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PDI Studio V

Ethnographic Description

The children of the Ark Community Charter School have an excellent learning environment. Each student had their own moveable desk, for storage and writing. The classroom was divided into different sections for different activities. There as a large hexagon table for arts and crafts, a carpeted section with milk carton seats for story time, and lines taped along the ground to help the kids line up. My initial observation was the presence of two adults in the room, a main teacher and presumably a student teacher as well. This provided for a surprisingly small student to teacher ratio. Overall my initial reaction was that the room functioned as a proper classroom for the fifth graders.

When it was time for the kids to be split up into groups they responded very quickly and obediently to their teachers directions. We gave our first group of students the assignment to draw anything they wanted. For the most part they responded by drawing something they had drawn before and could draw well, like a landscape, a house, or a football. Our first group was very eager to talk about themselves. We learned quickly the differences in individual personalities. Boy1 was very eager to learn our names and give us all nicknames. Peter quickly became Peter Parker, Greg a hobo because of his goatee, and myself became Julia Roberts. It was interesting to see how some children such as Boy 1 had no problem talking, relating and almost judging us. Other children such as Girl1 in the same group could barely make eye contact. I presume she was trying to act cool and uninterested but I'm not sure. When we asked who liked to draw, everyone else in the group responded with a resounding yes. When I asked Girl 1 specifically, she shrugged. But Boy 1-1 quickly took over saying "Oh come on Girl 1, you love to draw. See she loves to draw, she draws all the time." And after she had done a wonderful landscape drawing he even noted, "See she's really good!" This difference in behavior may become a challenge later in the course when trying to gauge the kids excitement over our product. If a particular product is liked by the quiet ones, it may be hard to tell because they have a hard time communicating with us. Reversely the interests and likes of the louder, more involved children may give a false sense of positivity towards a product. It just reminds me that the opinions of everyone are shown differently and we will need to watch that throughout the semester in order to get an accurate sense of our product.

Besides their personality differences, their tastes when it came to activities was surprisingly similar. When asked about music, hip hop/rap was unanimously listened too. Other interests included sports, especially football and basketball. I was surprised and pleased

by the number of female students who said they liked basketball. Dance was also popular among the girls. Despite all these similarities one interest out shadowed the rest, video games. One girl in particular, Girl 2 listed off every gaming device she owned. The list included doubles of very expensive systems and devices so new I had never heard of them. It may be critical to note that I myself am not a gamer. I have owned nothing other than a PS2, and a game boy color my whole life. So my not knowing these systems may not stem from the newness but rather my lack of knowledge. The way Girl 2 was listing off her systems to me seemed a little like bragging. She was proud of all that she owned. A boy in the same group Boy 2 seemed to want to outdo her and started to say he had 100 games. Boy 3 then chimed in by saying this was impossible. Boy 2 quickly responded that he gets games every birthday and Christmas. I didn't have the heart to tell him that he's only had 10 Birthdays and 10 Christmases. It seemed very important to the students to have the most of something that was of value to them and their peers. Gaming systems and games seem to be that medium of value. This reminded me of my youth when the medium of value were baseball or pokemon cards. You could brag about how many or how great your cards were. You could trade or sell them, much like the students now who talk about going to GameStop to trade in old games. I can't help but see the monetary difference between 60 dollar ps3 games and a 1-5 dollar pack of cards. I wonder the pressure that parents get especially from low income families to buy the latest in video gaming.

To expand on gaming, I was incredibly surprised by the level of violence these children are exposed to. Almost all the boys in class played Call of Duty Modern Warfare 2. Two particular boys, Boys 3 and 4 made a story board of them playing the game. While explaining how they play the game we got to hear the gruesome details of driving stakes into people, and shotgun wounds. The conversation between the boys seemed to be endless. Some of the girls in the group would roll their eyes or act appalled by some of the things they would say. But one girl in the same group, Girl 3 was also big into games. But instead of COD, she was a huge fan of Resident Evil which is a game that involves killing of zombies. When we asked Girl 3 what her favorite game was, Boy 3 answered "She only plays Resident Evil". It seemed like she was very fond of that one particular game. I wondered if she just liked it because it was her favorite or if she was in a financial situation that only allowed her one game, and that was what she played. In addition to games this particular group all liked scary movies. They rattled off titles of various R rated slasher movies. I know it has been said about every generation to come through but I feel like these kids are being desensitized at such a young age. They love anything gruesome and scary. This input becomes a bit difficult when trying to design for this age group.

On the other hand, when asked about classes they enjoyed, a surprisingly large number of students said math. I was not expecting this. Science was not liked nearly as much. Art, gym, recess, and lunch were also very popular answers. This was hopeful news. Additionally shopping and pets were more points of interest for the kids. Overall the kids were individuals

who behaved and acted very differently. They did enjoy some common interests. These interests included video games, scary movies, football, basketball, dance, hip hop, rap, pets, friends, and fun.