and various teaching resources that were printed. The drawers below the shelving house a variety of printed visual resources, such as posters of an instructional nature, artist prints that are used during lessons, and other prints that may find a rotation within the walls of the art room throughout the year.

Spanning the length of the art room are six large rectangular working desks with each desk or table holding two chairs on each side and a chair on one end, with shelving that runs parallel to the desks. There are cabinets beneath classroom windows housing classroom drawing paper, watercolor paper, construction papers scraps and things of that sort. On the other side of the desk is a classic white board on which outlines for the current lessons of study are written. On one side of the whiteboard is the area dedicated to posting state standards and essential questions. On the other side of the white board is an area dedicated to posting student artwork that was completed outside the art room, entitled “Mrs. P’s Star Artists”

What is usually referred to as the front of the room, where classes typically exit the art room is the SMART board, that is regularly used for projecting images, sharing presentations,

and power points, sharing digital artwork, and for projecting instructional processes through the document camera. On one side of the SMART board is a supply closet that houses all the media that is used in the art room during the school year. On the other side is there art room's kiln closet where student works produced with clay are fired. Adjacent cabinetry is outside of the kiln closet that houses student clay work.

The ambience of the art room is vibrant. Three large windows spanning from the ceiling to about three feet above the floor fills the room with natural light which is sometimes filtered through the lime green, purple and electric blue sheer curtains that cover the windows. There is signage on the upper portion of each wall. There are four classroom rules that focus on self-control that are posted above the whiteboard. Signs for the word wall and the interactive vocabulary display are above the shelving of the papers, and colorful posters that detail the elements and principles of art line the wall that is above the SMART board. The wall above the shelving that holds printed resources is lined with the ongoing rotation of student work both current and from years past. It smells like wax from crayons, tempera paint, and hand sanitizer. It is a warm, bright and welcoming environment that often solicits comments from of the teachers about how much they love to visit the space and regularly receives positive reviews during administrative evaluations.

Supplies that are accessible to students on a daily basis, such as crayons, sharpened pencils and erasers, markers, oil pastels, glue sticks and scissors are usually housed atop of the cabinets that hold paper right under the windows. They are organized in baskets with each supply in its own set of baskets with each supply having one basket prepared for each table. Generally, pencils, crayons and markers are set onto each of the student tables daily, as they are commonly used. However, depending on the project, different supplies are available and prepped for student

tables. For our collage portraiture project dry media such as pencils, crayons, markers, and colored pencils are accessible to students on each table along with permanent markers and student size scissors.

Students generally sit in groups of four or five, with classrooms varying between assigned seats, randomized seats and student selected seats-depending on the time of year, which usually affect student activity levels, and the kinds of projects that are being done. On occasion, students may work in larger groups that require larger numbers to satisfy the needs for group projects that occur occasionally throughout the school year. For the collage portraiture project, participants sat at a table for five, closer to the entrance door and sink area, due to the lack of activity in that area that made audio and visual recording privy to avoid interruption.

Participants

All five of my participants were African-American, male, fifth-grade students. The participants were part of an all-male homeroom; it was created to provide extensive instruction in English Language Arts, reading comprehension and writing, due to the low achievement in this content area of these particular students, compared to the rest of their fifth-grade cohorts. A heavily assessed content area, all of the participants showed evidence of requiring more intentional, focused, effective, equitable and relational instructional strategies to support their academic growth (Nelson, 2016). Therefore, I was particularly drawn to creating efficient instructional strategies for this sub-group of students. While I've had the opportunity to become familiar with all of them at varying degrees, there were indeed a couple of participants that possessed personalities that more frequently and outwardly fed our budding kinship with each other, because we engaged in regular, spoken communication during their time in art class.

One participant, KL, certainly had that type of personality, and would ultimately become the dominant voice within my participants. KL had been one of my students since his fourth grade year. KL was popular amongst his peers, and his homeroom teacher informed me that he was known for his “big mouth” in class, having a loud, high and characteristically pre-pubescent tonality to his voice. Through my general inquiry regarding her students-which included my participants-his homeroom teacher referred to him as being “prone to interruptions and could be a little stubborn when it came to following instruction and receiving redirection”. He got along with most of his classmates and seemed to have a growing friendship with another of my participants that was new to the school, JV. He also seemed to be *cool with* two of the other participants, LD and KH, based on her observations of their classroom interactions.

Always talkative, quite inquisitive, very social and very friendly, KL had always been one to incite conversation while in my classroom. Sometimes to the point of disruption, I’ve had to quell some of KL’s conversations during our class sessions because of his very vocal nature. I was not surprised that he was setting the charge for many of the conversations that would be born out of this project.

This was my first year having JV as a student. Fairly quiet, calm and one year older than the other participants--as I found out that he was held back a grade--JV always exhibited a different degree of maturity than most of my male students in this grade level. His teacher told me that once he arrived at the school, many of the female students from other classes were totally smitten by him. The quintessential fifth-grade version of tall, dark, and handsome, JV beginning to be known for his athletic prowess, as often demonstrated during physical education, and during recess. Because of these attributes and his non-confrontational nature, he was also heavily admired by many of his male classmates and peers. He was a cool dude; he wasn’t known to talk

very much unless he *wanted* to. His teacher told me that his verbal engagement in class was fairly low, and he was a hard worker that excelled in math. I found out that he had been held back a grade; he was the oldest of my participants.

While he engaged in conversations in the art room, he would often disengage just as quickly as he would engage, in order to either focus on his work or due to his waned interest in the conversation with his table mates. There would be several times that he would talk about how some of his peers annoyed him during regular class sessions, claiming that they were “acting young”. Although he seemed to have a friendship with KL, sometimes he seemed to merely tolerate KL’s verbal advances during art more than enjoy them. However, they didn’t seem to be too bothersome to him or to disrupt him to the point of distraction from his work.

MS had been one of my students since kindergarten. A quick-witted boy with a penchant for science, questioning existence, and the general social loner, MS had never seemed to operate in groups with frequency or ease. MS is one student that had always seemed to enjoy and prefer individual chats with me during class and during our casual exchanges during the school day. His teacher confirmed that most of his verbal engagement in class would be with her directly, and that he wasn’t particularly attached to any of his male classmates. He was always inquisitive. He would ask questions randomly that were often not related to art or the content of which we were discussing. He’s also demonstrated great artistic talent, had been focused on his skill building, and had to be reminded of time management quite frequently because he never wanted to stop working. He had a keen interest in painting- he was good at it and he really enjoyed it. He always seemed to enjoy art class and enjoy our conversations within the class, one- on-one. Over the past couple years, when we had the opportunity to chat individually, he would enjoy sharing videos that he would find on YouTube that explored scientific facts, curious environmental

anomalies, and stories regarding abnormalities such as superhuman strength or especially keen eyesight. He seemed to have a natural curiosity about people, why we do the things we do, and had a fascination with the supernatural, ideas of spirituality, and the existence of God- at such a young age!

I've also known MS to struggle in his homeroom settings, and that he is on some form of medication to regulate his moods. His teacher shared with me that some of his behavioral challenges would show up on his rougher emotional days. While I had never inquired specifically about his mental health, he has volunteered that he has taken medication and will let his teachers (including myself) know that he's having a tough day. There have been times I've greeted MS in the mornings, especially during the fourth and fifth-grade, with a tearful, somber beginning. I'd watch MS arrive with his grandmother- who is raising him- with an older sister, and a younger sister. His grandmother was a very active, chatty, tender woman who had devoted a lot of time to our school to volunteer and be present on a regular basis. For the past four years, she's even baked biscuits for several of us teachers and staff, and would lovingly distribute them to us in the morning as she would chat about the goings-on's of her morning, her plans for the day, and giving us general well wishes.

On some days, when MS would arrive clearly distraught, I would inquire of his disposition, and she simply shared that he was having some hard times. Ultimately, she divulged that MS regularly struggled with the absence of his mother, who is an addict. She talked about her inconsistent recovery, and that MS's especially difficult days would often follow a visit with his mother, who he hasn't lived with in several years. The grandmother has been the parental guardian of MS and his two sisters since he was around five years old. Knowing these things about MS his personal life, I wanted to be sure that, as a participant, he felt comfortable. I never

pursued personal information about this part of his life, but he was encouraged to feel comfortable chatting about topics of his choice, as the other participants were.

I didn't know very much about LD prior to our study. I was told that he was a playful student, per his homeroom teacher. She felt that high activity levels were often indicative of attempt to distract from his low achievement, as he struggled with content regularly. LD had been one of my students since his third-grade year. He came from a single parent family of three brothers and one sister. He was the second to the oldest, and I had taught all of his siblings, who all had some academic and behavioral challenges. Upon gaining permission for his study participation, his mother told me that she and LD's siblings were living in a home for abused women. I can only imagine how these transitions may have contributed to LD's academic and behavioral challenges. However, in the art room, I had known LD to be a decent student with few disciplinary issues and a quiet nature. He seemed to enjoy being creative and was successful with his projects.

KH was also a student that I had known since kindergarten. KH was the quintessential teacher's pet-high achieving, kind, friendly, and never overly social during instructional time. Never disruptive, always respectful, and always displays elements of good citizenship throughout the school. KH had an amazingly positive reputation with staff, teachers, administration, and with his fellow students. Although calm in nature, KH would not hesitate to stand up for himself or others if he sensed some form of injustice, whether from another student or from a teacher--and always in a respectful and timely manner. He would often be trusted to run errands, was on the beta club, and was a student ambassador for the school. Everyone likes him, and I've never heard a negative word about him during all of the years that I've taught him.

So, I was curious to know what else I would find out about this exceptional student from this project.

What I did already know about KH is that he lost his mother due to illness when he was in second grade. I also taught his older brother who is in fifth-grade at the time of his family's loss. Being raised by their father who is very active in their academic and social lives, KH's father is well known at the school. A proponent of discipline and organization, I've heard on more than one occasion KH use the term "my dad don't play..." alluding to his father's intolerance for foolishness. Being aware of the extensive prior knowledge that I had regarding some of my participants, I wanted to be purposeful in discovering new information, and even some confirmation of some of prior knowledge, through this project, their writings and through their artwork and artist statements.

Data Collection Methods

Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on grade level, ethnicity, gender and seating in the art room that was proximal to recording devices (Higginbottom, 2004). Fifth-grade is considered a transitional grade, both academically and socially; students are in their final year of elementary school and are preparing for middle school. Fifth-grade test scores are heavily monitored and often contribute to decisions made about the student's placement and course of study in middle school. My personal observations also contributed to sample selection, as fifth-graders are also on the cusp of pre-teenage years, often experiencing conflicts between dependence and maturity. Having the opportunity to deeply examine how this particular group of students communicate at this phase was of interest to me. The participants ranged in ages from ten to twelve-years-old. All students that attended the elementary school attended specials

classes-art, music, physical education, and attended regularly scheduled art classes one day per week, during forty-five-minute class sessions.

Data collection procedures for the study were chosen for their demonstrated capacity to discover distinct topics of conversation by these participants. Data gathering methods consisted of participant observation sessions in the art classroom, once per week, during the forty-five-minute art class session. Participant observations took place post-instruction, during student work time, which typically lasts twenty-five minutes or more, and consists of students working on their art projects while sitting in their groups of five. The bulk of instruction for this project occurred during the first class session, as students and participants were introduced to the lesson content and procedures of collage self-portraiture, which included the cutting and gluing of multiple images and text--both hand drawn and procured from school magazines--onto their paper canvases. Through whole group instruction, visual references were used to introduce the works of the artists of study, via projected images, as well as teacher created exemplars of the work to be completed. The three class sessions that followed featured a five to ten-minute review of the previous class, content and procedures, with approximately twenty- five to thirty-five minutes to create their portraits and complete the written portions of the project.

Group discussion sessions-our *lunch bunch*-provided an opportunity to participate with and observe my participants conversing with each other as peers, guided by topics of their interest, and provided some opportunities to talk about and reflect on the topics discussed during my in-class, participant observational sessions. Most often guided by the immediate conversational interests of my participants, these sessions were usually close to twenty minutes, during a shared, scheduled lunch time between myself and the participants. We ate lunch together and chatted with each other about a variety of topics-their artwork, topics that related to

their daily routines and regular activities, and current events occurring within the school and their lives. Through these exchanges and the discussions during our C.T.T., I was able to extract themes of their conversational interest to gradually integrate into our subsequent C.T.T. and lunch bunch conversations.

The completed collage self-portraits created through the project provided the summative, integral pieces of data that contributed to my findings. Their artists statements, completed after their collage portraits were finished, allowed the participants to describe their artistic decisions for the project in their own words.

Procedures

Participant observational periods

During a unit of study that consecutively spanned four weekly class sessions, group participant observations took place within the art room, post-instruction. Instructional time was generally between five and fifteen minutes of class time, with the bulk of instructional time being needed for the introductory portion of the project. This instructional time included teacher demonstrations, class discussion, and review. Therefore, post-instructional time provided approximately twenty-five to thirty-five minutes of observational time, as students worked on their projects within their groups (generally four to five students), with the remainder of class time being used for clean up. Detailed project procedures can be found in appendix A.

During this working time, students were permitted and to engage with each other through conversation of both an academic and non-academic manner, with the expectation of remaining on task. As fifth-grade visual arts classes are gender split, one all-male class was observed for four consecutive sessions, once per week. Again, fifth-grade classes are gender split based on

English Language Arts and writing scores, with the students in the all-male class being grouped together to receive intense instruction in this heavily assessed area.

Discussion groups and interviews

Discussion group sessions, our *lunch bunches*, also took place once a week. I was able to meet with my participants during a common lunch period, for twenty minutes each session. These lunch bunches occurred two days after our class sessions. We had our lunch bunch discussion group four times, subsequently after each art class. The first three lunch sessions were dedicated to creating space for participants to socially reflect on their collage portraiture project, for me inquire about their artistic processes and reflections, as well as for us to chat about whatever *they* wanted to converse about. Working with a discussion group allowed me to step out of the observer role and into the role of the discussion facilitator--but most often, as a discussion participant--allowing me to collect data that continued to specifically address my research questions, as the conversational themes of interest of my participants were explored with continuity outside of the artmaking space (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997; Levy, Emdin, & Adjapong, 2018). I had a chance to learn about how and when art-based topics would show up in our chats, as well as how the participants preferred to introduce and include themes of their own interests, and with what frequency. I also discovered the flexibility that I would need as a conversation facilitator, and the balance that I would have to practice as both teacher and researcher as they invited me into discussions that they facilitated.

The fourth and final lunch session was used to conduct one short (three to five minute) interview with each participant, after the conclusion of the project. I used that time for each student to talk about their individual work and the parts of their daily lives that they felt were reflected in their collage portraits. Being aware of their pre-existing relationships with me as

their art teacher, and I took explicit care to establish proper protocols to assure my participants of confidentiality, barring any content that could have reflected potential of harm or concern (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007).

Collage Self-Portraits

Student participants created collage self-portraits during the four week participant observation class period that supported the answers to the following research questions:

- (1) What topics emerge during student conversations while engaged in collage portraiture?
- (2) What topics/questions prompt positive student-teacher interactions that build rapport as an instructional tool?
- (3) What conversation-based strategies might promote student-teacher engagement/Art Talk in the art room?

While the collage self-portraits did not address my research questions solely, the creation of these self-portraits provided the arts based foundation of what I have termed as Creative Talk Time (C.T.T.), as my participant observations were conducted during class while student participants created their portraits. Many of our positive student teacher interactions during these sessions were related to their artwork and creative processes. During these class sessions, students created a collage self-portrait, with the project being titled "A Day in the Life." While completing a self-portraiture lesson was included in the curriculum during this scheduled unit of study, Diaz (2002) supports that adding the collage medium to self-portraiture promotes a reflective process as a way conceptualizing ideas, and as a research tool to blend images and text to explore meaning-making. Students used a combination of hand drawings, writing, images from magazines, and text from magazines to create a collage self-portrait that reflected a typical day for them. With an emphasis on routine, students and participants were asked to select images

and text that reflected their activities, hobbies, interests, environments, and relationships. The completed collage self-portraits were used as a data source to support theme extraction. I, as the researcher, also completed a collage self-portrait with my group. I included text and images that were reflective of my own routines, interests, relationships and identities as well.

I was able address this research through the same strategies that I use to address curricular needs. For this particular lesson, the unit that we covered was *Art is Personal* of the Stephens County Visual Arts Curriculum. This particular unit focuses on art, art history, artists, and content that explores creating and interpreting art that has a very personal connection to the artist and their artwork. Understanding the importance of structuring my lesson around my preexisting instructional and classroom routines (Marzano et. al, 2003), I began the lesson with my regulary and established prtocols for my introductory session. Research took place during our regularly scheduled class time. Therefore, I worked under the same routine as I do with every class lesson. Considering the substantial amount of literature that support the importance of cultural relevancy in our instruction specifically for marginalized student populations (Bailey & Desai, 2005; Collins & Sandell, 1992; Davenport, 2000; McFee, 1998; Stuhr, 1994) , it was important that atleast one of the featured artists for this project was African-Ameican, was of similar community, and a male, as I was working with an all-boys class. The content for this material was based on the work of Romare Bearden, who is famed for his collage work and collage portraits. The essential questions for this lesson were:

1. What is a collage?
2. What is portraiture?
3. How can we use collage to create a self-portrait?

I introduced the lesson through the work of Bearden and discussed two particular pieces: *The Block* (1971) and *Pittsburg Memory* (1964). We discussed these pieces and how they related to Bearden's personal life and history, his communities, and images that are reflective of the time of his creation. Bearden's image choices create representations of his personal histories, communities, culture, and features elements of story telling through a variety of imagery. Wanting to make this work feel more salient to our students, I chose this African-American artist whose work reflected very similar communities and environments to which most of our students are privy. With these aspects in mind, Bearden's work provided solid visual and artistic references for this project.

Participant Observation Protocols

Protocols for this portion of my research were guided by the instructional strategies used as outlined within the lesson plan for the project. The class was introduced to the collage work of Romare Bearden. We discussed his brief biography and the inspiration for many of his works. We also discussed the premise and intention of his collage portraits, and focused on his elements of personal story telling through this particular medium. We began our first working session by brainstorming responses based on the title of the project. I described to the students that the goal of this project was to use a combination of cut-out images, words, and drawings to tell a story of what a typical day in their lives might look like. I asked the students to think about their daily routines, with whom they interact, what places they visit, and what activities they were involved with on a typical day. The root questions (which divided their day into four sections) for the initial lesson included:

1. What do you do between the time you wake up and the time you leave for school? Who do you see or interact with before you arrive? How do you get to school? Who is with you on your commute?
2. What is your morning school routine like? What happens once you arrive at school? Who do you see and interact with before lunch? What are your tasks or activities?
3. What happens during lunch? Who provides it? What is your afternoon routine until the school day ends? Who do you see and interact with? What are your tasks and activities?
4. What happens after school? How do you get home, and who is with you on your commute? Who do you see/interact with when you arrive home? What are your tasks and activities?

I created a four column chart which was distributed for their responses. I demonstrated the writing the process by answering the questions as they applied to myself, and writing them in my own columns. I distributed the charts and pencils for the students to begin writing. They had ten to fifteen minutes to complete this portion of the project. I collected the students' writings and informed them that the next two sessions would be dedicated to creating our collage self-portraits. Having prior knowledge on portraiture and self-portraiture from previous grades, we did a quick review of self-portraiture, including its definition, artist intent and methods of execution. We addressed County standard *VA5.CR.5: Demonstrate an understanding of the safe and appropriate use of materials, tools, and equipment for a variety of artistic processes*, as the basis for using collage. We also addressed *VA5.CR.1: Engage in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas by using subject matter and symbols to communicate meaning*; and *VA5.RE.1: Use a variety of approaches for art criticism and to critique personal works of art and the artwork of others to enhance visual literacy* (<https://www.fultonschools.org/finearts>).

I began the next class session with a review of the introduction, followed by a quick demonstration of collage techniques for the students to use. We began with a 9"x12" white paper base, and I allowed students to expand the collage canvas, if need be, by adding another sheet of 9"x12" paper. Alternatives included modifying the lesson plan to address any accommodations that students and participants may have required, including changing/adding art materials and reducing the canvas size. I used my own columned writing draft as I looked for images in age-appropriate magazines that I provided that related to details of my day. I removed pages that held images I thought may have been useful. Each student was given a folder to store their pages and images as they plan for their collage. Students were also given 3"x4.5" strips of paper on which they could write words, draw, or create small illustrations to support the content of the collages, if they chose to. Students were also encouraged to include writings and text from sources outside of the art room that they believed were pertinent to their collage.

My student participants were confidentially working along with their classmates and, therefore, shared the same protocols as the entire class. They had the same options for differentiating their work, as well as the same requirements. After completing my teacher demonstration, we outlined the following requirements for the project:

1. Each student artist was required to use a minimum of 12 images (including text, writings and drawings) for each collage, in order to address at least 3 questions and answers from each of our 4 brainstorming columns. Since we were using images and text to represent our daily lives, identifying images or proper names of themselves not be able to be used.
2. The space had to be filled. Any gaps in the collage had to be layered or covered with text, drawings, or extracted images from magazines or printed media sources.

3. They had to demonstrate consciousness in craftsmanship, evident through thoughtful, neat and organized composition.
4. A short artist's statement of a minimum of five sentences had to accompany their completed self-portrait collages. The writing was to summarize the images chosen for their work, describe what the viewer was seeing, and briefly describe a typical day in their lives.

After the demonstration and review of objectives and requirements, students had approximately 25 to 35 minutes to begin procuring and creating images and text for their collages. Students were given the option to begin building their collages if they felt they had acquired or created enough appropriate images and text. Students used their folders to collect their clippings, any drawings that they may have done, or any text they may have created. Student work was collected by table group, and students were asked to mark their folders with their initials. Folders were stored according to table groups. Therefore, I was able to collect participants' works and store it separately and securely.

The third class session was used to compose the collage portraits. Students used scissors, glue, and dry media (markers, pencils, sharpies, and crayon), to create their works. After a brief review of the requirements, students had 30 to 40 minutes to work on their portraits. Students who completed their portraits within the allotted time were given paper and pencils to draft and create their artist's statement. Student work was collected in the same manner as the previous session, and class was concluded by informing the students and student participants that one final class session would be dedicated to project completion. Those students/participants that completed their collage portraits during the third session worked in their sketchbooks for the remainder of class time. With their collage portraits being an integral data source, photos of

student participant work was documented through digital photography as they had progressed through the project, in order to support the potential themes of conversations that developed while students were working.

Data Analysis

My ongoing data analysis occurred as my data collection progressed through my research, as themes began to emerge almost immediately during our first few C.T.T. and lunch bunch sessions (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, the coding of our conversation from our sessions was practiced, changed and adjusted under constant review, along with my personal notations and observations. This regular review provided me with the thematic data that I needed to integrate my participants' apparent conversational interests, perspectives, and concerns-along with shared portions of their identities that were showing up throughout C.T.T. conversations and developing collage self-portraits. Throughout this process, the data was constantly examined to guide my ongoing participant observation, to ensure that my research questions were being addressed, and to reflect my theoretical framework and methodology. I also made note of participant activity levels, temperaments and dispositions, and events that may have immediately occurred prior to our sessions that may have impacted or influenced the contents or directions of our conversations that followed, as well as what I may have anticipated.

During these class sessions, I collected data on participants' conversations through participant observation, video, and audio recordings that were transcribed. A Swivl recording stand was used to house a password protected, digital video recorder (an iPad Air) to capture any physical interaction and gesticulation of the participants that may have augmented audio recorded data analysis. An iQ7 stereo microphone was used for audio recordings. With mid-center, side-left and side-right microphones, the mini detachable system was small enough for

discrete usage, and powerful enough to capture immediate sound while helping to cancel much of the background noise of the classroom. The Voice Audio Pro application was used to secure recorded data and store the recordings with password protected access and digital storage. My digital recording device (an iPhone X) was discretely and securely placed underneath the top of the participants' worktable while recording their and our conversations during work time.

During my participant observation sessions, I was engaged in conversation with my participants while they created their works of art. Keeping in mind Bakhtin's conversation theory and its expectation of relationship and response, I procured the themes that found prevalence during my data collection. I found the following themes to be recurrent during our C.T.T., lunch bunches, and collage portraits interactions with my participants. Those themes were:

- Social interactions and perceptions (primarily with other students and teachers)
- Sports
- Entertainment related activities (music/rhyming, media personalities, YouTubing)

As well, my research goals included creating strategies that would promote positive student-teacher interactions in the art classroom, based on data collected through our conversations and artwork. Through our discussion/ lunch bunch groups, I was able to mindfully and equitably facilitate and participate in our discussions by providing conversation stems, integrate emerging themes extracted from our C.T.T. and ongoing lunch bunches into our conversations, and actively participate in conversations that participants facilitated themselves. Anticipating that specific themes would emerge from data collection that would be supported through conversations about their artwork, I used open-ended starters, such as:

- Think about when we talked last during class; let's talk about your thoughts on our project.

- Think about when you worked on your collage; let's talk about some of the images you've chosen for your collage.
- Let's talk about your day, thus far.

During our brief, individual summative interviews, the following questions were asked:

- What do you think the viewer might learn about you and your daily life through your collage portrait?
- Is there anything else you'd like the viewer to know about your daily life that may not be in your finished work?

I also used our discussion group/lunch bunch time to practice member checking in order to confirm my interpretations and analysis of our previous conversations during C.T.T. Notes and recordings were also reviewed after each session to ensure that no pertinent data would be overlooked. Since I looked for content that specifically addressed the interests, identities and activities of my participants, I also understood that not all conversational content would be used as data. Returning to my intent to uncover themes, I prioritized common themes as I gathered data for analysis.

Coding

To effectively manage and interpret the data collected through the study, developing criteria prior to data collection was imperative (Stake, 1995). Methods of compartmentalizing data, as supported by Merriam (2009), were guided by literature, my role and activity as a researcher and my developing knowledge of my participants. These elements supported data categorization that could properly support my aim to organize themes that were reflective of my research questions, theoretical framework, and methodology (Gerstenblatt, 2013).

Keeping Bahktin's (1986) theory in mind, I wanted to see and confirm rational relationships between the conversation theory and the data I was collecting which assisted in the effective management and sorting of my developing data sources, contributing to the creation of my categories (Ezzy, 2002). With the aforementioned assumptions in mind how about the anticipated themes of interest of my participants, I was curious to know how our conversations would and might contribute to their engagement with our project and the development of their collage self-portraits, as well as the themes that would emerge that would not be related to or show up through their self-portraits. I was also interested in how their artwork would guide and contribute to our conversations from which themes would be extracted, both during C.T.T. and during our lunch bunch sessions. I was also interested in discovering parts of their identities that would not only show up in our conversation, but would be reflected in their finished artwork, as demonstrated in the literature (Chilton & Scotti, 2014; Gerstenblatt, 2013; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992).

From a regular review of our recorded conversations and the fully transcribed versions of these conversations, I selected thematic terms based on the frequency of which certain topics arose through our C.T.T. and our lunch bunch sessions. Of those initial categories that seemed to take prevalence, I decreased the number of themes to the most prevalent and frequently used topics during our chat times by manually counting and sorting the number of times specific topics and themes appeared as I transcribed conversations (Merriam, 2009). After creating categories for each prevailing theme, I created subcategories of those themes, based on the frequency of specific terms from each category referred to or used during our C.T.T. and lunch sessions. After several rounds of determining the frequency of the sub categories and how they appeared in each domain or theme, I organized the data into a table based on the domains and

themes. I made note of the frequency of certain phrases, proper names, pronouns, and references to those prevailing themes and subcategories to further isolate them, in order to visually and succinctly represented within the table.

I made note of the frequency that certain topics or themes connected to what participants talked about may reflect parts of their identities and interests. Using coding strategies suggested by Merriam (2009), I sorted portions of my transcriptions manually to identify possible themes from transcriptions of our C.T.T. and lunch bunches, participant artwork, artist statements and interviews, as well as field/personal notes. Open coding derives grounded theory, allowing for dissection of data, analysis, assignment of meaning, and reorganizing based on the context (Ezzy, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The main purposes of open coding are to compare data sets, categorize concepts, label data, and group the categories around related themes to structure further organization (Moghaddam, 2006). In the course of open coding, I followed this structure as I cyclically analyzed, compared and categorized data through ongoing and repeated review and comparisons of my recordings, personal notes, progressing artwork, and transcriptions as I created them through review of the recordings. As I made manual and digital note of frequently repeated topics, open coding was conducted on each data source to extract and sort pertinent information that assisted my understanding and interpretation of the participants collage self-portraits, observed statements, questions, shared concerns and perspectives, responses, and comments. This process helped me to manually classify those pieces into categories based on frequently repeated references to specific people, activities, experiences, and related phrases (Moghaddam, 2006).

Triangulation of data consists of collecting data using two or more methods, followed by a comparison and combining of the results (Denzin, 2007). Comparisons were made between

recordings, personal notes, transcriptions, and student artwork to search for shared themes across the data sources, and how the emergent themes and topics addressed my research questions and contributed to my own methodological portraits of my participants. These data sets were triangulated in order to uncover thematic connections, and how these themes provided insight into the participants' common conversational interests and identities. It was imperative for me to reflect on my data as both observer, participant, and interviewer to allow me to assemble analysis of my findings, and what they imply for students and teachers in the art room. With my research questions as my guide, my data collection informed my analysis, which was used to specify the topics, questions, and conversation-based instructional strategies that emerged during our artmaking time and lunch sessions.

Analysis of Artwork

While student and participant artwork was formatively assessed throughout the length of the project based on expected outcomes and requirements outlined in the lesson plan that was used for this project, the finished products of my participants were also analyzed along with and compared to my other data sources. Based on the standards based requirements and instructional expectations of the collage portraiture project through which data was collected, the completed college self-portraits were also a vital data set, analyzed in tandem with recordings observations in transcriptions of our C.T.T. and lunch bunch sessions, to search for connecting themes and reflections of student identities that had shown up thematically during our C.T.T. an lunch bunch conversations.

Study Parameters

Engaging in C.T.T. in lunch bunch conversations along with making artwork with my participants allowed me access and insights into the conversational topics of interest of a particular set of African-American fifth-grade male students. As such, the study provided a unique discovery and examination this group. Though their dominant interests and identities may not be uncommon to other students of this sub-group, their portraits are not intended to represent the general population.

Participant selection was limited to fifth-grade, with the sampling sizes limited to five participants. Therefore, the data procured with these participants only represents a small portion of the population. This study was also confined to a four-week project, making the study fairly brief and limiting the discovery of conversation themes to those four weeks. This prevented the potential examination of changes that the participants interests may have taken over a longer period of time. Additional participant observations outside of the school setting may have also revealed additional themes of interest and identity.

The self-portrait artwork that was created during the course of the study held a significant personal significance for the participants. A different project that may not have prompted such participant reflectivity or may have resulted in a different degree of engagement from the participants. Conducting research in a classroom lacking established routines may have revealed a varied level of engagement as well. Portions of data were collected while an active art class was still scheduled, which required my ongoing attention and normal direction and remediation for and with all students. Working only with a small group outside of a normal class may have also provided more opportunities to discover additional themes through C.T.T.

Finally, while I present areas for further research based on the findings of this study, it should be recognized that these conversation-based strategies may not be effective for every teacher or student. These themes and instructional strategies shared within this study provide a foundation for related endeavors to create and/or improve effective instructional strategies for particular set of chronically underserved students.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to use arts-based inquiry through portraiture methodology, observation, and group discussion to explore the conversational interests of students' while artmaking. With Bakhtin's (1986) conversation theory as the foundation of my research, my aim was to discover themes of conversation that emerged during Creative Talk Time, which allowed me to isolate and develop specific student-teacher, conversation-based engagement strategies that contributed to positive rapport building through the integration of those student-centered themes.

As themes were introduced that showed regularity during our C.T.T. and lunch bunch sessions, I purposely and increasingly integrated those themes into our conversations-while they made art using collage portraiture, and during our lunch bunch sessions, which demonstrated evidence of positive rapport/relationship building as our conversations become more mutually cyclical and response-expectant, with increased invitations *from* my participants to actively join *them* in conversation. With Moll and Amanti's (2006) funds of knowledge study being integral to examining student identities through this research, I also observed and integrated both academic (conversation related to art and art instruction, and scholastic matters) and non-academic (content unrelated to art, art instruction or other scholastic matters) patterns and contents of conversations that connected to my participants identities, experiences, concerns, and meaning-making (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) through their collage portraiture. My research questions were:

- (1) What topics emerge during student conversations while engaged in collage portraiture?

- (2) What topics/ questions prompt positive student-teacher interactions that build rapport as an instructional tool?
- (3) What conversation-based strategies might promote student-teacher engagement/ Art Talk in the art room?

The African-American 5th grade male student participants of this study actively engaged in the collage portraiture production portion of the project, and many showed interest and excitement being encouraged to converse during our creative time and look forward to our conversations, especially during our lunch bunches. Providing a safe space for them to express their socialization experiences, their activities and interests that were parts of their routines, how they entertained themselves, what their goals were, and how they built knowledge were all welcomed portions of our conversation that were explored during our time together.

Their conversations during our creative talk time were often inclusive of art and academic related content that were connected to our project-questions about the content, concerns and discoveries about the artistic process, discussing their personal investment and engagement with the collage and portraiture modality, were all regularly addressed during our C.T.T., from all five of the participants. This particular content of C.T.T. provided evidence of their ever-increasing engagement with the material in their understanding of the instructional process for the assignment, as the frequency of this art-based content increased in our C.T.T. conversations. With the goal of beginning our lunch bunch sessions with protocols that were to provide more time and space for them to reveal their personal reflections on their artistic process, however, their increasing, prevailing craving and interest to talk about nonacademic content certainly overwhelmed the plans of exploring art-based conversation. The following review of

my findings will address my research questions based on data analysis, while integrating portions of transcribed conversation to support those findings.

Our Creative Talk Time

Graham (2003) posits that the art room often promotes an aura of independence and expression that students enjoy. With that in mind, it was not surprising that the participants seemed comfortable, ready and eager to talk about their social experiences during the school day with each other and with me. Contrasting with the common practices of which African-American male students are routinely disciplined for socialization in public schools (Howard, 2008), students within the art room are not penalized for engaging in conversation outside of instruction. Emphasizing the value of their own voices as students as part of socially responsible and equitable instruction (Perez Miles, 2012), students are generally permitted and encouraged to engage in conversation while they work on their projects, with the expectation of remaining on task an engaging in school appropriate conversation. This all male class was particularly talkative and usually exhibited the high level of energy, often requiring some initial redirection before active instruction began in order to promote on-task behaviors. However, the sometimes eagerness to talk with each other proved to be a beneficial catalyst for the chats that would develop during our initial Creative Talk Time, as revealed during *Class Session #1: Introduction to "A Day in the Life"*.

KH: "My mom was helping me work on my waves yesterday"

KL: "You need to put a du-rag on when you wash your hair when you got waves in your hair...you have to put a wave cap over your hair so you can have hair like me...yeah I'm serious... KH you hear me? You gotta put it over your hair to keep the waves!"

KH: "I usually wash my hair, then I'll be brush in it to keep the waves in my hair..."

KL: “All I’m saying is, I let the water go to my hair in the water goes through the weave in the cap and keep the waves in my hair... you can wash your hair out and it just keeps the waves...”

Before class started, my recordings informed me that a discussion had already begun to brew, specifically about hairstyling and hair care. Apparently, one can wash one’s short hair with a *wave cap* on, to maintain the waved hair pattern while thoroughly cleansing the scalp. I had certainly never known that-apparently the mother of one of the participants, KL, taught him to do so. KL healthily shared this process to advise his tablemate, KH, on how to preserve his *waves*. With their conversation unbeknownst to me, the boys settled into their seats for the day, and my instruction began

EP: “So, the purpose of this project is to find out more about what your days look like...so, the title of this project is called “A Day in the Life” ... I basically want to know the type of things that you do every day... the people you see... the things you do... what do you like to talk about... what is it you like to do...and this is going to tell people more about you and help build better relationships with you. How to talk to you and with you, you can show somebody that you care or that you’re interested in them by talking *with* them not talking just to them to you. Teachers do a lot of talking to you and we don’t have a lot of time to talk with you and listen to you and listen to your responses and find out more about you. So that’s why we have these questions here so you can tell us about a day in *your* life... the typical things that you’re doing during the day or something special you may do... something special on certain days, I want you to think about activities on those days.”

As the class began, I proceeded to tell them that we would be starting a new project based on self-portraiture. We had a quick review of self-portraiture, and our experiences with the genre and techniques that we've used, which have primarily involved drawings with an emphasis based on proportion. This was my first time introducing collage through this genre, of which I would later explain the processes.

I mentioned the two works of Romare Bearden that we would be learning about and told them that I would expound on his works and share the works of Faith Ringgold and Gabriel Roman as example of collage portraiture at our next session. This is a common practice within the art room to introduce concepts and skills first, followed by content and context, as I find that it is often more productive for my students (especially those classes of high energy) to move directly into the conceptual practice and skill building, and introduce content more thoroughly after some work has been done. This practice also serves as a pre-assessment, allowing me the opportunity to observe and confirm the skills that they may already have.

I briefly explained the steps of the project so that the students would have an idea of what the product would look like and what the process would involve. I introduced the term *collage* and explained to them that a collage is a piece of artwork made of several pieces. I explained that they would be taking several pieces from magazines, cutting out images, cutting out words and text, and even creating text and images to add to their collage that would help to support the answers in their brainstorming sheets.

KH to MS: *quietly* "Yoooo...your breath stink..."

KL: "Yoooo... just gonna let him talk about you like that?"

KH: "No disrespect...it just do..."

I already had set up my recording device at the table of my participants, so I proceeded to conduct class as usual as a whole group. I chose to begin the writing portion first before I introduced the artwork of Romare Bearden because I wanted the children to visualize before having any reference to any other artwork, and then to could go back and make necessary changes or adjustments if they wanted to if they found inspiration or guidance through his work, it's meaning, or the context of his work. We started by doing some quiet reflections after we went over the questions on the brainstorming sheet. We took about 10 seconds to close our eyes (another regular classroom practice of mine during brainstorming and reflection), and thought about some of the things that we do during the day on a regular basis-the people that we talk to, some of our routines, where we go, the people that may be with us, and things of that nature.

After our brief reflection time, the class began to write their answers the questions on the brainstorming sheets, using the pencils that had been supplied at their tables. I instructed the class on how to properly fill out the sheets, which included using their initials only to identify their sheets, which would be collected by table group, and put in folders for each group. I gave the class one minute to peruse the questions as I slowly read each question aloud to the class. I clarified the term *routine* and described it as things or activities that we do every day. I proceeded to talk about the last written portion of the project, which was their artist statement. I explained to the students that this part will be completed after the collage portrait had been finished.

As I began to circulate the class, I overheard KL's audible excitement regarding the artist's statement. I made my way to the participant table, towards the rear of the room.

KL: "THIS is the back part...this the part I'm waiting on!"

EP: “The back part is your artist statement the artist statement- it’s for you to just write a couple sentences to right after you finish this process.”

KL: “So you want us to just tell them about us?”

EP: “You can tell them about your artwork, you can tell them about you, you can tell them whatever you want- that’s up to you! That’s why it’s called an *artist’s* statement- I can’t write it for you, but you can say what you want. “

I proceeded to return to whole group instruction.

EP: “Part one is about what happens in the morning, the second part is about what happens when?”

Class response: “In the afternoon...”

EP: “Right- this includes anything that happens during the school day, and the third part is about anything that happens *after* school or in the evening, like when you leave.”

I started another timed portion for the students to write some responses on their brainstorming sheets. To combat distraction and encourage productivity, they were instructed to write as much as they could within ten minutes, having at least three responses (words, phrases, or full sentences) in each section.

I circulated the room to ensure that students had begun and that they were on track. I was available to answer any questions, provide guidance, or share suggestions as to how they could articulate their answers on their brainstorming sheet, based on their own thoughts, activities and associations to support them with the task. I verbally reminded the class of the time limit with every three passing minutes to rouse their sense of urgency. Meanwhile, I also shared some of my personal responses to the questions on the sheet, to supply some sentence structure stems and frame of thinking, as to what their answers could resemble.

KL: "...take a *dookie*..."

EP: "Not immediately every morning, but at some point during the morning, yes...(I divulge) (*KL laughs*) I always say goodbye to Megan and the pups...and I always turn on the TV for the dogs..."

I was reminded about selecting my clothing during the morning, and I said he was correct and reinforced the importance of brainstorming aloud at times; we are often able to help each other chat through our ideas effectively. Of the participants, KL certainly appeared to be the most excited of the participants, as the recordings revealed: he was very verbal about his answers throughout the course of the brainstorming session.

KL: "Don't forget your accessories- don't you pick out your accessories?"

I thought this was a keen observation on his part! I do wear jewelry every day and this let me know that he was thinking about even the small things that we do that are a part of our routine every morning. His questions and comments led me to believe that his answers would more than likely be explicit and detailed.

I continued to circulate the classroom and return to my own written responses that were being projected onto our classroom SMART Board and verbalized my responses as I wrote them down so that the students could view my work as an ongoing and developing example. I also understood that this portion of the project may pose some challenge, since my project-based lessons typically don't involve a substantial amount of writing, I had to put forth extra special efforts to keep them focused on the writing. I especially kept this goal in mind with my participants as I frequently visited their table throughout this brainstorming session to see that they were also on task. Some students asked if they should include the times in which they wake up, some students wanted to know how many details they should include. I continued to

encourage their inclusion of as many details as they would like, as long as they had a minimum of three responses per section.

I proceeded to share my own answers regarding my morning routine. I clarified certain vocabulary words such as *routine* and *commute* intermittently and described my own routines within those terms while I defined them, while speaking in detail about this portion of my morning routine as I completed the second section of the brainstorming sheet. Both my observations and recordings revealed that while I was attending to students throughout the classroom, a couple of my participants really struggled with the idea of itemizing their routines, and so I had to reiterate and emphasize repeatedly the idea that routine is something that you do *every day or on a regular basis*. This led me to believe that this project would hopefully help my participants and students explore a consciousness of their own daily lives that they normally may not, and I was excited about how this would show up in their writings, conversations, and artwork. The need to itemize based on their self-reflections seemed to be particularly daunting to one participant, JV. I went to the table to address some concerns that they seemed to have had. We talked through, it appeared that JV found it easier to verbalize his routines rather than to write them down. I found myself speaking to this participant extensively during this portion of the class session and assisted him with some writing stems in order to help him with his answers on his form.

However, we strayed off of the topic as my participants engaged in a few brief exchanges that involved some light-hearted insults: *jonin'* (Garner & Rubin, 1986). *Jonin'* involves jokingly and gently insulting each other or *picking* on each other. Data analysis revealed that several of the social interactions/ experiences that the participants referred to integrating some form of *jonin'*, as remarks or observations, and sometimes less than flattering commentary, were shared

about their teachers and a few of their school mates. Jonin' is generally jovial in nature, however I have witnessed its ability to ignite genuine conflict. However, at this time KL and JV seem to be maintaining an easy manner about their comments to each other. I was excited that they were conversing as they are working-that's an integral goal of this research! Furthermore, I was happy that they were conversing generally about the project but took the opportunity to integrate some content that they enjoyed talking about.

EP: "OK, well- you do every day once you get here?"

KH: "Uuummm...I get my computer...I take Mr. T. his stuff..."

EP: "Ok, write it down."

KL: "I see my friends... I go get breakfast..."

JV: *to KL* "...you talk loud...be annoying..."

KL: "You say *I'M* loud but it's always you! Always wanna talk about "I'm gonna fold you up..."

JV: "I sure would! That's why I always call you loudmouth KL!"

Both JV and KL laughed in agreeance.

As I hovered at the participants table, most of the boys are audibly engaging in conversation as they process through the questionnaire. However, I noticed that one participant, LD, seemed to be slightly seclusive, as he slowly migrated to the corner of the table to do his work. From what I already know about LD, he is a student that likes to engage unless he is focused on a task. In these instances, he seemed to prefer quiet time, and I watched him leave the table momentarily without a noise to work at an adjacent countertop.

While I observed and assisted as the participants processed through the second section of the questionnaire, I noticed that KL was a dominant voice at the table. I was not surprised by

this, because I know that KL tends to be a social, talkative student. He seemed to be enjoying this process, and he seemed to be particularly excited about sharing details about himself- not only for the questionnaire and for the artist statement, but to be able to talk to his fellow classmates about himself and about his routines. As KL maintained his dominance during our subsequent C.T.T. and following lunch bunch sessions, I found that as the teacher-as-participant observer, I would offer reminders for KL to allow, and ultimately respect room for other participants to share their interest through conversation. I looked forward to helping create space in which my participants could and would explore and share their voices, while being able to explore my own as I talked and created with them (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997).

MS and KH were working quietly, which is their typical fashion as students in my classroom. Very rarely had I observed them talking loudly or heavily engaging in the conversation in general, nor during the brainstorming process. The recordings revealed that they indeed did intermittently comment with their answers or engaged in conversation lightly with KL as he would share his answers and verbally. KL seemed to be expectant of responses from his table mates, which demonstrated a relationship between him and the other participants to which I was not privy (Bahktin, 1986). I wondered how their relationships would promote, contribute to, or impact their conversations during our sessions. I stayed with the participant table for a few more moments and continued to note their conversational patterns with KL seemingly at the helm, when I noticed LD's wheels turning at the counter, as he worked to interpret the vocabulary and use it properly within his writing.

“LD...is this a survey or something?”

As much as I tried to stay conscious of researcher bias, I anticipated its inevitability (Mehra, 2002) and allowed myself to reflect on pieces of my participants' *personal portraits* that

I was familiar with that may have informed their artwork and conversation. In example, I've been familiar my participant, LD, since his second-grade year. I've taught all the members of his family. He is the second oldest of four, with his eldest brother being in seventh grade, his younger brother being in fourth grade, and his younger sister being in second grade. From what I know about LD, based on my personal conversations that I've had with his teachers and counselor last year, LD has gone through a fair share of transitions since second grade. At the time, I knew that he and his siblings, along with his mother, were living in a shared home for women that have suffered from domestic violence. While at the time of this first session, I didn't know much about the situations that contributed to his living conditions, but there would be subsequent conversations after the conclusion of this project that in which two of the former participants shared harsh criticisms regarding his absentee father.

The two participants (KL and JV) later on made some shared some previous observations about LD 's father- how he appeared to dress very well and flamboyantly, donned in expensive gold chains. They referred to his appearance as *dripping*-slang for expensively and stylishly dressed, but not understanding why LD and the rest of his siblings don't appear to be cared for in the same manner that he cared for himself. While referring to personal appearances, dress and specifically hair care would also make its way into our C.T.T. on a few occasions, I did not perceive it frequent enough to be considered an emergent theme, but enough to seem to be a part of the participants consciousness.

From our first class session, LD seemed especially focused and very interested.

(MS and JV engage in further *jonin*')

MS: *to JV* "Yo... you got a peanut head BWOY (boy)!"

JV: *to MS* "Yo, you got a ball head BWOY!"

MS to KL: “You got a pepper shaped head boy!”

KL to MS: “Go ahead wit’ your coconut tree shaped head boy!”

(the group chuckles)

MS: *to KL* “You ovah’ here lookin like Blueface (*a rapper with a distinctly sizable head*) with that head boy!”

While determining the dominant and emerging voices throughout data collection, I found that KH and LD generally only spoke during the session to ask questions, specifically how to correctly spell certain words and names, and how to define some of the terms like *commute* and general questions that require some clarity regarding the directions. I found that I especially had to preserve talking space for these two participants throughout the study. During this initial class sessions, both KH and LD worked quietly, while KL and MS engaged in some quick jonin’ about the shapes of each other’s heads, the shapes of each other’s eyebrows and each other’s hair lines.

KL to MS: “But I get paid more than you...”

Towards the end of the first session, my recordings reminded me that there was certainly a need to remediate regarding time management. I realized that I had to initiate a two minute time warning to get the students to stay focused and to finish the writing. I then emphasized that the written portion had to be completed in order to guide our artmaking. I know that my students can be very anxious and excited to get to the production phase of our class. I understood that, and I realize that when I replicate this project, it will be imperative for me to explain the importance of the written portion, its impact on the artmaking, the importance of what the viewer would be learning about them from their art (Eisner & Barone, 1997), and how it is necessary it is to be completed first. To ensure the completion of section 3, I also had to enact a two minute quiet

time portion in order for some of my students who required it in order to finish, and even for myself so that I could finish my writing in time to share with the class. This brief quiet time is a customary practice for my art class, therefore I did not have any issues with my students acquiescing with this request. At the conclusion of structured writing and quiet time session, MS shared his anticipation of moving on by an audible ending to the timed session.

MS: “Beeeeeep, beeeeeeep, beeeeeeep, beeeeeeep, beeeeeeep!”

My observations from session one led me to conclude that, as I moved forward, keeping students on task while maintaining the integrity of encouraging conversation for this project would be an active practice. I also had to be aware of KL, or potentially other participants possibly dominating the conversation, and whether I would likely have to intervene to ensure other participants were actively engaging in conversation while working on their collages. I also questioned, and found that I would have to encourage, through suggestion or direct inquiry, our quieter members, KH in LD, to participate in order to procure conversation-based data as I prepared my analysis, also based on their artwork and the artist statements. As our project continued, KH and LD’s conversational interests would emerge with subtlety, helping me to be conscious of how effective conversation-based rapport building would certainly have to remain adaptable.

Emergent Conversation Topics (Research Question #1)

As the subsequent class sessions and C.T.T. conversations moved forward throughout the project in the manner reflected through the shared transcribed class session, several dominant themes would emerge through our conversations during class and through our lunch bunch sessions. With a well maintained eagerness to chat during post instructional time and during our lunch bunch sessions, participants and I engaged in conversations that reflected protocol based

on requirements for our collage self-portraiture project, and in conversations facilitated by myself as a researcher. But most often our conversations would be facilitated by the participants and would fluctuate between both the dominant and the quieter voices at the participants, with a level of engagement that seemed comfortable for them. When reviewing the video recordings I made note to look for physical indicators of discomfort with interaction amongst the participants- a physical removal, a look of despondence or embarrassment, or frustration. Reviewing the video recordings would become a valuable method of reviewing non verbal responses and levels of engagement with both the art project and our conversations.

As our sessions continued, I would find that participants were ready to start chatting immediately, especially during our lunch bunches as that time was specially allotted for dining and chatting without an instructional premise. I found out more about their personal lives, interests, and activities through our lunch conversation. The artwork was a catalyst for the conversations, and I do believe that it was evident through the images and text in their collages that reiterated many of the routines, interests, and parts of their identities that they talked about. The collages seemed to summarize some of the overarching themes of our conversations- friends/teacher interactions, entertainment, hobbies (especially sports) and activities. I got an inside look on the details, the likes and dislikes, the concerns, the passions, the confusion, the pettiness, the humanity of the boys- especially during our lunch bunch sessions.

Themes emerged through our sessions as certain topics would frequently be introduced, talked about, or carry on as pre-existing parts of conversations that existed as the participants entered the art room for C.T.T. or for lunch bunches. Based on the analysis, three prevailing themes emerged, along with sub themes from those major themes that are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

<i>Prevailing Theme</i>	<i>Social Interactions</i>	<i>Entertainment</i>	<i>Sports</i>
<i>Frequency of Occurrence during C.T.T./ Lunch Bunch</i>	<i>Total: 46</i>	<i>Total: 26</i>	<i>Total: 25</i>
<i>Sub theme</i>	<i>Teachers: 24</i>	<i>Rappers/Rhyming: 12</i>	<i>Football: 11</i>
<i>Sub theme</i>	<i>Schoolmates/Peers: 22</i>	<i>General Music: 7 (singing/songs/singers)</i>	<i>Basketball: 7</i>
<i>Sub theme</i>		<i>YouTube: 7</i>	<i>General Athletics/Athletes: 7</i>

Social interactions and perceptions

Our introductory C.T.T. and lunch bunch sessions set that tone for our continuing student-teacher conversations, providing a comfortable and trusted space for participants and I talk with each other. Our first C.T.T. was dominated by art related contents, s participants were heavily engaged with brainstorming for their collages. Our first lunch bunch session began with conversation protocol that directly inquired about their thoughts on the collage projects, their processes, and the events of their day. While during both initial sessions, my recordings and

transcriptions showed evidence of the participants talking about or mentioning particular instances and aggravations with certain school mates, I was very intrigued about their active conversations about their teachers.

During *Lunch Bunch # 2: Teacher Troubles and Girl Problems*, I overheard them chatting about the rehearsal before I joined them. They divulged their feelings about certain teachers. Again, I found it both surprising and intimate that they felt comfortable enough disclosing their opinions, be it negative, about a colleague of mine who I considered a friend. Talking about other teachers to me was not a common practice for students that I didn't know very well personally. I was wondering if our sessions were again creating space for them to feel comfortable to share their personal opinions about others, especially those of other teachers.

Prior to our project, I had limited personal talk time with the participants, other than our class discussions, which were usually arts related. I may have had more extensive interaction with KH, MS, and LD, because they had been my art students for a longer period of time. The one student that I regularly talked with about non art related topics was KL. He typically came to class, ready to share current events of the school day, with me and to chat with his regular table mates. He'd often start out personal chats with "Ms. P- guess what?! Always ready for the gossip! However, these sessions were the first time that I recalled him sharing his thoughts about other teachers, and I wondered if our lunch bunch time was making him comfortable enough to do so. By our third C.T.T. and lunch session, all of the participants actively and eagerly conversed with me about their frustrations, perspectives, concerns, and exciting experiences with both school peers and teachers.

Teachers

During *Lunch Bunch #3: Truth, Dare and Hot Chocolate*, the subtheme of teachers—in particular their frustrations with them—emerged during in full force.

KL: “I got a problem with Dr. Markson...she kinda like a parent, a person that likes to play...”

JV: “I knew Dr. Markson for a long time...she went to my old school...when I came here, *she* came here. She was meaner...”

EP: “She was mean over there? Like, how? Tell me the story!”

JV: “She was the kind of teacher to make everybody do work if they got in trouble or somethin’...and had them re-write words and stuff...then she...she’d suspend you and stuff?”

EP: “So was she a teacher over there?”

JV: “She held kids in her room if they were being bad...kinda like Ms. Rickerson does...”

EP: “Does Ms. Rickerson handle in school suspension?”

This would be an interesting conversational path for us—because all the participants knew that myself and their classroom teacher, Ms. Rickerson, were very close friends. I was wondering how comfortable they would feel sharing with me. Had we been building a level of trust that included sincere belief in our confidentiality? Enough that they could *share words* about my friend, their teacher, with me?

KL: “Ms. Rickerson...she just do too much!”

LD: “Yesss...yesss...”

EP: “LOL! So, what is she doing that’s too much?!”

JV: *sucks teeth* “Maaaaan, Ms. Rickerson kill me!”

KL: “Man...now she like...sometimes I have my days when I may not like her, and then sometimes I have my days where I do. Just like today—we weren’t even doing nothing, and then she’s going to start “...all y’all talking about them but they know how to read more English better than you (referring to our ESOL students in the classroom)! They can talk and write better than y’all, y’all don’t even know how to spell half ya’ll words!”

Then she had brought up how I had passed one of the benchmark tests, and was like “You barely passed! You was only one point from failing!” I was like “So! At least I made it, what about you? You still got that *lace front* in your hair and that bald spot!”

EP: **quietly** “...she on’t got no dag’gone a lace front...”

I tried to avoid *being in my feelings* about their comments regarding my friend and colleague—even thought she said some things to KL that were very inappropriate and insulting. As a human being, former student and occasional petty person—I didn’t condone, but understood why KL was slinging insults about her. Sure, he was conscious of my relationship with her, and was aware of his own insulting language. But, his feelings were clearly hurt by her words. He still followed up with an apology.

KL: **chuckle** “I’m sorry I had to talk about her like that, but I had to do it! And she like to jone’ on us so bad... but I’m not scared of her to jone’, so...”

JV: “Yeah, it’s cool, I ain’t got nothing against her though...”

KH: **loudly** “I really ain’t got nothing against her either!”

EP: “I know you don’t...but she loves y’all though—she literally always talks so lovingly about you...”

KL: “Yeah, it’s cool...I ain’t got nothing against her either.”

EP: "I get it...you just give her back what she gives you..."

KL: "Mmm hmmm!"

I took this opportunity to side on behalf of my participants. I was hoping that this gesture would provide some empathy and solidarity against certain teacher behaviors. I also advocated for mutual respect from student to teacher, and vice versa; being teacher first, researcher second.

EP: "Is that always the right thing to do as a student?"

KL: *quietly* "No."

EP: "No. But, you know...was that always the best thing to do as a teacher? Probably not."

Schoolmates and peers

As the class worked during our third class session--*Class Session #3: Sports "Digest"* -- the recordings revealed that someone reintroduced a classmate that was discussed in the first session-Lamaya. I overheard the tail end of their comments and made my way to their table. Apparently, she had been finding ways to annoy KL again, so I inquired about what she does that unnerves him so much. It turns out that the whole group had strong feelings to share!

EP: "Are you still talking about about Lamaya?"

KL: "She need to eat grapes, salad, ranch dressing with the salad..."

EP: "Let me ask you a question. Lamaya gets on your nerves...what does she *do* that gets on your nerves so badly? You seem to talk about her so much!"

KH: "She just mess with people all the time! She always mess with us!"

EP: "So...she messes with you guys *a lot*?"

JV: "Maaaaan...she just be talking too muuuuch...she just be getting on my nerves, always saying she don't like me and stuff and saying I like other girls..."

EP: "Like who?"

LD: "Like Angel..." *chuckles*

JV: "She walk around talking about I like Angel and stuff...Angel like me for, like, no reason... that is so *annoying*..."

EP: "So, Lamaya is starting that mess?"

KH: "She be talkin' and then she be tryin' to get us in trouble in class!"

KL: "Yeah...she always be going to Ms. Rickerson and sayin' we said somethin' that we didn't, and then Ms. Rickerson get in our face talking about how we talking and blah blah blah" *mocks teacher*

EP: "Well, the thing is...sometimes people that feel like they have to do those kinds of things because they're often dealing with their own self-confidence issues...try to be patient with her...?"

LD: "...aight."

I was touched by his agreements to practice and patience and kindness with the group enemy. Meanwhile, some boys at their neighboring table began to chime in with their own complaints about the student. I stepped back into teacher mode in order to redirect the energy. I returned to the front of the class to continue working on my own collage, audibly asking myself rhetorical questions. "What else do I need to include in my every day? What am I missing?". I visibly referred back to my writing as an exemplar for my working students and participants to see. After a few moments, I circulated the class to do a progress check. I returned to the front of the room to work on my own collage while it was being projected. Class would be concluding soon, so I gave my students the usual five minute reminder that clean up time was imminent.

The recordings shared that the participants all remained fairly quiet for the remaining minutes of class, much calmer since their expressions about Lamaya. They random sounds with their voices or using their pencils to lightly beat on their table. KL sang and talked about food. KH And MS had a short personal conversation about things that they liked to cook and eat. As I approached the table to again towards the conclusion of class, KH directed a statement to me that left space for me to ask some questions about their home lives.

The dominant theme of the following conversation--during *Lunch Bunch # 2: Teacher Troubles and Girl Problems*--was also related to peer interactions- specifically, dating. While each of the participants actively engaged with this topic, I noticed that the session was a lot calmer than the first session. I wondered what kind of implied norms we were establishing, spoken or unspoken, in regard to how our conversations would flow. Also, I wondered if the absence of JV put KL in a quieter space, as he typically seemed to engage directly with JV regularly during the first three sessions of observation. His voice was quieter and his ability to listen seem to be heightened. He seemed to be more interested in what the other participants were talking about. We continued to share our opinions of neighboring schools and chatted about the different charter schools that had opened in the past few years. KL mentioned some of the positive things that he had heard about the local charter academy that MS planned on attending for sixth grade. This provided a segue to MS's love interest and living the single life...as a fifth-grader.

KL: "So...me, LD, KH...we single. MS got a girlfriend."

MS: "She cute though."

KL: "You got her phone number? Do she got a phone?"

MS: "Yeah, she got a phone."

KL: “Yo, why you ain’t ask for her phone number bro?”

KH: “What’s her name?”

EP: “Yeah! Are you comfortable sharing her name?”

MS: *reluctantly* “...her name is Avery.”

EP: “So, how do you guys keep in touch then? This is something I’m so curious about. I know we talked about this earlier, but how do y’all keep in touch with each other since you guys don’t go to same school?”

While staying connected outside of school was not addressed with any frequency in relation to their peer interactions during our C.T.T. or lunch sessions, all the participants responded with the variety of means they used to keep in touch with each other, in an excited, overlapping fashion. They shared over each others voices- either through email, *TikTok*, through their parents email, Xbox Live, and through their personal phones for those that have them. KL expressed that he had his own phone, and “*on God*”, would give me his phone at that very moment to you use it- proving that phone was operable. He implied that most students didn’t have fully operating phones in his class. He also invited me to *visit* him, in order to keep in touch. He then went on to explain a variety of ways that he has asked for girls’ numbers. Being interrupted by another visiting teacher, I had to leave the table briefly. The recordings revealed that KL continued with his own instructional about how to ask of phone numbers from girls of interest and emphasized the importance of doing so immediately upon meeting.

KL: “OK, this is how you asked for a girl’s number... I just said ‘what’s your number?’ She wrote it down and gave it to me. She gave it to me in a little piece of paper. Now, go back to her in a couple of days. You know... I had to set, like, boundaries.”

I returned to the table after hearing KL’s last comment and re-joined the conversation.

EP: “I totally understand boundaries. So are you guys, like, cool being single? Or do you actually want girlfriends?”

KH: “Naw. I’m actually cool being single.”

KL: **assertively** “But, like, if you need a shoulder to lean on? Do you want to have somebody by your side?”

I left the table again to address another knock at the door. I had several visitors during this session and had to leave our lunch chat a few times. It turned out to be a good opportunity to use data from the recordings to see how conversations may have changed once I left the table. I wondered if my presence made a difference what the boys talked about, and their choices of words or expressions. The recordings revealed that after I left the table for several minutes, the conversation about a single living continued, with KL at the helm. Asking questions specifically to KH and LD about their decisions to be single. KL asked KH “Yeah... you really don’t want no girlfriend, you really cool being single, like you’ll never win a shoulder to lean on?”

KL’s emphasis regarding *a shoulder to lean on* seemed to relay his personal values about relationality and the benefits of specific kinds of connections-especially regarding emotional support and companionship, which to me seemed uncommon for a fifth-grader. However, based on my experiences during our sessions with KL thus far, this perspective didn’t seem to be too much of a stretch. He seemed to enjoy connecting with people, which was reflected in some of his image choices within his completed collage self-portrait. It was exciting and validating to see the personal themes of interest and identity of the participants connect across data sets.

Entertainment related activities (rhyming/music/ YouTubing)

The second major theme that was extracted from our C.T.T., lunch sessions, and supported by student artwork was entertainment. On twenty-six occasions, all of the participants

talked with me about forms of entertainment. These included gaming, use of social media platforms, recess activities, hobbies (camp, family travel) with the popular forms of entertainment being related to music (rhyming/rapping, fandom of specific rappers/musicians) and regular use of YouTube as a form of entertainment.

Rapping, rhyming and music

Rapping and rhyming was especially salient to the interests and behaviors of three of the participants- KL, JV, and MS. The recordings would disclose that participants would often softly make beats of the tables while created, and quietly rap and rhyme to themselves the lyrics of popular songs, hum or rap while cleaning up or even dismissing from the art room. Melodic sound was a constant undercurrent, indicative of *#blackboyjoy* (Lu & Steele, 2019), often defined as an act of resistance in potential oppressive environments, characterized by free, whimsical, joy driven expression that is not often promoted, expected, and allowed for black boys.

While this musical interest was something that I made general observations of with many of my male students, I had never been invited to join my students as they rhymed, rap or sing. However, during our first lunch session, one of my participants was prompted to invite me into their own student led *cypher*. A *cypher* is a small performance of a few rappers that perform a freestyle rap, with each person taking their own turn, often including reflections, observations, and 'joints' in their content (Levy et al., 2018; Love, 2014).

Our first shared lunch session--*Lunch Bunch #1: First (and Last) Dance with Protocols*--also provided initial evidence of the participants' lackluster interest in discussing art related content during our shared lunch times. As the study progressed, most of the boys made it clear through their short responses to protocol questions, and through their subsequent, regular student

led and facilitated chats, that I would have be flexible about addressing protocol questions for our lunch chats.

Ready to start talking, the group entered the art room for our first lunch bunch session. KL was the first to arrive and four more of the other gentlemen trickled in within a minute's time. With lunch tray in hand, KL arrived very punctually, with MS not far behind him as our conversations began immediately. Before I could even introduce the lunch brunch protocol questions, KL immediately noticed that I was working on a crafting project and he inquired about it. We chatted briefly about my personal project, followed by an attempt to address art-based protocols during our lunch bunch. While I received brief responses from most of the participants regarding the protocol questions, their melodic interests took precedence quickly.

Momentarily opposed to addressing protocols during this first lunch bunch, MS had prepared a *freestyle*- a non-scripted form of rap performance, to share with our lunch bunch about the idea of being snapped into oblivion. This was another example of MS's is interests in the existential, as I have gotten to know about him. He began to rap about *Thanos*, a fictional supervillain appearing in Marvel comics. Both interested and confused, I submitted to his interest to share his freestyle. KL, who is also apparently ready to support his classmates freestyle efforts, offered a countdown for MS to commence with his rhymes, by snapping and saying:

KL: *rhythmically beats on table* "...three, and two, and one..."

MS: *melodically sings and raps*

"I've got Thanos on my mind, I've got Thanos on my mind,
and purple head, double chin, golden gothic rock and eleven nine,

Spiderman, Iron Man, Peter Parker...I'm sorry that's all I have right now..."

EP: "Is this a freestyle?"

MS: *sings high with head upward*

“Let me tell you how I feeeel...

I live with my grandmaaaaaa”

The group emitted soft chuckles. Despite my attempts to redirect the participants to talk about the project, MS seemed to be disinterested about sharing about his collage portrait at the moment. So, I shared the space to them guide the conversation for the time being, as I attempted to find out more about their conversational interests. At this point I knew that relinquishing control would more than likely be necessary in order to continue with both the integrity *and* fluidity that would be needed for this kind of research (Thomson and Gunter, 2011).

They continued to talk about a schoolmate for a few more seconds, and I quickly inserted another redirective question during a brief lull. I asked about the images that they chose for their collage portraits, if they were able to choose any during that first session. Only the participants that finished their writing in enough time during the last session began collecting images that they would use for their collage portraits. KL began to answer my question by mentioning that he selected images regarding football, while MS continued with more melodies

MS: *audibly singing in the background*

KL: *to MS* “Oh, you ready to bus’ another freestyle?”

My redirection had failed. Apparently, freestyle and was on the minds of the current dominant voices- MS and KL. KL supported the motion and was operating as the social leader to at the table. The rest of the group quickly acquiesced and invested into devoting some time to free styling. With KL at the helm again, he assigned each of us--myself included--a freestyle with an offer to create a topic for us to rap about, directing to JV first.

JV: “I can rap to anything!”

KL: "School?"

JV: "Oh yeah I can do that- that's eeeeasy..."

MS: *starts clapping to a beat*

"School remind me to hell

I feel like I'm in jail

Somebody let me out of the cell

I am playin' no games get me out, give me out"

As MS concluded his freestyle, KL encouraged JV to begin with his. So far, from this first lunch bunch session, it appears of JV and KL seem to have an established friendship, based on their conversational patterns (Bahktin, 1986) Not only did KL mention him when he talked about the people that know him well, but they demonstrated a comfort and familiarity with each other as they sat next to each other at the table, picking at each other's platters, quietly saying things to each other while we or the others chatted or played. JV would talk to KL directly with the most frequency during our lunch bunch. Although KL encouraged JV to begin his own freestyle, he quickly and quietly declined, and KL confidently commenced with his own.

KL: "Why you 'ont like school?

It is so cool

I could live every day to being in school

You just may cause you're a looooser

Why are you so mad?

You built like a glass!

Your head so big I can put it in my bag!"

The group again erupted in laughter and light applause, showing that they approved of KL's freestyle. They all chuckled for several seconds, particularly over KL's verse "your head so big I can put it in my bag". I found to be quite entertaining myself. Then, KL directed the cypher to me. ME!

It was both an honor and surprise to be *invited to participate*. What kind of relationship was I building with these participants that they would voluntarily invite me to engage in one of *their* social activities? I have never been invited into a student cypher before. I was filled with delight with feeling included. I knew that if this was something important for me, undoubtedly this is something important for my students-to feel included, wanted, welcomed.

KL: "Go 'head Miss P!"

KL *dropped a beat* on the table as a welcome and to guide the rhythm of my freestyle.

EH: "Green beans

Eating my lunch with the kids now

Eating this pork trying to finish my work now

Just wanna get this thang

All I wanna do is sang...sike!

I just wanna wrap and I wanna eat pork and beans

I know I'm a big girl but be eatin' some salad,

before they jon' on me..."

Uproarious laughter came from the group as I further encouraged the continuation of the cypher by taking over the beating at the table. I was actively participating in the lunch bunch session, not only as a researcher but immersing myself into this boy culture (Janssen, 2007). I also wondered if I had been welcome into this area of comfort because of my established

relationship with some of these boys, or because I welcome them into a different space in my classroom outside of what is usually done in the art room, primarily artwork. We all seem to be experiencing a new place of liberation with each other, which was rather enjoyable. These types of occurrences- free styling, making mention of other students, playing tag, complaining about lunch, were not regular happenings in the art room during their time there, typically. I found it fascinating and exciting. Undoubtedly, I believe that the expectancy of me to participate in this formal conversation was reflective of our pre-existing relationship as teacher to student (Bahktin, 1986). It was the invitation into their social interest that led me to believe that these conversations were leading to the building of our increasing rapport and relational connection. MS joined while clapping.

MS: “Get some veggie chips

Get some veggie fries

Get some donut shops

Aaaaaye!!”

KL rose from his seat to continue his place in the cypher, as MS continued to beat on the table. MS and KL were heavily invested in this freestyle adventure. He gently circled the table as he continued his freestyle which includes a verse about eating Cheetos, *keeping it real*, community pride, and being well known. He also referred playing *Fortnite*, wearing jewelry and recycling the same themes throughout his freestyle by re-organizing the phrases for several minutes. KL claimed the stage, and everyone seemed to be happy to let him have it.

With KH seemingly disinterested in participating, or maybe not feeling comfortable enough to participate, KL extended a friendly, jovial invitation for him to *spit his verse*. As he was convincing him to begin a freestyle, JV quietly and personally shared with me that he had a song

to be released soon. I inquired of his rap moniker, and he told me that it was *Lil' Belly* as he continued to share some things about his body of work that he had been creating.

This was the first time JV had ever spoken to me directly about anything personal. I was excited to show genuine interest, and to see how much he would be willing to share. Not long before JV could tell me more about his music, KL interjected again by saying that he and JV would be having a song coming out as well. MS began to speak about his favorite animal, the honey badger. LD continued eating his lunch while casually observing, and KL continued to dance around while KH was also more of an observant than participant during his lunch session, despite invitations (from both myself and other participants) to engage in conversation.

The remaining moments of our lunch session was filled with overlapping conversations about qualities of the honey badger that MS directed, and another game of close quarter tag between KH, LD, and KL. While three of them were distracted MS and JV remain at the table with me, and JV restarted our personal conversation about his body of music. I noticed from the session that JV was privy to enjoy one on one conversations. Generally a quiet guy, he seemed to look for opportunities to connect conversationally on an individual basis. Even in a calm manner, he seemed very excited to talk about his music.

JV: “For real, I got a studio at my house and I go to the one on the southside. I’ll be killin’ at my house... I be rappin’...about to drop a whole mixtape over the summer.”

EP: * excitedly* “Are you for real? I mean, are you really going to do it? We need to know so that we can support you!”

I found this as another opportunity to respond to JV with expectancy, if not to support evidence of a pre-existing relationship, but at least to provide evidence of us building relationship or rapport (Bahktin, 1986).

JV: “Yeah, I’ll tell you when the tape the hit. I’m not gonna drop the whole mixtape, I’mma drop a couple of songs, and when I get famous I’mma drop the rest ‘cause it’ll be old. By the time I get famous, I don’t want all the songs to be old. So when I get up, I will drop a few, and when I get real up, I’m a drop some mo’.”

EP: “What are you doing to promote your music now? How are you going to get people to listen to it?”

JV: “I’m gonna put my stuff out with other folks I work with, where everybody listen to music so I can put myself out there and stuff.”

As KL and MS were about to interject bits and pieces into the conversation, with a subtle stutter in his voice, JV *took the mic* back and continued:

JV: “I...I got a lot of folk who drop stuff. And I ain’t even gonna lie, sometimes I don’t even write my stuff...somebody be writing for me. Somebody write my songs for me sometimes.”

It’s kind of a big deal to have someone write songs for you and they trust your delivery so much that they’re willing to share their work with a rapper. JV was proud of this, and I was proud that he shared it with me and us. Further, I was excited to see that JV was being assertive in the conversation, as he hadn’t been for the first part portion of our lunch bunch session and during our art class session – especially over dominant voices like KL and MS. Where there wasn’t room for him, he seemed to be making room for his voice.

EH: “And, so you just rap? Who writes your songs for you?”

JV: I just let somebody write my songs for me sometimes, and sometimes I just freestyle over stuff and... and then remember what I rapped about.

KL, JV, and MS continued the conversation by talking about some of their favorite rap artists, including famed YouTube music celebrities, like someone referred to as *Little LeiLei* and *Blueface*. MS accused KL of getting in his feelings as he responded unfavorably to his mentioning Little LeiLei, and the other three carried on with small talk until our lunch bunch concluded. We cleaned our dining debris from our table and had to wrap up according to schedule. The gentlemen all continued to talk about their favorite rappers as I gave them salutations and thanked them for having lunch with me. They all gave me an unsolicited side hug, and walked out of the door, preparing to move on with the rest of the day, concluding that music was in integral portion of their interests, entertainment, and lifestyles.

YouTube usage

Another dominant subcategory under entertainment what is the theme of the regular use of the media platform YouTube. Based on recordings and observations at some point all participants refer to their *YouTubing* habits. This included personal research of interest, personal efforts for education, learning more about a variety of musicians, celebrities, sports figures, and popular social media personalities. One participant, JV even expressed that You Tube was his preferred platform for personal research, as MS added that much of his inquiry about matters of existence are addressed through is YouTubing.

During *Class Session #2: Popeye's Chicken and Paranormal Activity*, MS interrupted a preexisting conversation once he came across a picture of Stephen Hawking while flipping through a magazine.

MS: *points to picture* "...this man don't believe in God."

EP: "I know, because Stephen Hawking-wait, how do you know who Stephen Hawking is?"

MS: “Oh, because I watch a video of his stuff all the time. I’ll be watching videos about the big bang and stuff and he said that God is not real.”

EP: “Yeah...it’s because he’s an atheist and doesn’t believe in the concept of God, to my knowledge-he believes in the big bang theory that the universe kind of created itself.

How did you learn about Stephen Hawking? I didn’t learn about Stephen Hawking until I was like in college!”

JV: “YouTube tell us everything.”

EP: “So, do you ever feel like y’all are more off of the Internet than y’all do in school?”

JV: Man... I feel like anything I’ll be learnin’ at school I can find out on the internet...”

Hearing that from JV affirmed at least one assumption that I had about a perspective thing that I would discover from talking to my participants-entertainment, in particular the use of YouTube as a main form of entertainment. Very different from my generation’s forms of entertainment, I found through this research that YouTube is a primary source of media and is valued as an informational source for my participants, and I wanted to affirm this as a source from which they bring knowledge into the art room (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). The prominence of this platform would make its way into our conversations at least on seven, lengthy occasions. MS facilitated these parts of our chat, as he often talked about videos that he would see on YouTube. I knew that YouTube would be something for me to integrate into our conversations and I became mindful of it as the process continued. Several references to artists personalities featured on YouTube--like *Little Dickie*, *Blueface* again--and a variety of artists that I had never heard of. I had to take note to do some research for myself and find a way to talk about those things in our class and conversations in the way that my participants were doing in order to create or build upon our connections based on their interests (Schensul, Schensul, &

LeCompte, 1999). I also learned that my participants procure a lot of information that is reflective of their interests- social topics, current events, hobbies, music and sports- through YouTube.

Sports

(Lunch Bunch #1: First (and Last) Dance with Protocols)

KL: “Football...first of all, if you ask me anything about football, I’m pretty sure I’m gonna know it. I know a lot, so I really like football. I like basketball, I like football...I’m not really into baseball or hockey.”

EP: “Have you ever watched hockey?”

JV: “All I know is they be fighting and stuff all the time.”

The final prevailing theme of our C.T.T. and lunch bunch conversations was sports. This included the participants personal experiences and interests with sports , specific references to participation in sporting events, references to their personal athletic prowess and ability, knowledge of statistics relating to professional and college level sports- primarily football and basketball, and integrating their knowledge and admiration, or even disdain, for specific professional athletes. Observations and recordings revealed that while all participants at some point engaged and conversation about sports with each other or with me during C.T.T. at lunch bunch, JV and KL wielded the highest levels of engagement with this frequent theme.

By the our third C.T.T. session, *Class Session #3: Sports “Digest”*, I noticed an intense focus on their creativity, as they worked to successfully finish their collages by the end of the fourth and final class session of the project. I didn’t want to be disruptive-but I *did* want to attempt to initiate conversation to assess an interest based response. I decided to try to initiate a conversation using a common interest that the participants had shared with me of the past couple

of sessions-sports. I decided to ask about a recent basketball game involving a new draft pick for the season for an NBA team. I had been keeping up with sports related news since in preparation for these moments. I found out that this particular young player's performance had been compared to another power forward that also played for the team to which he was drafted. This is my first attempt at integrating their expressed personal interests, based on our prior sessions, into our creative talk time.

EP: *with nonchalance* "Did anybody see ZW play last night?"

KL: "OH my God, I know! That team don't even know what to do with him! They don't deserve him! They brag on him since the ole' boy used to be their power forward!"

JV: *excitedly* "Yeah, he got traded!"

EP: "Well, personally I don't think AD is better than ZW..."

KL: "For real! Like, what are y'all gonna do with him?"

LD: "Nothing!"

KL: "AD need to go play for Golden State!"

The excited response was a further indicator of integral nature of sports within their interests, especially of JV and KL. The topic found its way back into our following lunch session, with immediacy, with all of the present participants engaging in the conversation.

In the midst of a conversation about their teacher interactions, *Lunch Bunch #3 Truth, Dare and Hot Chocolate*, JV suddenly changed the subject to an upcoming student-versus-student basketball game related to an upcoming *PBIS* event. *PBIS* (Positive Behavioral Incentive System) events are used as a reward system for incentivizing and encouraging positive behavior. Students have an opportunity to earn points for exhibiting positive behaviors in a variety of classroom settings, in the hallway transitions, and during cafeteria time. Apparently,

JV was looking forward to the game and apparently had earned enough points to participate in the event along with the other participants.

JV: “But, when I play out in basketball tomorrow, I’m gonna beat y’all bro...”

EP: “What time is your game tomorrow?”

JV: “We playin’ in school... like, kids against kids...my team, we gonna win. I wanted to be on they team (referring to the other participants), but because I wanna win...that’s why I got my own team.”

LD: “That’s gonna be tough right there...”

KH: “On my team, it’s going to be me, LD, and Darian. We gonna be wearing red.”

JV: *excitedly* “Guess who my team is? Guess who my team is? It’s gonna be me, Phosiah, and DeAndre.”

EP: “Oh! Does for Phosiah know how to play?”

JV: “Yeah-he got the free throw record...”

JV seemed so excited to talk about his team. Sports was definitely his *thing*, and I knew that if I wanted to continue to feed a relationship between JV and I through conversation, I would most likely have to integrate sports into our creative and lunch talk time.

KL: “My team is Brian, and Caraun. I’m wearing blue. We’re in blue.”

LD: “We got our own team uniform, name...”

JV: “We going to win it all because we skilled...we go hard in the paint with them all day!”

Again, sports was one theme that emerged from our student-teacher conversations that I was unfamiliar with and would have to make efforts to learn more to increase my effective participation and thematic integration of this reflected and regular interest of my participants.

Topics/Questions that Prompt Positive Student Teacher Interactions That Build Rapport as an Instructional Tool (Research Question #2)

Asking about their processes during C.T.T.

There was a need to remind the participants that their artwork was to be reflected upon as the basis for our talk times. Though participants did not demonstrate much interest discussing their processes during lunch, they seemed to find interest and affirmation addressing their process during our class sessions. The highest engagement of the participants during our student-teacher conversation about art related content occurred during our C.T.T. As well, inquiring about their processes should be ongoing and formative, as it serves as means of assessment and a show of interest, which was found to be vital during our student-teacher conversations.

I found this practice to be especially necessary for students with quieter voices. My participants like KH and LD benefited from our individual chats during C.T.T., as they had seemed to prefer private space to ask questions about the requirements of the project, ask for help or requested guidance if and when needed. Students like KH and LD that didn't engage heavily in conversation of a non-academic manner during C.T.T. engaged more frequently when the student teacher conversations were based on the artwork.

Inquiry about student artistic processes may also require some additional time outside of the scheduled art class time. After our third C.T.T.--*Class Session #3: Sports "Digest"*--one participant returned to class immediately after being dismissed, with a desire to talk about his artist progress. What was most surprising was that this conversation was unsolicited, and that the participant excitedly returned of his own volition.

The participants left the table to line up for dismissal. Surprisingly, after the class left the art room, LD rushed back in-as if he forgot something. I inquired about his problem, but he only

wanted to come back and explain some of the choices that he made for his collage. I followed him back to the table as he grabbed his folder, opened it and pointed to some of the images on his collage. I knew that a response of interest was vital in this moment (Tosolt, 2010) as he demonstrated comfort in returning to my classroom, as he hadn't ever done before.

LD: "I got nine pictures now!"

EP: "Oh! Good, good, good!"

LD: *pointing and counting to all the pictures* "I had added these pictures today..."

EP: "This is looking good! OK! So, what does this *motioning to certain images* have to do with your everyday life? Tell me about it!"

LD: "Like...like this shows that like to make things...this is clay-like you be teaching us...the guns had to do with the army, but I know they're real guns, but I use them for like water guns, LOL..."

EP: *laughs* "OK! That's good to know!"

LD: "This Mr. Clean is because I clean every day-I clean the bathroom, I clean the tub, I clean my room..."

EP: "Like your chores and stuff?"

LD: "Yeah. I'll wipe the walls down..."

Then KL and JV made their way back to my room. I assumed that once they had noticed that LD had come back, they returned and quickly joined us at the table. They excitedly looked over LD's collage with us. LD proceeded to talk about the images of vegetables in his collage, "...because I eat vegetables". He pointed to symbols of money, and explained that they were related to donating money, and a picture that related to him looking into the future, because "...I think about it every day." He made one last reference to a YouTube personality and musician-

Boonk Gang-and how he watched him every day. He shared that he found him “entertaining”, decided to include in his collage.

KH slipped back into the art room at the last minute, while we were standing at the table. He took the opportunity to look over his collage and mentioned that he wanted to improve on the appearance of his *waves* in his small portrait that he drew for collage. Because I had to prepare for the next class, I unfortunately had to break this surprise and exciting conversation. I was thrilled that they wanted about their interest to talk about their artwork with me. It was amazing and I felt as though the efforts being made to talk *with* them with frequency was certainly impacting their engagement in my room. I don’t ever recall students excitedly coming *back* to my room to talk about their artwork immediately after dismissal. That delightful urgency was a first for me. The research was showing effectiveness of inquiry about their processes, through such evidence of the increasing student engagement in the art room.

Showing interest through inquiry of pre-existing conversations

Sharing curiosity through inquiry is a characteristic of a teacher showing interest and their students (Foster & Peele, 1999). Throughout most of our C.T.T. and lunch bunch conversations, responses were generally and easily solicited through most of the participants at various length and about various topics of their interest simply by asking questions about what they were already talking about prior to initiating or facilitating student teacher conversations. The most thoroughly explored theme- social interactions-were rarely teacher led, as students were already talking about this theme on several occasions before I began to participate in the conversation. I inquired about their feelings about certain teachers, asked for details about certain advance that they were already speaking of and ask why they had certain feelings about these social interactions.

Maintaining an awareness of my tone, I intentionally and regularly attempted to be mindful of my reactivity so as not to discourage my participants from comfortably expressing themselves. Stems such as *“I overheard you all talking about...”* or questions like *“What’s happening today?!”* were frequently used for ascertaining the contents of, and show interest in, preexisting student conversations.

Preparing to practice this level of inquiry may also require personal research about student topics of interest. Another major theme of interest of my participants was sports. Initially, I was ill prepared for these chats due to my low level of sports knowledge. After participating in conversations about sports that were primarily inquiry based on my part, as I had more questions than content to contribute, I acquired enough specific information about their interests in this area through my personal research. I found that the participants were primarily interested in football and basketball and had favorite professional athletes that they would reference with some regularity. With this information I was able to do research on these particular athletes and their collegiate histories, their statistics, frequency of which certain games were played, final scores, and championship game schedules. I was then able to integrate inquiry about these specifics or engage in a cyclical response how about these sports related topics, as shared during our third C.T.T. *Class Session #3: Sports “Digest”*.

Responding with interest to student-facilitated and student-initiated conversations

When attempting to collect conversation-based data from LD, KH, and JV- the non-dominant voices of my participants, it became apparent based on cycles of response through personal student teacher conversations, that these particular students needed evidence of interest for them to be encouraged to engage in extensive student teacher conversations with comfort and expectation. These opportunities to respond with interest most often showed up during student

facilitated and initiated chats. While JVs level of conversational engagement with the participants and myself was notable, his highest conversational engagement level would result from focused interest and inquiry regarding *his* conversational interest, usually uncovered through participating in preexisting or student led conversations. This was evident during both C.T.T. and lunch bunches. A review of the data informed that JV's highest level engagements in student teacher conversation were based on my demonstrated interest and inquiries about his goals as a rapper and his budding music career, integrating sports related content with intention into our student teacher interactions, or directly asking him his opinions or perspectives about teachers and or schoolmates of regular mention during our C.T.T. and lunch bunch sessions that he initiated or led.

Both KH in LD showed the highest levels of engagement concentration and focus on their collage self-portraiture during our class in C.T.T. These two participants very rarely engaged in the student-teacher and students-student exchanges during C.T.T., but tended to focus on their production, or ask questions regarding their artistic processes or the requirements of the project. However, when asking for guidance or sharing a need for some remediation, responding with interest to their requests during C.T.T. showed evidence of promoting personal, positive student-teacher conversation through cycles of response expectancy and inquiry-on behalf of both myself and the participant, further supported by Bahktin's conversation theory (Bahktin, 1986).

The quietest voice of *Class Session #4: The "Rap" Up* was KH's. Throughout my interactions with the participants directly, and on the recordings, KH's voice was limited to a couple of compositional and confirming questions- "...is this right?", "...like this?" With our class time dwindling down, I noticed that his concentration looked heavy-I noticed a few furled

brows, a couple of gentle face-palms, and a couple of head scratches. I circled back to the participants table to check in on KH. I asked him how he was doing and if he was still taking some time to think. KH responded in a soft voice- “yeah still thinking.” I touched his shoulder reminded him that we still had several minutes before class came to a close, and that he had some time to add a few more images and one more sentence to his artist statement.

KH: *whispered to himself as he drew* “OK, *waves*...my waves got to be swimming...gotta make sure to find a picture of some waves...”

EP: “Well, if you can’t find a picture you can always draw yourself with the waves...”

KH: *nods in agreement*

However, the highest levels of engagement of KH and LD through student teacher conversation were present in a discussion about the supernatural and which both students excitedly shared their experiences and recollections about memories of being contacted by spiritual beings. Though this topic would emerge more than one time, it was evident that these participants found excitement and encouragement in the interest that I shared about their personal experiences, as they engaged in the cycle of expectancy our relational conversation.

During *Class Session #2: Popeye’s Chicken and Paranormal Activity*--our second C.T.T. sessions--as I was about to leave the table, MS reeled me back as he turned the conversation back to the spiritual by reintroducing the idea of believing in the supernatural and visitations from spirits. The table got quiet, as MS’s question commanded full attention from the participants. This gave me a hint that maybe discussing things of spiritual nature maybe uncommon for them, but maybe they were interested in doing it and finding a space to do so and share their experiences. I had to stay mindful of proper boundaries when discussing things of a spiritual nature in the classroom and I hoped to maintain some balance and neutrality while not wanting to

discourage the conversation. The discussion that ensued was something unexpected on my behalf. Deep stuff!

MS: "...do you believe that people that have died and that you know can come back?"

EP: * reluctantly answering* "...oh, there's some people that believe that..."

MS: "...but maybe, like maybe it's because when they die and they didn't believe in God maybe they might go to different places?"

EP: "...well, there's a lot of different beliefs in the world and I believe in respecting peoples different beliefs-and I think the most important thing is to be nice to people and to show kindness because those things always help make the world a better place..."

KL: "Yoooo...one time I had a dream that my cousin died...and I woke up and I thought she was talking to me, on God. You have a have a dream that somebody died and then you fall asleep and then your dream if feels like you have a moment with them."

KH: "YESSSS!!"

For a few minutes, I went on to explain or share what I believed to be supernatural experiences with my best friend's mother who had passed away several years ago. I told them that I felt as though she had visited me twice, both in a dream state and felt like it was essentially a request that I go spend time with and check on her daughter as she was going through some difficult times during those visitations. Both the class and the table were quiet as I hoped to not cross any boundaries but again create and participate in the space where students could talk about their interests, questions and experiences. It made me feel like I was being invited as a researcher, and as a teacher, into their realm of interest beyond instructional chatter. They *wanted* to hear about my perspectives and experience. I shared that the instance didn't make me feel scared, but that it felt so familiar. I explain to them that when I was in my dream state, I felt

like I heard myself say her name “Miss Beverly?” MS laughed and asked me if I really had said her name out loud, in wonderment and amusement. This made me wonder how often our students must be curious about our personal experiences that they might find a connection to.

MS: “My grandmother told me one time that when she was younger, she was sick, when she was in the hospital one time and she remember she was just looking at it and she felt like she had seen Jesus, like she was looking at Jesus, she was seeing Jesus, like sitting on a cloud?”

This was one of the few times throughout the project that KH had commanded the attention of the participants as he shared his personal experience with the supernatural.

KH: “I’ve...I’ve seen a spirit one time. It was something that made me calm down...”

I purposely had to simmer KL and request that he be quiet so we could hear KH’s experience while the participants steadily flicked through magazines, quietly tearing out pages and placing them in their folders, with eyes shuffling between the speaker and the work.

EP: **excitedly** “Oh really?!”

KH: “At first, I was scared because I didn’t know what I was looking at, but then I saw it moving and I can’t remember what it said to me –he said something that made me calm down...”

EP: “Really? Did the spirit feel familiar to you? Was it somebody that you knew?”

KH: **softly shakes his head** “...no, not really. Just, like, a generally relaxing spirit.”

Another surprise, this conversation was an opportunity for LD to command the attention of the participants as well as he shared his supernatural experience, making room for my continued interest to be demonstrated in their student led chat. I relished this moment and

thought about ways and topics that could further be used in my and other classroom settings that provided equity in voice and interest and experience.

LD: "...and I was at home, and you know how at night time it be dark? So, there was only like one light on in the house. And you know, I'll be the first one awake – I don't even know why I'm always the first person to wake up before everybody else in the house. Every time I wake up they just be asleep, LOL. Anyway, it was in the middle of the night and I wake up for some reason, like I don't know, and I saw something. It was a shadow on my mama door – so I thought it was in her room. In the shadows on the door, and I felt like I knew him so-when I went it wasn't there so...that was like last year. I wasn't scared though!"

KL then started talking about the movement sensations that he felt when he falls asleep, similar to being on a roller coaster, all the participants vibrantly agree. MS interjected by explaining that that sensation is a result of rapid eye movement. Again, I questioned how he knows these things, he shared that he found out from YouTube. JV exclaimed "Yoooo, he's the scientist right here!" in a complementary tone directed to MS. Though that exchange would be one of the few exchanges that occurred directly between JV and MS, the participants individual invitations and directives towards me in conversation began to provide evidence of our deepening relationship through the cycle of expectancy of conversation (Bahktin, 1986). Being prepared to respond with interest to a variety of topics proved to be useful in connecting through conversation. The topic of lactose intolerance was even introduced during a C.T.T. session, and being prepared to inquire about the participants experiences with their digestive issues proved to create a surprising lively and active exchange between myself and the quieter participants, as JV and LD eagerly shared their inability to enjoy cheese and ice cream (*Class*

Session #3: Sports “Digest”) JV chatted with me about being lactose intolerant, spurned from a C.T.T. chat about foods. This is one of the few times the JV addressed me directly in conversation, and I was trying to find ways to lengthen our engagement by adding to the conversation. I was enjoying the cycle of expectancy that was developing in this conversation, which reflected a growth of relationship or rapport that was benefiting from my demonstrated interest in conversations that were led by participants.

Conversation-Based Strategies That Promote Student-Teacher Engagement/Art Talk in the Art Room (Research Question #3)

Data analysis included procuring the themes of student interest during conversations and discovering ways to integrate those themes into our conversations as an instructional tool to foster positive rapport building, I found the following strategies to be effective for promoting student teacher engagement in the art room through student teacher conversation.

Active listening

1. Actively listening to the contents of student conversations during their work time in order to procure their topics of interest. Active listening assists in preparation for participation in those conversations, through inquiry or teacher integration of topics of interest into instruction and C.T.T.
- 2 Actively listening to the contents of student conversations during their work time in order to procure their topics of interest in order to prepare for participation in those conversations by researching topics of conversation that may be unfamiliar to the teacher.

I found these strategies to be especially helpful for doing personal research about unfamiliar topics that my participants thematically conversed about. The active listening was also helpful when initiating participation into pre-existing conversations. To not interrupt their

conversations during C.T.T. especially, but to promote a fluid and welcomed participation, knowing what students were already talking about before initiating participation helped with those transitions.

Knowing that most of the gents had expressed some football fandom, through the course of the study, I'd been bulking up on my football knowledge, based on C.T.T. conversations that I observed, participated in, or heard via review of audio recording. During our third C.T.T. session, I was confidently and successfully able to initiate and actively participate in sports based conversations, which solicited a cycle of response from three of the participants, showing interest and excitement about talking about the topic. I also took special note when referencing names of NFL teams, important championships, past games of importance, familiarizing myself with a few names of popular quarterbacks, and things of that nature so that I would be ready to converse about these items *with* my participants. I felt ready to effectively participate in this sport chat, through personal research spurred by my active listening. By our fourth class session, "The 'Rap' Up, I was even asked about hometown sports teams, and was dive in to a sports chat!

JV: "I know you *geekin*' in your hometown...Philadelphia?"

EP: "Yeah...Philly!"

JV: "You don't like they teams?"

KL: "They fire now though! You trippin!"

EP: "Here's the deal...they won the Super Bowl last year...OK..."

JV: "But they lost their quarterback last season though...his contract was over and he only had a one year deal with the Eagles...he was already playing for the Rams...but the Rams let him go too, so he had a one year contract with Philly..."

EP: “Yeah...it hurts my heart, but here’s the deal...I never been a big fan of the Eagles, until they won the Super Bowl because I’m a bandwagon fan! Because, honestly, I think Philly teams can be kind of trashy, like for real...except for the hockey team. That’s the one team from Philadelphia that I follow and that I keep up with during the season. But the Eagles just...I’ve never really been a fan of the Eagles until a couple of years ago!”

JV: “They be making it to the playoffs though-they lost one playoff against the Saints right?”

Actually I wasn’t sure at this point about this specific references of which they were talking-I *just* started keeping up with these things during the time my data collection, so a lot of references that happened in a distant past hadn’t become part of my new football repertoire. This meant that I had some more research to do in order to further connect with my participants through *talking sports*. I had to exit the conversation to circulate the class and attend to some student needs, but the recordings revealed that conversations continued between JV and KL that included some technical football jargon that I was barely able to interpret. Again, I had some more research to do in this area.

The conversation transitioned out of football and into basketball players that have been traded during the previous season, and team changes for the next season, with overlapping exchanges between JV, LD, and KL about their speculations over who would be victorious during championships, and who would suffer without certain key players that had been traded to other teams. They had some soft debates between them about why they should like certain big-name players and why they shouldn’t like some players. The active listening that I practiced immediately prior to this conversation helped me to make a smooth transition into it, through my own new knowledge of sports events!

Starting the conversation

1. Initiating conversations through sharing and inquiry during C.T.T. based on inquiry and interest about artist processes
2. Initiating conversations through sharing and inquiry during C.T.T. based on procured topics of student interest or including those topics into instruction

As early as our first C.T.T. session, I noted that, while not an emergent theme, that participants mentioned food several times as they searched for images related to their daily routines. By our third C.T.T. session--*Class Session #3: Sports "Digest"*--I integrated the topic into our C.T.T. by initiating a chat through inquiry. I noted and overheard KL whispering about finding food pictures, and he raised his hand to tell me that he was having problems finding pictures of ice cream.

I asked him if eating ice cream with something that he ate every day. He responded by saying "No, not every day, but often enough...". I told him that if it was important to him then to feel free to include it in his portrait. Even though we had set parameters for the project, I also knew that flexibility was imperative- for our assignments and for data collection, especially since it was being conducted during a traditionally scheduled class time. JV quietly but quickly added that he liked ice cream too, but couldn't really enjoy it, and we talked about us both being lactose intolerant. Again, this is one of the few times the JV addressed me directly in conversation, and I was trying to find ways to lengthen our engagement by adding to the conversation with him. He continued that he could eat it, but not without suffering with nausea. I was enjoying the cycle of expectancy that was developing in this conversation, which reflected a growth of relationship or rapport (Bahktin, 1986)

JV: “I love ice cream...it just don’t go down right. Like...I can eat fruit...any kind of things...but, like milk...or cheese...there’s like... no macaroni and cheese. I ain’t eat macaroni and cheese in like, a long long time...”

EP: “Oooh, so you’re lactose intolerant?”

JV: “Yeah...any kind of stuff like that...it make me throw up.”

EP: “Maaaaan, we can’t do that lactose!”

JV: “Yeah, like, I be wantin’ to try stuff, but I be gettin’ sick...”

EP: “Yeah, it’s so crazy that it’s so prevalent in the African-American community...a lot of us can’t do dairy and stuff like that...”

JV: “Yeah, especially cheese...real bad. I can eat it, but when I finish eating it, it’s gonna come up, so I can’t be eatin’ it...”

EP: “Ugh, I’m so sorry. I remember when I was a kid, I didn’t realize I was lactose intolerant until I knew the language...but when I was a kid and I went to school and I had school breakfast, and I would have, like, milk and cereal...I would always feel sick, and I always had to go to the bathroom during the day—and I ain’t wanna tell nobody!”

This conversation led way for KH to share some rather personal experiences regarding evidence of digestive issues and loose stools, LOL!

KH: “Oh, oh...last year...one time a kid dookied on the ground!”

EP: “HUH??!”

It seemed as though most of the boys were disrupted by my response and lifted their heads and perked their ears to hear what we were discussing.

KH: “Like right outside of the bathroom! It was like a smear outside of the bathroom!”

The other participants chuckled as they seemed to agree and recall the situation themselves. A few of the other conversations happening at the other tables seemed to transition into their own recollections of the...occasion!

MS: “I remember thinking it looked like a snake!”

KH: “OH NOOOO! That was a dooooookie!”

The gentlemen chuckled their way back into a quiet work mode. For several minutes there was a lull in conversation. Under normal circumstances in my classroom setting, I treasure these moments—it’s usually an indicator that my students are focused, they’re working well and independently, and that they were highly engaged in the project...an art teacher’s dream! Even though controlled chatter and conversation is not discouraged in my classroom, quiet of this nature is usually a very good sign. So, I took this time to cycle around the room to address any potential needs. I eventually made my way back to the table of my participants. Observing their intense focus on their creativity, I didn’t want to be disruptive-but I did successfully attempt to initiate conversation to assess an interest based response.

Creating talk time

1. Consciously create spaces during scheduled class time (while checking for understanding, circulating the room, during remediation, facilitating times for class and small group discussions during post instruction/ independent work time) to initiate, facilitate, integrate into, or engage in student-teacher conversations, based on procured topics of interest, as well as artistic processes discussed during C.T.T..
2. Creating time outside of scheduled class time (lunch bunches, visits during teacher lunch times, hallway interactions, etc.) to initiate, facilitate, integrate into, or engage in student-

teacher conversations, based on procured topics of interest, as well as artistic processes discussed during C.T.T..

C.T.T. provided me with solid and effective opportunities to include instructional, art-based conversation, in a seemingly comfortable manner for my participants, encouraging an increasing and validating cycle of expectancy within those conversations from my participants, supporting evidence of our growing rapport (Bahktin, 1986). Supported by Perez Miles (2012), evidence of social commitment by teachers is demonstrated when student views are actively heard and validated through the cycle of response in student- teacher dialogue. With that, C.T.T. held it's own limits when used to procure, reflect on, and integrate student views into conversations, as an active classroom was still in session and student needs still required attention. While talking during production is common for my classroom, C.T.T. reflects the intentional practice of the aforementioned strategies in order to learn about our students' interests through conversation. Again, C.T.T. poses some time and focal limits, as class is still in session and instructional needs of the entire class are prioritized. Contrastingly, I found our created space to talk, our lunch bunch sessions, opportune for devoting time to provide focused attention, engagement, mutual, more equitable engagement, and student based thematic integration into our student teacher conversations.

The emergent themes were most thoroughly explored by both myself and the participants during our lunch bunch times. Considering the academic energy and expectations of the art room during class times, my participants seemed most comfortable talking freely about their social interactions with teachers and schoolmates while we were alone, with only each other and myself. In line with social learning theories that support the idea that teachers' demonstrated social behaviors could influence their feeling of ease and acceptance experienced by students

(Howarth, 2006), I found it to be beneficial to monitor my responses during disclosure heavy chats, as I wanted my participants to feel comfortable in their own disclosure. I found that I needed to be prepared to share, especially when students would invite me into their pre-existing chats or pose inquiries to me about the topic at hand.

Practicing appropriate disclosure

1. Prepare to share personal experiences and perspectives
2. Find connections between student disclosure and your own potential disclosures

Associated with encouraging open discussion and improving communication (Pain and Harwood, 2009) practicing mutual disclosure with my participants was a successful strategy at garnering immediate interest and steady engagement during both our C.T.T. and lunch bunches. Throughout the use of literary discussions as a catalyst for examining the benefit of mutual teacher student disclosure, Bradley and Rouse (1989) supported the practice so that teachers can learn more about the personal interests, perspectives, experiences, and concerns of their students, promoting a warm sense of natural sharing.

One previously mentioned conversation that held high engagement from all participants, about paranormal experiences, was spurred by MS and another conversation about YouTube related inquiries. The conversation morphed into a highly engagement conversations about paranormal experiences. Each of the participants, especially our quieter voices KH and LD, were especially excited to share their personal experiences, and were just as eagerly attentive with each other as they were to me, as I shared my personal experiences. While I knew that I may have been taking a risk with the nature of this conversation, choosing to appropriately disclose my experiences seemed to create an especially humanizing feeling to our conversation. While the class was in motion, the participants table was markedly quiet as each person told their own tale.

Another conversation of note that supported the cycle of conversation that would bud over the course of our growing rapport was a topic that I was *challenged* to disclose my personal feeling about. In the, midst of another conversation about social interactions, the participants began to talk about their feelings about teachers that they like or disliked At KH's request, we prepared hot chocolate to share as we chatted during our lunch. Amid preparing our warm drinks, KL initiated a game of *truth or dare* that revealed their sincere desire to know my thoughts and feelings on their administration and teachers...*my colleagues*.

During *Lunch Bunch #3: Truth, Dare and Hot Chocolate*, I gave KH a shout out and thanked him for the idea and the rest of the gentleman followed with the same, KL with especially high accolades for the idea exclaiming "yeah, good idea man! You DID THAT, KH!", meaning that he was the type of friend to look out for others, the type of friend with ideas, and all-around affirmation to receive from one of his peers. For several minutes during the preparation and starting of the hot chocolate, the boys had overlapped in conversations about candies and foods they had eaten in the past few days, some stomach problems that JV had as a result of mixing and candy with Pepsi, and KL sharing his most recent experience with diarrhea because he had a whole lot of ice cream, burgers and nachos all one day. KL started rapping and JV and LD joined in with him, with a cycle of interchangeable tunes going across the table as a gentleman drank and chatted about a variety of random things. At this point the conversation seemed to be directed towards each other, so I took an opportunity to clean the mess that was made from children's lovingly but messily preparing hot chocolate.

Towards the end of our lunch bunch, KL had somehow morphed the activity of spinning a pencil in the middle of the table to a game of truth or dare. He directed it at me and said "OK Ms. P... truth or dare?"

Another invitation to engage with them and participate in the conversation that I did not want to miss out on. Even though I was a little concerned about with the question would be!

EP: “A truth?”

KL: “Is it true that you like everybody in the school?”

EP: “...No. I like every child... I don’t like every adult.”

I took the opportunity to be transparent. I was encouraged that the boys so willingly felt comfortable to share so much of their personal thoughts with me. I was using this disclosure to help create a connection and further our comfort levels with communicating intimately with each other (Derlega et. al, 2001).

KL: “Another truth.”

EP: “OK...”

KL: “Is it true that you like Ms. Nelson better than you like Ms. Jackson?”

He wanted to know my opinions on the new principal of the year versus our former principal that *many* teachers had very harsh feelings much about.

EP: *quietly* “...yeah that’s true. I like Ms. Nelson a lot better than Ms. Jackson.”

LD: “I like Ms. Nelson better too.”

KL: “What Ms. Jackson ever do to you?”

EP: “She never did anything to me... I liked Ms. Jackson as a person, I like both of them...but I like Ms. Nelson better as a principal. And just because I like somebody better than somebody else doesn’t mean I don’t like the other person. I liked Ms.

Jackson...I loved Ms. Jackson, but Ms. Jackson...I didn’t agree with how she treated some people, especially when it came like to certain teachers, that I thought was unfair.

Now I don’t hold that against her personally...if she ever needs anything, I got her back

but I don't agree with some of her professional practices. I agree with Ms. Nelson's practice is more...because she makes to me always feel like you have to do what's best for the kids, and she makes it evident! Sometimes we don't always like her choices but the main reason she does stuff is because she's trying to put our students first, put your best interests first."

KL: "...all right"

EP: "Plus, me and Ms. Nelson are I both Leos so, we're the same sign, so we understand each other better...aye!"

KL continued to turn the tables on me as the researcher by asking me another truth.

KL: "Give me three teachers that you don't like... really don't like."

EP: "If I tell you, and I hear this information on the street I'm coming for you!"

The table got quiet and KH responded "I put this on my mom I won't put you out there like that." I appreciated his security and confidentiality-it felt nice and genuine.

EP: "Since I've been very confidential with me, I'm going to tell you this..."

LD: "...yeah, like we share stuff with each other, and like, we trust each other."

THAT was *everything* to hear.

KL: "...yeah when you say something, we just kept it quiet."

I remember wondering if I could be compromising myself professionally by providing my answers. But I felt comfortable, I had a growing trust with my participants, so I went all in.

EP: "Y'all promise?"

KL: "...yes we really promise!"

LD: "...yes for real..."

JV: "I ain't no snitch, on the real..."

EP: “One I don’t like...Ms. Smalls because she’s a sucky teacher...Ms. Smalls does not like children, I don’t like the way she talks to children or babies, and that’s not cool.

So, I let it out. And on top of it I don’t like the way she talks to people! I was raised...my mama always said that when you talk to people, talk respectfully to people! Whether it is an adult, child, an older person--everybody deserves respect!”

I was *going in*.

EP: “That’s why I, even with some of my students... I don’t like the way some teachers talk to y’all! When y’all do something that may be against the rules or whatever... I don’t like the way some teachers roll up on you like that! You know why? Because it’s rude, and you get defensive...sometimes you feel like when a student looks away, you’re being disrespectful but a lot of times you’re just trying to maintain your self control!”

LD: “Right?”

EP: “You have to respect young people space...you have to respect them! That’s why I get along with my students... I know I can get mad sometimes...once in a while I may have to go off, but that’s my last resort. I never *come out the box* being in somebody face, whether you’re younger or older... and Ms. Smalls does that, and I don’t like it.”

What a catharsis my participants created it for me. How did they learn to leave room for *me* like that? Was it something that had already existed? Was it something that they were learning from our time together? Was a combination of things? I only wish I had more time to explore this, but I loved every moment and felt secure. LD was heavily engaged and wanted to know more.

LD: “Just go ahead and name all the teachers you don’t like...”

EP: *taps fingers on desk leans in quietly with reluctance*

KH: “Just go ahead Ms. P...”

EP: “OK, for real, for real, I don’t want to say that I don’t like her...but sometimes Dr. Markson gets on my nerves.”

LD: “THANK YOU!”

EP: “Sometimes she just does the most...like she just got here, you don’t know us like that.”

I recall biting my tongue when Dr. Markson’s behavior, compared to her time at the other school, had come up. This time I was ready to talk. And I had to remember that I was also the teacher. And I had to advocate for a level of self-control that was within our school norms which included also being mindful of our interactions with teachers and adults. While we only had a minute left with our time together, I rounded off the conversation by reminding them that it’s never OK to talk to another adult or teacher in a disrespectful manner. KL suddenly agreed, but currently redirected me to the initial question about the teachers that I didn’t like.

KL: “OK, come on homegirl...”

EP: “I don’t know! I’m pretty much cool with everybody else!”

LOL! For him to use such an informal language so comfortable comfortably with me was very heartwarming. Absent of a disrespectful tone, it seemed very appropriate for the color of our conversation. Further, the active participation, expectancy and engagements solidified the value that my participants held for my disclosure.

CHAPTER 5

THE COLLAGE SELF-PORTRAITS

Participant artwork was photographed incrementally over the four-week course of the project. As completion rates varied per participant, a photograph of the work in progress was only updated as a participant made additions to their collage self-portraits. The data was collected during our C.T.T. time when students were involved in the creation of these self-portraits. I also worked along with the class and the participants on my own collage self-portrait as an exemplar and as a means of collectively working with my participants on the creation of both our collages and methodological portraits.

The creation of the participants' collage self-portraits was guided by the preliminary written work that created space for them to brainstorm about their daily routines, activities, interests, and identities. The participants referred to this written work throughout the creation of their collage self-portraits to ensure that they were selecting imagery and creating imagery reflective of their written answers. In addition, they added any other images that they felt were appropriate to demonstrate what a typical day in their life was like. After the conclusion or completion of the self-portraits, participants crafted an artist statement to summarize their choices for their collage and to provide any additional information that they would like viewers to know. These statements also provided a source for member checking, with the expressed intentions of their artistic choices may have related to the themes of our student teacher conversations during C.T.T. and lunch bunch sessions.

Through the course of my research, as the participant observer, I also used the multiple forms of data procured from this study to create my own methodological portrait (Lawrence-

Lightfoot, 1997) of each of my participants, based on what I had learned about them through our student teacher conversations interviews, and artwork.

KL



Figure 1: KL, week 2



Figure 2: KL, week 3

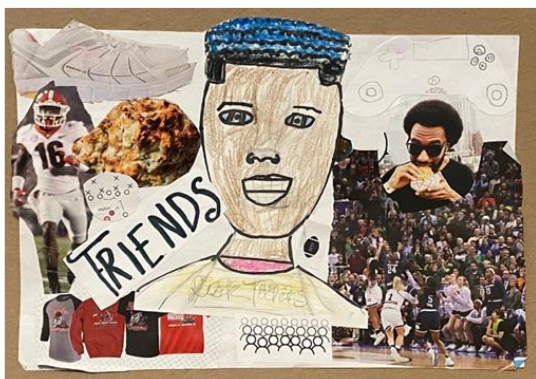


Figure 3: KL, week 4

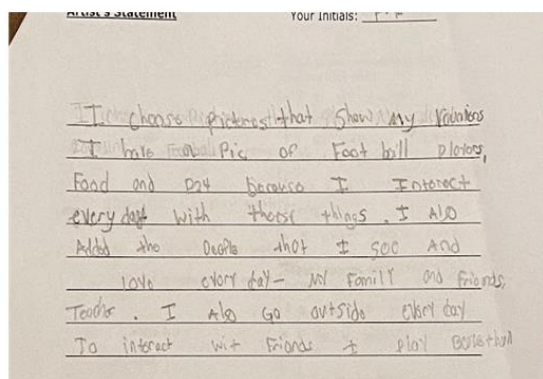


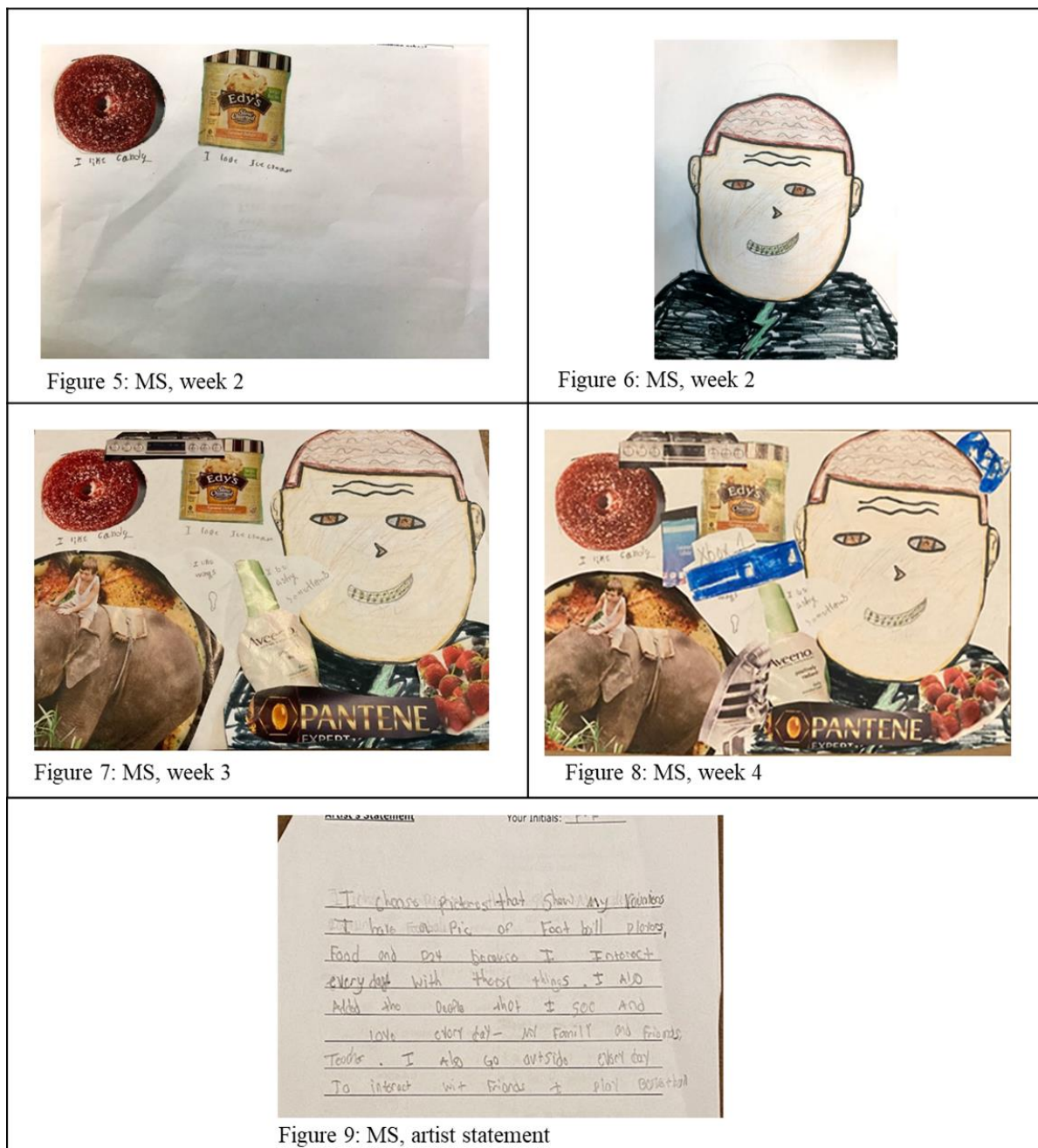
Figure 4: KL, artist statement

The way to connect with KL was talking about people and events. His portrait includes a very socially aware person, with the deep concern and connection to his friends and family, with an exciting interest in current events-especially the ones in his immediate space. He is vivacious-ready to sing, act, move, decide, and lead. He was into people, places, and the things that people were doing in these places. He was opinionated and a social director and created opportunities to lead conversations and to even spark reactions. He believed in respectful behavior from both

students and adults and expected it. He was a good friend to his friends, but always had a jone ready.

His final collage featured a hand drawn self-portrait, prominently placed in the middle of the piece, surrounded by images of people, sports and gaming images, and eating, which aligned with our conversations. Further, his artist statement reiterated his prioritization of/ for the people that he would see and loved every day; this informed my own portrait of him. His investment in this project was evident from the start, as he demonstrated excitement to brainstorm, create his collage portrait, and even write his artists statement. While KL had always been a focused (but very social!) student, it was enriching to see his engagement flourish with this project, our C.T.T. and our lunch bunch times!

MS



My portrait of MS is of a person that enjoys exploring the mind, feelings, perceptions and beliefs, with an existential awareness that looks for small spaces to share his ideas and prefers one-on-one conversations. Not often sharing things of a personal nature (besides having a

girlfriend) he seemed enjoy chats about knowledge and experiences. He cares about how things work, from people to planets. He possesses tenderness and prefers to talk through his thoughts and share facts and theories. These topics excited him the most, as conversations of a more cerebral nature saw his highest participation and engagement. Science, the supernatural, esoteric bits of knowledge, belief systems, and learning about these things were a few of his favorite ways to be entertained.

His finished collage and artists statement didn't seem to reflect his major themes of interest through our personal and group conversations, through C.T.T nor lunch bunch. He included images of foods, beauty products, cellular and gaming devices, and a hand drawn self-portrait. There were only images related to animals, and I wondered if he found difficulty finding images related to his thought provoking interests. I regret not paying more attention to this, as I could have provided some more guidance for images.

His brainstorming sheet and artist statement also conflicted with the interests that he shared through our chats. His writing seemed so simplistic compared to his conversation. He also mentioned spending time with his mother and brother as part of his routine-which I knew to be inaccurate based on conversations with his grandmother, but it was never addressed in our C.T.T. or lunch bunches. Though his voice was not dominant during our talk times, he certainly talked with me and us significantly more than he wrote for his sheet and statement. Based on the intimate nature of his general communication style, I wondered if writing or speaking truths about his family situation was too vulnerable of a space for our chats, which I honored and respected.

JV

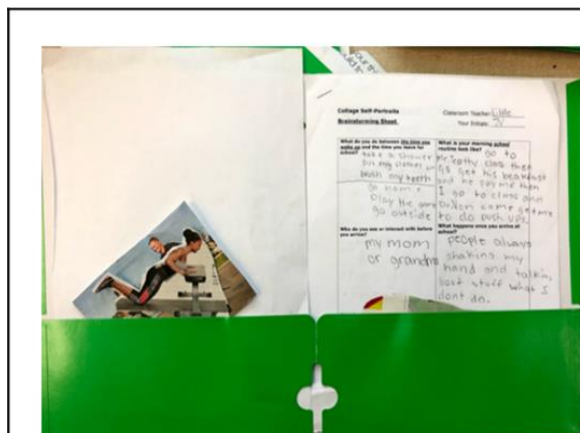


Figure 10: JV, week 2



Figure 11: JV, week 3



Figure 12: JV, week 4

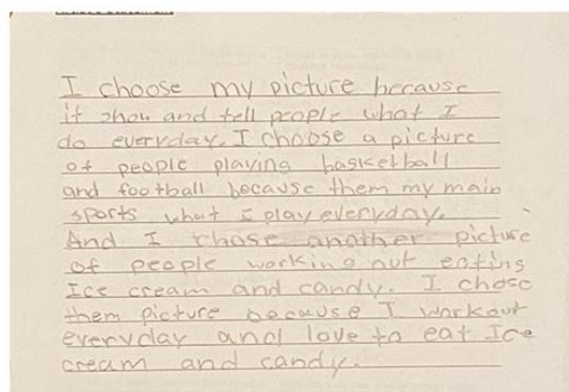


Figure 13: JV, artist statement

My portrait of JV is of a person that has maturity beyond his peers with a cool collectiveness and self-confidence. He feels most secure in his sports prowess and knowledge, and most hopeful and involved with his musical endeavors. Prior to my research, his quietest times during my class were often when we talked about art-through a review or talking about a new project or new information. Before our C.T.T. and lunch bunch sessions I didn't really know much about JV, other than he was an excellent athlete, a year older the most of his classmates, who was found to be highly attractive to the fifth-grade girls. This was all hearsay. He was trouble free, came to class, did his work, and left quietly on a regular basis. While my portrait of

him certainly maintains his quiet nature, it leads me to believe that it's a reflection of his personality, and not the social insecurity that often impacts student engagement. His finished collage included images of sports and food, and one image represented earning money from playing professional sports. All of these images definitely aligned with our conversation about his life and interests, and his artist statement supported his images choices as well.

The way to connect with JV was through sports-related conversation. Making room for him to chat about his musical endeavors and acknowledging his extensive sports knowledge was fruitful for our rapport and his artwork. He came alive when we talked about statistics, players, speculations about certain players things of that nature. Sports was definitely his thing, and I knew that if I wanted to continue to feed a relationship between JV and I through conversation, I would most likely have to integrate sports into our regular creative and lunch talk time.

With JV, I had noticed an increased level of concentration with his work and a steadier, unhurried pace near the project completion, unlike his work patterns before research began. Further, being one to not talk directly to me on a regular basis before research, JV would now briefly would invite me to converse or begin a conversation with me with more frequency than ever. I would like to attribute the positive effects of our relationship building throughout data collection for these positive changes and both his communication with me and his work patterns.

LD



Figure 14: LD, week 2



Figure 15: LD, week 3

I choose pictures that show my routine
I like to have waves and on the
summer I shoot water guns because it
be hot. I like to play
Game.

Figure 16: LD, artist statement

My portrait of LD emerged from his collage portrait. LD let his discussion about his art be the major conduit for learning about his routines and interests. While LD's conversational engagement was more limited than most of the participants, I found out most about him in a burst when he came back to my room to explain some of the decisions that he made for his collage images. My portrait of LD is that of a loner by choice, who allows his focus on the things that he values to dominate his actions and interactions. He values skill building, activity, intimate associations, and care for his personal spaces. He will remove himself from spaces that break his concentration and is very selective with whom he spends his time.

LD allowed me to understand his communication style and some of his social choices especially during our class time. Generally quiet, what some teachers may have considered as despondence, LD informed me-primarily through conversation-that he chooses to be a loner to avoid potential aggravation from other people and peers. This apparently has shown up through not always cooperating with his homeroom teacher. He chooses to actively avoid potentially stressful situations. His quiet nature was certainly defended through his own words, through my observations of his work style during our collage creation, and during his conversational styles and integration of his personal interest during our C.T.T. and during our lunch bunch sessions.

After our third class session, LD returned to the art room to take some personal time to share with me his path and his decisions for his artwork, which is certainly not typical student behavior. I wanted to attribute this to our budding relationship based on our conversations during C.T.T. and lunch bunch times. I also attribute the intimate nature of the collage project, as it created an opportunity for LD to explore and express elements of his personal interests, thoughts and concerns. He alluded to thinking about the future on a regular basis, and he explained that his hand drawn self-portrait was of himself, doing just that. While his artist statement was brief, it aligned with some of the images on his collage. However, his collage showed more substantial alignment with the topics of our conversations, which I considered to be evidence of a successful self-portrait!

KH

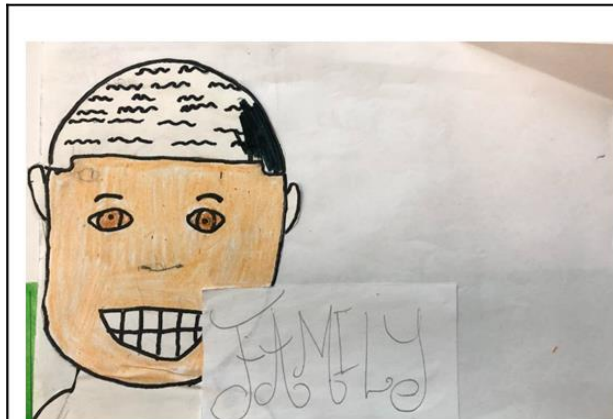


Figure 17: KH, week 2

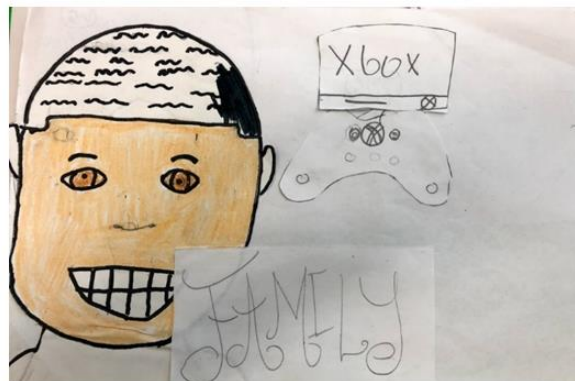


Figure 18: KH, week 3

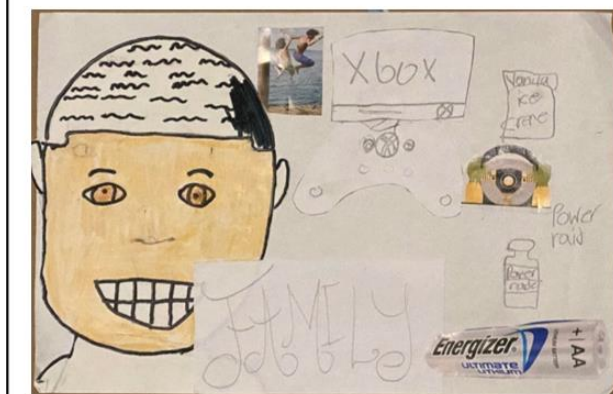


Figure 19: KH, week 4

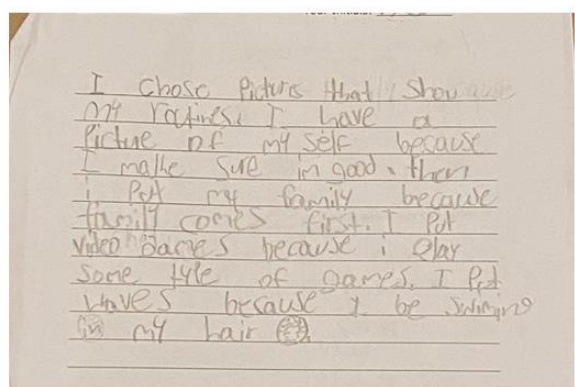


Figure 20: KH, artist statement

KH's portrait is that of a person that operates through reason. Through the course of our C.T.T. and our lunch bunch sessions, KH seemed to only engage in conversations of his interest, and never to merely participate for the sake of general socialization. He participated most when we all talked about experiences with others- students, teachers, and even spirit beings. He shared his opinions when they were strong and shared his plans with confidence. He showed evidence of enjoying comradery, and he defended others with an authoritative sense of righteousness.

These elements of his portrait explain why he was so well respected among his peers and teachers.

His artist statement aligned with his image choices very concisely, with the most prominent images being a hand drawn image of himself. According to his statement, his self care is his priority, followed by the care for/of his family. His other hobbies seemed to be very secondary, both in conversation and by the small images that he chose or created for his collage to represent those activities. Despite the length of time that I had known KH, I felt as though I discovered the least about him and his interests through this method of research. Though his pristine reputation was well known by both his peers and teachers, I wonder who knows KH the most at our school.

EP



Figure 21: EP, week 4

A photograph of a handwritten artist statement on lined paper. The text reads: "I chose pictures that show my routines I have a pic of dogs, foods, and art because I interact every day with these things I also added the people that I see and love everyday—my family, and my students."

Figure 22: EP, artist statement

The methodological portrait that my participants helped me to share with them—as their teacher, and as a researcher—reflect the prevalence and priority of my relationships and connections. Creating with them through this study allowed me to share the value that I have of communication, both artistically and verbally. I both enjoy and value conversation, and I use it as a tool to it not only gain familiarity with those in my environment, but to develop relationships

with them. I believe in the power of conversation to create intimate bonds through storytelling, shared experiences, and verbal expression of feelings and perspectives. The ways in which we talk *with* each other can fill us or deplete us, so the intention to fill each other positively is paramount when choosing how we converse with one another. If it wasn't apparent at the start of our time together, we all showed evidence of the positive effects of mutual interest, inquiry, and disclosure. We wanted to share with each other and responded in the long term with a desire to keep the conversations alive.

While my collage self-portrait indicates some of my routines, it also heavily reflects an emphasis on my relationships. The largest images and text refer to the people that I commune with regularly-as a teacher, friend, wife, daughter, sister, and mother to fur babies, my dogs. Central to my collage are the words *teach* and *talk*. Being an educator is significant to my identity and talking is a major way that I connect with my students and build relationships with the people in my environments. I demonstrated this through the course of my research, and through the practices and behaviors that I exhibited while working with my participants. This research allowed me to learn more about them as individuals, and in turn, they were able to do the same with me through our C.T.T., lunch bunches, and our work together through our collage portraits.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to use arts-based inquiry through portraiture methodology, observation, and group discussion to explore the contents of student conversations while engaged in creating a collage self-portrait. My research questions were:

- (1) What topics emerge during student conversations while engaged in collage portraiture?
- (2) What topics/ questions prompt positive student-teacher interactions that build rapport as an instructional tool?
- (3) What conversation-based strategies might promote student-teacher engagement/Art Talk in the art room?

The contents of the conversations reflected themes of interests and identity for the participants, and I was then able to use these themes to develop strategies for integrating these themes into my instruction in order to better connect and increase positive rapport through student teacher conversations. Using Bakhtin's (1986) conversation theory to support my research questions and findings, as well as portraiture methodology to guide my data collection and analysis, I was able to extract emergent themes of our conversation, uncover prompts, questions and actions that promoted this mode of positive student teacher interaction, and develop strategies to enact the methods of rapport building through student teacher based conversation in the art room.

Analysis

The use of portraiture methodology to guide my data collection and analysis certainly wielded the results that I was looking for in order to learn more about the students through their artwork (their collage self-portraits) and through our conversations, to gain a better knowledge of

who they were as individuals, not just students. It also supported a reciprocal rapport building, as they learned more about *me* through the process. The goal was to find ways to connect through conversation during creative talk time in the art room, and the processes of this methodology allowed me to conduct research in ways that I could integrate into my instructional routines while maintaining the integrity and validity of data collection. I was able to learn more about my participants-and them about me-than I would have ever created an opportunity to do in my regular classroom setting. It also allowed me some liberation, excitement, and it humbled me that they too would invite me (I didn't feel unwelcomed, nor did I feel that I inserted myself forcibly) so readily and steadily into conversations. Their eventual inquiry demonstrated a mutual interest in *my* perspectives, interests, and experiences. We were creating our portraits together, and my participants left with a portrait of me as I had of them.

Included in this developing framework of the importance of engaging students in conversation (while creating) is the interest and ability to converse about topics that were non-academic manner. We had opportunities to speak about personal experiences, especially related to other classmates, community experiences, and our common experiences. The most inclusive conversations that we had (almost all the participants engaged) were about paranormal experiences and sports...not art or art related content. It seemed most effective to listen carefully, to try to introduce topics that garnered an excited response and use those same topics or find ways to use stems of those topics (during instructional time and C.T.T.) to build rapport.

I experienced some conflicts between maintaining a quiet, focused class and encouraging my student participants to engage in conversation in a manner that that would allow me to procure their interests while they created, with the content of conversation that would hopefully encourage creativity and reflection on the choices that they were making for their artwork. I

know now that conducting this type of research in a classroom setting certainly requires some flexibility within my classroom norms and some decision making as a teacher versus a researcher. While I wanted to ensure the productivity of my students and participants, when things got quiet in the classroom during the third session, I slipped into a slight panic because the C.T.T. was also at a lull. However, this did not prevent solid data collection, nor did it compromise the goals of my research. As well, their engagement levels did not seem to be compromised.

As our lunch bunches continued, I would find that participants were ready to start chatting immediately. I think that I was finding out more about their personal lives, interests, and activities through our conversation. The artwork was a catalyst for the conversations and is evident through the images and text in their collages that reiterated many of the routines, interests, and parts of their identities that they talked about. The collage self-portraits seemed to summarize some of the overarching themes to their conversations- friends, family, hobbies and activities. I got an inside look on the details, the likes and dislikes, the concerns, the passions, the confusion, the pettiness, the humanity of the boys- especially during our lunch bunch sessions.

Also, after gaining insights from the participants from their homeroom teachers, it was interesting to see the evidence of pre-existing relationships through conversations that happened during creative time and through lunch bunch- primarily between KL and JV. It was also curious to see the evolution of relationships, possibly born out of working in close contact and encouraging conversation between MS and KL – knowing that they hadn't really been friends or associates in their homeroom setting.

My findings guided my contextual reminders of the impact and need for socially equitable responses to conversational and activity. A specific exchange about disciplinary

problems occurred within a personal conversation between JV and I during a moment of high activity during our third lunch bunch-*Lunch Bunch #3: Truth, Dare and Hot Chocolate*. KL decided to jump up and expel some energy by dancing around, followed by KH and then lastly by LD. For a moment just JV and I were left at the table and so I took this opportunity to carry on with a personal conversation with him about rehearsal for an upcoming school program, while we ate lunch together.

EP: “So, how’s rehearsal going?”

JV: “Bad! Everybody keep getting in trouble and being put out! It’s just our class messing up! It’s just our class for some reason – I don’t even know why!”

I thought the statement was another testament of JV’s maturity. He seemed genuinely frustrated and confused by the behavior of his classmates and their inability to successfully complete their rehearsals. LD shared some input as well.

LD: “They be doin’ right, so they just be talking and stuff...”

JV: “It *is* always our class... I don’t know why!”

I looked up to see KL dancing on a chair, and KH running around the chair with him. I asked him to get off of the chair for safety purposes and surprisingly JV co-signed it with “yeah man and get off the chair”. I gave him a note of appreciation and said “...thanks man”. As I looked around and then set my eyes back on JV as we continued the conversation.

EP: “Do you think it’s because y’all have a lot of energy?”

JV: *shrugs* “...but they always want to talk about our class that always wanna say we’re bad...”

EP: “You’re *not bad*...yeah just, your bodies aren’t (?) in control yet. In order to get through rehearsals and stuff we just need everybody to do what they need to do.”

JV exclaimed as he looked around... “See! Ya’ll playing too much, bro!”

EP: “See? That’s what I’m talking about...their bodies are just out-of-control right now... now is not the time to be doing it.”

JV continued to look at the boys in contempt as they played with the door of the closet and ran around the open space towards the front of my classroom and told them to stop playing with the door and calm down. Instead of interceding I took this time as an opportunity to observe their behaviors with each other, and honestly to let them have some time to let out some steam. Was it what I needed them to do right now? No, but it seems as though it was something that THEY needed. They seemed to have had a rough morning with the teachers presiding over the rehearsal, and I wanted this lunch bunch space to feel good and feel free. Even if that meant deviating from the protocols and some of the structure of my usual classroom expectations. Only for this moment. I was hoping that the verbal affirmation on reframing their behavior from being labeled as *bad* to *active* instead (Love, 2013), as the boys engaged a momentary release of energy could be a impactful, albeit fleeting encouragement to not let his internal narrative of high activity as something “bad”.

When continuing to think about the impact of our increased rapport on positive discipline, I reflected about the change in behavior that I had seen during class time, especially with KL. KL was never a disrespectful or problematic student-however he *could be* very disruptive, and I believe unintentionally, simply because he liked to talk, has a very loud voice and he likes to dominate conversation. I would like to attribute our time together during the lunch bunch sessions and maybe specifically are our one-on-one time during our collage making sessions to his consciousness of self-control with his voice, and allowing other student voices at his table to be heard more frequently. I’m not quite sure if he had always been so invitational of

conversation-I wish that was something I had observed before the research began. But what I did notice was that KL, although was very dominant with his voice, was very intentional and very frequently invited other students to engage in conversation with him while he worked. This may have been increased due to the dynamics of conversation and conversational patterns that we experienced and practiced during our work sessions and lunch bunch sessions—primarily when I would have to interrupt KL to allow other people the opportunity to speak. This mindfulness also could have been increased due to our increased rapport, leading to an increased level of respect for my classroom norms and expectations when it comes to socializing during both instructional and post instructional time.

In relation to social relevancy through conversation-based rapport building, these sessions made me wonder about the impact of using particular colloquialisms like *jonin'*, *cypher*, and other casual pronunciations (such as *eatin'/eating*, *aight/ all right*, *wit'/with*) in order to connect linguistically and to use shared cultural language with affirmation (Smith, 2013), and therefore socially with my students and participants (Levy et al., 2018). Finally, this session gave me a wonderful dose of what is referred to as *black boy joy*--the idea that black boys are able to exist in the idea of mattering, enjoy some amount of freedom, expression, playfulness and merriment with each other, in their surroundings, without the ongoing threat of being penalized, victimized, misjudged, or subject to racism and hyper-vigilant discipline as they often are. (Bennett, 2017; Love, 2019).

I sometimes felt slightly conflicted between using slang and casual pronunciations to incorporate relevant language into our communications and feeling a need to maintain professionalism by using traditional English language and pronunciations. My choices may have positively impacted their comfortability and conversation with me and seemed welcomed and

appropriate because I was also African-American, as they were. I'm not sure if these linguistic choices may have/ have not been welcomed from a teacher that was not African-American. I also made no effort to correct them which is often done in academic settings, and purposefully used certain colloquialisms to express emphasis or excitement.

Finally, *IF YOU REALLY WANNA BUILD RAPPORT THROUGH C.T.T., LET THEM LEAD!* The strategies developed through this research can be used to help us know what our students care about, what their interests are, what their identities are--through conversation while they create, and through time that we can *create* for them. We as teachers need to honor and validate these parts of our students by finding and creating time to talk with them about these things, and to integrate them into our instruction to build more personal, stronger, humanizing connections between ourselves and our students. These strategies are not created to simply inform the teacher, but to empower the student through opportunities to share leadership in our relationship building with them. Create space for them to invite us into their heads, and let them lead us through their thoughts, concerns, observations, processes, learning, and lives. The most exciting and engaging conversations happened when I let the participants initiate, lead conversations, or when I asked about what they were already talking about. This practice seemed to fulfill the expectancy of response, helping to feed our rapport/relationship through conversation (Bakhtin, 1986). Appropriate reactivity was vital and matching it with the energy of conversational delivery seemed to be important! It's something my mother taught me-that how you react to what someone tells you can either make them feel comfortable enough to share more, or your tonal response can create pause and end disclosure because of feeling judged or uncomfortable. An appropriate tonal response can convey sincere interest that encourages

disclosure, mutual excitement, understanding or empathy, which can promote comfort in conversation.

My findings were that when I let my participants initiate and/or facilitate the conversations during our lunch bunch sessions, we addressed topics of their interest more thoroughly and fluidly. After my first attempt at beginning our lunch bunch sessions with our protocol question, and subsequently letting the participant initiate the conversations (or inquire about previously existing conversations) for the rest of our lunch bunch sessions, comparatively the conversations of which they initiated and/or facilitated had significantly more content. I found them to be more reflective, and they displayed a higher level of engagement in the conversation. When we talked about their personal interests during our C.T.T. time, the engagement was higher as well.

Not to mention, the parents of three participants--JV, LD, and KL—have all kept in touch with me since the conclusion of our study. Over time, they've voluntarily shared with me stories that their sons shared about our conversations, especially our lunch bunch times. KL's mother told me that he would come home raving about our talk times, and JV's mother shared later that he had become more vocal about his experience at school. LD's mother shared that he been *in* to art more, and that he's even doing some independent painting! Mission accomplished.

CHAPTER 7

IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to use arts-based inquiry through portraiture methodology, observation, and group discussion to explore the contents of student conversations while artmaking. With Bakhtin's (1986) conversation theory as the foundation of how conversation was used throughout this study, I was able to isolate and develop specific student teacher, conversation-based engagement strategies that foster positive rapport and relationship building through the integration of student centered themes of conversation while they made art using collage portraiture.

The strategies developed through this research can be used to help us know what our students care about, what their interests are, what their identities are--through conversation while they create, and through time that we can *create* for them. We as teachers need to honor and validate these parts of our students by finding and creating time to talk with them about these things, and to integrate them into our instruction to build more personal, stronger, humanizing connections between ourselves and our students. These strategies are not created to simply inform the teacher, but to empower the student through opportunities to share leadership in our relationship building with them; to create space for them to invite us into their heads, and let them lead us through their thoughts, concerns, observations, processes, learning, knowledge sources and lives (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992).

Reflective of Moll and Amanti's (2006) funds of knowledge research and exploring student identities through our conversations and artwork, my research questions were:

- (1) What topics emerge during student conversations while engaged in collage portraiture?

- (2) What topics/questions prompt positive student-teacher interactions that build rapport as an instructional tool?
- (3) What conversation-based strategies might promote student-teacher engagement/Art Talk in the art room?

The findings of this study suggest the effectiveness of promoting and engagement in student teacher conversations based on the interests and identities of students. The group of students that I worked with through this study represent a continuously underserved group that is often stigmatized as chronically underachieving, often subject to hypervigilant disciplinary actions, and often neglected in the areas of socially and emotionally supportive instruction. This particular group of students shares a need for specified instruction that, based on my research, emphasizes and integrates intentional rapport building through student teacher conversation that reflects their interests, and validates connection through the active, verbal communication that these students are often discouraged from practicing in classroom settings. Creating socially just instructional strategies that support social and cultural validation is integral to the development of effective pedagogy for these students, and the research that I conducted contributes to a body of knowledge that supports this need. It is essential for this method of effective development of instructional strategies to have rapport and relationship building at their core. Though my participants represent a small part of the student population, the evidence of improved engagement with the art content, as well as improved interest and connection to the content that undoubtedly flourished along with the development of our personal relationship building through the intentional integration of topics of their interest, as well as the intentional behavioral displays of personal interest, expected response, and mutual disclosure.

The topics that emerged during our creative talk time through both academic and nonacademic based conversation became an integral part to my instruction throughout the collage portrait project. Topics that showed frequency--which helped me to discover themes in conversation--were often born out of conversations based on questions that I would ask. Themes also emerged from conversations that the participants would initiate, or pre-existing conversations, often of a non-academic nature--unrelated to the instructional vocabulary, processes, and project. It was these conversations that most frequently occurred during our C.T.T. that helped me extract the themes and help me isolate the questions that I would use for inquiry-based on their topics of interest to prompt our student teacher positive interactions they will contribute to the building of our rapport during instructional time.

Our conversations during our C.T.T. team were the guide for the topics and questions I would use to prompt our positive student teacher interactions to incorporate into my instruction. They were certain practices that became evident is being effective to use during our interactions to promote positive exchanges between us, that built a cycle of expectancy that showed evidence of a growing relationship (Bahktin, 1986). Based on the levels of high engagement in response when asking about their processes during C.T.T., I began to regularly integrate questions about their thoughts when their artwork asking them to share some of their decision-making invited him to talk about your procedural choices and even being mindful of my tone when asking these questions so as to convey a feel of interest and not just assessment. As evidence of their engagement with the project increased through the course of the research, their response implied that the investment of interest and intentional inquiry about their work was it meaningful to them, felt invitational, and provided them a safe space to securely chat about their work and not just answer questions in response to assessment measures

Several topics and questions proved effective for promoting positive student teacher interactions that contributed to our rapport building. Notable enthusiasm to talk and share would ensue with my participants when I would ask them about their processes during our C.T.T., making the topic of their work a priority for our interactions. I consciously tried to monitor my tone as I inquired about their processes in a way that conveyed my personal interest in their work--as opposed to stating questions in a way that felt more like an assessment of their progress. Asking with excitement in my voice "Oh! Tell me about what's happening here!" as I motioned to a portion of their developing collage or inquiring with a smile about some of the writings on their brainstorming sheets would generally garner a positive response cycle. I was interested in what they were doing as individual artists, as well as interested in their progress and understanding, so I attempted to use my inquiry as a starting point for conversation. I was so surprised when LD chose to come back to my room to excitedly share his processes, on his own volition. Being an uncommon student behavior, I attributed some of his high engagement and comfort to return to my room to the conversations that we would have during our C.T.T. time.

I became more conscious of the effectiveness of asking questions about my participants artistic process as useful topics to integrate into our conversations, as several positive student teacher interactions followed this type of initial inquiry. For those participants that responded with immediacy to this topic, they demonstrated a joy and eagerness to talk about their artwork, elements of the collage portraiture project that they were enjoying, to talk with me about the parts of their identities and interests that were showing up in their artwork as they connected to what they were creating. This increased engagement certainly implies the effectiveness of asking about students processes during C.T.T. to demonstrate a teacher's personal interest in their

students' processes. Doing so contributed to the space for them to comfortably share their decision-making and processes, while promoting our rapport building.

Questions that were especially helpful to use for prompting positive interactions were based on my inquiry of topics that were already being discussed by my participants within pre-existing conversations. A significant part of inquiry during C.T.T. time was posing questions about the pre-existing conversations that I happened upon during my visits to my participants' table. I would hear what they were already chatting about, and I'd ask a relating question (if I was familiar with the content) or ask them what they were talking about (if I was unfamiliar with the topic) to demonstrate my interest in their chosen conversational contents. Bakhtin's (1986) theory supported evidence of the cycle of conversation that would often follow these kinds of questions, which were reflective of our developing relationships. The cycle of conversation was fed through the ongoing interest that I would express through my inquiry about their experiences, perspectives, interests and identities that were foundational to their pre-existing chats.

Through the questions that I would ask based on topics of pre-existing conversations, I was able to practice strategies that showed interest, implying the need for teachers to respond to students in a way that emphasizes our personal interest in our students as individuals, and not merely their work as students. This display of personal interest also creates an environment of comfort, which is essential in building relationships--especially with this particular student population, as supported by the literature. The fact that these all make students have been grouped together to provide intensive remediation in ELA is glaring evidence of the needs for more effective, connective instruction. Part of creating a socially just environment that promotes engagement and achievement with this underserved group of students should involve regular demonstrations of teachers' personal interest. This includes teacher based inquiry of students'

demonstrated interests. This suggests that the teacher should make a conscious effort to show this interest through inquiry--about their students' artistic processes and decisions, and the student as an individual, in order to bolster engagement and achievement through rapport building. Utilizing the topics of pre-existing conversations to show personal interest and promote engagement validates C.T.T., in the absence of the fear of being disciplined for simply sharing their thoughts, interest and concerns through conversation.

Beyond showing interest or personal interest through inquiry was the need to respond with personal interest to the concerns, questions and conversations that were initiated by my participants. Through the course of my research, I found that I would be increasingly invited into conversations that were being started or already happening with my participants during our C.T.T. time. These invitations allowed me to demonstrate responsive interest through inquiry and/or through adding to the conversation, cementing my interest in their topic. My responsive interest and inquiry would allow me to learn more about the interests and identities of my participants, to demonstrate my interest in them with regularity, and promoted a level of comfort to share their personal stories and ideas. This developing comfort seemed to be a vital part of their trust and desire to have me talk with them as they invited me into their conversations. I was conscious of practicing those same levels of responsive interest whether by response, appropriate reactivity, or disclosure based on the content of the conversation. These practices imply the need for teachers to consciously be aware and prepared to respond with positivity to the already existing interests and contents of conversations the students maybe having while they are working.

This research provided a framework for conversation-based strategies that can be used to promote positive student teacher engagement in the art room. Through the review of the

instructional practices that were utilized to build rapport through conversation, specific practices have been isolated that were effective in building positive relationships, supporting positive conversations and promoting engagement. As these practices were procured throughout the study, I was able to integrate these strategies into my instruction to support student engagement with the content through conversation.

The first strategy that I was able to extract what is the intentional practice of active listening. Actively listening to my participants as they talked during post instructional time as I circulated their table allowed me to find out what they would talk about in the absence of my initiation or inquiry. Discovering what they liked to talk about on their own allowed me to honor their interests as it informed my inquiry, my initiation and my participation in their conversations. It also allowed me to validate some of their concerns that they would talk about during our C.T.T. to establish a unity between us on certain topics--especially those about teachers and students. This implies that putting into practice the behavior of active listening allows teachers to not only procure the contents of conversations and interest of the students, but contributes to creating a comfortable space in the art room for students to talk appropriately by honoring those topics as they are integrated into our instruction.

Another strategy that I found helpful for promoting positive student teacher engagement in the art room was to start the conversation. By starting the conversations based on the ongoing procured interests of my participants, I was effectively able to initiate and facilitate conversations with the hope that my participants would respond with interest, and that the conversation would produce a cycle of response--demonstrating an ongoing growth of our building relationships. This strategy proved to be efficient, especially for initiating conversations that were reflective of the major themes that had been, or were being, extracted from my ongoing C.T.T. and lunch

bunch sessions. I specifically found the cycle of response to be high when initiating conversations about sports and about student teacher interactions and events, which were major themes of interest for my participants. Again, this practice suggests the need for teachers to get familiar with the interests of our students, enabling us to start conversations that they will want to participate in with us, providing evidence of a growing, positive relationship.

This research further informed my knowledge of the importance of intentionally creating time to talk with our students--during post instructional time or utilizing other spaces outside of instructional time to build rapport. Our C.T.T. certainly provided the space and structure to engage in conversations with my participants about their artwork and about topics of their interest. However, this time was also relegated to a preset instructional schedule, with my responsibilities as their teacher tethered to this time. This included sharing my attention with other students, assessing their work, and meeting the needs of my classroom while conducting research. I found that organizing talk time outside of our regularly scheduled art class seemed to create a very personal space in which my participants enjoyed initiating conversations, could focus on topics that we wanted to talk about, and had more time to do so--rather than sharing that time with classroom room work expectations. Our more personal conversations often happened during our lunch bunch chats. It was additional time, outside of scheduled class time, in which my participants were able to go into greater detail about themes of conversations that may have been introduced during C.T.T.. It was also extra time for them/us to continue conversations that may have carried over from other lunch bunches.

The casual nature of the lunch bunch sessions also seemed to contribute to their comfort levels, as they were more likely to disclose personal experiences and perspectives during these lunch chats, and to ask me about my own. Consciously creating this time to connect through

conversation implies the intentional need and effectiveness of connecting with our students outside of regular schedule instructional time to contribute to the building of a personal rapport with them. These extra instructional environments and interactions undoubtedly promoted our positive, personal interaction and disclosure, evidential of our growing rapport. The use of this strategy translated into increased engagement through positive rapport building, in the art room.

Finally, strategically practicing appropriate disclosure was another practice that supported our positive student teacher interactions (Bradley & Rouse, 1989). As our conversations continued and the cycle of expectancy grew during our conversations, I found that my participants became very interested in my perspectives and experiences and began to inquire about them during our conversations—during both our C.T.T. and lunch bunch sessions. This surprised me at our first instance, and I was hesitant to share my perspectives about certain colleagues that my participants questioned me about. Their inquiry--and my initial discomfort--let me know that I would have to prepare to practice appropriate disclosure to continue to build and maintain mutual trust. In order to continue to feed the cycle of comfort that was evident through our personal exchanges, their willingness to share, and their inquiry about my personal perspectives, this meant that I would also have to maintain professionalism while being willing to share as mutually as they were. According to the literature (Bradley & Rouse, 1989; Pain & Harwood, 2009), mutual disclosure is an integral part relationship building, as Bradley and Rouse (1989) support, so that “students and teachers can come to know themselves and each other better” (p.34). This certainly implies that teachers should prepare to practice a safe level of disclosure that is appropriate for classroom conversations. My participants became very interested in my feelings and perspectives, and undoubtedly found unifying elements through the mutual disclosure that fed a positive rapport.

Suggestions for Further Research

With a need for further research in the area of conversation as a rapport building instructional tool, I suggest additional study into methods of developing practices that create opportunities for student teacher conversation--personal conversations that will allow the students to share details about their interests, concerns and elements of their identities. Teachers can build rapport through integrating these themes into classroom assignments, and I recommend professional development for teachers wanting to develop these strategies and create classroom environments that support these practices.

Certain portions of our sessions also had me thinking a lot about the impact of feeling welcomed. The participants made me feel very welcomed as they invited me to participate in their freestyle cypher, and as they inquired about my personal feelings and perspectives. From that first lunch bunch onward, I made it a point to start using that term “welcome” when I speak into my students, especially with circumstances in which they may be having some challenges or conflict. I’ve learned to integrate the word “welcome” because I know how it made/ makes me feel, and I hope that my students feel the same way. So when I say “you can’t do this, but you’re welcomed to do something else!”, or “you’re welcome to join me for lunch...” or, “you’re welcomed to stay with me while we wait for your teacher to pick you up...”. I’m hoping it has the same effect on my students as it had on me. Therefore, I suggest further research into the language of promoting feelings of comfort and welcoming within the classroom setting.

As mentioned earlier, I suggest that teachers find ways to conduct personal research to familiarize themselves with the topics that they procure from student conversations, in order to participate in the conversations *with* them. I suggest further research on effective strategies and language that teachers can integrate into instruction that emphasizes the creation of welcoming

spaces, speech, and learning environments for our students. How can we learn more about what makes our students feel welcomed into our/ their academic spaces? A further exploration of this question would undoubtedly yield findings that would support positive relationship building, and its positive effects on student engagement.

Lastly, the findings of my study create implications for my own practice, as all of my recommendations can be introduced or further integrate into my regular classroom practices. Though building rapport through conversation in the art room is an ongoing priority for me as I seek to find new ways to learn about my students in efforts to connect with them, the processes of the study led me on a journey to discover specific processes and strategies that both ignite and reinforce the understanding and importance of intention when exploring and creating instructional strategies to address the specific and varied needs of my student populations. I was also reminded through this study the importance of leveraging time in the classroom. Time can be at such a premium for classroom teachers of all content areas, and for the strategies developed in this framework for C.T.T., the execution requires intention and time.

The discovery of what my participants liked to talk about when they were creating was intentional, and nothing about the process of the findings were happenstance. Every strategy that was being developed as a result of ongoing findings led to intentionally creating further strategies that addressed my research questions. While creating a climate in my art room that supports expression, validates identity, invites diversity, and encourages exploration has always been paramount, this study informed my new awareness of intention and use of time to support a just climate in the art room. The climate in which I hope my students may flourish requires an ongoing reassessment and intentional use of time--even if small amounts--between instruction, guidance and remediation to intentionally discover parts of my students' identities in order to

honor them with fidelity. Being responsible for informing myself through my own research about my young artists, I'm going to be a teacher that continually invests in my students mattering (Love, 2019), and maybe help to save some of my students in the ways that Ms. Howell, amongst many other teachers, helped to save me in ways that I needed.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Teacher: Erica Hicks Pendleton

Grade: 5

Lesson Title: Collage Self-portraits

Learning Objectives

Students will be able use images, text, and/or drawings to create a self-portrait, using collage components to represent elements that reflect a typical day in students' lives

Standards

- VA5.CR.1: Engage in the creative process to generate and visualize ideas by using subject matter and symbols to communicate meaning
- VA5.CR.5: Demonstrate an understanding of the safe and appropriate use of materials, tools, and equipment for a variety of artistic processes
- VA5.RE.1: Use a variety of approaches for art criticism and to critique personal works of art and the artwork of others to enhance visual literacy.

Session 1: Introduction

- Explain to students that one's personal identity is built upon layers of life experiences and culture
- Share the following essential questions:
 1. What is a collage?
 2. What is portraiture?
 3. How can we use collage to create a self-portrait?

- Inform students that Romare Bearden expressed himself and his identity through collages; discuss his brief biography and the inspiration for many of his works; discuss the premise/ intention of his collages and elements of personal story telling
- Tell students that creating the symbols and representations of one's life can be done through the arrangement of images, drawings, and text
- Tell students that a **collage** is a piece of art made by placing various materials such as photographs, pieces of paper, and other two- dimensional materials onto the same backing.

Explicit Instruction/Teacher modeling

- Display and discuss some of Romare Bearden's pictures: *The Block* (1971) and *Pittsburg Memory* (1964). Ask students what they see and what they think these images might mean.



The Block



Pittsburg Memory

- Explain to the class that they will be doing investigations into themselves. Tell students that they will need to cut out or draw pictures and/or words that they can identify with.

Brainstorming

Model responses based on the title of the project: A Day in the Life

- What do you do between the time you wake up and the time you leave for school? Who do you see or interact with before you arrive? How do you get to school? Who is with you on your commute?
- What is your morning school routine look like? What happens once you arrive at school? Who do you see and interact with before lunch? What are your tasks or activities?
- What happens during lunch? Who provides it? What is your afternoon routine until the school day ends? Who do you see and interact with? What are your tasks and activities?
- What happens after school? How do you get home and who is with you on your commute? Who do you see/ interact with when you arrive home? What are your tasks and activities?

Allow students to submit written answers on worksheet, and collect.

Session 2

Review of the introduction; quick demonstration of collage techniques for the students to use.

- Demonstrate how students can cut out images that represent parts of their daily lives- objects, people, products, etc. from provided magazines. Arrange these items on 9 x 12 paper.
- Cut out a picture from a magazine that you identify with. Place this picture within the colored construction paper body. Explain to students why you placed the object where you did.
- Add more images, explaining what they mean as you go.

- Tell students to start thinking about their objects, as they will be evaluated on a written summary they create about their picture.

Requirements

1. Minimum of 12 images (including text, writings and drawings) for each collage, addressing at least 3 questions/ answers from each of the 4 brainstorming columns
2. Images/words only. No proper names
3. The space must be filled; gaps in the collage must be layered or covered with text, drawings, or images
4. Demonstrate consciousness in craftsmanship- evident through thoughtful, neat and organized composition
5. A short artist's statement of a minimum of 5 sentences must accompany their completed self-portrait collages; summarize the images chosen for their work, describe what the viewer is seeing, and briefly describe a typical day in their lives.

Independent working time

- Students may begin procuring images/ text for their collages and place in folders marked with their initials; may begin building their collages if time allows
- Folders will be collected by table group

Session 3

Composition of the collage portraits will begin/ continue.

- Students will use scissors, glue, and dry media (markers, pencils, sharpies, and crayon), to create their works

- After a brief review of the requirements, student will have 30- 40 mins to work on their portraits
- Students that complete their portraits within the allotted time will be given paper and pencils to draft and create their artists statement

Session 4

Review

- Collage/ artist statement completion
- Use sketchbook with remaining time

Differentiation

- **Enrichment:** Do research about Bearden and tie it to the images used in his artwork
- **Remediation:** Struggling students may work in groups of two or have help finding pictures to represent themselves.

Assessment

- Check the artwork for an understanding of the concept of unity in the composition.
- Check the written work for relationships between the images and the ideas of the student.

Review and closing

- Have students discuss their artmaking process
- Create gallery display of selected finished works

APPENDIX B

Collage Self-Portraits

Classroom Teacher: _____

Brainstorming Sheet

Your Initials: _____

<p>What do you do between <i>the time you wake up</i> and the time you leave for school?</p>	<p>What is your morning <i>school</i> routine look like?</p>
<p>Who do you see or interact with before you arrive?</p>	<p>What happens once you arrive at school?</p>
<p>How do you get to school? Who is with you on your commute?</p>	<p>Who do you see and interact with before lunch? What are your tasks or activities?</p>

<p>What happens during <u>lunch</u>? Who provides it?</p> <p>What is your afternoon routine until the school day ends?</p> <p>Who do you see and interact with?</p> <p>What are your tasks and activities?</p>	<p>What happens <i>after school</i>?</p> <p>How do you get home and who is with you on your commute?</p> <p>Who do you see/ interact with when you arrive home?</p> <p>What are your tasks and activities?</p>

APPENDIX D

Lunch Bunch/Group Discussion Protocols

The following was used as protocol for group discussion:

- Think about when we talked last during class- let's talk about your thoughts on our project.
- Think about when you worked on your collage-let's talk about some of the images you've chosen for your collage.
- Let's talk about your day, thus far.

APPENDIX E

Personal Interview Protocols

The following was used as protocol for 3-5 minute, individual interviews:

- What do you think the viewer might learn about you and your daily life through your collage portrait?
- Is there anything else you'd like the viewer to know about your daily life that may not be in your collage?