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PDI 5  
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### Ethnography II

On October 11<sup>th</sup>, PDI Studio 5, including myself, traveled to the Ark Community Charter School again to interact and observe the children while they engage in a variety of group activities. My group and I worked with the 5<sup>th</sup> graders this time. The purpose of this trip was to create a device to persuade a reaction. From this reaction we can learn more about them that we didn't from the first time.

My group decided to use the connection the children have with music to engage them while observing and learning more about their unique interests and culture trends. As we moved our group of three into one of the corners of the room, the teacher was splitting the class up into four smaller groups of an average of six kids per group. However, before going to the Ark Community Charter School for the second time, my group had decided on two plans of engaging the children. We decided to have one table set up for the rhyme and metaphor teaching lesson, which we used to help the children eventually write a few lines of a rap or of a song. The other table was to show the kids an open source processing program. The open source program was called the Wekinator, and it used the webcam from our laptop computer to visually track the movement of a colored object. It also has a function that uses the color tracking movement to create different sounds effects.

My group's objective was to observe the children's reaction to a software program we may try to use or modify in final project and to learn more about the kids and their interest in the teaching them about the fundamentals of writing music. When the children learn a little about the software and how the webcam on the computer tracks color, we were able to set up multiple colors and objects to track. Furthermore, the kids discovered how to change sounds, mostly tones, when a specific color is tracked by the webcam. Once the program is trained and all the data that is necessary to function the color tracking and the sound changing is working properly, the children were able to discover the possibilities of this interactive tool.

Before going to the school on October 11<sup>th</sup>, each of us individually made a hypothesis on how the children would react to our activities. I thought that most of the children would be interested and attracted to the webcam aspect of the open source program but not with the sound effects. The random tones are annoying and unattractive and because most of these kids are hip hop and rap enthusiasts, I believe they would be more interested in smooth beats and instrumentals that are catchy and fun. However, I did think they would be interested in the sound changing aspect of the program where the tone/sound would change pitch when the webcam recognized the selected object moved. On the other hand, the rhyme and metaphor lesson I believe will be easy to teach the children and it will be fun for them when they can express themselves through writing a rap or a song.

In the first group I sat back and observed the children trying to learn about rhymes and metaphors. One of the boys who I believe is African American didn't want to participate with his classmates. I didn't even notice him until he came up behind me and threw his arm on my shoulder and said, "What's up man!" I was very shocked that he just came up and sparked a conversation out of the blue. I think this shows how quickly children can change their comfort levels because the first time we were there, I remember he wanted no business with our activity and didn't really speak to anyone. Then another student, I believe he was Mexican or Latin American, started speaking out loud. The student kept on reciting his simile's and metaphors out load while Cat and Jonny were trying to teach the group about the fundamentals of writing music. I do not know his background or much of anything about him but I am going to speculate that he likes to hear himself talk. On the other hand, the first group was very productive and my assumption is that the kids learned a little bit and got to express themselves in writing some lyrics.

In the second and third groups I started to introduce the Wekinator to the students. The students, one at a time came over to my table and I showed them how the program worked while the others were learning about similes and metaphors. I first showed them how the webcam recognizes colors by selecting a few colors in the video area, like the pink and blue winter gloves I was wearing, and how the dot on the screen moves with the colors around the video area. After I explained the basics of the program, I would get the kids involved by having them play around with the color and sound functions.

One of the boys, I believe he was African American, was very interested and excited about how it all worked. The student asked me to pick the color of his shirt, so the webcam would follow him around. He had a lot of fun trying to "dodge" the dot on the screen. The only thing he wanted different was some cool music or beats, other than the tones he was playing with as he was dancing around. This shows that the culture these children are growing up in has a big influence on music and dancing.

The students interacted surprisingly well with the Wekinator. Even though the girls did not look as interested as the boys, they cooperated and worked with me. My group could have made it better and easier for the students to be more involved by having more than just one kid at a time with me. It would have allowed them to be more relaxed because a few of them looked absolutely frightened and scared to do anything alone. Also, after everything I asked them what they would have liked differently and almost every one of them said they would have like to have had better sounds or beats to play around with. On the other hand, the metaphors and similes were much harder to teach than I expected. Even though it looked like they were having fun writing verses they couldn't full grasp some of the concepts my other group member were trying to teach them. In conclusion, I think the trip went really well and we are now prepared to make a killer device to help teach the kids about any of the major subjects in school.

**Great work! I loved this technology and the way you were able to integrate it into their cultural interests. The fact that some of the experiment did not interest the kids is not a problem; it just means you did a good job actually testing your hypothesis – and that's the key!**

I could have used a bit more detail about the device itself – you said “I would get the kids involved by having them play around with the color and sound functions” but that doesn’t tell me what those functions actually are, or which ones the kids responded to the most, etc.

Grade = A-