

Assignment 6: Ethnography-Write Up #2

The purpose of our second trip to the Ark Community Charter School was to create a device to induce a reaction from the students to better learn their behaviors and attitudes. On October 11th, 2011, my group and I came prepared with two activities that we thought would give us a good chance to explore their interactions. One of the devices we brought with us was a computer software program called Wekinator. The program uses Xbox Kinect-like technology which uses real-time tracking and color tracking to give users the ability to use control commands shown on a webcam screen. We decided to use this program to watch the children use their body and hand movements in accordance to what they saw on the computer screen. The second activity that we decided to involve the kids with was writing their own song lyrics by teaching them simple writing and musical structure. The basics were taught to each group of students and the rest was mostly open ended to give them the freedom to write, sing, or rap whatever they pleased. The second trip gave us a much better understanding as to what sparked their interests. We were also able to speculate as to why the children were more enthusiastic about some parts of the two activities as opposed to others.

Before the start of our trip to Ark Charter School, each of us came up with hypothesis's in regards to how the children were going to react to the activities we chose. Personally, I felt as though the children were going have trouble connecting to the purpose and fundamentals of the Wekinator. The program is very technically heavy and has little user friendly functions. The program was created as a base for other computer programming enthusiasts to build upon it. As for the song writing activity, I was almost certain that most of the students were going to open up much more with us. We used similar group work with the students during our first trip and students were not bashful when it came to writing lyrics and reciting them to the rest of the group. The difference this time, however, was teaching the children proper sentence structure and musical ideas before letting them write on their own. I was skeptical on how the students would respond to a short learning lesson beforehand.

The students were broken down into four groups, and each groups worked with an RPI group for twenty minutes and then rotated. Our group used both activities that we came up with simultaneously. One member worked one-on-one with the students using the Wekinator, while the other group member and I started to teach the kids about similes and metaphors. This seemed to be an organizational and structural problem because the one student that was working

on the computer one-on-one seemed to feel isolated from his/her peers. Each student in the song writing group was given a piece of paper and something to write with. To start, we wrote down a brief definition of what similes and metaphors are and gave an example of each. We had each student copy it down onto their paper, hoping that they would better understand it by physically writing the meanings down. After examples were given of each, we let them try their own, mostly to see if they fully understood the concepts. The students had an easier time grasping the idea of what a simile is as opposed to a metaphor. We realized that we spend too much of the allotted time trying to teach to the first two groups that we encountered. We decided to move on before halfway through the twenty minute periods to the actually song writing with the last two groups even if they did not thoroughly comprehend the ideas.

Once the children were given permission to make their own song lyrics, we introduced the idea of matching beats with syllables. We used a basic four count as a start to make the task of breaking down words and sounds to each beat simpler. The students clearly had learned what syllables were before and how to sound out each word which was great to see. Then, finally we let the kids write on their own. For the most part, the children were interactive and participated heavily. Most kids started to write about interests that they had or things that they aspired to be or have. We did not see any negativity coming out of the student's minds or any profanity which was a good sign.

My hypothesis that the children were going to cooperate with the song writing was correct. The activity caused the kids to talk to one another about what to say and how to say it. This allowed us to see what their personalities were like. The learning lesson involved was not as successful which was expected. The learning method could have been more interesting but the children still partially understood the concepts nonetheless. The Wekinator was not as much of a hit which was not a big surprise to me. We should have briefly explained to the children what the program was and how they were going to use it before we arbitrarily sent one student to learn more about it. With better initial presentation to the software and creating a more fulfilling game or activity could easily make this computer program a hit with the students.

***Nicely done – this was a well-detailed description, and I liked the fact that you were willing to allow your hypotheses to be falsified (eg the failure of the Wekinator) as well as confirmed.
Grade = A.***