THE POSSIBILITIES OF FREEDOM WITHIN A HIGH SCHOOL MIXED MEDIA ART

CLASSROOM

by

AMY JO WORKMAN

(Under the direction of Carissa DiCindio)

ABSTRACT

This Visual Ethnographic Research study examines secondary students' experiences with mixed media art and the ways in which their creative processes and imaginations are fostered and freedom is embraced through their art making. This study focuses on the overall experiences of students' mixed media art making, the ways in which these experiences promote their creative processes, as well as the ways in which the context of the classroom affects their art making and creativity.

The insights gained from this study offer an understanding of the possibilities for students' creativity and imagination within art education. Secondary art students experience artistic success and creative struggles as they create mixed media works of art. From idea generation to artistic implementation, students face personal decisions that come to bear on the development, revision, and final product of the art making process. A student-centered, mixed media art classroom can offer students the opportunity for play, experimentation, investigation, collaboration, communication, and risk taking. The experiences encountered over the course of creating mixed media art may ultimately lead to greater imaginative capabilities, enhanced creative processes, as well as the growth of the student's artistic abilities.

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AMY JO WORKMAN

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Major Professor: Carissa DiCindio

Committee: Kathryn Roulston

                     Lynn Sanders-Bustle

DEDICATION

To my husband, Everette, and our children, Elias and Avalie—thank you for the continuous support and encouraging me to have fun along the way.

My gratitude extends to my committee—Dr. Carissa DiCindio for her willingness to steer me in the right direction and foster the quality of my work, Dr. Kathryn Roulston for her qualitative wisdom and invaluable guidance, and Dr. Lynn Sanders-Bustle for her astute perspectives and thoughtful recommendations.

Finally, I thank my dear friend, Frances for joining me on this journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

By becoming aware of ourselves as questioners, as makers of meaning, as persons engaged in constructing and reconstructing realities with those around us, we may be able to communicate to students the notion that reality depends on perspective, that its construction is never complete, and that there is always more.

- Maxine Greene, *Releasing the Imagination*, 1995, p. 381

Throughout the past sixteen years, I have embraced the rewards and challenges of being an art educator. Since my first days in the classroom, my teaching has developed as I have discovered new paths in art education and gained a greater grasp of the vast purposes for teaching students about art. During the latter half of my teaching experience, I have become engaged in the reconstruction of my pedagogy as I questioned my teaching methods, my intent as an educator, and the role of art education in developing students' learning. These questions led me to reflect on my journey into art education and previous experiences that developed my pedagogy as I seek new perspectives and directions for teaching students.

My Journey into Art Education

My path into art education began as a high school student, where I acquired confidence in my artwork through the development of technical art skills. I enjoyed the process of creating art and learning new methods and techniques of art making. Although the aesthetic appearance of my completed works demonstrated skillful renderings, my art was often devoid of deeper

meanings. I was good at following teacher-administered directions and rendering my work with technical skill. Looking back, I do not feel I was truly accessing my creativity during these high school years.

My journey continued into college as I began to question my art making and its lack of creativity and meaning. This realization developed after many encounters with other highly creative art students as I attended my freshman semester at Atlanta College of Art (ACA). I remember one of my first ACA gallery experiences where I viewed an exhibition of senior students' art. The work seemed quite strange. In one part of the gallery, huge white sheets were draped from the ceiling. On these sheets were beautiful screen-printed photographs. With closer inspection, I found the photographs represented family. There were many small trinkets and beads hanging from the sheet. After reading the artist's statement, I discovered that the work was a mixed media art representation of the artist's perspectives of life and experiences growing up. My appreciation of the work extended beyond an analysis of the technical qualities of the art. I appreciated the unique and creative way this artist chose to represent her life through her art.

Later that semester, my figure drawing class was asked to create a self-representative work. We were given one week for the project and were then asked to present these to the class. I continued to struggle with my creative abilities and searched to find my creative self. I revisited the student exhibition gallery many times during that week to witness the creativity of senior art students. I was most affected by the assortment of materials many of the students used. This inspired me to find materials from around the campus to document experiences I had during my first semester of college. I found berries around the campus to use as paint, and blueprints of the Olympic Village construction to use as paper. I gathered other small objects representing my freshman semester to collage onto my work. I then set out to combine my artistic talent with a

creative endeavor to develop a work of art that embraced my personal meaning making and incorporated a variety of meaningful, found materials. Through my work, I experimented, searched, was inspired, attempted originality, and tapped into my intrinsic motivation to be creative. I enjoyed the artistic process more than ever before.

The first years of my art teaching practices and lessons were based on my previous experiences in K-12 and college art classes. After a few years of teaching and reflecting on my practice, I discovered that while I was successful in getting students to follow my directions, I rarely encouraged them to develop their own thoughts. I seldom allowed students to explore their own methods of creating art. It is through this realization that I began to explore research on creativity, art making methods, teaching practices, purposes for creativity, and ways in which to foster creativity within my students and myself. Through this exploration and work with my students, I discovered the creative potential of offering students choices within their art making. These choices include aspects of idea generation, the creating process, and material selection. This understanding led me to investigate the benefits of mixed media art as a form of art making that promotes choice, as it is not limited to one material and can include a variety of art making methods (Bey, 2012; Driscoll, 2015; Mace & Ward, 2002; Prager, 2013; Vaughan, 2008). I began to allow students' more autonomy through a mixed media approach of art making. I took strides to transform my art classroom into an environment that allowed students the freedom to make choices and individually explore and experiment with mixed media approaches to creating art.

I have continued my personal pursuits to create mixed media art by experimenting with and incorporating various materials, including found objects, into my self-reflective art making. I currently teach mixed media art at the high school level. The process of teaching students mixed

media art allows me to share my knowledge and love of this form of art making. Through my graduate courses at The University of Georgia, I have been able to examine theories and philosophies that have expanded my understandings and thoughts on the ways in which creativity and the imagination are fostered through aspects of mixed media art making. My graduate studies have taught me to question and analyze myself as an artist aiming to portray deeper meanings of reality within my art, as an art teacher seeking greater awareness of the theories and philosophies of art education that can positively influence my teaching, and as a researcher collecting understandings of the world around me. These lessons led me to conduct research that seeks new perspectives and awareness of the possibilities of my students' creative processes as they develop mixed media works of art within my art classroom.

Pilot Study

During the spring of 2015, I conducted a pilot study to initially examine the concept of creativity within my mixed media art class. I conducted a single case study of Georgia (pseudonym), one of my mixed media art students, to examine her experiences creating mixed media art. Georgia's work occurred throughout four weeks of an 18 week semester period. My overarching research goal for the pilot study was to understand the ways in which a student's imagination and creative processes were fostered through mixed media art making. To gain a greater understanding of her experiences, imagination, and creativity, I also considered the culture of my classroom where Georgia created her art.

I utilized methods of visual ethnographic research to allow Georgia to share her experiences creating mixed media art (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Maxwell, 2013; Pink 2007). These methods included photo and art elicitation during the interview, my field notes of her art making processes, as well as photo documentation of her mixed media art making. These methods were

4

utilized to examine the ways in which mixed media art fostered her creative thinking and

processes during her art production (Coover, 2012; Freeman, 2010).

As I interviewed Georgia I gained an initial insight into her experiences of mixed media

art. She was able to describe her first encounters with mixed media art, her enjoyment and

struggles with creating mixed media art, and her thoughts pertaining to the influence of the art

classroom on her art making. She shared her personal perspectives of art making and the

importance of imagination. She often described opportunities of feeling free to create through

mixed media art making. I was able to capture her varied moments of art making by

photographing stages of her creating. These photos demonstrate her art making processes as well

as her creative thinking and imagination during mixed media art making.

Awareness of Freedom

Through this pilot study I came to a greater understanding of the choices made and

processes utilized by Georgia, as she created mixed media art. This included the decisions she

made as she created her own ways of working, generated her own ideas, and chose materials best

suited for her art making. She described the combined feelings of freedom and fear as she was

allowed to make personal choices in her work. Georgia yearned for self-governance in her art-

making. She desired problems to solve, yet sought guidance as she developed new perspectives

and solutions. Mixed media art making within a student-centered classroom offered Georgia the

opportunity to explore her imaginative capabilities as she developed her art through problem

solving, choice, experimentation, and personal idea generation.

Creating mixed media art required different methods and processes than other forms of

art making encountered by Georgia. She explained that creating mixed media art did not require

a certain process as compared to other types of art making. She made comparisons between

mixed media art and other forms of art making, alluding to the stages of painting or drawing as being clear and determined from the initial stage of idea generation. She explained that with drawing or painting, she sketched and planned her ideas and then followed through with the application of a single drawing or painting media. However, she described creating mixed media art as a fluid process that often changes paths during various stages of the art making. Georgia expounded on the open process of creating mixed media:

> I just feel like with mixed media there's never really a certain process. I know with painting it's always like do the background first, do the lightest colors first, and then go darker. But with mixed media it's just like…what do you want to do first. Kind of more like trial and error.

Sometimes a mistake would cause a new idea to emerge or stumbling onto a newfound material might elicit a novel approach. She felt less restricted in her creating process, as mixed media art making allowed her the opportunity to utilize any material.

Georgia's fears and freedoms associated with mixed media art making included concerns of judgments of her work as well as the fear of judging other students' work. She explained that she did not want to offer criticism of another student's work, as his/her idea might be in progress. Careful judgment and working through fears of judgment were highly important to Georgia's mixed media art making as she worked through aesthetically difficult stages of her art. This unpleasant stage is often referred to by students as the "ugly stage". Georgia realized that beautiful outcomes arose as she worked through these "ugly stages". This often required complex problem solving.

As Georgia began to tackle the fears associated with creating mixed media art, she began to rejoice in the freedoms experienced through the process. Because mixed media art making

allowed her the opportunity to utilize any material, she felt less restricted in her creating process. This freedom within the experience of mixed media art making permitted Georgia to make personal decisions concerning her idea generation and the use of materials in her mixed media work. As she worked through her fears and embraced the freedom offered by the mixed media art making process, she was able to foster her creativity and imagination. As Georgia's creativity and imagination reached new heights, she was able to address deeper layers of personal meaning in her work and access more possibilities for creating mixed media work.

Examining one of my student's imagination and creative processes through her experiences with mixed media art making allowed a greater insight into a student's thoughts concerning mixed media art. Through the pilot study I discovered the underlying concept of freedom that has the potential to develop as students' creativity and imaginations are fostered within mixed media art making. As I investigated research connecting freedom, creativity and imagination, I became engaged with the Maxine Greene's, *Dialectic of Freedom* (1988). I utilized Greene's (1995b, 1988) art education philosophy to develop a theoretical framework that aided me in constructing and reconstructing the realities of my students, to understand their meanings and perspectives, and to discover that there is more to their art making than what appears on the surface of a completed product.

Theoretical Framework

Maxine Greene's (1988, 1995a) art educational philosophy encompasses the overarching goals embodied within my teaching and goals for my students' art educational experiences. The praxis of imagination is embodied through the philosophy of Maxine Greene as she urges educators to engage the imagination of children so that they may attain freedom (Greene, 1988, 1995a). Freedom for Greene, involves "persons to become different and to take actions to create

7

themselves" (Greene, 1988, p. 22). This freedom arises as the imagination is developed and then liberated to gain multiple possibilities (Greene, 1988, 1995b). Imagination, the heart of Greene's theory, stands as the central necessity of educational systems, the arts, and teaching pedagogy. Greene (1988) states:

> Confronting a void, confronting nothingness, we may be able to empower the young to create and re-create a common world – and, in cherishing it, in renewing it, discover what is signifies to be free. (p. 3)

Greene's philosophy of the freedoms derived from an emancipated imagination charges teachers and educational systems to allow students to imagine alternative possibilities for the world and break away from a predefined reality. Throughout her books, *The Dialectic of Freedom* (1988) and *Releasing the Imagination* (1995b), Greene presents goals and curricular ideals for teachers to tackle the arduous challenges of assisting students to employ their imagination to extend beyond their defined and often times, self-involved existence. To embody freedom through imagination, Greene (1995b) encourages teachers to engage students through encounters with other people and the arts. As imagination is embraced, students gain a greater understanding of the world.

To Greene, the role of the arts is paramount to the pursuit of increasing students' imaginative capabilities to gain a reflective and insightful understanding of the world (Greene, 1995b). I utilize Greene's philosophy of freedom as I examine my students' creative and imaginative growth as they discover new possibilities for themselves, others, the world, and art through their mixed media art making (Greene 1988, 1995a, 2014). Imagination is the underlying root of creativity and through its consideration, greater understanding of students' creative processes can be reached (Stokes, 2014). Aspects of knowledge, awareness, education, and

social structures are each woven within Greene's philosophy of freedom through the imagination and contributed to the foundation of my study to examine students' creativity within mixed media art making.

Background of Problem

Philosophies supporting the cultivation of creativity and the creative process within art education classrooms urged me to continue to pursue the possibilities for creativity within my teaching and research (Bastos & Zimmerman, 2011; Freedman, 2010; Greene, 1995a; Gude, 2010; Zimmerman, 2009). Zimmerman (2010a) argues "art teachers cannot anticipate the exact content necessary to be learned within the next decade, but they can teach students skills that will prepare students to find and solve problems that have both local and global import" (p. 85)**.** To properly prepare students for a place in this world, art education needs to reevaluate stagnant practices. It is encouraging that much current art education philosophy seeks to reconsider the current status of art education and bring focus to the development of students' creative thinking (Bastos & Zimmerman, 2011; Freedman, 2010; Gude, 2009; Gude 2010; Heid, 2008; Marshall, 2010).

Zimmerman and Bastos (2011) incite teachers to re-conceptualize their role within art education for art classrooms to become "a place of true creative endeavor so that when students mature they are supported in generating bodies of work that demonstrate creativity, innovation, and imagination" (p. 7). This philosophy is often reflected within the postmodern philosophy of art education presented by Gude (2007). Gude's postmodern philosophy enriched my perspectives of the importance of promoting students' creativity within art education classrooms. She outlines her postmodern objectives for art education through ten "Principles of Possibility: playing, forming self, investigating community themes, encountering difference, attentive living,

empowered experiencing, empowered making, deconstructing culture, reconstructing social

spaces, and not knowing" (Gude, 2007, pp. 7-14). For Gude (2007), play involves a free

experimentation with media that is "not directed toward mastering a technique or solving a

specific problem" (p.7). Students can form identity through art making when they are able to

create "a repertoire of projects which use diverse styles of representation and various symbol

systems to explore various aspects of experience" (Gude, 2007, p. 7). Allowing students to

explore themes related to issues within their communities and explore the differences among

others through art making may increase "deeper understanding and empathy to a shared social

experience" (Gude, 2007, p. 8). As students embark upon individual art making experiences,

they may become aware of the possibilities for their art making. They understand the meaning

that may be derived from their work and the work of others (Greene, 1995b; Gude, 2007). Gude

(2007) explains that a quality art curriculum should promote students to re-discover

preconceived ideas. Through these new discoveries, Gude (2007) attests:

> They will learn to see many things differently. They will learn new strategies of making
>
> meaning through which they can interrogate received notions of the real. They will learn
>
> how to play, not just with material, but also with ideas. They will be able to entertain new
>
> ideas and new possibilities. (p. 14)

These expressions are important to my study as students within my mixed media class were

empowered to be attentive to and personally explore themes related to self, community, and the

world through their art making. Oftentimes students had to face moments of not-knowing within

idea generation and techniques of art making. These moments allowed for creative growth

through problem-solving. As they created art, they were encouraged to play through

experimentation and investigate themselves and their environments by experimenting with a

variety of ideas, art materials, and art making techniques. Gude (2007) explains that through these principles students "sense, examine, and explain the structure of the art curriculum; these explanations should emphasize important ideas and themes associated with traditional and contemporary art making practices" (p. 7).

Zimmerman's (2010b) philosophy focuses on student-led visual expressions that are grounded in meaning making and derived from the lives of students instead of works awarded for meeting predefined teacher directives and expectations. This theory is often in contrast to the previous Discipline-Based Art Education approach to the National Art Education Standards, which followed a teacher-as-artist model purposed to educate art students on aesthetics, art history, art criticism, and art production (Freedman, 2010; Gude, 2010; Zimmerman, 2009). Teachers adhering to a DBAE approach direct less consideration toward student-centered studio experiences, creativity development, or student-based artistic investigations (Freedman, 2010; Zimmerman, 2009). The goals of DBAE were to align art education with academic disciplines through a standardized frame (Delacruz & Dunn, 1996).

The National Coalition of Core Art Standards (2014) released a new series of National Core Art Standards during the early development of this research study (see Appendix B). These standards are divided into four overarching categories: Creating, Presenting, Responding, and Connecting. Specific anchor standards are presented for each category. Enduring understandings are aligned with each of the anchor standards (see Appendix A). The National Coalition of Core Art Standards (2014) define enduring understandings as "statements summarizing important ideas and core processes that are central to a discipline and have lasting value beyond the classroom. They synthesize what students should come to understand as a result of studying a

11

particular content area" (p. 10). Moreover, they articulate what students should value about the content area over the course of their lifetimes.

Enduring understandings should also enable students to make connections to other disciplines beyond the arts. A true grasp of an enduring understanding mastered through a variety of activities is demonstrated by the student's ability to explain, interpret, analyze, apply and evaluate its core elements. For example, the enduring understanding for the visual art standard "creating" is, "Creativity and innovative thinking are essential life skills that can be developed" (National coalition of Core Art Standards, 2014, Visual Arts-Creating). The standards along with the enduring understandings reflect many of the key principles supporting an approach to art education that encourages creative thinking (see Appendix B). The standards support students' creativity in conceptualizing ideas and developing works of art to present their creative thinking. The standards encourage students' conveyance of personal meaning and interpretations within works of art. Students are urged to personally respond and connect to art through their interpretations, analysis, and meaning making (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014).

The theories and philosophies encompassing the support of creative and imaginative development within students' art educational experiences, along with the National Core Art Standards (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014) are woven throughout my research of students' mixed media art making. My research aimed to examine the mixed media creative processes and present the art making experiences of my adolescent art students as they created within a student-centered classroom.

Statement of the Problem

Through my experiences as an artist, graduate art student, and teacher, I have gained new understandings and awareness of art making and pedagogy by viewing, discussing, teaching, and creating mixed media art. Mixed media art allows artists an open-ended exploration of art materials. The process of creating mixed media art does not rely solely on the techniques of painting, drawing, printmaking, or sculpture. Instead, it offers any combination of mediums for the artist to achieve a desired outcome (Bey, 2012; Mace & Ward, 2002; Pragar, 2013; Vaughan, 2008). Mixed media art often requires experimentation, research, collaboration, and risk-taking within the art making experience. As students create mixed media art they have the possibility to play, form new perspectives of themselves, engage with others, embrace differences, investigate the unknown, and form new awareness of others and the world (Gude, 2007). These aspects are representative of the ways in which creativity develops (Gude, 2010; Penick, 1983).

Rather than examining a product, an awareness of the creative process is oftentimes more important for gaining insight into creative thought (Runco & Jaeger, 2012). Graham Wallas (1926) proposed that creativity develops through the creative process and should be examined for greater assessment of people's creative abilities. Much learning and development takes place during stages of the creative process as students design an art product. Art education aims to teach more than the technical skills that enable students to produce technically rendered works of art. A primary objective of art education is to teach students to develop creative thinking (Jaquith, 2011; Zimmerman, 2009). As described in the National Core Art Standards (2014) creativity is "an essential life skill that can be developed" through "artistic investigations, following or breaking with traditions in pursuit of creative art making goals (Visual Arts –

Creating). My research examined the ways in which mixed media art can be utilized to develop students' creativity as they investigate the possibilities of art making. Rather than analyzing the creativity of final products, I documented and analyzed the ways in which creativity develops through students' processes of mixed media art making.

Purpose and Research Questions

The high school students involved in my mixed media art class have the opportunity to utilize a variety of combined materials to create a work of art. Due to the unlimited possibilities within mixed media art making, my students often face artistic struggles and rewards through many stages of idea generation and implementation as they make complex choices involving composing the work, the use of art materials, and art making techniques. The complexity of their creative processes encompasses their experimentation, meaning making, and interactions during art making. The choices made by my students as they face artistic struggles have the potential to foster their creative thinking abilities.

Research Questions

My overarching research goal was to understand the ways in which the creative processes of students may be fostered through their development of mixed media art. I employed the following research questions as guidance for this study:

- What are students' experiences in creating mixed media art?
- In what ways does the process of creating mixed media art foster students' imaginations and creativity?
- What factors within the art classroom contribute to students' creative processes?

Importance of the Study

Mixed media art is a form of art making that is not confined to one material such as a pencil drawing, a watercolor painting, or a photograph. Mixed media art includes, but is not limited to assemblages, altered books, and collages (Driscoll, 2015). However, the classification of art as mixed media is diverse and can incorporate any possible materials ranging from paint to recycled materials to sculptural materials (Prager, 2013; Vaughan, 2008). It can exist as three-dimensional or two-dimensional art. Mixed media art making allows an artist an open-ended exploration of art materials (Driscoll, 2015). The process of creating mixed media art extends beyond and culminates traditional mediums such as painting, drawing, printmaking, photography, or sculpture. Through mixed media art making, an artist incorporates, combines, and layers a variety of unlimited materials to create (Bey, 2012; Driscoll, 2015; Mace & Ward, 2002; Prager, 2013; Vaughan, 2008). An artist is often challenged and required to research ideas and techniques, play through experimentation with materials, as well as take risks within mixed media art making experiences (Koon, 2011; Lin, 2011; Meier, 2014).

My investigation of current, peer-reviewed literature concerning mixed media art produced sparse results. I provide a discussion of the literature concerning mixed media art in chapter three. The literature gleaned from visual art sources revealed the work of individual mixed media artists, typically documenting specific art exhibitions. Museum websites and articles offered descriptions of the historical aspects of mixed media art and discussed the work of contemporary and historical mixed media artists. However, these sites did not contribute to the educational contexts of mixed media art. Some art educational literature documents specific mixed media lessons instructed by teachers, but primarily explores lessons of painting, drawing, and sculpture (Guhin, 2015; Rufo, 2012). I discovered articles documenting mixed media

techniques, such as the collage process (Pragar, 2013; Vaughan, 2008). However, mixed media art can reach far beyond these forms. One implication for this study is to contribute to an understanding of the interweaving aspects of creativity, imagination, art education, and mixed media art. My goal was to develop awareness for the value of mixed media as both a medium and a tool to teach students to be creative and imaginative.

Another vital purpose for my research study was to document and analyze students' creative processes as they worked to develop their mixed media art. Research examining the ways in which students create is limited. Marjan (2012) argues there is not a clear theory of how creativity happens, or whether creativity occurs because of individual characteristics or circumstances. Once again, research focuses on individual artists. However, creative and artistic production within a group, specifically students, is not often considered in research (Kasof, 1995; Wehner, Csikszentmihalyi, & Magyari-Beck, 1991). Because of the diversity within definitions of creativity, research of creative processes and teaching for creativity are encouraged as areas for future research.

Evidence of collaboration, interaction, and individuality can be examined through the study of a group of students as they create art. This evidence creates a more substantial documentation and analysis of the dynamics of the group as they create. Art education is a prime area for research connections to be made between creativity theories and practices as attention is placed on characteristics of the creative process, artistic dispositions, or acts of creativity (Gardner, 1999; Zimmerman, 2009). Zimmerman (2009) recommends focusing on domain-specific creative processes for adolescent students. Since adolescents typically have a more mature commitment to a particular domain, researchers suggest a focus on a specific field of interest, thus supporting my focus on mixed media art. Researchers also encourage studies that

discover ways in which the creative process can be taught, developed, and nurtured. Greater understandings in these areas will help educators teach and assess the creative processes (Arnheim, 2001; Marjan, 2012; Nelson & Rawlings, 2007; Zimmerman, 2009).

For this research, I conducted a case study of my mixed media, high school art class. It was important for my study to capture the students' experiences both individually and as a group. Research on creativity and the creative process typically involves individual experiences. Research of the creative processes of art production is rarely conducted within a group (Kaufman, 2007). A case study of the creativity of a group would address specific traits which apply to the whole group as well as aspects of its individuals (Kasof 1995; Kaufman, 2007; Wehner et al., 1991). Students work within a social group context as they talk and interact with each other in the art education classroom. The documentation and analysis of this dynamic was important for greater understanding of the creative processes that occurred within the mixed media art classroom.

Research Design

My qualitative research study examined secondary art students' experiences creating mixed media art. I utilized a visual ethnographic methodology to examine, document, and represent the experiences of my students. This included case study, a unit of analysis of five cases within the case, as well as photography to capture visual aspects of the research. I purposefully selected these methods to offer an explanation and visualization of students' creative development through mixed media art making. The following description presents an overview of my research design. A more detailed description of my research methodology is discussed in chapter three.

Case study methods were utilized to examine the mixed media class as a whole, as well as five individual cases within the group (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Maxwell, 2013; Pink 2007). The study of the five individual student cases, contributed to an in-depth documentation, analysis, reflection, and representation of the art making experiences and creative processes encompassed within my mixed media art class. I incorporated ethnographic research methods including field notes detailing observations, photographic documentation of students' work, informal and in-depth interviews, along with photo elicitation within interviews. Studying the class as a whole offered data related to the experiences within the mixed media art class. This data represented aspects of students' creative processes, such as collaboration, forms of idea generation, and use of materials within the classroom. The more in-depth account of five students' art making experiences was conducted to offer a more detailed study of the case. This included in-depth interviews, photographs of their art making processes, and field notes describing my observations of these students. The selection of students, as well as a description of the case, is described within the research design section of chapter three. These methods of visual ethnography research served to assist me investigating and cultivating an awareness of the ways in which students' creative thought, imagination, and artistic ability was developed through the creative processes of mixed media art making.

Context of Study

The students enrolled in the large public high school where I teach have the opportunity to take many different art courses. Courses are offered through an eighteen-week semester with ninety minutes allotted for each class period. Foundational art courses are a prerequisite to advanced art courses to develop students understandings of art making. The choices for advanced

art courses include painting, sculpture, drawing, and mixed media. Students who excel within the art program may be eligible to enroll in Advanced Placement Studio 2-D or 3-D art during their senior year.

This case study is comprised of ten of the fifteen students enrolled in my mixed media art class. These ten students consented to the study and returned parental permission forms to participate in the study. Some of the study participants have taken only the foundational high school art course, while others may have had art courses through middle school as well as additional advanced high school art courses. The study participants also represented a range in gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, personality, work ethic, academic abilities, and artistic abilities.

I teach the high school mixed media course and served as the teacher and researcher within the study. My subjectivities as a teacher were interwoven within this study as I conducted my classroom, implemented the curriculum, and assessed students based on my philosophy of education. My philosophy of education is to lead students to a greater understanding of themselves and their relationship to the world as they foster their imaginations and creative thinking through art making experiences. The curriculum I implemented for my mixed media class supports a student-centered structure where students are encouraged to generate their own ideas and art making practices. As the teacher within the mixed media class, I informed students of a variety of art making methods that could be used to create their mixed media art. During the first six weeks of class, I presented lessons to students on a variety of art making techniques. I discussed the use of art media such as drawing materials and techniques, painting media and processes, as well as printmaking processes. I also incorporated methods of creating three-dimensional mixed media art within this instruction. I offered directions of art making processes

for students to build on previous foundational art concepts. Even though I presented instruction through the first six weeks, students were encouraged to generate their own ideas and experiment with ways to apply the instruction to their art.

After this introductory period, the course focused on a more student-centered curricular approach. Students were able to construct their own curriculum (see Appendix G). They each planned a series of works that encompassed areas of interest concerning their lives, community, and/or the world. This relates to Greene's (1995b) philosophy as she encourages learning that engages students to encounter the possibilities within the world and to be self-reflective and consider the perspectives of others. Through their student-centered curriculums, students were able to devise ways to represent themselves and areas of awareness through their art making. As they generated ideas and developed their art, they employed a variety of art making media and processes. As the teacher, I assisted students through possible struggles with idea development. I continued to offer individual and whole group instruction of materials and techniques as needed or requested by students. However, my instruction during this period represented a student-centered interest of particular art making processes.

Assessment of students is a necessary requirement for all courses within this high school. However, teachers are offered autonomy in developing the structure for assessment. In order to encourage student-centered art making experiences, experimentation, and the development of their creative processes, I had to balance concepts of success and failure. Sometimes a student did not successfully complete a quality work, yet achieved great development in their creative process. The assessment of students' learning was not centered on the final product, but rather represented the growth and learning outcomes of the student's process.

An art rubric guided my assessment of students' art making (see Appendix C). Once students completed a work of art, they used the rubric to assess their art making experience. This assessment was not recorded but allowed students to reflect on their development. I assessed the students by first conferencing with them individually about their work. Through these conferences, we discussed their personal rubric grades, areas of needed improvement, and areas of success. The students received grade deductions on areas where they needed to focus more attention. My final grade assessment was recorded in an electronic grade book that is viewable by the students and their parents.

Scope of the Study

The procedures utilized to answer the research questions were:

1. Review the literature concerning mixed media art, creativity, the creative process, and perspectives of creativity within art education to gain a greater awareness.

2. Review the literature regarding research methodologies to develop a strategy for research methods.

3. Gain research approval through the institution's Institutional Review Board to study the students within my mixed media art class.

4. Conduct the research study utilizing observational field notes, photographic documentation, as well as informal and in-depth interviews.

5. Implement member checks and gain additional input from participants.

6. Analyze and interpret data to provide answers to research questions.

7. Represent findings through an aesthetic representation that interweaves text with photographic imagery.

8. Offer conclusions and implications.

Limitations and Delimitations

This research study examines the creative process involved within the mixed media art making of a particular high school class. The class has been selected as the case because it is a high school course specifically designed for the exploration of mixed media art making. I purposefully selected five students as a unit of analysis to gain a more in-depth examination of students' creative processes within mixed media art making experiences. Purposive sampling is used to select participants who differ in their art making experiences. This range is important to the research as it offers a greater insight into the possibilities of the creative processes and mixed media art making. Concentrating on a small number of cases allowed greater depth of information and quality of research (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Due to my purposive sampling, this research may not be generalizable to other cases. However, the research findings have the potential to be transferable as they offer conclusions and implications concerning students' creative processes, mixed media art making, art education, and student-centered education. The research contributes to a greater awareness of mixed media art and the creative processes of students that may be useful to other art educators.

Definition of Terms

*Creativity***.** Originality is integral criteria to defining creativity. Runco and Jaeger (2012) attest that a product must be original to be considered creative and should not exist in an exact, previously created form (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996; Anderson, Krathwohl, Airasian, Cruikshank, Mayer, Pintrich, & Wittrock, 2001; Sawyer, 2006; Zimmerman, 2009). Csikszentmihalyi (1996) clarifies the myth of "original product" by explaining that a new, original idea does not stem from a single person, rather it brings together other previous ideas. The domain in which a product was created should also be considered as

people are not generally creative, but rather demonstrate their creative characteristics within a specific domain (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Feldman & Benjamin, 2006; Gardner, 1999; Winner & Martino, 2003; Zimmerman, 2009).

Creative Process. A creative process involves an innovative and effective new procedures or techniques that changes the way art is developed, thought of, or understood (Beattie, 2000; Newton & Donkin, 2011).

Student-Centered. A student-centered educational structure encourages learning through students' choice-based experiences (Douglas & Jaquith, 2009; Orr, Yorke & Blair, 2014). A student-centered curriculum encourages students' personal investigations and discovery (Perkins, 1994). A student-centered classroom offers an environment that provides students with the personal opportunity of decision-making autonomy and self-governance through choice and self-reflection. A student-centered art classroom allows access to a variety of materials that can be used to help students develop their ideas in a personal way (Armstrong, 2000; Jeffrey & Craft, 2004). Through maintaining an open space that promotes personal creative experiences, develops opportunities for play through experimentation, and provides situations for self-evaluation, teachers can promote creativity within the art classroom (Andrews, 2010; Bluffington, 2014; Gude, 2010; Jaquith, 2011; Yenawine, 1998).

Play. Play involves a form of expressiveness that may be described as improvising, chaos, spontaneity, chance, or experimentation (Prager, 2013; Richardson & Walker, 2011). Playing within art education permits students to explore materials and ideas. Gude (2007) explains that play must be "truly free, not directed toward mastering a technique, solving a specific problem" (p. 7). Play in art allows students to generate new ideas, learn new art-making processes, and form new meanings through spontaneous moments of art making (Gude, 2007).

Summary

This research study stemmed from my experiences teaching and creating mixed media art, as well as the pursuit to foster the creativity of my students. Through this research study I examined the creative processes of my adolescent students as they created mixed media art. My initial pilot study led me to understand the rewarding aspect of freedom that can be achieved through imaginative and creative art making. I employed Maxine Greene's (1995b, 1988) philosophy freedom as the theoretical framework for examining the creativity and art making experiences of my students. Greene's philosophy contributed a greater understanding of the freedoms that can be reached through art making. The findings from this study contribute to the body of research concerning creativity within art education, secondary art education, student-centered education, as well as mixed media art.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Fostering adolescents' creativity and imaginations through art education experiences was the enduring root of my research. Through my review of various research studies and literature concerning creativity, mixed media art making, and art education I developed greater knowledge and understanding of the importance of creativity, the role of creativity within art education, and ways in which I may foster my students' creativity and imaginations. The first theories to shape my research and teaching practices were those related to philosophies of creativity and methods to enhance creativity. As I considered these theories and philosophies with my teaching of mixed media art, I became more aware of the ways in which the creative process occurs and is developed through mixed media art making. Therefore, I examined various theories related to the creative process (Arnheim, 2001; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Marshall, 2010; Runco & Jaeger, 2012; Siegesmund, 1998; Wallas, 1926) as well as various means to enhance creativity through art educational approaches (Freedman, 2010; Jaquith, 2011; Milbrandt & Milbrandt, 2011; Zimmerman, 2009). Through this chapter, I first elaborate on the theories and philosophies of creativity. I expand on the literature concerning creativity and its role within art education. I then discuss literature related to the creating and teaching of mixed media art. Through the final section I present the literature guiding my theoretical framework which encompasses aspects of creativity and mixed media art making.

Creativity

Defining Creativity

The component of originality is important to assessing the creativity of a product (Amabile et al., 1996; Runco & Jaeger, 2012; Sawyer, 2006). The domain in which the product was created should also be considered in measuring the creative (Barron, 1963; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Runco, 1989). Most people are not generally creative, but rather demonstrate their creative characteristics within a specific domain. Cultures and fields of expertise are both important components when considering domains of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Feldman & Benjamin, 2006; Gardner, 1999; Winner & Martino, 2003; Zimmerman, 2009). Within the field of education, Anderson et al. (2001) explain that a work should relate to the domain within students' learning.

Another aspect of the originality of a product, discussed within literature of creativity, is that creative processes do not always result in an original product; rather, the creative process is innovative and effective as new procedures or techniques change the way art is developed, thought of, or understood (Beattie, 2000; Newton & Donkin, 2011). Even though a product may lack uniqueness, the imagination, experimentation, ideas, and thoughts occurring during the process of creating may be considered creative (Baker-Sennett, 1995; Elster, 1992; Heath, 2008). The process is often uncertain and ambiguous due to the expanse of the imagination, differences in skill, uncertainty of ideas, and speed of the process. A true creative process does not require following rules or directions (Best, 1991; Eisner, 2009). However, it does require personal evaluation and scrutiny of ideas and processes. This concept is often referred to in literature as evaluating the "fit" and "appropriateness" of an idea or product (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Humphreys, 2006; Newton & Donkin, 2011; Siegesmund, 1998).

Issues of Classifying Creativity

Big-C, Little-c is a philosophy of creativity often use to classify different levels of creativity (Merrotsy, 2013; Runco & Jaeger, 2012). Researchers often apply the Big-C little-c concept to classifications of creativity. Big-C creativity is often associated with creative genius and involves a socially valuable product within a domain. Little-c creativity considers ordinary problem solving as creative (Merrotsy, 2013; Runco & Jaeger, 2012; Sawyer, 2006). Many researchers advise against classifying creativity in terms of Big-C/little-c due to the lack of explanation or support in research (Merrotsy, 2013; Runco, 2014). Merrotsy (2013) and Runco (2014) argue the literature on creativity does not offer enough valid arguments for the existence of this dichotomy of creativity, nor does the literature provide enough evidence supporting how or why it could be taught. The classification causes misleading knowledge concerning creativity instead of advancing understanding and suggestions for increasing creative potentials. Instead, researchers and educational systems are encouraged to focus on the shared components of Big-C/little-c to develop a more inclusive classification of creativity (Merrotsy, 2013; Runco, 2014).

An approach to defining the levels of creativity that is more relevant to this study involves the complexity of creative processes or products. (Amabile & Hennessey, 2010; Marjan, 2012; Sawyer, 2006). The simplest level of creativity is in the form of spontaneous expressiveness, where there is less focus on originality, effectiveness, or quality. A second level would include technical skills and proficiency in techniques. A third level requiring new developments of existing ideas is considered inventive creativity. A final level, emergent creativity, would require a completely new, often abstract idea (Marjan, 2012). These levels defining creativity are much more relevant to my study than Big-C/little-c as they allowed me to

make distinctions between the creativity of art products and the creative processes utilized by my students in the development of mixed media art (Runco, 2008, 2014).

Product versus Process

Analyzing the art product may not always the best method in determining the creative capabilities of students. Some research argues that an art product cannot be authentically assessed as creative or not without awareness of the artist's process (Marjan, 2012). In Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) study of undergraduate students, they found that students' artistic processes were a much better indicator of their creative ability than the art product. The process of creating art extends beyond the technical process of making a product. Through the artistic process, new meanings can be developed which help students to think differently or more innovatively (Freedman, 2010). In Marjan's (2012) study of 41 children's linoleum prints, participants were asked to evaluate the creativity of the prints. Many participants expressed ethical dilemmas of not knowing the students, their other works, their personal artistic development, or the involvement of the teacher/parent.

Wallas (1926) originally proposed the four stages of creative thinking which resonate and have been expanded on in the literature on creativity (Cubukcu & Dundar, 2007; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Marjan, 2012; Runco & Jaeger, 2014). He classified the creative process into four stages: 1. Preparation: gaining new insights 2. Incubation: time away from the problem; 3. Illumination: new idea; 4. Verification: solving the problem. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) expands and alters Wallas (1926) stages by adding 5. Insight: when understanding is realized; 6. Evaluation: analyzing worthiness; and 7. Elaboration: realization of the idea. Many current researchers continue to use and expand upon Wallas' (1926) original model of the creative

process to develop, interpret, and analyze their research (Amabile et al., 1996; Heid, 2008; Marshall, 2010; Siegesmund, 1998; Torrance & Safter, 1999).

There are criticisms of Wallas' (1926) models addressed in current research (Runco & Jaeger, 2014; Sawyer, 2006). The processes should not be considered a step-by-step model. Instead, the process does not always have an exact starting point and stages often spiral back to be repeated (Runco & Jaeger, 2014). New ideas might develop throughout the process. The artist might begin the creative process through manipulation of materials and experimentation (Heid, 2008; Marshall, 2010). Heid (2008) encourages teachers to promote idea generation in the beginning stages of the process. Helping students connect personal experiences with imaginative thoughts have the potential to foster these early stages.

Sawyer (2006) expanded upon the criteria of originality within the definition of creativity. Sawyer's (2006) criteria for creativity included basing creativity on social judgment within a particular group and its value to that group. He also explained creativity should involve new combinations of existing elements within a particular flexible, domain. A flexible domain refers to offering a range of opportunities to explore creativity within a group (Sawyer, 2006).

Originality and effectiveness of a final product were not as important to my study as the creative processes developed during the course of creating a mixed media art product. Therefore, Sawyer's (2006) explanation of creativity's importance within a particular group is relevant to my research as I specifically examined the experiences of students within my mixed media art classroom. The flexibility in the creative process, through a student-centered classroom, was an important component of my research. Developing a better understanding of the creative process helped define the stages of creativity and the creative processes utilized by secondary art students as they worked to create an original and effective product. Rather than focusing my research on

an assessment of the originality of the art product my students created, my study sought to understand the creative processes students utilized as they created mixed media works of art within the domain of a secondary, mixed media, visual arts classroom.

The stages of the creative process where students' ideas are generated, discovered, and developed are often unconsidered in educational research; the final product receives more analysis and evaluation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Runco, 2008). Runco (2008) explains that a focus on product ignores the significant process of creativity. Therefore, understanding and analyzing theories and research involving the creative process was vital to my study as I aimed to understand the creativity encompassed within my students' mixed media art making.

Creative Expression through Artistic Process

When considering creativity, the product is often analyzed rather than the process. However, it is through the process of art making that the creative ideas, techniques, and actions manifest (Freedman, 2003; Richardson & Walker, 2011). Michael (1980) explained the term "express one's self" to mean "a person is giving and projecting his point of view, his interpretation, his personal and unique feeling, thinking, and perceiving about something" (p.116). Expressiveness can also be understood as a type of play within art making. This concept of play may involve improvising, chance, chaos, spontaneity, experimentation, and an exploration of materials and ideas (Prager, 2013; Richardson & Walker, 2011). Through a student-centered creative art process, students were able to embark on an expressive form of art making where they explored their personal aesthetics, feelings, thoughts, and personal perceptions. A student-centered approach to mixed media art making permitted students to

engage in creative expression through their artistic process. Students examined their ideas, perceptions, attitudes, and feelings about the world as they played, experimented, and explored materials and ideas.

Researchers have expanded on the definition of creativity to encompass specific traits of creativity in art. Artistic creativity forms as materials, ideas, and culture are entwined with the history, thoughts, and emotions of an artist (Amabile et al., 2010). Artistic creativity includes a variety of processes, which encompass artistic knowledge, cultural traditions, visual thinking, and motivation (Amabile et al., 2010; Zimmerman, 2009). Defining aspects of artistic creativity follows Maslow's (1974) philosophy of creative people. He explains that creative people fall into two categories: those with special talent creativeness, and those who have self-actualizing creativeness. Maslow studied many different types of people from athletes to artists to housewives. He concluded that many of his participants were creative in their efforts, ideas, and pursuits even if their product did not include a masterpiece. His observations support the definition that creativity applies not only to a product, but also the thought and process leading up to production (Amabile et al., 2010; Zimmerman, 2009).

During the process of creating art, problem finding, problem solving, emotional involvement, and personal vision are each important components. However, Green (2007) points out that creativity in art is often reduced to emotionality. She argues against defining artistic creativity as solely an emotional, soulful, haphazard event. It also aids in promoting intellectual development, innovative ideas, and progressive thinking through the development of critical thinking skills. Freedman (2010) proposed a model of seven characteristics to describe creativity: a) creativity requires critical reflection; b) creativity is developed through personal interest; c) creativity is a learning process; d) creativity is functional; e) creativity is social; f) creativity

31

includes reproducing as well as producing; g) creativity is a type of leadership. Students who have greater creative thinking abilities will be able to produce art that is more inventive due to their attempt to find and solve problems through novel solutions (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976; Zimmerman, 2009).

Considering Creativity within Art Education

To understand the importance of creativity, Csikszentmihalyi (1996) explains that we must first remember creativity is essential to human life. Endeavors such as developing languages, sciences, mathematics, technologies and the arts can be attributed to the ability to think creatively (Binnewies, Ohly, & Sonnentag, 2007; McRobbie, 2001). Our role as educators within a democratic society is not simply to fill students with concepts and knowledge, but to aid students with the conditions that will allow them to experience the responsibilities of learning and construct new meanings within of their worlds (Freedman, 2010; Greene, 1995a). It is necessary for students to understand how to facilitate their own learning and thinking. This includes equipping students with the capabilities to be creative thinkers. Within a democratic society, students should be able to develop their imagination, be self-expressive, and discover possibilities (Blandy & Congdon, 1987; Elder & Paul, 2009; Florida, 2002; Freedman, 2010; Greene, 1995b; Gude, 2009; Heath, 2008; Newton & Donkin, 2011). This constructivist philosophy is supported through Greene's (1995a) philosophy as she urges people to continually discover more by becoming "engaged in constructing and reconstructing realities" (p. 381). Through this construction, we increase our awareness and perspective of ourselves and the world.

Florida's (2002) research explains that the creative sector comprises one third of the United States economy. This sector includes designers, painters, sculptors, animation,

advertising, film, architecture, fashion, landscapers, and graphics. Students who are creative in their artistic abilities as well as those who recognize creativity may have a role in the future creative job sector (Collins, 2010; Newton & Donkin, 2011). As art educators focus more attention on creative work, students will have potential to benefit as future developers, producers, or those who will be influenced by the creative sector (Freedman, 2010; Hausman, 2010).

As an indicator of the importance of creativity, the National Arts Education Association (NAEA) now recognizes creativity as a primary, vital component of art education (The National Coalition of Core Art Standards, 2014). The NAEA is attempting to promote creativity as a priority for art education. The 2011 conference theme was based on creativity, imagination, and innovation in art education. A major aspect of high quality art instruction recognized by the NAEA is teaching students to use processes that develop creative thinking and creative products (Bastos & Zimmerman, 2011; Zimmerman, 2009).

Participating in an art education class is not a guarantee that creative thinking will be developed. Art courses equipped with the best practices in developing creative thinking will not necessarily equip students completely for a job within the creative industries. Art teachers are unable to predict the skills needed for the future economy. However, art teachers can work to educate all students in problem finding, problem solving, and the creative processes that will possibly prepare them for situations that may occur locally or globally. Art educators must remain vigilant that the merits of creativity development within art education will extend well beyond the art classroom (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Newton & Donkin, 2011; Zimmerman, 2010b).

History of Creativity in Art Education

Current research supporting the development of creative thinking through art education points out differences between objectives of contemporary art education that promote 21st century goals and art education as it has existed previously (Gude, 2004). The notion of children's creative capabilities was not readily recognized in education until the early 1900s. Through the 1920s and 1930s, art education emerged through psychology, modernism, and art therapy as students' self-expression was encouraged. The 1950s presented a transformation of art education to represent the finer things in life and art as a human experience. Through these years in art education, the role of the art teacher was to present a child-centered approach that supported self-expression. The teacher provided support, resources, and supplies but did not necessarily interfere in the student art making process. Little connection to a cultural context was made during these years. Through the late 1950s and 1960s art education became influenced by global events and inventions such as Sputnik and color television. School curriculums became focused on developing science and math programs. Creative thinking was considered a way to bolster learning within math and science. During the 1960s and 1970s increases in art education research promoted the development of a standardized art education curriculum (Freedman, 2010; Gude, 2004; Hausman, 2010; Jaquith, 2011; Zimmerman, 2009).

Art education in the 1980s was transformed through a standards-based design presented by The Getty Center for Education in the Arts (Zimmerman, 2009). Greer (1984) originally introduced the discipline-based art education (DBAE) model. These standards established an approach to art education centered on aesthetics, studio art, art history, and art criticism to make greater connections between art education and academic disciplines. His model extended from the work of Erikson (1970), as well as Feldman and Benjamin (2006). The goal of the DBAE

standards was to implement a systematic model of art instruction that would allow school administrators to view art education as an important aspect of general education. DBAE includes a written curriculum, focus on the four disciplines, systematic instruction, and attention to products of instruction (Greer, 1984).

Many leaders within the field of art education questioned the merits of the DBAE model for art education and called for a postmodern re-conceptualizing of art education. Gude (2010) argued that art education content standards did not focus enough on the creative processes involved in producing art. Critics claimed that school systems, even in a time of such global innovation, relied on uncreative practices such as rote memorization and basic skill application, and rarely allowed students opportunity to interject personal thoughts, argue significance, or develop their own ideas (Armstrong, 2000; Goodland, 1999; Gude, 2010; Hamblen, 1999). Hamblen (1999) argued models such as DBAE do not account for student interests or choices in learning material, and curriculums do not relate to the specific places or people that it serves. Art education leaders arguing against the DBAE model believed students' independence and creativity were traded to conform for the sake of accountability (Blandy & Congdon, 1987; Gude, 2010; Hamblen, 1999; Zimmerman, 2009). They support the need to establish creative thinking as a vital component of the current and future art education curriculums (Anderson et al., 2001; Freedman, 2010; Gude, 2010; Hausman, 2010; Jaquith, 2011; Lampert, 2006; Zimmerman, 2009) rather than the standardized instructional designs.

National visual arts standards have been released by the National Coalition for Core Art Standards (2014). The standards seek to "guide the delivery of arts education in the classroom with new ways of thinking, learning, and creating" (NAEA, 2014, p. 2). The philosophies and theories supporting the development of students' creative thinking are reflected in the standards.

Four overarching categories compose the standards' framework: Creating, Presenting, Responding, and Connecting. Specific Anchor Standards are presented for each category and Enduring Understandings are aligned with each of the Anchor Standards (see Appendix A). The standards encourage teachers to develop lessons that will promote students to explore "big ideas, enduring understandings, meaning making, world awareness, and their personal lives" (NAEA, 2014, p. 3). Through the presented guidelines, teachers are urged to reflect on their teaching and curriculum as well as engage students in meaningful dialogue (NAEA, 2014). The standards support students' creativity in conceptualizing ideas and developing works of art to present these creative ideas. The standards support students' conveyance of personal meaning and interpretations within works of art. Students are also urged to personally respond and connect to art through their interpretations, analysis, and meaning making (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014).

Fostering Creativity through Art Education

Researchers and leaders have established recommendations for art education practices. Amabile et al. (1996) argues that for a product to be original, it must develop through tasks that require an individual to generate his or her own process and path to an answer. Tasks in which individuals follow a prescribed process are not as likely to promote the creative process or result in a creative product. Brookhart (2013) expands the work of Amabile et al. (1996) by suggesting that making choices fosters creative growth. Douglas and Jaquith (2009) discourage an explicit, teacher-directed curriculum that proposes teacher-assigned lessons, specific materials, and few opportunities for student choice. Instead, inquiry-based art education supports a learning process based on student motivation through personal interest.

Student-Centered Art Education

Art education research presents a variety of structures for art curriculums aimed to encourage students' creativity through personal artistic development. These structures are presented with various names and models to allow students a formidable voice within their educational experience. The models include a variety of titles such as: student-centered (Andrews, 2001, 2005, 2010; Burton, 2000), child-centered (Pitri, 2006), student choice (Douglas & Jaquith, 2009), decentralized (May, 2011), socio-constructivist (Pitri, 2006), constructivist (Milbrandt & Milbrandt, 2011), discovery (Perkins, 1994), and negotiated (Pitri, 2006). Each of these models encourage students to construct personal experiences and collaborate with other students to enhance learning. My study connects to Pereira (2014) who offers the term "learner-directed" to describe her model where high school students are considered young artists instead of children or students of a teacher. She utilizes "learner" to signify an active participant in the facilitation of knowledge and "directed" to describe the active participation of students in the learning process. I also identified with Marshall's (2010) use of Efland's (2002) structure of experiential learning. Through experiential learning, the student participates in an active learning process, constructing knowledge, developing artistic inquiry, and participating in the development of knowledge through hands-on exploration. These learning events are shaped by creative thinking. Visual-inquiry is another theory related to learner-directed models. This theory encourages students to make decisions for their art through personal perception, conception, expression, and reflection (Heid, 2008; Siegesmund, 1998).

Student-centered educational experiences are also supported through Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) flow theory where creative persons develop ideas and products through a series of stages as they are deeply immersed in an enjoyable activity. People are able to reach a flow experience

when their concentration, interest, and enjoyment occur simultaneously during their

participation. In a study of 526 high school students' Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Shneider, and

Shernoff (2003) found that students were most successful and engaged in challenging learning

activities that were personally relevant and "allow students to feel in control of their learning

environment and confident in their ability" (p. 173). The activities where students became most

engaged were student-centered and promoted a personally interactive involvement in the activity.

Student-centered is a widely utilized model presented in art educational research and

correlated with the structure of my mixed media class and my students experiences within mixed

media art making. Andrews (2005) describes student-centered art education as an environment

where students are engaged in art making, art planning, and art reflection. They are the

"instigators of their art curriculum; not passive bodies waiting for instructions" (p. 36). A

student-centered methodology involves students in curriculum planning as they make choices

concerning their art making, learning tactics, and means of discovery (Buffington, 2014;

Claymier, 2014; Hesser, 2009). Students are required to think, imagine, critique, discuss, and

create for themselves as they engage in a space with others. Within a student-centered classroom,

students no longer rely solely on the directives of the teacher (May, 2011; Hesser, 2009;

Andrews 2010). A student-centered classroom offers an environment that provides students with

the personal opportunity of decision-making autonomy and self-governance through choice and

self-reflection. In order to foster a more creative environment, students need materials to expand

on their creative ideas (Armstrong, 2000). A student-centered approach to art education involves

students' learning through choice based experiences centered upon personal inquiry and

discovery (Douglas & Jaquith, 2009; Orr et al., 2014; Perkins, 1994). These methods focus on

students' creative processes rather than a product of their experience. A student-centered

environment allows access to a variety of materials that can be used to help students develop ideas in their own way (Armstrong, 2000; Jeffrey & Craft, 2004). Teachers can promote creativity within the art classroom through maintaining an open space that promotes personal creating experiences, develops opportunities for play and experimentation, and provides situations for self-evaluation (Andrews, 2010; Bluffington, 2014; Gude, 2010; Jaquith, 2011; Yenawine, 1998). Through student-centered mixed media art making, students make decisions concerning their choice of materials, exploration of personal ideas, personal meaning making, and self-reflection of their progress.

Researchers offer literature to assist teachers in fostering creativity within the art classroom. One of the overarching themes discussed through the literature concerning the cultivation of creativity is for teachers to offer choice through a student-centered classroom that permits students artistic agency (Gude, 2010; Rufo 2011). Jaquith (2011) encourages teachers to provide activities that provide learners with problem-finding and problem-solving opportunities, allow students openness in developing solutions, and focus on the process of art making, not the concluding product. She offers the advice for teachers to count to ten before interfering in a student's creative process. Eisner (2002) encourages "improvisation and unpredictability" in classroom activities to promote creativity (p. 152). Activities that are less prescribed by the teacher and permit students to elicit a variety of possibilities have greater potential to foster the creative thinking of students (Bastos & Zimmerman, 2011; Eisner, 2002; Heid, 2008; Jaquith, 2011). The problems and activities presented for students should also enable students to become personally engaged within the activity. By allowing students governance in designing and defining assignments, they have greater intrinsic motivation to find solutions (Runco, 2008).

Freedman (2003) encourages art educators to offer educational opportunities that will expand the possibilities for personal expression in art making. These opportunities should present students with open-ended lessons where they are permitted choice in art materials and research topics that allow personal exploration. This approach is characteristic of a student-centered method of teaching. Instead of a discipline-centered approach where students' utilization and skill development of a single material is teacher-directed, a student-centered approach is dedicated to the decisions, thoughts, ideas, and imaginations of the students (Andrews, 2010; Freedman, 2003; Greene, 1995a).

Maxine Greene (1995b) charges teachers with "educating young people to grow and to become different, to find their individual voices, and to participate in a community in the making" (p 382). Through art making experiences within the mixed media art classroom, students have the potential to make choices for personal expression, create artistic goals, utilize their imaginations and creative process, and employ freedom in art making. Burton (2000) describes the dialectic learning through multi-material manipulation that forms during student-centered, mixed media art making. He explains, as "materials bring responses into focus, they simultaneously act as vehicles of reflection provoking new shades of meaning and enriching the immediate significance of the originating thought, memory, or event" (p. 330). A student-centered approach is representative of the art educational philosophy of teaching mixed media art where students are able to access various aspects of their own world within the creation and understanding of art.

Mixed Media Art

Mixed media art making can be described as a form of art making that offers the artist varied possibilities through an open-ended exploration of art materials utilized for artistic expression. The process of creating mixed media art does not rely solely on a single, traditional medium. Instead, it permits any combination of materials for the artist to achieve a desired outcome (Bey, 2012; Driscol, 2015; Mace & Ward, 2002; Pragar, 2013; Vaughan, 2008). An artist may employ materials such as buttons, cloth, clay, wood, paint, photographs, and prints to create a mixed media work of art. Mixed media art also has the potential to employ technological materials such as sound devices or computerized images. Mixed media art may take the form of a two or three-dimensional work, an installation, or digital imagery (Bey, 2014; Brouwer, 2014; Andrews, 2010; Driscoll, 2015). The label mixed media art is often utilized in classifying art that includes multiple elements including, but not limited to painting, collage, assemblage, recycling, journaling and drawing. Materials such as canvas, wood, cardboard, or clay board are often utilized as foundations for media. Although a multitude of materials are used in the creation of mixed media art, artists tend to adhere to traditional compositional rules (Liphart, 2014; Nasher, 2013; Tate, 2013). The Irish Museum of Modern Art (2013) attests that classifying contemporary art is often difficult to label due to the multitude of art making mediums and approaches that are currently utilized by artists.

The combining of a variety of materials within a work of art has appeared throughout the history of art. Examples can be found in the gold leaf, mosaics, and paintings of Byzantine art as well as paper and fabric collages of ancient Japanese art. Early artists such as Leonardo da Vinci experimented with combinations of paints and drawing media, and William Blake altered his prints with watercolors (Liphart, 2014). However, the term mixed media art is relatively modern,

making its debut around the early 1900s as Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso developed their collages using glue, paper, charcoal, and other found objects (Nasher Museum, 2013; Tate, 2014). Picasso (1911-1912) employed rope, canvas, cloth, and paint as he created *Still Life with Chair Caning* (see Appendix D). Braque (1912) devised the mixed media process of collage to create *Fruit Dish and Glass* (see Appendix E). These mixed media approaches were expanded through the Dadaists as they utilized collage and assemblages for social statements. Artists have continued to devise novel methods of creating mixed media art and have expanded mixed media art methods into areas such as craft, sculpture, and digital imagery. Mixed media artists range from those with technical, formal fine art training to backgrounds in craft arts, as well as self-taught artists (Irish Museum of Modern Art, 2013). Since its onset, many artist have utilized mixed media art making to represent postmodern concepts (Liphart, 2014). The early twentieth century German artist, Hannah Höch represented her concerns of classism and the status of women within her mixed media art (Liphart, 2014). Another German artist, Kurt Schwitters, demonstrated the value of found objects in his mixed media art making. He coined the term Merz to describe the concept of everyday, found materials used in mixed media collages (Liphart, 2014; Nasher Museum, 2013). Mixed media can also be created as large scale or installation art. Kurt Schwitters along with other mixed media artists, from the mid twentieth century, began to create larger scale, mixed media installations. Many mixed media artists portray their awareness of the world or others within their art making. Contemporary artist Rosemarie Trockel uses wool, human hair, and photography as media to represent issues such as gender roles and stereotypes. Chris Ofili even uses elephant dung, along with paint, resin, glitter and collage to create works representing African American experiences (Tate, 2014).

As teachers employ mixed media experiences within the art classroom, they may offer students the potential to view and create different types of art, explore new ideas, and make personal decisions concerning their work (Andrews, 2010; Bey, 2014; Brouwer, 2014; Freedman, 2003). Mixed media art often requires play, experimentation, research, collaboration, communication, and risk taking within the art making experience (Driscoll, 2015; Pragar, 2013). These qualities are may serve to foster the imaginations and creative thinking of students (Gude, 2010; Greene, 1988; Penick, 1983).

Discovering New Paths through Mixed Media Art Making

As artists began to respond to postmodern principles and reflect world issues within their work, they were often moved to develop mixed media art (Duncum, 2010; Milbrandt, 1998; Ulbricht, 2011). Because the vast structure of mixed media art making affords artists a multitude of possibilities to freely express thoughts, opinions, arguments, and concerns, artists often choose this form of art making as they embrace postmodern philosophies. Within the research, I found many new directions proposed for art education which align to postmodern principles (Gude, 2004; May, 2011; Milbrandt, 1998; Ulbricht, 2011; Swift & Steers, 1999). Milbrandt (1998) explains that a postmodern approach aims to increase connections between art making experiences and aspects of students' lives such as, language, culture, and society. May (2011) attests a postmodern curriculum and pedagogy would offer new insights into cultural and societal challenges. Through explorative and experiential art making, students may make connections between their art making and global awareness (Freedman, 2003; May, 2011).

The application of mixed media art making is beneficial within art education classrooms as art teachers seek to increase students' creativity, imagination, and critical thinking. Through a postmodern approach to mixed media art making, teachers may evoke artistic expressions that

incorporate student decision-making, autonomy, inquiry, experimentation, and creative learning

experiences (Gude, 2004; May, 2011; Marshall, 2010; Swift & Steers, 1999). These democratic,

explorative experiences of mixed media art making have the potential to enhance students'

autonomy and understandings of their worlds, culture, communities, and selves.

Fostering Creativity through Mixed Media Art Making

Through the creative process of art making, the student artist constructs his or her own

knowledge and meaning through hands-on exploration, experimentation, developing meaning

and awareness of self-process, and technique building (Efland, 2002; Gude, 2009; Marshall,

2010). This development of knowledge and meaning can foster the imaginative capabilities of

students. Greene (1995b) urges the world to engage students' imaginations to attain freedom.

Freedom, for Greene (1988), involves people taking stances to become different by imagining

new perspectives through awareness of themselves, others, and the world. Imagination, the heart

of Greene's theory, stands as the central necessity of educational systems, the arts, and teaching

pedagogy. Greene (1988) states:

> Confronting a void, confronting nothingness, we may be able to empower the
>
> young to create and re-create a common world – and, in cherishing it, in renewing
>
> it, discover what is signifies to be free. (p. 3)

A connection to the arts is paramount for students to increase their imaginative capabilities.

Through the arts, students are able to gain a reflective, insightful understanding of the world and

to develop possibilities for the world beyond their current status (Greene, 1995).

Art education aims to teach more than the technical skills that will enable students to

produce skillfully rendered works of art. One of the most important attributes of art education is

to teach students to become self-aware, self-reflective, and foster creative thinking (Jaquith,

44

2011; Zimmerman, 2009). This development can emerge as art teachers seek new directions for art education which connect students' awareness of the world, their communities, societies, and cultures through art making. Because mixed media art requires the artist to employ personal decision making, critical thinking, and personal approaches through art making processes, it becomes beneficial for developing the creativity and imaginations of art students.

Mixed Media Art Making in the Secondary Art Education Classroom

The National Core Art Standards (2014) for visual art provide goals through standards and enduring understandings, as well as essential questions to promote learning within art education. These standards provide the overarching framework for a mixed media curriculum. Literature involving high school mixed media art classes are sparse; however educational research offers models structured to promote creative thinking and the imagination for students through art education classes (Greene, 1995b; Hanson & Herz, 2011).

Maxine Greene (1986) urges teachers to create art educational spaces that promote "exploring rather than passivity that allow for the unpredictable and the unforeseen" (p.57). Hanson and Herz (2011) argue that to increase the creativity of students, art educational experiences should present a certain structure. This optimal structure involves motivating students to seek novel perspectives, prompting students to become reflective and seek personal direction, and encouraging students to participate in creating art that is reflective of their personal lives and ideas. Classroom environments should encourage students to seek their own path to innovation, not create projects based on the teacher's innovation or decision-making (Greene, 1995a; Hanson & Herz, 2011).

A vast amount of learning experiences occur as students journey through the creative process in a secondary art classroom. During the artistic creative process, developing ideas and

insights are often discarded as students investigate and experiment to find new solutions (Gude, 2010). Students have the potential to increase an awareness of their own processes where they interact with the world, its objects, and the ideas that have been generated from it. To engage creativity, students need to embark on a serious investigation of materials and art process while also playing and experimenting with media and ideas (Gude, 2010). A student-centered mixed media secondary art curriculum has the potential to provide high school students the opportunity to access this creative process.

A variety of lesson plans and processes are offered in the literature about mixed media art and mixed media curriculums (Greenman, 2001; Guhin, 2010, 2015; Hardwick, 2015). These articles present a range of suggestions such as materials to utilize in a mixed media class, novel mixed media processes, cultural connections to mixed media lessons, environmental investigations through mixed media art making, and possibilities for technology within mixed media art lessons. For example, Prager (2013) presents the mixed media collage process where he discusses the postmodern historical development of mixed media art and elaborates on the variety of materials, freedom of personal idea generation, and the play and experimentation of processes available through the collage process. Although many works employ collage methods, mixed media encompasses a multitude of techniques and processes. Though some research exists concerning specific mixed media lessons and procedures, overall research concerning mixed media art is sparse. Rufo (2012) attests that a greater focus within art education is presented to lessons specifically exploring traditional mediums such as painting, drawing, and sculpture. Altering images and creating new images through a variety of methods and materials is an element found in the literature concerning mixed media art. Artists often utilize, but are not limited to paint, thread, pen, ink, fibers, and recycled and found materials as they alter images for

their mixed media works (Chalmers, 2012; Elliott & Bartley, 1998; Vaughan, 2008). Bottles, beads, buttons, fabric from old clothing, cardboard, scrap paper, bubble wrap, sticks, and leaves are only a few of the many possibilities of found or recycled materials that can be used to create mixed media art. The opportunity to utilize found and recycled materials allows students to reach out to their environments to find creative possibilities for their work (Elliott & Bartley, 1998). Visual journaling and sketchbooks also allow students to express themselves artistically. Through visual journaling, students can practice self-reflection and self-inquiry, generate ideas, experiment with various media, make decisions about their work, and record successes and challenges (Cummings, 2011; DiJulio, 2011).

Re-awakening artistic expressiveness is presented in the literature as a way to develop creativity (Amorino, 2009; Greene, 1995a). Amorino (2009) investigated whether the artistic expression of adolescents could re-emerge through a certain educational pedagogy involving the "Artistic Impetus Model" (p. 218). The Artistic Impetus Model involves "sensory stimulation, emotional response, expressive impulse, and a kinesthetic engagement with materials." (p. 218). Her case study involving a group of high school students demonstrated that by enacting a pedagogy that fostered artistic expression, the high school students were able to awaken their personal voice in art making and enrich the creativity of their art making and idea generation.

Hesser (2009) also conducted a study with his high school art students involving a self-discovery, student centered approach. He found that by offering students governance of choice and decision making in their art, students developed greater awareness of their lives, ideas, environment, and beliefs. Research conducted by Bey (2012) documented students' engagement in discussions of complex topics such as religion politics, global events, and societal issues as students created a mixed media work of art that explored sacred spaces and personal meanings in

47

their art. Each of these studies represent the important role a student-centered approach played on fostering creativity within my mixed media class.

Foundations of Theoretical Framework

The pilot study I conducted in the Spring of 2015 motivated me to further investigate the importance students placed on working through art making fears to attain artistic freedom through mixed media art making. This concern for freedom began to guide my thoughts related to art education and my research foundation. This led me to seek a greater understanding of the vast purposes of the creative processes that encompassed the thoughts, emotions, ideals, fears, and freedoms of my students' art making endeavors. Maxine Greene's (1988) philosophy of freedom and the imagination embodied my teaching purpose, as well as my students' desires for art education experiences. Greene's (1988, 1995b) philosophy of imagination purports that through meaningful art education experiences that foster self-reflection and engagement with the world, students may embrace freedom through the development of their imaginations. For my research, I utilized Greene's (1988) theory of freedoms of the imagination to understand and present my students' experiences creating mixed media art. Theories and philosophies of the creative process and art educational approaches to foster creativity served as substantive, mid-range theories that guided my pedagogy and the curriculum for mixed media art.

The Fundamental Theoretical Lens of Imagination

I utilized Greene's philosophy of the freedom achieved through the imagination as the fundamental lens for understanding my students' creative growth, development, and creative processes as they created mixed media works of art (Greene 1988, 1995b). The praxis of imagination is embodied through the philosophy of Maxine Greene as she urges the world to engage the imagination to attain freedom (Greene, 1988, 1995b). Imagination, the heart of

Greene's theory, stands as her central necessity for educational systems, the arts, and teaching pedagogy. Freedom, for Greene, involves "persons to become different and to take actions to create themselves" (Greene, 1988, p. 22). This freedom arises as the imagination is developed and then liberated to gain multiple possibilities (Greene, 1988, 1995b).

Releasing the Imagination of Students

As I read *Releasing the Imagination* (Greene, 1995b), I began to question my understanding of the term 'imagination.' I found Greene's philosophy beautiful, inspiring, and thought-provoking. I identified parallels between my research goals and Greene's philosophy. As a seasoned art teacher, I understood the capabilities of the imagination in terms of creativity and extending the mind into novel frontiers. However, Greene extended the capability of the imagination to push a person to achieve a more humane democracy and find alternative possibilities for the world (Greene, 1988, 1995b; Heath, 2008).

There are two facets of the imagination as employed by Greene: an inventive imagination and radical imagination (Heath, 2008). The radical imagination involves the creation of novel existences that have not been a part of any previous experience. This form of imagination compels the mind to create an original perspective. The inventive imagination allows the mind to conjure what is not present (Heath, 2008). Where the radical imagination focuses on new ways of being, the inventive imagination finds novel methods of seeing or thinking. Heath (2008) connects this concept to Greene's philosophy where the imagination is used in learning to allow a person to transcend a situated consciousness so the learner has the "capacity to become a new person through the imaginative learning process" (2008 p. 122). The imagination allows learners to find possibilities of "what is not and yet might be" (Greene, 1987, p. 14).

Through this framework derived from the philosophy of Maxine Greene, I examined the ways in which Greene's philosophy positioned the footings and built structure for my research study. Greene's thoughts on the roles of the teacher and the arts in developing the imaginations of learners was central to my research as I served as the researcher and teacher within this study of my mixed media art class. Just as Greene encouraged engaging encounters with others to embody freedom, this research study comprised the encounters among students within the culture of the mixed media art classroom. I utilized Greene's philosophy as I examined and analyzed my students' capacity for self-reflection as well as their ability to extend beyond what they are through the processes of creating mixed media art.

Releasing the Imagination through the Arts

For Greene, the arts serve a vital role in developing the imaginations of students so they may achieve freedom of thought, action, and of being in the world. The arts develop a critical awareness to promote students to see more in experiences with world (Greene, 1988, 1995; Rasheed, 2008). The arts reawaken the consciousness of routines, habits, and conventions that become smoldered with a preoccupation of mainstream mindlessness. Greene (1995b) states:

> Encounters with the arts nurture and sometimes provoke the growth of individuals who reach out to one another as they seek clearings in their experience and try to live more ardently in the world. If the significance of the arts for growth, inventiveness, and problem solving is recognized at last, a desperate stasis may be overcome (p. 57).

The arts are recognized by Greene as vital in promoting problem solving and inventiveness in students. As students develop an aesthetic awareness through the arts, they increase the ability for their imaginations to play, expand, and seek various paths (Greene, 1986; Allsup, 2003). This

awareness can lead students to seek further experiences in the world and transform into new

beings (Greene, 1987, 2014). As Greene (1987) states:

> The more becomes visible, the wider becomes the ground over which imagination can
>
> play, shaping, ordering the particularities into a never completed whole. This may
>
> become an occasion for the ordinary, the taken-for-granted to show its hidden
>
> abundance - for imagination to move to the unexpected, for the individual to discover
>
> that there is always more in experience and more to experience than can ever be
>
> predicted (p.17).

Though Greene recognizes the potential of artistic experiences to reawaken the imaginative

possibilities in students, she specifically points to the benefits of creating through the arts.

Greene asserts that students' experiences within the arts should comprise more than an exposure

to art (Greene, 1986). Students evoke greater imaginative experiences as they create new worlds,

ideas, and images. Through their own creations they are able to perceptually enter into these

worlds and generate new cognitive experiences (Greene, 2014).

A Space to Release the Imagination

The physical space for developing the imagination should offer freedom for possibilities

(Post, 2002). A space must stand open to inventiveness, choice, and the value of others and the

world. The opportunity to embark on initiatives and actively participate is crucial as students

create in a space. Greene (1986) describes spaces which promote the imagination:

> They should be spaces in which particular atmospheres are created: atmospheres that
>
> foster active exploring rather than passivity, that allow for the unpredictable and the
>
> unforeseen. At once, there should be a deliberately cultivated consciousness of craft,
>
> standard, and style (p. 57).

Allowing students to explore materials, ideas, notions, and various art forms, increases their capability for meaningful and productive experiences and have potential to expand their realities (Greene, 1986).

Through my research, I sought to understand students' imaginative capabilities and experiences as they created mixed media art within the space of my art classroom. As I studied students' experiences, I discovered ways in which the space of the mixed media classroom fostered and influenced the imagination of my students. The influences of this space included the students, the teacher, the conversations, the materials, the art, and the setting of the classroom.

Engaging with Others

I also considered an engagement with others within the space for imaginative development. To further cultivate students' imaginations, they must learn to interact creatively with and among others. A public space, such as a classroom, can serve as an arena to develop a pursuit of freedom. As students engage with others they discover new thoughts, actions, and existences in the world (Greene, 1995b; Post, 2002; Rasheed, 2008). To achieve Greene's freedom, students must understand ways to engage others and break away from the mainstream. They must learn to use their imaginative capabilities to continuously find ways of being in the world (Greene, 1986, 1988; Post, 2002).

The aspect of engagement with others was important to my research study as students collaborated, interacted, taught, and shared thoughts with classmates during their mixed media art making process. Continuous engagement among students was an important component of the culture within my mixed media art class. I utilized Greene's philosophy of the social embodiment of freedom to understand the role of engagement with others on students' mixed media art making experiences.

The Requirement of Self-Reflection

Through my quest to expand imaginations, I strived to be introspective and impassioned as I led students to think and reflect more deeply (Greene, 1988; Rasheed, 2008). The aspect of self-reflection is an essential component of Greene's philosophy concerning the requirements of the teacher and the learner in developing and releasing the imagination. As Greene states (Greene, 1988):

> There must be attending, there must be noticing, at once there must be a reflective turning back to the stream of consciousness—the stream that contains our reflections, our perceptions, our ideas. I am arguing for self-reflectiveness and new disclosures, as I am arguing for critical reflection at a moment of crystallized habits. (p. 182)

Throughout Greene's writings, she argues that engaged, reflective thinking, which will aid in the discovery of imaginative thinking, can be realized and fostered through the arts. Arts activities that promote creative thinking and creative encounters may sustain the cultivation of the imagination (Greene, 1986, 1995b; Rasheed, 2008). As students ponder and imagine through critical self-reflection, they may uncover the governing structures of their world and learn to employ their own choices and new perspectives of their worlds (Greene, 1995b). I considered students' process of self-reflection as I sought to understand their experiences as they created art and made choices during the mixed media art class. I sought to understand the choices my students made as they created and discussed the ways in which their imaginations were employed.

Reaching Beyond

As mentioned earlier, one aspect of Greene's educational philosophy is to lead students to break from a reality defined by the mainstream which governs choice, ideals, perspectives, and

viewpoints (Greene, 1995b; Rasheed, 2008). By utilizing their imaginations in a space with others, students may seek the unfamiliar, influence others, and wander through unforeseen paths for action and possibility (Greene, 1988, 1995b; Post, 2002). Stepping beyond reality and utilizing the imagination to find possibilities is a crucial stage in assisting students to reach beyond what they are. In the process of expanding beyond themselves, students have the potential to generate new meanings and develop enlightened ideas concerning their lives (Greene, 1987; Post, 2002; Rasheed, 2008). Greene (1987) states:

> They [young people] may raise challenges to the taken-for-granted and begin to look at things as if they could be otherwise. In my view, this is the ground for learning to learn. I am convinced that it is not only the thought of having more that moves the young to reach beyond themselves; it is the idea of being more, becoming different, experiencing more deeply, overcoming the humdrum, the plain ordinariness and repetitions of everyday life. (p. 14)

As students enhance their imaginative capabilities, their potential to discover new avenues in their lives and with the world may become abundant and free (Greene, 1987). This research recognizes the experiences of my students creating mixed media art as well as the ways in which their imaginative competencies and perspectives have broadened.

Awakening Adolescents through Art Making

Due to the developed skills and maturity of adolescents, teens are more able to build high-level creative processes and products. However, these students are often expected to conform to teacher expectations, standardized tests, and conventional practices, and not allowed to address their individual creative abilities in process or products (Amorino, 2009; Zimmerman, 2009). As evidenced on creativity tests, a decrease in creativity occurs in preadolescence

(Runco, 2014). Adolescents' ability to express themselves artistically decreases from early childhood largely due to a focus on directive, academically centered approaches to education relying on memorization and the building of technical skills (Amorino, 2009). When creativity is not developed or enhanced, creative ability continues to diminish (Cubukcu & Dundar, 2007). There are many differences in the creative process of young children and preadolescents than students' post-ninth grade (Runco, 2014). Though the importance of creative development in young people has been evidenced, few studies research and document adolescent creativity (Arnheim, 2001; Claxton, Pannells, & Rhoads, 2005; Oakley, 2009; Runco, 2014). Therefore, examination of the experiences of adolescents' creative processes will contribute to the body of research in this area.

Pedagogy

Teaching basic skills and formal techniques through directive instruction and sequential guidelines is a common practice utilized by many art teachers before allowing students to express themselves creatively (Andrews, 2010; Bastos & Zimmerman, 2011; Freedman, 2003). Freedman (2003) argues that when teaching basic art skills, deeper meaning, reflection, creativity, and understanding should be woven into art making. As art teachers readdress their curriculums and pedagogy, they should consider the ways in which they deliver instruction, promote student learning and creativity, and engage students in self, cultural, community, and global awareness. Teachers should also consider the ways in which they provide students with decision-making power and free students to make choices for their art making (Bastos & Buffington, 2014; Cotner, 2011; Freedman, 2003; Hanson & Herz, 2011; Zimmerman, 2011).

Classroom Environment

It was important for my students to understand the difference between a teacher-directed and a student-centered classroom geared towards creativity development. I discussed with students how they would develop knowledge, skills, creativity, and an awareness of the world and themselves during the semester. I explained to students that we would learn many new art skills and techniques along with developing a vast amount of knowledge and understanding concerning art, the world, their communities, and their lives. Throughout the mixed media semester curriculum, students fostered their creativity and imagination as they generated personal ideas, made choices concerning their curriculum and art making, as well as developed their mixed media art (Armstrong, 2000; Binnewies et al., 2007).

To promote an environment conducive for mixed media art making, students needed materials available to expand their creative ideas. I taught students the differences between types of materials and techniques for using the materials. However, students were also given the opportunity to play and experiment with materials through their art making. As part of learning how to use the materials, they were instructed on the clean-up and management of art materials (Bayles & Orland, 1993). An open environment allowed access to a variety of materials that were used to help students develop their ideas in their own way (Armstrong, 2000; Jeffrey & Craft, 2004). I organized a wide variety of materials into stations around the room. I arranged painting cabinets with tempera, acrylic, and watercolor paints. Students had access to drawing materials such as markers, pastels, pens, pencils, color pencils, crayons, and rulers. Collage materials were available to students, including a variety of decorative and colored papers, glue, scissors, buttons, wood, wire, beads, string, fabric, old books, and magazines. Students had access to computers, personal devices and magazines for research and to gain visual inspiration

56

for ideas. At the sink, I kept a variety of brushes, water cups, and paint containers. Students also had access to aprons, rags, and mild detergent for cleaning.

My classroom tables were arranged into groups to encourage dialogue and collaboration as well as evoke inspiration within the classroom space (Dawson & McWilliam, 2008). I often interacted with students as I engaged in dialogue, offered individualized instruction, or assisted in problem solving. I also modeled my creative and art making process as I developed mixed media art alongside students.

The behavioral goals for my student-centered classroom were to maintain an autonomy-supportive environment (Reeve, 1999). I wanted students to feel comfortable discussing their ideas and showing their work. I maintained this environment in how I spoke with the students and by setting expectations on the ways in which students were to speak with each other. It was important for students to be intrinsically motivated to learn and understand more about the world and aesthetics through their art making (Greene, 1995a). I aimed to stimulate intrinsic motivation through a student-centered environment where students were offered governance of their learning, choices for their decisions, and self-directed goals for their art education.

Problem Solving

Constructing awareness through problem solving is a method discussed within the research to foster creative thinking and the creative process (Best, 1991; Dawson & McWilliam, 2008). A problem may foster creative growth in the attempt to develop a solution. Connecting students' art making to issues within the world, cultures, community, and their own lives afforded them the opportunity for purposeful art making, innovative thinking, and awareness of their world. It was important for students to be afforded the opportunity to develop their own ideas, discover areas of interest and concern, as well as become personally connected to their

work. Within my mixed media art class, students were allowed to make choices and decisions concerning their ideas, meanings, directions as well as ways in which to utilize art making skills, techniques, and media.

Summary

My research goal was to understand the creative processes of my students through mixed media art making experiences. The purpose of this study was to examine the creative processes of my high school art students through their experiences developing mixed media art. I examined the ways in which students' creative processes and imaginations are enhanced through the development of mixed media art within my classroom. Current research documenting and analyzing mixed media art is sparse (Rufo, 2012).Within art education, the literature focuses more on lessons specifically exploring painting, drawing, and sculpture (Rufo, 2012). Through this research study, I aimed to present secondary students' mixed media art making including important learning and creative outcomes that may be derived from their creation of mixed media art.

An awareness and understanding of students' creative processes was expanded through research and analysis of students' involvements with mixed media art making. The unique opportunity of teaching mixed media art to high school students afforded the possibility to generate data as teacher and researcher. A review of the literature surrounding mixed media art, high school art education, and student-centered pedagogy provides a foundation for the high school mixed media art class that served as the studied case. Theories and philosophies derived from the review of literature concerning creativity, the imagination, and the creative process, offered guidance towards the construction of the study and analysis of the research. The

philosophy of freedom described by Maxine Greene (1988, 1995b) was utilized as the

foundational lens to interpret my research findings involving the mixed media art experiences

and creative processes of my mixed media art students.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Current research of mixed media art primarily focuses on the work of professional artists (Pragar, 2013; Vaughan, 2009). The review of the literature revealed insufficient information concerning the teaching of mixed media art. Where there are postmodern philosophies of art education and student-centered instruction interlaced within applications of a mixed media art curriculum, few studies are specifically devoted to examining students' artistic or creative process within mixed media art making. There is a dearth of literature devoted to the creative art making processes of students, especially secondary art students. Therefore, my study examined the experiences of high school students as they created mixed media works of art in order to understand their creative processes during stages of art making. The overarching research goal was to understand the ways in which the creative processes of students were fostered through the development of mixed media art. I employed the following research questions as guidance for this study and to impart greater understanding within the literature:

- What are students' experiences in creating mixed media art?
- In what ways does the process of creating mixed media art foster students' imaginations and creativity?
- What factors within the art classroom contribute to students' creative process?

Research Methodology

Through this qualitative research study, I utilized visual ethnographic methods to examine the art making experiences of students within my high school mixed media art class. My intention was to understand aspects of students' creative processes and the ways in which

60

mixed media art may foster their creativity and imaginations. The following description elaborates upon the relative literature utilized to construct the methodology for this study. Methodologies that influenced the design of this visual ethnography are also examined. Visual research is first addressed to contribute to the visual aspects of the research. Following my discussion of visual ethnography, I focus on photography and photo-elicitation as they are significant methods within this visual ethnography. I also offer the connections of arts-based educational research to my study. The application of visual ethnography methods used within my study is discussed within the research design section of this chapter.

Visual Research

As early as the 19th century, anthropologists used cameras to photograph the cultural and environmental realities of Africa and India (Coats, 2014).Visuals maintain a significant role within scholarly studies primarily within anthropology and ethnographic studies. Even though visual research stems from anthropology, it is now applied within various interdisciplinary, academic, and artistic domains (Mitchell, 2011; Pink, 2003). As researchers conduct field observations, apply documents within research and analysis, and document the lived realities of participants and communities, they rely on visual data. Images allow researchers in various fields the opportunity to document and analyze groups and phenomena. Visual data also demonstrates participants' and researchers' views, thoughts, and feelings. These visual facets of the participants' and researchers' lived realities offer important insight into subjectivities, validity, and study findings (Coats, 2014; Coover, 2012; Literat, 2013; Pink, 2011). The technological development of photography coupled with the ease and affordability of cameras, have prompted the utilization of visual documentation in research. The development of handheld cameras and simple image editing software has permitted more researchers to employ visual elements as part

of their research endeavors (Marion & Crowder, 2013; Mitchell, 2011; Pink, 2011).

A researcher may revisit and re-engage with the study by viewing and analyzing images which capture details of the research. This reexamination of research from images can allow the researcher to provide a thicker description of the study so greater understanding can be reached by the researcher and the viewer (Bene, 2014; Benson & Cox, 2014). Both images and narrative present the research story; however, images allow the viewer to access a scene of the research moment easily. This leads to an immediate, clearer understanding of important research segments aimed to convey details about the setting, context, or participants (Marion & Crowder, 2013).

Although images offer the opportunity to revisit research moments, a limitation of visual research is that the researcher may not be able to visually document all aspects of the study. Important segments of the research could be left out of the study. Therefore, combining visual documentation such as photography with interviews and field notes is recommended (Marion & Crowder, 2013).

Visual Ethnography

As visual research permeates other disciplines, it is often conducted through qualitative research methodologies, specifically ethnography. Visual ethnography has ties to photojournalism and art as it employs images for study and presentation. Oftentimes, the visual images presented through ethnographic studies demonstrate an awareness of artistic aesthetics, and the storytelling quality is representative of a photojournalist portrayal. However, visual ethnography expands beyond art and photojournalism as it meets scholarly obligations to research such as ethics and seeks deeper meanings and understandings (Marion & Crowder, 2013; Pink, 2011).

In Pink's (2007) study, she discusses the concept of "walking with" the camera as she conducts visual research (p.250). She explains her method of ethnographic research whereby she takes pictures with her camera during her interactions with participants. She explains

> My approach is to use the camera when I think I will be able to learn more or
>
> learn differently about the particular questions that I am interested in. I switch on
>
> the camera when it will…benefit our collaborative explorations. (p.250)

Creating visual research does not require the researcher to film or photograph every happening within the research context. Because the photographs are based on the selective viewpoint of the photographer, some images from the study may not be captured. Where this is a possible limitation within the photographic documentation, images can be generated as the researcher finds moments that will complement, engage, enhance, or contradict aspects of the research (Marion & Crowder, 2013; Pink, 2007). Images should be captured as the researcher observes moments that may be represented clearer visually than through words or text (Marion & Crowder, 2013; Mitchell, 2011; Pink, 2007; Wagner, 2002).

An additional role of the camera within visual research is the participatory, often intrusive quality of photographing or video recording participants. A camera may seem out-of-place or awkward, as it may not be a customary aspect of the environment. As a researcher photographs participants, they must often interact within the space of the participant. This forms a new relationship of trust, respect, and interaction (Bene, 2014). Coats' (2014) research involves the visual research of community spaces through photography. He found that the camera created encounters with the people and the space that might not have existed otherwise. Coats (2014) attests the camera is an investigative tool for looking deeper into the space that expands art into the realm of social science (Coats, 2014).

The use of the camera within visual ethnographic research may also promote a participatory, collaborative effort between the researcher and the participants. As researchers develop a greater sensitivity to their research participants, they begin to include participants in the research process (Singh, 2011). This practice allows participants a voice within the research study (Coats, 2014; Durington, 1997). Heisley (2001) encourages ethnographic researchers employing visual methods to work with participants through collaborative visual efforts. He explains that through collaboration researchers should not simply take pictures of participants, but rather engage the participants in the image collection process. This participatory effort can exist as researchers collaborate with participants as well as include participants in the actual image making (Heisley, 2001). Many researchers encourage participatory voice when conducting research with children (Burke & Cunningham, 2011; Clark, 2010; Greenland & Rayman-Bacchus, 2014; Kullman, 2012; Literat, 2013). Permitting children to have a participatory stance in the visual documentation adds a deeper perspective into the study and helps them understand the research to which they are consenting (Lomax, 2012; Luttrell, 2010; Mizen & Ofosu-kusi, 2010).

Visual research extends the opportunity to express the story of the research through a deep, thick representation (Literat, 2013; Marion & Crowder, 2014). As ethnographic researchers visually document a study, they must pay close attention to their surroundings and participants to capture essential images. This interaction with the research environment can yield a deep connection and collaboration between the researcher and participants (Bates, 2013; Bene, 2014; Irwin & DeCosson, 2004; Marion & Crowder, 2014). As visual researchers interact with

participants or within a community through image collaboration, there is a potential for

understanding and knowledge of the cultural systems (Marion & Crowder, 2014; Mitchell, 2011;

Pink, 2007).

Photography

 Photography is a primary mode of visual research discussed throughout the literature

used to relate the participants' stories, a specific time, place, or event, as well as to present an

argument or theory. Images can convey a researcher's purpose through a realist portrayal or as an

aesthetic artistic expression (Coover, 2012). Art, drawings, and documents are also employed

within visual research literature as a means of arts-based research methods and representation

(Al-Yah Yai, 2014; Literat, 2013; Marion & Crowder, 2013; Mitchell, 2011; Moss, 2013; Pink,

2001; Theron, 2011). Singh (2011) utilizes the term "visual artifact" to describe types of visuals

utilized in research and encompasses "paintings, sketches, maps, doodles, photographs, video

and film" (p. 42). Visual research weaves visual images with textual writings to present a

research study (Coover, 2012). Each of these methods allow researchers and participants to gain

greater understandings as they examine moments of the research in detail (Coats, 2014).

 Photography is a method utilized by anthropologists conducting visual research (Marion

& Crowder, 2013) as well as artists/researchers conducting arts-based research (Springgay,

Irwin, & Kind, 2005). Photography is often used as a source of data for analysis and research

representation (Hogan, 2012; Rose, 2001). As researchers photograph contextual elements of

their study and participants, they aim to uncover new insights and previously unnoticed details of

the research. The camera also enables the researcher to engage with the participants and within

the research environment as the researcher and participant interact and collaborate during the

photographic moment (Coats, 2014). A participatory use of photography is developed by

allowing participants to collaborate and engage in photo making. Deeper meaning and

understanding of the research is garnered through a participatory collaboration with the image

making and image analysis process (Singh, 2011). Photographs can be incorporated within

written text to enhance understanding and clarify meanings (Irwin & DeCosson, 2004; Kullman,

2012; Marion, 2010; Marion & Crowder, 2013; Mitchell, 2011).

Photo-Elicitation

The concept of photo elicitation and photo interviewing was developed by John Collier in

1957 and extends from mental health research (Harper, 2002). Photo elicitation has since

expanded to incorporate other forms of image elicitation such as video, art, and other types of

images. These images are often utilized in social science to stimulate responses from

participants. Image elicitation can trigger memories from participants and promote participants to

provide context, discuss thoughts, attitudes, and believes, and reveal a deeper understanding of

the research (Harper, 2002; Hogan, 2012). Qualitative research methods often utilize image

elicitation during interviews. Elicitation of participant responses from images can generate

greater insight and broader understanding to the researcher (Banks, 2014; Hogan, 2012; Marion

& Crowder, 2013; Pink, 2007; Singh, 2011).

Arts-Based Research

As I reviewed literature and constructed the framework for this visual ethnographic

study, I often encountered research pertaining to arts-based, research. Due to the examination of

experiences within the visual arts and the utilization of artistic methods in the visual

representation of the research, many ties exist between visual ethnographic research and arts-

based research. A more specific component of arts-based research is arts-based educational

research, which examines elements of education and presents research through artistic

representations. Barone and Eisner (1997), proponents of arts-based educational research, encourage researchers to seek participatory, expressive, art-based practices in order to uncover greater understanding of experiences with and among the arts. Barone and Eisner (1997) assert arts-based educational research may apply to the use of the arts within classrooms, research utilizing the arts with participants, and/or the representation of research through artistic means (Barone & Eisner, 1997). Arts-based educational research weaves together the act of researching aesthetic experiences with developing understanding through the creation of aesthetic experiences (Al-Yah Yai, 2014; Coats, 2014). Arts-based educational research can be utilized to investigate, understand, and represent research through the arts. As the researcher is engaged with the aesthetic development, meaning is continuously derived.

My visual ethnographic research corresponds to arts-based educational research as I sought to research and gain an understanding of the creative process of students through their art making experiences. I also utilized the artistic method of photography to capture my participants' experiences. As the teacher/researcher, I constructed meaning through the research process as I photographed, interviewed, took field notes, and analyzed images and text from the study. Meaning was continuously constructed as students sketched, wrote about, discussed, and created art. However, the resulting product developed from the research findings separate my study from arts-based research. The product of an arts-based research study is characteristically represented through an aesthetic expression. Arts-based research encourages the researcher, participants, and viewers to create meanings and understandings from the involvement with the aesthetic product (Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008; Coats, 2014, Wall, 2012; Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005). The findings from my study include my students' description of their mixed media art making experiences along with photographs documenting their art making. Although I utilized

photography to document my students' art making, I refrained from altering the photographs to form a personal artistic expression. This decision was made to authentically represent the findings and to maintain a transparent presentation of the research. As the researcher and teacher, I aimed to remain true to my students' personal stories and moments of art making.

The data collection, analysis, and presentation of my research incorporates photography and textual data. Bach (2007) utilizes the term "visual narrative inquiry" to describe research incorporating both visual and narrative methods. Marion and Crowder (2013) explain that visual research can be considered multimedia, as it combines different types of visual and textual data. This can include photography, art, or other images, joined with text and narratives (Hogan, 2012; Marion & Crowder, 2013, Pink 2001). The multimedia presentation of this study incorporates photographs and photo collages derived from the study, text describing research findings, and participants' narratives.

Research Design

Visual ethnographic research methods were applied through the observation and photographic documentation of student participants within the regular setting of their mixed media art class. These methods included field notes and the use of photography to document students' mixed media art making experiences and aspects contributing to their creative processes. Students contributed to the research data through their mixed media art making, where I photographed the various stages of their processes. I utilized both informal and in-depth interviews where students were able to voice their thoughts, recollections, encounters, and beliefs about mixed media art making and describe their creative processes through their answers to open-ended questions (Gallagher, 2012; Roulston, 2010). The interviews employed the visual and ethnographic method of photo and art-elicitation to engage the participants in reflecting upon

68

their art making processes (Harper, 2002). Through the following description of my research design, I elaborate on the specific case involved in the study along with individual cases within the case. This description includes the ways in which the case was bound, selection of the case, and the unit of analysis.

The Case

My case study involved examining the experiences of my high school mixed media art students' as they created in order to understand the creative potential this form of art making may offer to secondary students. Through my study, I aimed to understand the culture of art making within this specific group of students as they participated in a unique, student-centered form of art making. Individual cases within the case were used to garner an in-depth understanding of the mixed media class. My mixed media art class served as the specific case that for the study. Stake (2013) explains "the qualitative understanding of cases requires experiencing the activity of the case as it occurs in its contexts and in its particular situation" (p.3). This class is a course within a large public high school in the southeastern United States. I served as the teacher of these students who chose to take the mixed media art course. An introductory high school art course was the art department's requirement prior to taking the class. This specific case occurred through the duration of an eighteen-week semester.

Fifteen students were enrolled in my high school mixed media art class. The case included the ten students who consented to participate in the study and received parental permission. Stake (2013) explains "to study a case, we carefully examine its function and activities but the first objective of a case study is to understand the case" (p.3). I kept field notes of my experiences and observations of the students during their art making to develop a greater

69

understanding of the case. As students were involved in the art making, I photographed stages of their art making. These images served as documents for analysis.

Participants within the Case

Obtaining parental permission and student consent played a major role in participant selection. Each of the fifteen students were invited to participate in the research, and I issued letters and permission forms to their parents. Any student who submitted consent forms contributed to the research study as I observed and photographed their mixed media art making experiences. As a unit of analysis, I chose to focus on five participants for a more in-depth study. I purposively selected (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Maxwell, 2013) the five participants to gain a range of student experiences. The purposive selection of these five students was based on differences such as social engagement, personality, gender, ethnicity, academic ability, and artistic ability as each of these had potential to contribute to their art making background, their creative process, as well as add diversity to the data. The smaller unit of analysis allowed me to spend significant time with the participants and the data they each contribute to the study (DeMarrais, 2004). I conducted in-depth interviews with each of the five participants. I also took more extensive photographs of these five students' processes of art making. The five students' experiences within the mixed media art class are featured in chapters four and five. The experiences of the five students in the context of the overall case study is also discussed within chapters four and five.

Data Collection Methods

The data for this study was collected from August 2015 through the spring of 2016 and employed methods that aimed to both visually and verbally express the creative experiences of my mixed media art students. The chosen methods were most appropriate for my research design. These data collection methods included observational field notes, photography, as well as informal and in-depth interviews.

Interviews

I utilized ethnographic interview methods including photo and art elicitation to gain a better understanding of my student's mixed media art making process (Gallagher, 2012; Heyl, 2001; Roulston, 2010). My informal interview conversations with student during class and through the in-depth interview settings needed to be supportive for students to find comfort in discussing the depths of their artistic processes and mixed media art making experiences with me. As the teacher-researcher, I aimed to build trust and rapport with my students "to generate the kind of conversation that is intimate and self-revealing" (Roulston, 2010, p. 56).

Informal interviews were conducted during class as students created their mixed media art. My role as teacher-researcher within the mixed media class afforded me the opportunity to conduct informal interviews through the duration of the research period. Important aspects of the informal interviews were recorded within my daily field notes.

An in-depth interview of each of the five students comprising the unit of analysis occurred near the conclusion of the semester. These five interviews, each lasting approximately 60 minutes, sought a more detailed account of the students' creative process as I asked a series of open-ended questions (see Appendix F). I relied on prompts within questions to guide students to expand their responses.

I used photo-elicitation during these in-depth interviews for students to reflect on integral moments of their mixed media art making. Singh (2011) employs the term "visual artifacts" to describe images utilized to evoke dialogue and cooperation between the researcher and participants to generate increased understanding of the study (p. 42). As researchers and participants utilize visual artifacts to construct meaning, researcher subjectivities and ethical concerns are decreased as a more expansive understanding is assembled. The collaboration invites participants' viewpoints and guidance of image interpretation and analysis (Pink 2003; Singh, 2011; Wiles, Coffey, Robinson, & Heath, 2012). Following the interview, I reflected on the interview within my field notes journal. These reflections related to my thoughts concerning the interview, subjectivities, and possibilities for future analysis (Roulston, 2010).

Photography

Photography, a method of visual research, was an important aspect of the methodology, as it captured moments of the research to be used for analysis, reflection, elicitation, and research presentation. Bach (2007) describes the use of images within research as a form of visual narrative inquiry. She explains that visual narrative inquiry "is an intentional, reflective, active human process in which researchers and participants explore and make meaning of experience both visually and narratively (p. 281). The visual, photographic documentation adds layers of significance to the research. Through the narrative inquiry, I captured stages of the art making experiences of students as they developed mixed media art. These visuals served as documents for analysis, a mode of elicitation for student interviews, and reflective moments of the students' mixed media experiences. Utilizing visual research as a means of elicitation and documentation of the research offered student participants a voice within the research. Photographs documenting their processes represented their personal ways of art making (Mitchell, 2011;

Rose, 2001). The visual images combined with textual data are utilized as a component of the research presentation, thus offering the researcher, participating students, and the viewer greater clarity of the research and a continued development of meaning (Banks, 2014; Marion & Crowder, 2013; Mitchell, 2011).

Photography aided in the reflection of observed moments of the study (Pink, 2003). The camera captured details of actions, choices, experiences, and processes may have been unnoticed or forgotten without visual documentation. The visual increased my capability to produce thick descriptions. These thick descriptions have potential to promote a deeper engagement between the researcher, participants, and viewer. Visuals offer glimpses into accounts where words may not be sufficient (Bates, 2013; Benson & Cox, 2014; Coover, 2012; Marion & Crowder, 2013; Pink 2003). As visual research is presented, the viewing audience may reach a greater understanding and insight of a culture, community, or action that might not be captured as clearly through text alone (Benson & Cox, 2014; Coover, 2014; Mitchell, 2011).

I used photography as a method of narrative inquiry to document and examine the daily creative processes of my students as they created mixed media art (Bach, 2007). The images were employed in photo-elicitation interview discussions and field note reflections. I incorporated the images within the visual presentation of the research findings. The photo documentation allowed me to reflect on and analyze my student's creative processes. I also utilized the images to represent different angles of my research findings (Bach, 2007; Coover, 2012; Mitchell, 2011; Rose, 2014).

Images generated as data from visual research served as visuals to enrich field notes, photo-elicitation documents for interviews, memory aids during research writings, as well as sources for research presentation (Marion & Crowder, 2013, Mitchell, 2011). Al- Yah Yai

(2014) attests that new meanings may be discovered as researchers observe with their own eyes, through a camera lens, and from images acquired during the study. As I analyzed visual data I was able to reflect, re-search, and re-engage with lived moments of the research that was captured through images. Analyzing data from images promoted rich representations and thick descriptions of the study (Al-Yah Yai, 2014; Bene, 2014; Hartman, Mandich, Magalhaes, & Orchard, 2011; Singh, 2011).

Image Management

Photographs were taken using a fifth generation 32 gigabyte (GB) Apple iPod touch. Since cell phones and portable digital devices are common sights within the classroom, using the iPod was be less intrusive to the classroom environment than the use of a larger camera. I took 747 images and uploaded them to a password-protected hard-drive. A folder was created for each student that was coded with the student's pseudonym. The iPod also recorded the date with the photo, which will assisted in organization and analysis.

Observational Field Notes

Throughout the semester of the mixed media art class, I kept field notes to document my observations of students' art making processes, questions, and overall experience. During class time, I would document students' processes with photographs. Photographs garnered during the class allowed me to reflect on research moments and add details to field notes. I would take note of specific questions or comments students had concerning their processes in a sketchbook/journal. I utilized my field notes to reflect on my students' experiences through the duration of the research period. Participant observation is an integral aspect of ethnographic research where the researcher "takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people" (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p.1). As I taught the mixed media class, I was

involved in the daily art making processes of my students through my instruction, assistance, assessment, and encouragement. At the conclusion of each day I would write a brief paragraph in my field note journal, reflecting on the daily experiences of the class.

Member Checks

I conducted member checks of the interview transcript to secure accuracy of interview data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants were asked to verify my interpretations and explanations of the research data. Although participating students were able to make additions, corrections, and contribute to the clarification of the research, they did not request any changes.

<center>**Data Analysis Methods**</center>

Data analysis occurred throughout this study as I reviewed research photographs and interviews. My engagement with the data involved reading and rereading interview transcripts. To begin generating categories, I utilized an open approach to coding data. Initial codes were based on ideas drawn from my review of literature on creativity (Amabile & Hennessey, 2010; Elster, 1992; Ruona, 2005) and the creative process (Baker-Sennett, 1995; Wallas, 1926; Zimmerman, 2010), adolescents (Amorino, 2009; Erikson, 1970; Greene, 1995a; Hesser, 2009), art education (Andrews, 2005, 2010; Best, 1991; Dewey, 1980; Greene, 1988, 1995b), student-centered education (Douglas and Jaquith, 2009; Orr, Yorke & Blair, 2014), and mixed media art (Douglas & Jaquith, 2009). I utilized Atlas.ti, a data analysis software program to assist in the continued organization, coding, and categorization of data, as well as generating themes within the research. Throughout this section, I elaborate on the data analysis methods employed for each form of data.

Interviews

Once the interviews were complete, I listened to the interviews and took notes of my initial impressions. I employed a transcription service to provide detailed, accurate transcriptions of the interviews. I reviewed the transcripts for accuracy and offered digital copies of the transcripts to participants. I began interview analysis by categorizing and coding the interview transcripts. My initial codes and categories included aspects of students' art making such as fears, materials, problem solving, stages, classroom interaction, and creativity. After initial coding and categorizing, I generated more in-depth categories, as well as made connections between the categories to begin generating themes. Initial themes involved students' understanding of mixed media art, experiences of art making, and creativity, as well as the classroom environment. I utilized Atlas.ti to further develop and organize codes and categories. The sorting function within Atlas.ti allowed me to discover the depth of themes and connections within the data (Ruona, 2005). As I analyzed the data, I searched for themes concerning the creative process of my participants' art creations. I also sought themes attributing to the processes of mixed media art making.

Photo Analysis

My methods of analyzing images are reflective of textual data analysis methods (Bates, 2013; Marion & Crowder, 2013). To begin analysis, I re-examine images as new discoveries, allowing new understandings to emerge (Banks, 2014). I also collaborated with participants and wrote detailed notes concerning the images (Bene, 2014). For analysis, all photos, including notes, were organized, coded, and categorized within the hermeneutic unit of Atlas.ti. Themes were generated from the analysis and were interwoven with other forms of data gleaned from the study. These themes outlined the major categories or findings of the study. The themes generated

from the codes provided a broad understanding of the experiences of my participants (Brookhart, 2013). To construct the findings in chapters four and five, I first integrated the interview data thematically. I then wove images of the five participants' experiences within their stories to illustrate the narrative presentation of the research. Images presented within the narrative aims to portray greater meaning, views, and validity of the research (Bates, 2013; Bene, 2014; Marion & Crowder, 2013).

Field Notes

I utilized Atlas.ti to code my observational field notes. This coding, categorizing, and thematic analysis was similar to my analysis of interview transcripts. Once the notes were coded, categorized, and organized into themes, this data was incorporated within the other forms of data through the use of Atlas.ti. The grouping and sorting functions within the program allowed me to integrate the data sets and organize them according to corresponding codes and category families (Ruona, 2005). The field notes assisted me in clarifying moments of the research.

<div align="center">

Data Representation

</div>

Visual research often weaves images with text. Participants' words combined with images of their experiences provide various perspectives of the research, thus contributing to greater meaning making (Bach, 2007). Irwin and DeCosson (2004) argue that art and text should not represent similar aspects of the research. Instead, they should "unite the visual and textual by complementing, refuting, or enhancing one another" (p. 13). I aimed to represent my research findings through a visual presentation that incorporated photography garnered throughout the study within participants' narratives and textual descriptions. Visual images from photos combined with text and narratives, offers a thick description of my students' experiences creating

mixed media art. Photographs along with photo collages of students' processes over time are utilized to visually represent moments of the study.

The participants' stories are provided through a narrative of their words to present a transparent and trustworthy representation of the data. Siedman (2006) attests, "telling stories is a meaning making experiences" (p. 7). I refrained from altering or summarizing participants stories to offer a true depiction of their experiences. Smagorinsky (2008) argues that research methods too often are "representative of the author's preferred conclusion than what the data actually produced about the focus of the study (p. 397). My goal was to remain true to the research and the experiences of my students.

This culmination of data within the research findings may offer my participants an extended voice through the research (Mitchell, 2011). The visual and verbal data offers a thick description of secondary art students' mixed media experiences and creative processes. A facet of visual research is that new discoveries are continuously derived as images are reviewed and revisited. This study invites the participants, viewing audience, and myself to participate in the continued meaning making and develop deeper understandings of the research.

Ethical Guidelines Protecting Human Subjects (IRB)

Ethical cautions are found throughout the literature of visual research. Any research involving human subjects aims to maximize the protection of the participants. Since visual research involves capturing images of the participants and their lived reality, this leads to heightened concerns of their anonymity, image ownership, image display, and understanding of consent (Bates, 2013; Clark, 2013; Lynn & Lea, 2005; Marion & Crowder, 2013). My study did not present any harm to the participants as I documented their experiences of mixed media art making. However, Marion and Crowder (2013) caution that since researchers might be unable to

control the full extent of the dissemination of visual images, participant consent and well-being should be of a heightened concern when conducting visual research. Throughout this section I elaborate on each of these concerns and possibilities for alleviating the challenges.

Anonymity

An aim for scholarly research is to preserve the anonymity of the people represented through the study. Visual research methodologists question the amount of anonymity posed in a study (Bates, 2013; Clark, 2013; Marion & Crowder, 2013). Visual researchers often collaborate with participants concerning the images displayed, thus garnering greater ethical consent (Bates, 2013). Visual methodologists suggest concealing the identity of participants unless their image is critical to the study (Clark, 2013; Marion, 2010; Marion & Crowder, 2013; Wiles et al., 2012). If anonymity is diminished, participants' firm understanding of consent is a priority (Bates, 2013; Marion & Crowder, 2013; Wiles et al., 2012). For my study, I issued pseudonyms and identifying information was concealed in the research presentation. Students were able to collaborate with me concerning the images used to represent the research. Due to their role as minors within the study and requests for anonymity within my school district, their identity remained concealed.

There are many creative methods of assuring anonymity presented in visual research studies. I protected the anonymity of my participating students by adjusting the camera frame and utilizing image editing programs to conceal identities (Clark, 2013). This alleviated possible embarrassment, frustration, and anxiety that could develop from the inclusion of their identifying images. I also collaborated with students on the images used to represent their experiences (Wiles et al., 2012).

Image Ownership

As part of the consent agreement, participants should have an understanding of who owns the images produced for a research study (Clark, 2013; Marion & Crowder, 2013). Prior to my research study, I clarified the consent to visual research with my participants and their parents. Researchers are encouraged to maintain primary responsibility of the images. Control of images should remain a priority for a visual researcher due to the ease of image dissemination through social media, internet, and digital sharing (Clark, 2013). As with any research data, procedures should be constructed and followed in the storage and protection of images (Marion & Crowder, 2013; Mitchell, 2011). For my study, I stored all images on a password protected hard drive. I was the only one with access to the images. Students were able to view images of their art making process for collaboration purposes and through photo-elicitation interviews. If a student were to request a copy of specific images, I would provide a digital copy of the image(s) to the student and their parent.

Consent and Image display

Visual researchers may utilize images for data and/or study representation. It is important for researchers to consider the ways in which the images will be employed prior to conducting visual research. Images may be used for data analysis, elicitation of participant responses, or presentation to an audience. The audience may include participants, community, and/or members of the academic community (Bates, 2013; Clark, 2013; Marion & Crowder, 2013). Each of these aspects are vital to consider and reveal to research participants as they offer consent

Though a typical practice in scholarly research is to attain participant consent prior to conducting research, visual research practices require a heightened understanding of consent between the researcher and participant. Participants need to understand what the visual research

will entail, the level of anonymity, the ways in which their images will be displayed, and the guidelines of image ownership (Coover, 2012; Marion & Crowder, 2013; Pink 2007; Wiles et al., 2012). Throughout a visual research study, participants should understand the aspects of their consent and their right to withdraw from the study. Wiles et al. (2012) explain that participants, especially children, may be excited to participate in a visual research study, but may not have clear understanding of the implications of the images garnered in the study. It is the responsibility of the researcher to clarify the components of consent. Prior to the research, I discussed with students that the images of their art making would be used to visualize my written description of their process and to illustrate their stories of art making. My use of images, reflective-writing, and interview data were each clarified within the student consent forms as well as the parent letter and permission forms.

Standards for Research Quality

Validity and Authenticity

As a mixed media artist and teacher of mixed media art, I was aware of my subjectivities and that my relationship to this study was influenced by my experiences and understandings as a mixed media artist and teacher. I also understood that the teacher-researcher relationship to my students within the mixed media art class would potentially influence the research data. My goal throughout this study was to conduct quality research while remaining earnest about my subjectivities and influences they could have on the research (Peshkin, 1988). Multiple methods of data collection were utilized for triangulation to establish validity (Denzin, 1978; Freeman, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007).

Prior to data collection, I issued consent forms and discussed the purpose of the research study with students. As each consent from was turned in, I clarified the roles of myself as

researcher/teacher and their role as participants. I explained to the students that the class would be conducted as normal; however, I would often take pictures of their art making and take notes concerning their art making. After selecting the five specific case participants, I explained the interview process as well as my focus to photographically capture their moments of art making. Clear documentation and descriptions of the five students' experiences are provided within the research findings of chapters four and five. The five participants' words along with photos of their processes are incorporated into chapters four and five to establish trustworthiness of the data and for transparency (Smagorinsky, 2008). Through the use of multiple methods of data collection and detailed analysis procedures, I aimed to present an authentic study that will contribute greater meaning and understanding within the field of art education.

Summary

Through each semester teaching high school mixed media art, I am afforded the opportunity to witness my students' art making abilities and creative process flourish. Oftentimes I attempt to describe to others the intricacies of this mixed media class and the growth in creativity that takes place. I have found my descriptions fail to express the aspects that encompass this growth. My views are based on practitioner experiences and do not truly articulate the aspects of the mixed media classroom and the students I have the pleasure to work with. This awareness prompted me to examine and develop a greater understanding of my students' creative processes and art making experiences. Through my various forms of data collection and detailed analysis, I garnered a greater understanding of students' creative processes within mixed media art making.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS: STUDENT-CENTERED ART MAKING AND

UNDERSTANDINGS OF SELF

Throughout the semester of my mixed media art class my students had a range of art

making experiences. These experiences prompted my students to form new understandings of art

and personal connections with creating. Chapters four and five provide a presentation of research

findings along with a thematic analysis and discussion of the students' mixed media art making

experiences. I began this chapter with a review of the research purpose and goals. I then

introduced the mixed media class through a brief overview. The sections that follow are

presented by themes garnered from data analysis. Within each theme I offered the participants

experiences along with a theoretical analysis. The participants' experiences, within each thematic

section, are presented as individual narratives.

Each narrative includes photographs of the students' art making moments along with

their words elaborating upon their new understandings developed from mixed media art,

experiences within the class, and approaches to a student-centered curriculum, as well as the

personal meaning making that formed through their creative processes. Students discussed

differences found between mixed media and other forms of art making. They described their

creative growth, personal meaning making, peer interaction, and art making process. Students

also offered details describing the importance of mixed media art to their personal and artistic

development. The words and images are presented with minimal interruption through each

thematic narrative as I aim to clearly and transparently present the voices and art making

moments of my participants (Smagorinsky, 2008). Through their words and images of their art making, I offered a thick description of students' mixed media art experiences.

Following each thematic narrative I provided a discussion of students' experiences. Through this theoretical analysis, I discussed the research findings as related to the theoretical framework designed to examine students' creative processes within my mixed media art making class. I elaborated upon the four major themes that emerged from data analysis. Through chapters four and five I discussed the themes of student-centered art making and new understandings of self and art making. The themes of mixed media classroom culture and personal meaning making through the creative process are presented within chapter five. Within both chapters I expounded on the underlying theme of freedom that is interwoven among each theme and the theoretical framework.

Research Purpose and Goals Review

My goal for this research study was to examine my students' art making in order to gain new understanding and awareness of secondary students' creative processes and the benefits of mixed media art making to their creative and imaginative development. Throughout the research and discussion of findings, I centered my focus on the students' experiences and processes during art making and steer from a critique of students' finished products. My intent was to examine secondary art students' creative processes and development of creative thinking through the study of their thoughts, actions, exploration, experimentation, collaboration, choices, techniques, decisions, and reflections during art making.

Postmodern educational research encourages the development of creative thinking among students. These philosophies invite students to embrace the creative process and art educators to expand classroom objectives beyond the development of technical skills and art products

(Jaquith, 2011; National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014; Zimmerman, 2009). Studies have presented possibilities for advancing the creative thinking of students through specific lessons and strategies (Andrews, 2005; Gude 2010; Guhin, 2015; Hanson & Herz, 2011). However, few studies specifically examine the creative processes and thought of secondary students through stages of art making and limited studies explore students' involvement with mixed media art making (Kasof, 1995; Wehner et al., 1991).

As I sought greater awareness of the ways in which students' creative processes may be fostered through stages of mixed media art making, I utilized three research questions to guide my study:

- What are students' experiences in creating mixed media art?

- In what ways does the process of creating mixed media art foster students' imaginations and creativity?

- What factors within the art classroom contribute to students' creative processes?

I wanted to gain a holistic understanding of students' experiences and processes within the mixed media art classroom. I considered these guiding questions throughout the research and analysis as I developed a theoretical and methodological framework, researched relevant literature, constructed interview questions, analyzed data, and generated themes.

Introduction to the Mixed Media Class

Art students quietly entered my morning mixed media art class on the first day of the semester, each with the big question, "Where do I sit." I replied, "You get to choose." This became the answer to many other questions through the remainder of the semester. My goal for this mixed media art class was to allow students opportunities to make personal decisions concerning their art making. I wanted choice to be ingrained into their actions from their first

moments within the class. However, students did not immediately grasp onto the concept of choice. They were tentative about making their own decisions and attempting to venture down new paths of art making.

Figure 1. Panorama view of my art room taken after students were dismissed from class.

Tension and anxiety seemed to fill the first couple of weeks of the mixed media class. I almost felt the need to tiptoe around the room due to the silence of the students. I often encouraged students to discuss their work with others within the class but few took the chance during these first weeks. Although I encouraged students to explore and investigate within the classroom to find inspiration, it was as if they were permanently glued to their seats. As the semester progressed and students grasped the reins of control over their art making, the classroom became alive with creativity and imagination. They embraced the student-centered curriculum, where they were offered autonomy over idea generation, media choice, and art making processes. They became motivated to further their learning and artistic development through self-generated goals and plans for art making.

Figure 2. Students creating substrates from two different moments of the semester.

Introduction to Kathie

Kathie began the semester as a quiet and timid eleventh-grade student who was immensely concerned with the technical aspects of her work. She often stressed over the layout and composition of her work, as well as art techniques such as shading, proportions, and the accuracy of details. However, as Kathie finally accepted the freedoms of media, process, choice, and ideas offered through the mixed media class, she embraced her differences, became enthusiastic about attempting new ways of creating, and sought to represent personal thoughts and perspectives within her work.
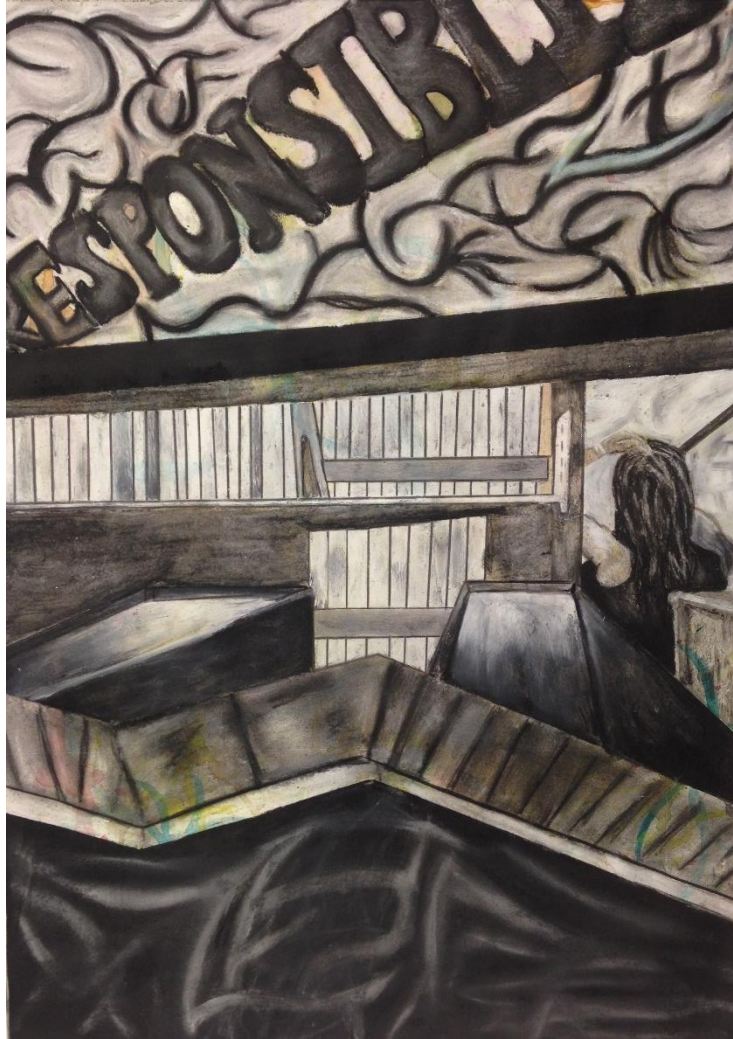
Figure 3. One of Kathie's first works created in the mixed media class.

Kathie's Experience

If I don't have an art class I won't get through the day. Art is my only way of expressing myself and calming down. I have a stressful life. I find that I started art because my grandma painted and I liked it a lot. My step sister drew a lot. Watching her draw, I used to pretend that she taught us art over the summer. That got me into art.

Figure 4. Kathie created this work about family early in the semester. This was her first collage

experience.

Introduction to Joan

Joan is a hard-working eleventh grader who juggles the stresses of school, homework,

social life, a part-time job, as well as caring for family and siblings. I taught Joan during her

ninth grade year when she was often overwhelmed with frustration and anxiety. This semester, in

the mixed media class, she expressed her thoughts and feelings through her art making.

Joan's Experience

Basically I started out in art in elementary school. I was just a kid that kind of stood out

in basic art. Cartoons were kind of my thing, like the Disney stuff. I was really good at it, so I

always did it and gave it to my art teacher. She had a huge stack of them. I was like the teacher's

pet. I did art visions in sixth, seventh and eighth grade. I stood out there too. All of those classes - I flew through projects. It was always something new.

Then I got to tenth grade, and then dropped art altogether. Yeah, biggest mistake of my life. Absolutely. I knew I'd enjoy it, but I didn't think it's where I wanted to go in life. In high school, I felt like everything you did had to be for your future. Like, I did band when I was in middle school and dropped band because it wasn't my future. I did art in ninth grade and dropped it because I didn't think it was my future Then I realized that even though I'm a business major, now I can still go and take art classes in college. I can still do visual arts, I can still do art at home. It's just not everything you do has to be set in stone, your future. So that's why I dropped it. And then I was like, yeah, no, you're an idiot, time to pick it back up.

Now I've done mixed media and it's something else I flew through. I just get into pieces, and where they're supposed to be week-long projects, I'll pull them off in two or three days. That's just me. Once I get my ideas on paper, it's just kind of like my thing and it's just kind of my go-to, because I'm not getting rewards at all. I'll stumble and I'll repeat myself - I don't know, art is just kind of like my way of expressing it.

Prior experiences with mixed media art. Mixed media is included as a component of the 9th grade art curriculum. As the ninth grade art teacher, I introduced students to mixed media art through a creative problem solving exercise. Joan describes this as her first experience creating mixed media art.

In ninth grade I did that one where - I think you gave us storylines and it was like some freak science experiment. I did that bird piece and I dumped salt all over it. It was three birds and one was in gray scale. It was going from gray scale to color. Then the next one was bright,

and I put tissue paper over the whole thing. It was black and then colored, and then I glued the whole thing and dumped salt all over it. I had salt all over your room. My piece was huge, it was massive.

I don't remember exactly how we did it. I just remember that was still when you were laying down the fundamentals for us, like early on. I don't think it was our very first piece, but I know that it was the one I remember the most. I put so much effort into that thing. You said it was like a freak science experiment and something had to change. You said it was like a mutation, so some kids did something based off something changing into another. I did a bird. I still have the whole sense of free will that I've always done with my pieces.

So I did the bird. It was a huge piece. I started out in the corner and it was three birds, all the way up. That's when you taught me to use layers. The first bird was Black, white, and gray. The middle one was gray, brown and black. Then the very top one was nothing but color. It was all the way up and you see it falling away. It was kind of like it was chasing away. It was all tissue paper. The top was multicolor tissue paper and the bottom was black. I glued all that, and when I covered it in glue, dumped salt all over it. That was my first mixed media piece.

Introduction to David

David is a tenth grade art student who moved to our school during his ninth grade year. He is a focused student who strives to do his best artistically and academically. He smiles as he speaks to his classmates and me, yet works with serious concentration as he creates his art. David is always willing to tackle any task I set before the class.

David's Experience

Ever since kindergarten and throughout elementary I loved art. I like to color, sometimes draw, but not a lot of time. I love to paint. I loved to go to art classes. In middle school, when

91

you get to choose if you want to continue art, I've always chosen art. But, I hated how you have to draw – there's not much painting or adding color to stuff. So, it became mediocre. Then in sixth grade I took up journalism, and I did photography. I loved it so much that I want to become a photographer now. I've been taking classes for photography.

In seventh grade I did an art class and I liked the teacher there because she let us do whatever we wanted, but she would still give us something to do. She wouldn't tell us, no coloring or no drawing. Then eighth grade, I did some drawings, and it was just - do whatever the teacher says and get graded on that. The teacher would give us an assignment that we had to draw—like draw a house, or make up a little picture of an animal or something, and we just had to draw it. There was no coloring, unless she said so. So, I sort of hated that. Then ninth grade, I just drew whatever she gave us. It wasn't free - whatever we wanted to do. Then this year, I like mixed media because I can do whatever I want - add color, or paint instead of just having to draw over and over again.

This is the only art class I actually do my own thing. I usually had someone say I need to do more with a piece, even though I would not want to do any more to it because I think its fine. Then I just sort of slack on it. I do just a little bit, because I really don't want to do nothing more to it. I would take a bad grade because I like it like that. I'm not about to add on more stuff to make it look worse than it already is.

Introduction to Sal

Sal is a technically advanced eleventh grade art student who is tremendously thoughtful about his art making. I taught Sal art during his 9th grade year, and he took art from another teacher during tenth grade. Sal spends time thinking through his ideas and aims for precision and

mastery of technique as he creates his art. He is confident about his artistic abilities and ideas but is humble and continuously strives to improve his art making.

Sal's Experience

From elementary school to middle school art, even up to tenth grade, art teachers tell us what to do and we do something. Everyone's art is different but it's the same concept. So whatever your skill level was, that's how good it was. But it was all the same. Just some were better. A lot of it was just 2D, we didn't paint - not Art 1 or 2. So, pretty much drawing. A lot of drawing. In middle school it was getting shapes down and learning to draw 3D. That was pretty much it.

In Art 1 we had a tree piece. It was weird to me, I didn't know what to do really. So I kind of – I did a mosaic type thing. It was like a positive/negative mosaic, but it was a tree piece. Honestly, I didn't like the piece at all, and while in the process of making it, it wasn't tedious, but I didn't feel like doing it just because I already didn't like it. So I was reluctant to work on it. But I finished it, and then it ended up winning awards and stuff, which surprised me. That was the earliest I can remember doing mixed media.

I just didn't like the way it looked. It was new to me. The type of art was new to me. I wasn't used to that. Because I didn't believe, at that point, I didn't believe that a mixed media piece could be as aesthetically pleasing as a drawing or a 2D hyper-realistic or photorealistic drawing could be.

I know I remember not liking the tree. I ran into problems with that because I wasn't as familiar with the way a tree was structured, and the branches and all that. So I guess that could be considered a problem. It was kind of just flat. I wouldn't say I am where I am now, of course,

but it definitely helped me realize that people see art differently from the way I do. I'm going to

be my worst critic, so it definitely showed me a different side.

Figure 5. Sal's work on his realistic drawing using a mix of drawing materials (charcoal,

graphite, chalk, color pencils).

Introduction to Sonia

Sonia is a cheerful, positive spoken student who works hard, however, her confidence

often faltered throughout stages of her art making. She did not believe her drawing and technical

skills or ideas would lead her to success in her work. Through her work in mixed media, she

became more accepting of her ideas, learned to form personal meaning in her work, and

discovered ways to experiment with materials and improve technical abilities through art

making.

Sonia's Experience

I've taken Art 1, Painting, and now I'm taking mixed media, and I took art in elementary school. Chorus and orchestra were like my main things in middle school, so I couldn't take any other classes.

I think I did a mixed media piece in painting because we did the collage and then we put beeswax on it. I felt like that was more like mixed media. Like the stuff that we do in here. With the collage I feel like it was more mixed media. We painted over pictures with oil paint, acrylic paint, and all the different oil colors. We glued pictures down and then put paint and color on it. We put beeswax on that one. And the oil on top of it. At first I didn't know what to think about the mixed media class. I was like, oh boy, all these people are so good at drawing.

Student-Centered Art Making

Research concerning a student-centered methodology encourages students' involvement in choices concerning art making, learning objectives, and methods of discovery (Buffington, 2014; Claymier, 2014; Hesser, 2009). Student-centered learning is less teacher-directed, allowing students' governance in developing assignments and become personally engaged with their learning (Bastos & Zimmerman, 2001; Heid, 2008; Jaquith, 2001; Runco, 2008). Within the mixed media art class, students learned through a student-centered approach to art making, where they were able to develop their own curriculum for art making including personal art making goals, ideas, themes, skill development, and materials. Students were offered the freedom to explore personal meaning within their art and become aware of their world through a self-exploration and an investigation of areas of interest. The student-centered curriculum

directly related to students' development of creative processes and personal meaning making within their work as they were offered the time, materials, and freedom to explore their interests and goals through art making.

Kathie's Student-Centered Art Making

I have so many ideas and I can't put it all down at once. That is hard. So, when you tell me what I need to do. I am like okay I can go ahead and do this and I can put my own twist into it. But, I don't know what to start with first. Like is this going to look good. Well I don't have time, so I will try this. That is what is challenging about it. Because I have so many ideas, but I can't get it out all at one time.

Figure 6. Kathie working in her art book to develop an idea.

Coming up with the ideas is a challenge. It is stressful to have art as a class because you have to come up with an idea and it is a lot of trial and error. Being in a class and having deadlines, you don't have enough time to try. So like, I can start a piece now and then I don't know what is wrong with it, but I can come back a few months later and be like okay I can do this. So it is kind of hard because it is a lot of trial and error. So, if something does not work you can try something else.

Printmaking. *Now, I am just loving carving into linoleum and rolling ink on it and stamping it onto a piece of paper. The linoleum you gave us was really smooth. So carving into it kind of relieves my stress. Like I have the blade in my hand and I can cut through this stuff. I am making something. It just goes smoothly into it. With the carving tool I can just carve straight into it and it is like watercolor. It just flows.*
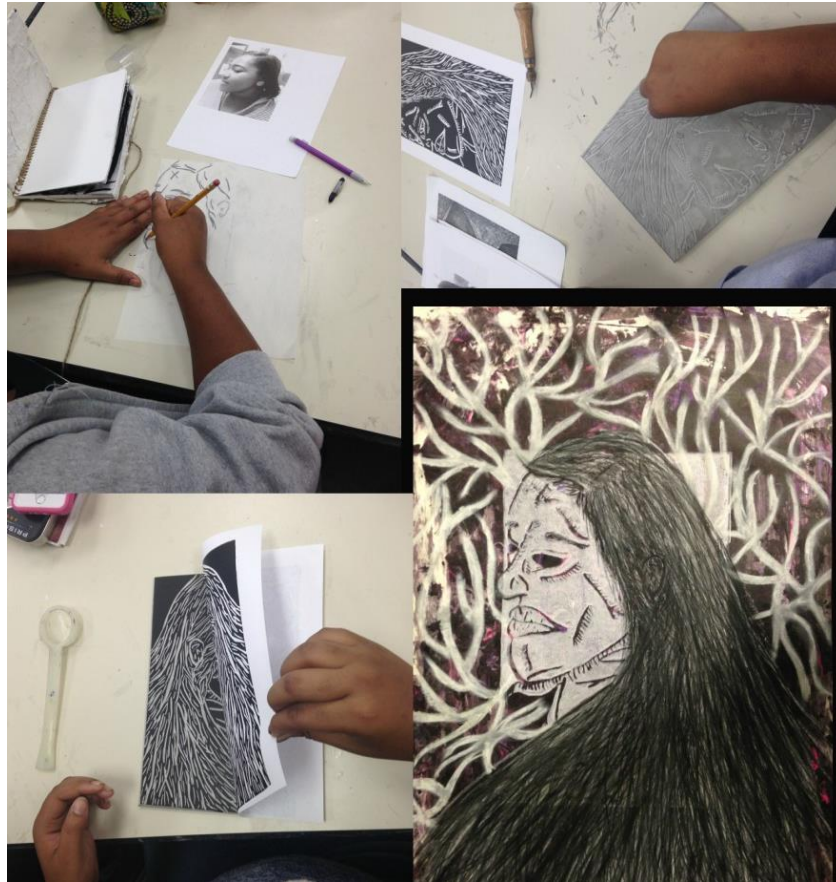
Figure 7. Kathie's process developing one of her mixed media portrait prints.

I have saved everything that I have carved out of all the linoleum blocks. I have saved it because I don't know what I am going to do with it. I am going to do something with it. So now I have this bright blue cushy bag in the drawer that has a ball of the carvings. I am going to do something with them. I just don't know yet. Because when I started carving I was like these are

weird pieces. So maybe I will do a portrait or something and that be the hair. Maybe I will do a

landscaping piece and that be the grass. I will probably do a portrait. I just don't know what yet.

I just saw them and they looked weird and different. And it's not like you can just go pick up a

box of them. They are something from all my linoleum pieces. They feel good on your fingers.

Figure 8. Kathie's collection of linoleum carvings.

I guess you could call me a hoarder. I never throw anything away. I used to have boxes

and boxes and boxes and stacks of paper. Lots of boxes of papers. I had a box of random things I

would find on the floor. Box of cans box of bottles. I used to keep all of that stuff. My mom told

me to throw it away when we moved. She said you don't need all this stuff, what are you going to

do with it. I was like I don't know. She was like, that is not a good answer. But thinking back it is

like why I probably like mixed media so much. Taking different things that you don't usually keep. Like I will look at my trash I am like I can really make a mixed media piece out of this.

Art book. *Like making my sketchbook, I started out and saw that everybody was putting on one or two pieces of paper and adding a button or adding another piece of paper and adding words. I was like, that looks really good, but it's supposed to express ourselves and what I am. I saw everybody else doing theirs and everybody else was just putting stuff together. It was not really working for me. I hadn't allowed myself to be myself.*

So, starting off I got really frustrated because I wouldn't really let myself be myself. So I tried tearing off the paper I put on there. I had done that sculpture piece with the paper. And that is why I started tearing the paper. I was thinking, if everybody else is doing like that, is it ok for me to be my own person and do my own thing? Is it okay for me to do that? And yeah, it was okay. So, I just went ahead and did it and it turned out to be cool. It was okay to be different. And now I am letting myself be myself. I don't really care what people think, at all. I like that my pieces have meanings. I like to look back in my sketchbook and think why did I choose this?

The way I think about stuff, I show people my sketchbook. They come up and are like can I look in that? I am like, sure if you want to. They open it up and are like, whoa…wow…you don't look like the type to be a scary person. I'm not scary, I am just different.

Whenever I get angry or upset or sad I just take my journal and write in it. But writing is not always the best for me because I can't get it all out at one time. Talking is better, but no one can hear me. So I just get a piece of paper and I just start drawing stuff and painting stuff. Stuff that isn't real or even a thing. Just putting color on the paper. I can actually be myself and I don't have to think.
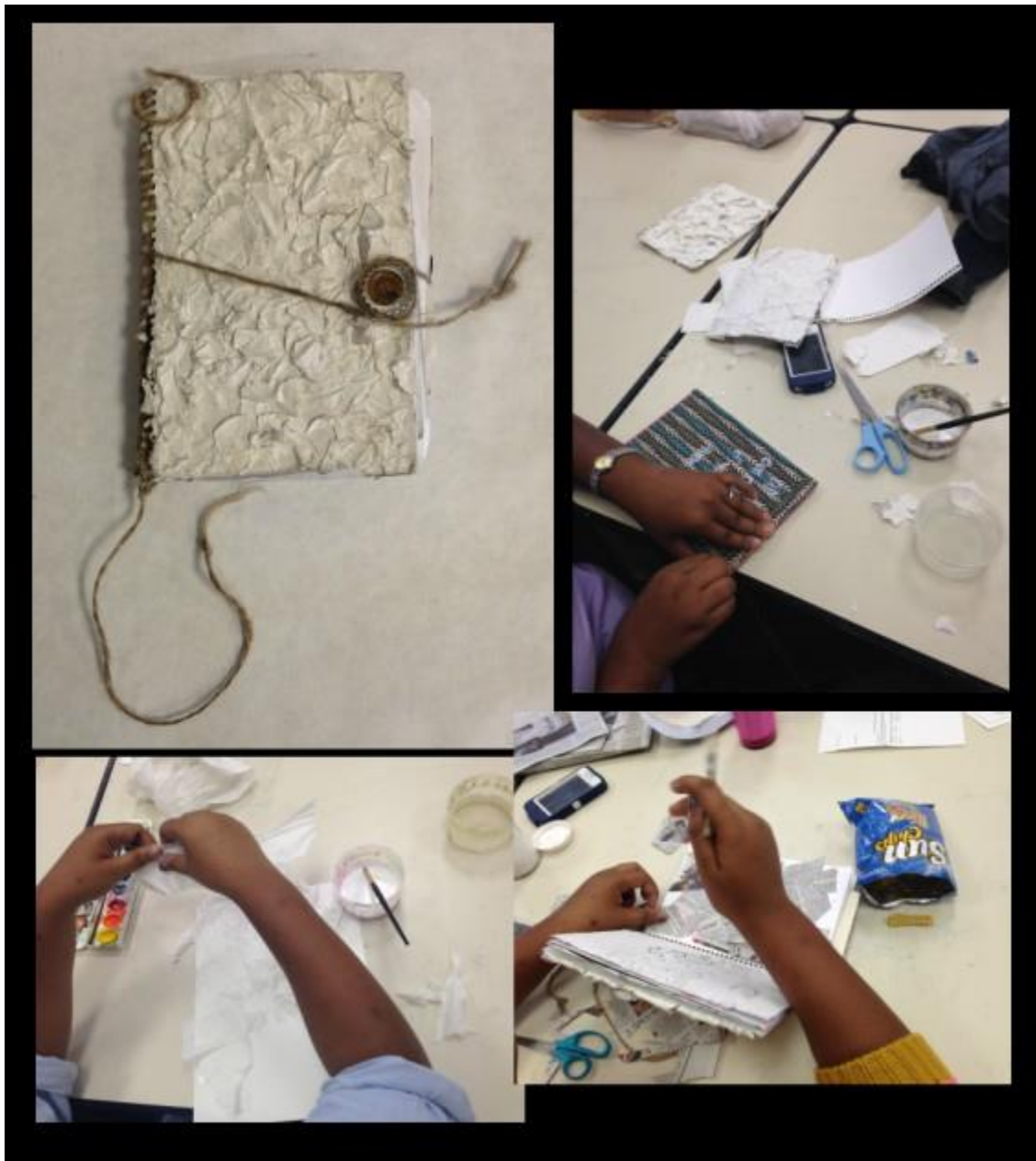
Figure 9. Kathie creating and working in her art book.

Joan's Student-Centered Art Making

I was really, really, really excited about the student curriculum because, I was just like,

great, I haven't had a good piece yet. There's not one that I've loved. I haven't had a project that

I was head over heels excited about. I pulled project, after project, after project, after project.

Anywhere, from one thing to the next, to some I haven't finished, to some that are just chilling in the room. I mean, I've got the flower one, I've got my heart, I've got my koala, I've got two pieces chilling in the drawer over there. I've just got all these piece lying around. It's fun. I love it. I love doing it.

Figure 10. Joan's development of her mixed media koala.

I guess I work way faster than I should – not meaning to. I just get into it and it's just like, I loved it. I still love it. It's like - Okay, what am I going to do now? Oh, I'm done, what's next? What's going to come out of this? Or I'll get a piece of paper and I'm like - okay, what am I going to do with this? Oil pastels were always my favorite, but now, I truly don't even know anymore. Probably collage, collage is really fun. I've really got to the point where I do not like working on a plain surface at all.

Creativity. *Creativity is kind of going out of the box. So like me and Erin were talking*

about that. Her first two are nothing but paintings. She was trying for her last project. Well, she

wasn't sure she was going to paint it. I was like - It's a mixed media piece. All you've done is

painting. She's like - Yeah, I don't know what I want to do. I was like - What you could do, just

an idea, is Google the opening sheet music to "The Little Mermaid", because her sugar skull is

supposed to be Ariel. Print them out, take them, cut then up, and rip them up, not small enough

where you can't read it. You could take it, collage it on, paint it blue like the sea, cut her out, and

put her on it. There's your piece. And she was like, yeah, you're right, you're absolutely right.

Figure 11. Erin working on her mixed media version of *The Little Mermaid*.

And then Callie was like, what do I do because I've painted, I don't know what to do. I

was like, you could take the bird, cut him out, put it on the collage of newspaper, or whatever

you want to do. I told her, you can paint it, twirl it up, do something to the paper.

So to me with creativity it's like literally just stepping out of the box. I feel like I do that well, just because I use so many different materials. They're all in different directions, they're all referencing something else. Creativity - I'm really, really good at it. Like this was problem solving. I was improvising and trying to finish the piece. If one thing doesn't work my whole goal is to try something else. When I didn't like everything that was going on over here, we cut it down. I remember I had that chandelier looking thing over here and I didn't like it - well, I cut it down. I did something different - take your basic idea and just change it. Turn it around. It was neat, the whole layering concept and pulling things out and pushing things away.

Figure 12. Joan's school drawing that she cut down and made different from the original.

David's Student-Centered Art Making

My first goal was to do something with a rubber duck and painting. That's when I learned how to use the oil pastels and the stuff you smooth it out with – the turpenoid. I smoothed it out, which gave it an effect to not look not plain, because at first it was just blue. Then I just tried to mix the colors up and make little, sort of like, bubbles.

Figure 13. David adding layers of pastel and paint over his mixed media duck.

The second one with the weaving and the Eiffel Tower - that one I'm still working on, because I haven't figured out the background yet. I've never weaved and done something with it. It was a little messy because I had to be careful when I was cutting it and it didn't all come out.

Figure 14. David beginning his Eiffel Tower art from a photograph he found.

My third goal was the beeswax one. I wanted to use the beeswax because I've never even thought that you could put beeswax on art. And I like that one a lot. My fourth goal was the collage one. I liked that one because I had to cut out of the magazines and then glue, and then mixed in the painting and the oil pastels.
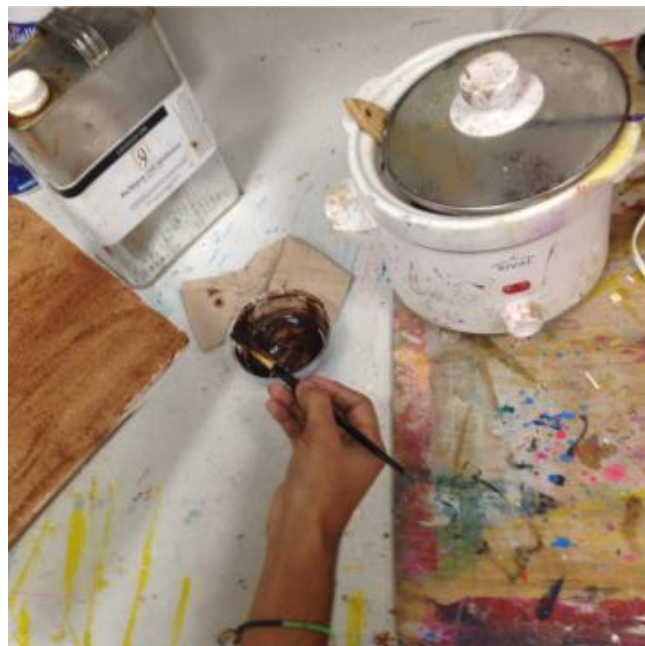
Figure 15. David applying beeswax and oil to his picture.

Doing the drawing part was the toughest. Just making it your own. Not making it look like everybody else's and putting in what you want on there. Because sometimes it's better to have your own opinion, but sometimes you need that teacher to tell you what you could put in there. I would've been lost if you didn't say some stuff. It would've just been a bear and some trees and a sun if you didn't say anything.

Sal's Student-Centered Art Making

With the student curriculum mainly I'm using the same materials, because that's just what I'm comfortable with and that's what I feel I can produce good work with. But I do think I need to use more of what's available to me because there's definitely a whole bunch, like when I'm able to go out and dig in the paper and stuff and find out what I want, or when I go into the supply room, because there's so many options. I just think I need to branch out more into the classroom to find out what's there.

This is a mixed media class and I kind of like try to branch off more into that. I do sometimes, it's just I'm so comfortable with drawing. And it's not even really so much that I'm comfortable with it, it's what I love. I love to do that. So I think that because it is mixed media you are allowed to do anything. I think that every project, people should do what they want to do. If they want to do a mixed media they can, or they can do a different type of media for every project. If someone is drawing and that's their thing then they should be able to do that. If someone's painting then they should be able to do that. Because that's what the class is, you know, it's where a bunch of those arts come together.
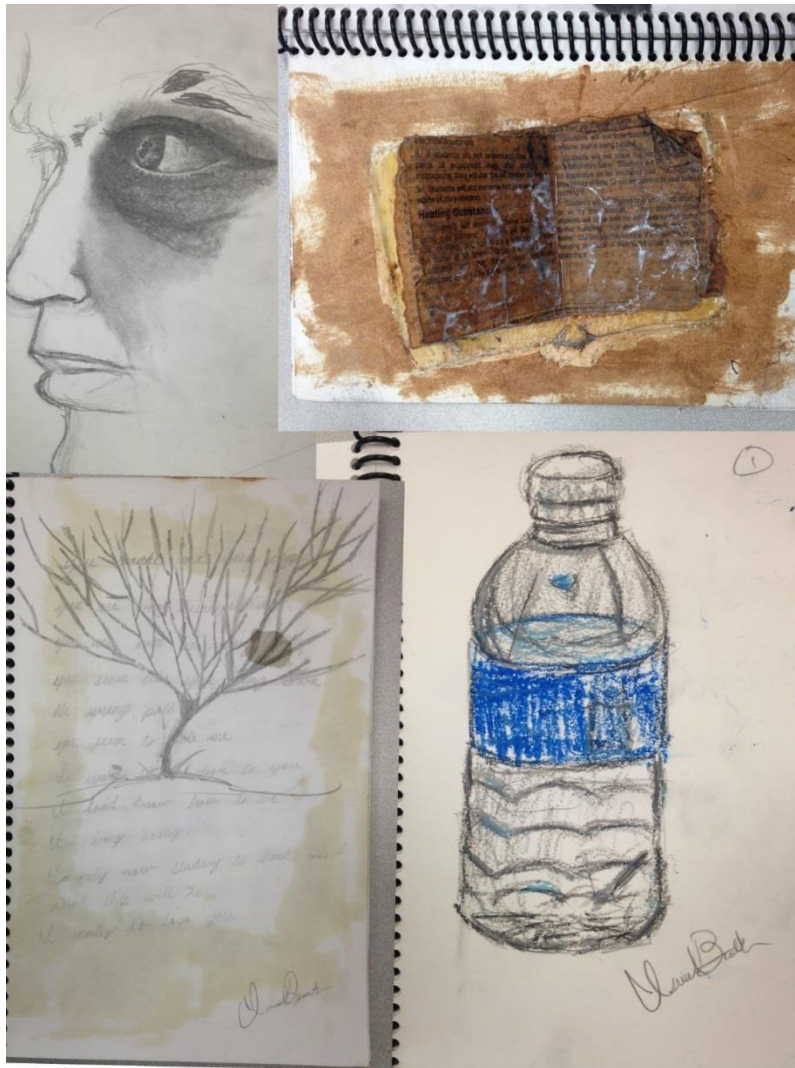
Figure 16. Sal's experimental drawings and media investigations.

It's kind of tricky, because like what I was just saying, if you're all in that class and you want to do something, you do it. So you have a bunch of different groups of people that are doing their projects for every project really. That allows for the students to teach the other, as well as the teacher teaching the students. But it might also take away the aspect of making the students more creative, because if they're not stepping out of their bubble then they're probably not going to grow that much.

My favorite material to use is graphite, but one of the materials that I really like but can't use, two of them at least, are oil pastels and oil paint. I think they're really, really cool. The way oil pastels come off and they're so vivid. I think I did it sometime in middle school or something, but not really where I focused on one piece and did the while piece like that. I just haven't brought myself to do it. I am into accepting all the materials and stuff like that. I'm just not comfortable with it yet. I'm almost scared of it.

Fear hinders you from creating great things and from reaching people sometimes. Because some people accept some kinds of art, and it can really touch somebody and teach them something. But here I am, not wanting to use that, so I'm limited to what I can do with my art, to what impact I can make.

Just like someone that begins driving for the first time, they're scared but once they get into it they get more comfortable with it. That's what mixed media does. It helps people get into a different realm of art, one that they might fear, or they might turn out to enjoy. It really makes you step into the water with that and gets you more comfortable with it. Whereas, someone can go on their whole life never touching anything, and missing out on a lot of opportunity.

Back before, when I was in a pattern, it would just be like this is art, this is my art, that's just what I do. Now it's more of trying to find what I want it to be and not lose its meaning. I'm trying to accept and to realize that it can be other types of art. It can be whatever. So now, when I go into a piece, I'm trying to be more creative and not setting some predestined piece. I don't know what's going to be.

I think mixed media provides the chance to free yourself, really, from just thinking one way or thinking in 2D or 3D. It's free. It frees you from the limitations. It allows you to impact people. When it comes 100 percent from you and it makes sense to you, that's a great thing. For

you and for the people that are experiencing it. I think one of the key things to making mixed

media art is to not worry, really. It should be personal, but that's a given. I think it's key to just

do it. To let it all be from you and not worry about what it looks like. And when you run into

some mistakes, to accept it, to accept that it's your art and that it's coming from you. I don't

think that there are really rules to mixed media. You keep in mind it's your art. So let it be that.

Let your art be a piece of yourself. If there's a mistake, that's you, you made that mistake,

so it's part of you. Don't try to cover it up. You're human. You're fallible. If you have viewpoints

that people don't agree with, then let that be, let your art say that. Don't try to change who you

are because your teacher or your classmates don't agree with you. So really just let your art be a

part of yourself.

Sonia's Student-Centered Art Making

With the student centered thing it's tough trying to think of stuff to do. I'm so used to

being told, oh, draw this, do this and do this. I feel like it was just really complicated for me to

think of something to do. So sometimes it's frustrating trying to think. Especially if you get

behind on stuff it's like - okay, I got to get this today, and then trying to think of everything and

plan it out.

I think with the student thing, again, I just feel sometimes I can't think and it scares me

because I don't want to get a bad grade on something when I couldn't think of something to do. I

think that just trying to figure out what to do and how to do it is tough. I think how to do it in

mixed media was freaky, because you had to figure it out – you have so many different options.

You're like, okay, what do I want to do on this piece, what looks good with this piece?

With the student centered thing you get to do what you want to do, and you're not told what to draw or whatever. I feel like that's more freedom than somebody saying - oh, draw this and do this. I feel like it's your choice to do. Like with Sally's piece that's her choice. She's frustrated - let her do it.

Figure 17. Sally's expressive mixed media work.

Hers always turn out so cool. It's so weird - I felt like she was just painting or throwing something together, but it turned out really cool. It's like her frustration is thrown out on the canvas. See, I would never think of something like that, like just throwing a bunch of stuff together and figuring it out.

You don't know what you're going to do. You just got to think about it and you have to have creativity to throw something together and figure it out. And so I feel like that helps a lot. I

feel like it helps you think better, too, because you throw all this stuff together and you're like,

okay, where can we go? And then you don't know what to think because you're like this is so

ugly. It goes through the ugly duckling stage.

Printmaking. *I really like the printmaking thing. I just don't think of printmaking as any*

other art class. I wasn't thinking about doing it in Art 1, and definitely not Painting. You can do

more layering in mixed media than any art class. So, when we did the student curriculum, I was

like, okay, printmaking is going on my list.

Theoretical Analysis: Student-Centered Art Making

Teacher's Context

Instead of issuing students directions and teacher generated objectives, the students

governed their artmaking. However, sometimes opportunities for lessons arose through students'

moments of art making. For example, when students asked to use beeswax, I instructed and

demonstrated ways to use the beeswax. Modeling or demonstrating art making processes or the

act of experimenting with a certain material was part of my teaching. For example, Sal described

my demonstration of freely experimenting as: "When you demonstrate, you don't go in with a

plan so that helps us. It helps me be able to understand what mixed media is about… that you

don't always need a plan."

The student centered approach to mixed media art making required students to develop

their own goals and objectives. Students described my responsibility as the teacher was to help as

needed, be there to listen and give advice on developing ideas, and encourage students to be

open-minded. However, as the semester progressed, the students often showed characteristics of

a teacher. Sal worked with Ben to help him mature and to teach him drawing skills. Joan pointed

out that Sal also helped her with painting facial features. Sal explained the reciprocal effects of

learning through teaching others: "It teaches me to be not only patient and stuff like that, but it

teaches me that I was that way once too. And it's okay. It's just a growing process." As students

became more familiar with specific materials and demonstrated skilled knowledge of art

techniques, other students would often ask them for instruction. Students would also seek other's

opinions and critiques of ideas and possibilities for their work.

Curriculum Development

To begin the student-centered curriculum, I asked students to create a list of four themes

they wished to explore in their art making and four goals they wanted to accomplish through

their mixed media curriculum. As a class requirement, students had to turn in weekly art book

assignments. Therefore, for the student-centered curriculum, students were asked to generate a

list of six art book assignments. These tasks could be completed as drawings or writings.
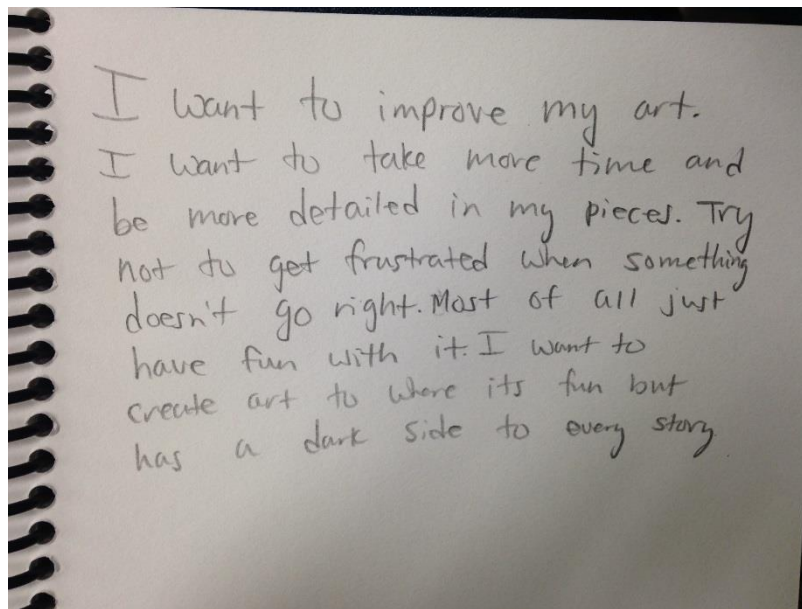
Figure 18. Student's reflective writing about art making goals.
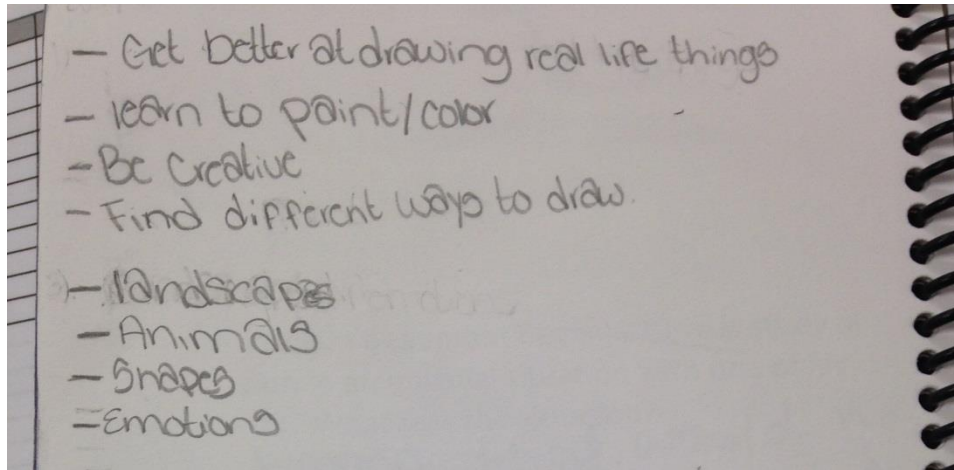
Figure 19. Students list of goals and themes to explore through their curriculum.

Students' goals ranged from improving specific technical art skills, work ethic, or attitude to mastering new art materials or subject matter. Some goals related specifically to art making. For example, one of Sal's goals was to use less time creating art but continue to incorporate more detail. Goals were sometimes related to family or social life. David wished to incorporate a rubber duck, symbolic of his relationship with his mother, into a painting. Where David and Sal's goals were more specific, other goals were more general, such as learn to be creative or explore ways of drawing. Goals that were general became more specific as students focused on specific nuances within their art making. Lisa's goal to be creative (Figure 71) translated into learning how to draw and paint landscapes in more novel ways while utilizing different materials and processes.

Media Centered Goals

Students explained that a beneficial aspect of the mixed media class was the ability to discover and investigate a wide variety of materials within one class. Due to the student-centered curriculum, students were not only able to explore materials of interest, they were also able to witness a wide expanse of media utilized by other students within the class. Sal clarified, "if

someone is drawing and that's their thing, then they should be able to do that. If someone's painting then they should be able to do that…it's where a bunch of those arts come together." Due to wide variety of materials being utilized through the student-centered curriculums, students were able to form personal connections to new materials and be exposed to a greater possibilities for media as they viewed others' creative processes.

Exploring new forms of media and improving technical abilities with specific media were common facets of students' list of goals. These included collage, drawing media, oil pastels, charcoal, and ink. However, the three main media found among the goals were painting, printmaking, and beeswax. Students commented that they had little to no experiences with these media, yet were drawn to their appearance in other students' art.

Printmaking. One of the first, foundational mixed media lessons I taught to the class involved reduction printmaking with linoleum blocks. Students learned many mixed media applications as they carved linoleum and printed on various surfaces, layered prints with other materials, and worked back into prints with a variety of media. Printmaking allowed students the freedom to change the colors, print on different surfaces, compose various layouts in multiple works, as well as deconstruct and reconstruct a work to create a new meaning or appearance. Students were able to make many choices concerning the development of meaning and the aesthetic quality of their printmaking pieces.

Printmaking quickly became the favorite media for many students in the mixed media class. Many students included exploring printmaking as one of their goals. They expressed interest in learning other forms of printmaking, beyond the linocut. They also wanted to further experiment with printing on different substrates, as well as working various media onto a printed surface. Sonia explained that she wanted to include printmaking as a goal because of the amount

of layers she could incorporate into the work. This layering process included, but was not limited to, collage, painting, drawing, printing, writing, and beeswax. Kathie became enamored by the physical process of carving into a material such as linoleum or foam and then printing it. She felt so connected with the linocuts that she saved all the carvings from the linoleum blocks. Kathie then formed the new goal of creating something with the collection of carvings. This was a self-driven goal that was derived from her personal meaning making, imagination, and creative process.

Beeswax. Hot beeswax is an atypical material available for students to utilize in their art making. The use of beeswax was a media foreign to most students prior to the mixed media class. The pure block of beeswax is heated in a crockpot and once completely melted, can be added as one of the final steps to a work of art. Students were enthralled with the various possibilities and unique appearance the beeswax as I demonstrated the process of painting beeswax on a surface, discussed options for adding other media to the beeswax, and presented previous students' works that incorporated beeswax. Many students wished to experiment with beeswax as one of their curriculum goals. Their work with the beeswax included carving into the wax and adding oil paint into the carved grooves. Found objects, such as buttons, paper, string, or beads were sometimes collaged into their waxed surfaces. Students also experimented with adding oil pastels, acrylic paint, and crayon onto the wax.

Painting. Many students wanted to explore painting for various reasons. David enjoyed painting through childhood art classes, but due to the emphasis on drawing in middle school and foundational high school classes, he had little opportunity to explore painting. One of his goals was to reconnect with painting processes and incorporate painting into his mixed media works. Some students were much like Joan and had fears of painting. Therefore, one of their goals was

115

to experiment with painting processes within their mixed media work as a way to conquer their fear. Joan described her painting challenge, "I feel like if I was to do a whole painting piece I'd probably hyperventilate… But, I have faced my fear of painting, greatly. Still not dropping Algebra 2 to take up painting." Even though Joan did not feel completely successful with painting, she faced her challenge.

Challenges

Fears, challenges, and frustrations were ever-present as students worked to meet their student-centered curriculum goals. These challenges included aspects of idea generation, developing art skills, problem solving, and the acceptance of new ways of art making. Many students struggled with developing an idea when they had previously relied on teacher-directed instruction. Some students, such as Kathie, struggled with the certainty of a new concept. Kathie described her overwhelming perplexity getting started with a work, "I have so many ideas and I can't put it all down at once… I don't know what to start with first, it is a lot of trial and error." She offered that sometimes, she would rather I simply tell her what to do so she did not have to struggle with making choices and decisions. Brookhart (2013) attests that making choices fosters creative growth. Even though Kathie struggled with her choices, she came to appreciate the opportunity be herself and express her own ideas and personal perspectives within her art making. The challenges students faced as they made decisions about their work cultivated their creative thinking and art making processes.

Amabile et al. (1996) attested that the quest for originality must involve situations requiring individuals to develop their own process and path to an answer. Prescribed processes are less likely to promote creative processes or creative products. Douglas and Jaquith (2009) discourage teacher-administered objectives, media restrictions, and limited student choice within

116

art curriculums. Previous experiences in teacher-directed curriculums was initially one of the main hindrances to the students' development of personal creative processes. As Sonia explained, "With the student centered thing, it's tough trying to think of stuff to do. I'm used to being told, oh draw this, and do this." As students began to embrace the freedom and support offered to them within the class, they became more comfortable with the notion of portraying personal perspectives and ideas within their art as well as forming individualized processes of creating art.

Some students faced challenges due to undeveloped technical art skills. Students would generate an idea but had difficulty executing the idea as desired, due to complications with their drawing, painting, or other art making skills. David explained, "Doing the drawing part was the toughest. Just making it your own. Not making it look like everybody else's and putting in what you want on there." To combat these challenges I would offer students individualized instruction on applicable art techniques. Students would also seek assistance and instruction from technically talented peers when they needed help.

Another challenge for the student centered curriculum was that some students were fearful and unaccepting of different forms of art and art making. Some students were only comfortable working in graphite or paint and were often hesitant to pursue other options for their art. Sal explained that "fear hinders you from creating great things and from reaching people sometimes…but here I am, not wanting to use that, so I'm limited to what I can do with my art, to what impact I can make." Sal understood that his art could have greater potential if he reached beyond his zone of comfort. As students explored different ways to create art, their acceptance of art forms and ability to further their ideas through art making grew.

Problem Solving

Andrews (2005) explains that students should be "instigators of their art curriculum; not passive bodies waiting for instructions" (p.36). An aspect of this engaged process involves students' opportunity to face challenges and embark on creative problem solving. This was a major challenge students faced through their individual mixed media art curriculums. After developing an initial idea for art making, they faced the problem of bringing the idea to fruition. Selecting materials, the art making processes, and combating mistakes were each aspects students faced as they solved an art challenge. Some students experimented with materials prior to developing an idea to diminish future mistakes or become more familiar with new media. Students adopted the term, "ugly duckling phase" to describe mistakes, problems, and unpleasant appearances in the development of their art. Sonia utilized this phrase as she explained her thoughts concerning problem solving, "Mixed media was freaky, because you had to figure it out… you have so many different options…then you don't know what to think because you're like this is so ugly. It goes through the ugly duckling stage." Students confronted mistakes or stagnant thoughts within their creative art making process in various ways. Students would often ask others to critique their work so they might discover new directions for their art. Students would often take time away from their work to return refreshed or realize new possibilities during their time away.

Jaquith (2011) encourages teachers to engage learners in problem finding and problem-solving opportunities, allow students openness in developing solutions, and focus on the process of art making, not the concluding product. She urges teachers to count to ten before interfering in a student's creative process. As students faced mistakes or obstacles in their work, some saw these as possibilities for new directions. Joan described overcoming a problem she faced in her

118

school collage. She said, "I was improvising and trying to finish the piece. If one thing doesn't work my whole goal is to try something else." Where some students gained new inspiration from problems or mistakes, others were daunted by the challenge and required motivation or assistance from the teacher or peers. Creating mixed media art often required students' experimentation, research, collaboration, communication, and risk taking in order to solve problems that occurred through art making. Facing the challenges of mixed media art making was a critical aspect that fostered the imaginations and creative thinking of students.

Assessment

Because the student-centered curriculum provided students autonomy in choice of ideas, materials, themes, as well as processes and encouraged personal objectives and goals, I shared the responsibility of assessment with students. Students used the mixed media art rubric (Appendix C) to assess their work prior to my final assessment. Before a final grade was issued, I conferenced with students about their successes and areas of needed improvement, discussed meaning, and offered words of motivation to assist students in understanding their potential. Students were often discouraged with their art making. The conferences offered a moment to support students' growth, individual approach to art making, creativity, as well as the personal meaning and awareness they developed through art making. Sometimes students chose to continue to develop the work after the conference and resubmit for grading. The conference allowed students to understand the assessment and be motivated to achieve greater success in their art making. Sal offered a positive aspect of this grading method: "You take the opportunities that you get to teach us things, and I think that's something that a lot of teachers don't do. They kind of just let kids make their own mistakes and get their grade, and then tell them why they got that grade." Freedman (2010) attests that educators should provide students'

opportunities of responsibility where they understand how to facilitate their own learning and thinking. As students participate in the assessment, their path to greater learning continues as they develop understandings of their strengths and areas of needed improvement, engage in deeper meaning, become motivated to achieve, and discover greater possibilities for themselves and art making.

New Understandings of Self and Art Making

As the researcher and teacher within the mixed media art classroom, I aimed to follow Greene's (1978) guidance to permit, among students, "a reflective turning back to the stream of consciousness – the stream that contains our reflections, our perceptions, our ideas" (p. 182). Throughout the semester in the mixed media art class, students developed many new realizations about how they make art, the way they find meaning in art, and the perceptions they have of themselves and others. This introspective was garnered through a semester where students were issued the freedom to enrich creative processes involving critical thinking along with deep reflection as they expanded their creativity and imaginations.

Teaching students to become self-aware, self-reflective, and to foster creative thinking is an important goal within art education (Jaquith, 2011; Zimmerman, 2009). Through the semester in mixed media, students fostered their imaginations, found new possibilities, as well as a greater awareness of themselves, others, the world, and their art making. Green (1995b) attests that through imaginative thinking within the arts, creative thinking and creative encounters will promote students to uncover their own perspectives of the world. As students created, they made personal discoveries about the type of person they were, their thoughts concerning the world, and the confidence they have in themselves. This was expressed through the five participants' stories along with the photographs taken of students' mixed media art making throughout the semester.

Kathie's New Understandings

When I was in the seventh grade I was taking eighth grade classes. So, when I was in ninth grade I was taking high school courses. My ninth grade art class was just called art at my old school and it counted as Art 1 here. When I got here in the tenth grade I took Art 2 and I took painting the next semester. Now I take mixed media and sculpture this semester. Next semester, I take Art 3. I want to take all the classes.

I didn't know what mixed media was before this class. I just wanted to take an art class. Art 1, you were learning the basics. Art 2, was like you were drawing and shading. It is very… it has to be done a certain way. Mixed media is different because it does not have to be done in a certain way to be a piece. With mixed media you are taking a bunch of media and mixing them together. So, you can put like, buttons together and make a bunch of balloons. But it doesn't have to be like perfect.

Figure 20. Kathie inked her fingers to add her fingerprints onto her self-portrait print.

That is why it was harder for me to start out in this class. My first assignment for this class, I didn't know what mixed media was. I thought it was just a bunch of different writing utensils together. But I used a bunch of shading skills from Art 2. I thought my grid drawing had to look exactly like the picture. But as I started doing more I learned I had more room than I thought I did and could expand into other things and pull out other things. I started out being real hard on myself and that is why I didn't want to do it. And then in the end it kind of all flowed together, because I started thinking more instead of just straight up doing the way I thought it had to be. You can tell from then to my other mixed media pieces that I have been able to think and express myself.

Figure 21. Kathie thought of different ways to print her linocut.

Everything started really uptight at first. Everything I did was really uptight and really

technical. And then it just snapped and I was just like, I don't have to be like that. I don't have to

be like everybody else. I don't like being like this. I want to do something different. It just

snapped and all of a sudden. I think that creativity, I locked it up once I got in Art 2. I thought,

no, you are not supposed to be creative. Art is not about creativity. Art is about technical. It has

to be done like this. And then I got to painting and I was like well, I guess I can think if I want to,

a little bit. And then I got in mixed media and I was like it doesn't have to be like that, I have

room to think. I think that if you like your art then it shouldn't matter how other people view it.

Like you don't think Andy Warhol had somebody standing over him, like why did you choose

those colors to put next to each other? But you get that he worked through it himself and its

good. Kathe Kollwitz, you know a lot of people said, what are you doing? That is not art that

looks like scribble scrabble on a piece of paper. But to me it looks crazy good. I want that. So,

there is not a right or wrong cause I could view it another way. You could sit here and say, oh

it's good, and I am like oh no. So there is not a right or wrong because it is always in-between. If

you feel like it is right it is right.

Figure 22. Kathie experimented with different ways to represent herself through her linocut.

I don't really care how other people see my artwork because I didn't make myself feel

better for them. I spend a lot of time trying to make others happy. So, I can do my sketches or art

and not make other people happy - I can make myself happy. I spend a lot of time making sure

everybody else is ok. So, when I do art, then I don't have to. I can make sure I am ok.

With the first play piece, I was still trying to figure out stuff. Now I am thinking more and my artwork has more meaning to it now. I am trying to relate myself to my artwork. It is easier for me to come up with something metaphorical than something I am told to put together. Like, you may not think you're thinking, because you are just doing it. But you have to think, well how would this look if I put charcoal on it, how would it look if I rubbed glue all over it. That is thinking whether your realize it or not.

This year, being in mixed media I am having to push myself more, think more. Mixed media helps me think for myself. It has actually helped me not just in my art but in my English class we have too. I have noticed I have become a lot better at my writing. I have wrote more since I have been in this mixed media class, a lot more. I used to just write when I was angry. Now I can write, not just because I am angry, but if I am sad or happy or confused. I can write because I know how to think for myself and I can actually think about what I want to write about. It is easier for me to type papers and it is easier for me to get my words out on paper. Mixed media makes you think and when you get to the real world, you are going to have to think whether you realize it or not.

I like mixed media because I can get away from school and be able to think for myself. High school is a stressful time because you got to get in all of your classes. You are trying to get ready for college and you start working and driving and taking care of your sisters. So when I get to mixed media I can just kind of think about what I need to do. I can think for myself.

Figure 23. Kathie played with ink to create a substrate for her work.

Joan's New Understandings

Mixed media was fun. It was a lot of fun. I definitely enjoyed it. I don't know, it feels like,

growing up I always thought art, you could paint, it was always one type of thing. I didn't think

I'd be dumping salt everywhere, because stuff like that, you look at as a messy concept. If I

dumped salt on it at home, my mother would've killed me. But here in art class you're using all

these different things and it's just like - Okay, you know what? I want to express myself. So how

am I going to do this? I'm in a crappy mood today, let me do it this way. I don't know, it just kind

of opens you up to so many different formats. It's like one road and you can go at it so many

different ways.

Figure 24. View of five mixed media students' work in progress.

That's why I love mixed media as much as I do, because it's all different things. It's

literally whatever you think, that's the piece. Mixed media is like one of those classes where you

can go in any direction. Its multiple things, on multiple things, on multiple things. I feel like if I

was to do a whole painting piece I'd probably hyperventilate.

Understanding self. *I've never been a very talkative person. Even last semester, when*

I'd come in here and I'd talk to you, it would just be bits and pieces. I'm not good at expressing

myself ever, like with words. But with this class, it really showed me how I can just be myself. I

mean it's just like I figured out how to express myself in ways other than words. I hate talking, I

just hate it. It's a lot easier to use my hands on paper versus actually trying to communicate with

somebody. Because then I just start mumbling and talking a hundred times a second. It's kind of

like there's more to me than just being quiet or the pissy moods. Instead of getting mad and just

taking it out on everybody else or just not speaking at all, I've learned how, if you're in a bad

mood, you express it. With me I figured out I can do these artworks, I can do these projects, and

I feel better because I've expressed it. I do the pieces as fast as I do because it's the way I feel.

Figure 25. Joan's beginning step to building a mixed media animal sculpture.

I'm really an independent person. Being free, it shows up in all my pieces- all of them.

Either it's something from solitude, to a girl by herself, to female power, it's all different things.

Mixed media has shown me how to be more open-minded. It's just shown me that I can do my

ideas. And just because a piece is done one way it doesn't mean it can't be another way. It's just

about how you can go absolutely anywhere with your work. You're not stuck in one place. You

don't have to stay right where you're at. There's 500 different directions you can go and it

doesn't matter which one you take - you're still going to have an amazing piece out of it. You can

decide either to rip it up later or use it again. It's almost like a never-ending process. It doesn't

have to stop unless you want it to - and just because you want it to stop now doesn't mean it's

done forever.

I have to remind myself every single day with my family that I'm not stuck right here. It's

not over right here. The clock's still going to tick. That day is still going to go by, and eventually

I'm going to get to the point where I can leave. So just with my pieces, I have to remind myself

that I'm not done. It's never-ending. So I mean I have my freedom, I just have to give it time.

David's New Understandings

Mixed media is about taking something plain and making it into something unique with

other stuff. Instead of just using one material, you use plenty of them to make something pretty.

It's an art class where you take something plain and you make it into something different. You

take some materials and make it different. It could still be black and white, but with something

different. And you can use stuff other than just drawing. You could paint, glue stuff on, structure,

make something - that's what I like about it. It's not like an ordinary art class.

Creativity is taking something and making it beautiful with anything. I think if you can

come up with something in your head and do it in your artwork and make it look beautiful, it's

creative. Sometimes it's good to have color, and sometimes just to be in black and white. I love

color stuff, I don't like to have just black and white.

Figure 26. One of David's first mixed media drawings where he incorporated color.

Some say my art's weird or why are you doing that. Sometimes I don't like to share with them because it's personal. They give their opinions, but as long as I think it's all right and I like it, I could care less. Some students say I'm an overachiever because I turn stuff in. That's just an early bird, that's not an overachiever. I don't like waiting to the last minute with anything. I'll do it – like the day you give me something, I want to try and do it the next day. I sort of get that from my mom because neither one of us likes being late. I don't want to be like a last minute person and then it be bad when you turn it in because you rushed it.

Figure 27. David's first mixed media play piece, started on his 16th birthday.

First mixed media work. *With this one, the birthday one, I struggled with putting something over it and then bringing it back out. It was like we were thinking we were just about to draw again. I had never done anything like that. You said create a substrate. Then you told us to try making a plain sheet of paper into something different, not just a blank sheet of paper. And I thought that was cool. Now I like making substrates.*

Figure 28. David's creation of various substrates.

The only way I could think about bringing my drawing out was either painting it or

drawing it. I painted, finger painted and used bubble wrap, the stencils, sharpies, color pencils

and regular pencils, markers, and rulers. Figuring out how to bring it back out without it looking

boring was a problem. It wasn't going to be just a plain sheet of paper and pencils and erasers.

It was going to be colors and different materials. I think art is better with mixed media because

you don't have to just start out with a blank sheet of paper. I like how you start out with

something and then you make it more interesting. I think everything is cool about mixed media.

I learned if I make a mistake I could go over it with painting. If I didn't like how it

looked, I could just take the joint compound and go right over it, and then try again with it. And

132

then if I don't like it, then pull it off or wipe it off. And the shading, I've gotten better at that because of the painting and the transfer piece. I used to just draw it and then it'd just be there. It wouldn't have any shading to give it an effect.

I would say the printmaking is my favorite. I've never carved into anything and then made my own stamp. So it's cool. And then I added color - like we could change the colors up and make a piece. I really liked that. There wasn't really any drawing to it. I liked doing it. I wish I could have made different ones because I didn't like trying to use the same one to make different ones. I also like the way beeswax smells on the picture - it smells nice. Then the carving into it sort of gives you the feel of like the printmaking

Figure 29. David's experimentation with printmaking.

Figure 30. A selection of David's final mixed media linocut prints.

I wouldn't take Art 2, because of you have to draw a lot and I'm not really into drawing. I love mixed media because you don't just have to draw, you can paint. I think my senior year I'll take painting. I'm just not really that deep into drawing. I'd rather paint - just drawing, it stresses me out - like realistic drawing, because I want every line to be perfect. I don't want a crooked line. I want it to look like the real thing. And it sort of stresses me to the point where I just don't want to do it anymore. My mom's like - but you can draw, but it's not my passion.

Sal's New Understandings

I would describe mixed media as - anything you want your art to be, it can be in that class. So, anything that you want to use or that you can see in your art, it can happen. Mixed media, for materials, you can pretty much use anything. That's why it's called mixed media. Anything you think would look well with your art, look good with your art, or that you can imagine, like dirt, or leaves, or Mod Podge or paint, you can bring all those things together and make a piece. So you're not limited to just 2D or 3D.

Figure 31. Sal's mixed media sculptural work.

I didn't really know what to expect going into it. I knew what mixed media was because of the name, but I didn't think it'd be such a deep lesson. I kind of figured it would just be a class where you can do anything, but it's more than that. It helps you grow in certain areas. I've learned that through growing. I thought I'd just go in there and do what I do. Because it was

135

mixed media and you were able to do whatever, I just stick with what I do. But since, I've been pushed to do other things. I'm not as hesitant to do those things now.

I have a bigger appreciation for mixed media. I can understand it now, and I can understand better that I'm going to look at my art differently than other people will. Art should be appreciated, because there's work put into it and there's thought. Now I see when I look at that piece, I worked on this and it might not have been what I wanted it to be at one point, but it's still appreciated.

I want people to see my work as beautiful. Stereotypical beauty, you know, like where everything looks perfect, it looks real. But there's definitely beauty in other art. I think that if it comes from you, and if it means something to you, then it's beautiful. Even if the piece is ugly to other people, it's beautiful because it's something that came from you, from your ideas, from your mind. Maybe even a piece of you.

I'm going to Art 3, so now that I've had Art 2, mixed media in the middle and then Art 3, it'll help me when I get to Art 3, Art 4, and AP Art. It'll help me and I will have had that experience and that increase in creative process. It's not a mixed media class but it'll help me change the way I do things. It'll help me branch out to different types of media when I'm in there. It'll give me a variety of stuff to do for my portfolio, not to just stick with, just all portraits or all graphite pieces.
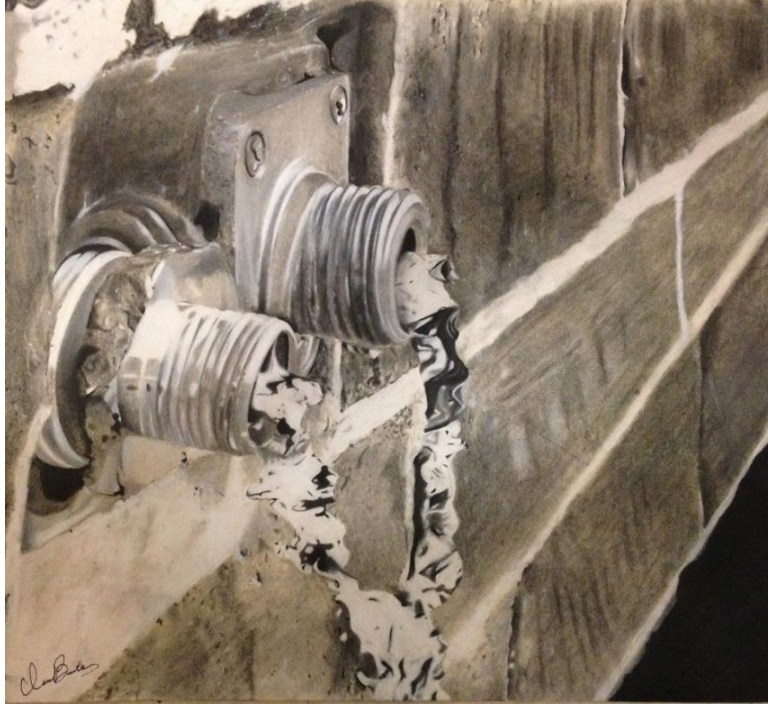
Figure 32. Sal's realistic mixed media drawing of a photo he took of the school exterior.

Along with me wanting to do hyperrealism and to get good at that, now I can see the value in other kinds of art. Before it was kind of, this is my kind of art, this is what I want to do, I don't want to do anything else like painting or 3D. But now I see all the work that goes into that, and how it's just as challenging as the type of art that I do. Because now that I've tried to do that art I see like, hey, this takes skill, this takes patience. Where people are able to take apart things - usually it's just random objects and it doesn't appeal to me, because they don't go together. But people are able to take those random parts and make something beautiful, or maybe even something ugly but still intriguing, with those things. I think that's a great thing to have and that's what mixed media does.

Being that a lot of people come from different places – whereas like I was 2D, so all I knew was 2D, pretty much – it allows people to open up and to experience new things and to try new things. And to really just break that mold that they've been put into.

137

A lot of teachers, they like to do stuff their way. I had Mr. D and everything was very technical. I guess that's part of the reason I'm that way. So, I think a lot of people focus too much on what their teachers want them to do, and they don't think for themselves. So having mixed media helps them to think for themselves and to have a better creative process. Mixed media opens up a hole – like even if you haven't had other art classes, you can kind of just experiment. And it's like, since you can use anything, it allows you to bring different ideas into your art. And it's completely different because now I'm thinking maybe I want to do 2D, maybe I want to do 3D, maybe I want to do both.

It seemed other art classes were not about being yourself, incorporating yourself into your pieces. It's kind of just like do this and see how well you can do it. Sometimes teachers would tell us exactly what we were doing. They wouldn't give us time to think about what it was going to mean. They wouldn't let us write down and brainstorm different themes in our life or whatever. Where, when I got into ninth grade, one of the projects we did was the spirit animal, or the totem animal. And so that – see, that has a meaning. Because, you're relating yourself to another creature, and you had to think deeper like why you're related to that creature and stuff like that.

That's the great thing about this class is that it helps you in a lot of ways that most classes don't. Like painting, you're painting. Art 1 and Art 2 you're drawing, so it teaches you a lot different from the other classes. It has things to offer anybody, even if you're not into mixed media art.

I think anyone that experiences mixed media, their creativity will grow. It will grow because you're having to think of different things to use, what would work best with what. I think I can say that since my creativity has improved from taking mixed media and doing mixed media

art, it's going to help me with hyperrealism, to maybe add more into a really realistic face. A lot more depth to it, or maybe I'll be able to do surrealism. This class has been very good for me because I've gotten to experience mixed media. Technically I've improved. .And definitely in time management. I think I've definitely grown in creativity and been able to think differently than I did. I think that thinking more outside the box I'm able to use different materials. Using things and turning them into other things kind of bring things to life.

Right now because I'm in school and I can't be taking so much time, and getting points off for projects when I know I can do the work. I just find it stupid to take so long on stuff when I need to turn it in. But then again, I don't want it to just be a school project. I want it to mean something to me. That's why sometimes I just do what I want, draw out the time. It shouldn't be something that teachers just look at, and just be like, oh, it's just another piece of art to grade.

Being an artist you take a lot of time and you put a lot of effort into what you do. I think people should be able to appreciate that. No matter what they may think about it. They should appreciate all the time and effort and the meaning behind what any artist does.

I want to expand what I do, like the types of art, but I want to do commissions. I want to be able to fulfill those commissions for people, whether it be painting or mixed media or graphite, charcoal. I want to be able to expand my abilities to please people when they see my work. I believe I have a gift for art. With that gift I want to give to the world, you know. I want to be able to give pieces of me through my work and to let people know who I am through my work. It's not just about having people see my work and admire it and stuff like that. I want to give them a piece of something or maybe some message that I want to give to the world. I want to spread positive and negative messages - negative as in, awareness to negative things. I want to enlighten people.

Sonia's New Understandings

I think of mixed media like layering - like crazy collage and all that kind of stuff. I think of mixtures of different pictures and paintings all put together on one thing. It's an art class and you do all sorts of art. Like you do painting, you do Art 1 or Art 2 stuff, you draw and you shade, and you do literally every art class. It's just combined into one art class. That's how I think of it too, is like all these art classes just put into one. Because you do – I feel like you do a little bit of everything in mixed media.

You don't know what you're thinking until you just throw stuff together, and then it ends up looking really cool and you're like, oh, I would never think of doing that. Like this, I would never think of putting paper and beeswax on top of a piece. I think it's because you just don't think of stuff like that in a normal – well, I mean this is a normal art class, but in Art 1 or Art 2 you just don't think of throwing a bunch of stuff together and then making something out of it. I feel like you have to have better creativity to figure out that kind of stuff.

I would recommend mixed media because you do all sorts of different arts. I feel like mixed media helps you out because you get to use other materials that you would use in another art class. And so I feel like it helps you out because have more creativity to move on to another art class. Like my sister would probably love this class because she loves art and she loves trying out new things, exploring new materials and all that stuff. I would recommend it and say, hey, you know, you're getting to use all sorts of stuff in this class.

Initial experience. *Trying was frustrating at first. The school piece was my first grid drawing. I was trying to figure out how to do everything, and make it how the picture was, and make it in the right grid, and make it however big it was supposed to be. I had never done a grid drawing. Not even in Art 1, we didn't do grid drawing. So it was my first one, and I was just freaking out about it. But, I like it - the black, like how I went back over it with a sharpie and made it stand out more.*

Figure 33. Sonia's first mixed media collage/drawing.

I have improved by trying to figure out what to draw and just putting my mind to it, because I feel like in my Art 1 class I didn't put my mind to it. Now in mixed media I'm like, okay, I got to get this right, it has to be right. So I feel like just putting my mind to it and focusing on it, it makes sense. I have learned don't get frustrated. Just take your time and think about it. Because at first you're like - what the heck am I supposed to do - this is crazy. You just got to think about it and just work through it. That's what I had to do. At first it was like, what am I supposed to do, this is crazy, I don't like this. Now, I'm like, oh my gosh, I love this class.

Judgment. *What other people think is important to me, because I don't like being judged on stuff. I feel like I have to make it really good so people aren't like - oh my gosh, she can't do anything. That's how it was with that first piece, because everybody was doing so good and then I felt like mine was just like a two-year-old drew it. I think that's why after I cut it out, I felt like it looked better. I feel like judgment is getting better - I don't know if it has, but I feel like it has because I feel like I've improved on my drawings and on the shading.*

I'm starting to care less about what people think. I feel like it's really late in the semester to start – just now start thinking that, but now I'm like, I don't care, so whatever. It's my drawing, not theirs. I'm not drawing it to impress them, I'm drawing it because it's what I want to do.

I feel like it was the printmaking one that helped. Everybody was doing their own awareness and everyone was like, oh my gosh, your thing is so cool, I would never think of that. And so I felt like it was just like then, everybody was getting really close then. I felt like I was judging them before I even knew them. I felt like they were judging me because I couldn't draw. Now I just feel like after that printmaking piece it's just been like, oh, that's cool. Everybody loves that piece.

Figure 34. Sonia's printmaking process where she expressed awareness of the deaf.

Theoretical Analysis: New Understandings of Self and Art Making

Defining Mixed Media Art

The five students expressed their conception of the defining aspects of mixed media art. Although their definitions are far from a textbook explanation, they capture the expressionistic, creative, and imaginative qualities of mixed media art making. David described the difference of the class as "not like an ordinary art class… mixed media is about taking something plain and making it into something unique with other stuff." This uniqueness represents the creative processes within mixed media where students explored and experimented with art making as they utilized various materials.

After taking many other art classes, Kathie explained that "mixed media is different because it does not have to be done in a certain way... you can take a bunch of junk and put it together." The junk portrays the various materials, including found or recycled materials, students may utilize during mixed media art making. As Kathie described, there was no prescribed formula for creating mixed media art within the class. This notion reflects Greene's (1986) argument to allow students the opportunity to explore materials, ideas, notions, and various art forms to increase the capability for productive and meaningful experiences so their thoughts and perceptions may be expanded. Throughout this chapter, I describe many ways in which students embraced the freedom to explore possibilities for their art making.

Joan and Sal described the openness and the potential to incorporate any material, process, or technique into a mixed media work. Sal asserted that within the mixed media class, "anything you want your art to be, it can be." Joan explained that it is "one of those classes where you can go in any direction." These qualities represent the ability for students to make personal choices, create meaning, and explore new possibilities within the mixed media class.

Through this, students are able to form their creative processes of art making and construct their own knowledge and learning as they develop meaning, awareness of art processes, and build art techniques through hands-on exploration (Gude, 2009; Marshall, 2010).

Misconception of Perfection

The new understandings students gained through their art making processes often came through frustration, confusion, and struggle. David described his first mixed media pieces as a struggle because he was "thinking we were just about to draw again" and "had never done anything like that." Various elements contributed to students' initial problems with the process of creating mixed media art. Kathie felt that she "locked up" her creativity in previous art classes where technical skills were emphasized. Greene (1986) argued that spaces for learning should promote the cultivation of knowledge and skills along with imaginative growth through active exploration that allows for unanticipated and less predictable results. Oftentimes, the mixed media students had come from art classes where incorporating meaning and being yourself was not a priority. Instead, the teacher would provide specific instructions for art making.

Students often come into the mixed media class with the misconception that for art to be good, it must be technical and meet standards of perfection. Kathie and Sal emerged from this way of thinking as they came to accept the many possibilities of art. Kathie struggled at the beginning of the semester to experiment with different types of art making that were not heavily rooted in technical art applications such as shading and realistic drawings. She expressed her new understanding that "mixed media is like taking different mediums and putting it together to see how it looks…If it doesn't look good then you can do something else. Mixed media does not

always have to look good, like perfect." Even though students continued to appreciate realism and art executed with technical expertise, they garnered an appreciation for expressionism, abstract art, and contemporary forms of art.

The issue of perfection was a struggle for many students as they approached their first mixed media work. Kathie explained, at first, she was "really uptight and really technical". Initially, this caused students to be fearful of making their own choices. They were hesitant to experiment with new materials and processes as they dreaded the possibility of making mistakes or creating art that might be judged as ugly. As students came to realize the freedom within the classroom to develop their imaginations, they became more open to inventiveness, expression, experimentation, and making personal choices (Post, 2002).

The fear of perfection was tough for many students as they were unsure if their work would be acceptable if it were different or did not include technical mastery of art processes. Fear of judgment from themselves, teachers, or peers initially hindered students from freeing themselves to attempt new methods of art making. Sonia, expressed initial frustration as she wondered "what the heck am I supposed to do…this is crazy." Students explained that they often worried about receiving a bad grade or their art not being liked if they attempted something different. Greene encourages teachers to embolden students to break from pre-defined realties that often govern students' choices, ideals, perspectives, and viewpoints (Greene, 1995b; Rasheed, 2008). As students realized the freedom of artmaking they had within the mixed media class, they embraced their own creative processes and learned to make personal choices for their art. Their fears began to diminish and the potential for new meanings was more freely explored.

Post (2002) describes a physical space for developing the imagination is one that offers students freedom for possibilities. Through the semester in the mixed media class, students

developed an acceptance, as well as an appreciation for different types of art. Sal explained that he now understands "there's definitely beauty in other art… If it comes from you, and if it means something to you…it's beautiful because it's something that came from you, from your ideas, from your mind, maybe even a piece of you." He argued that the class has helped him develop a greater appreciation of art and has taught him to be less hesitant to try new ways of art making.

Embracing Creativity

As students began to embrace their imaginations and develop their own creative processes, their frustrations and struggles with mixed media art making began to diminish. They were able to venture down new paths of possibility as they sought new meanings and novel approaches to art making (Greene, 1995b; Post, 2002). Sal explains that his creativity has grown as he has "been able to think differently…thinking more outside the box." This sentiment was described often by students as they expressed a desire for their work to have meaning and represent aspects of themselves and their thoughts of the world. Sal argued, "I don't want it to just be a school project. I want it to mean something to me." As students realized they were in a space to think and express their creativity, they opened themselves up to developing creative processes, finding new meanings, and exploring new materials and techniques.

The creativity of mixed media art making seemed a little haphazard at times as students experimented with a plethora of materials, created messes around their workspace, and made a series of mistakes. Students' described mixed media art making as a process of thinking differently, but sometimes not really thinking at all. Sonia describes the process of thinking without thinking during mixed media art making as, "you don't know what you're thinking until you just throw stuff together, and then it ends up looking really cool… I would never think of doing that…in a normal art class. Marjan's (2012) description of creativity levels places

spontaneous expressiveness as the simplest form of creativity. The second level includes

technical skills and proficiency in techniques. Requiring new developments of existing ideas is

considered inventive creativity, the third level. A final level, emergent creativity, would require a

completely new, often abstract idea (Marjan, 2012). Many students within the mixed media class

discovered the importance of the simplest form of creativity as they utilized spontaneous

expressiveness as a way to free their imaginations. Even though most had well developed

technical art skills, they often had to place these concepts aside in order to think freely. This free

engagement in the activity of creating is representative of Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) flow theory.

As students are personally connected to the enjoyable activity they are able to become more

intrinsically engaged in the act of creating and often lose themselves within the creating

experiences. These moments lost in the flow allow them to achieve deeper levels of focus and

concentration (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Shernoff et al., 2003)
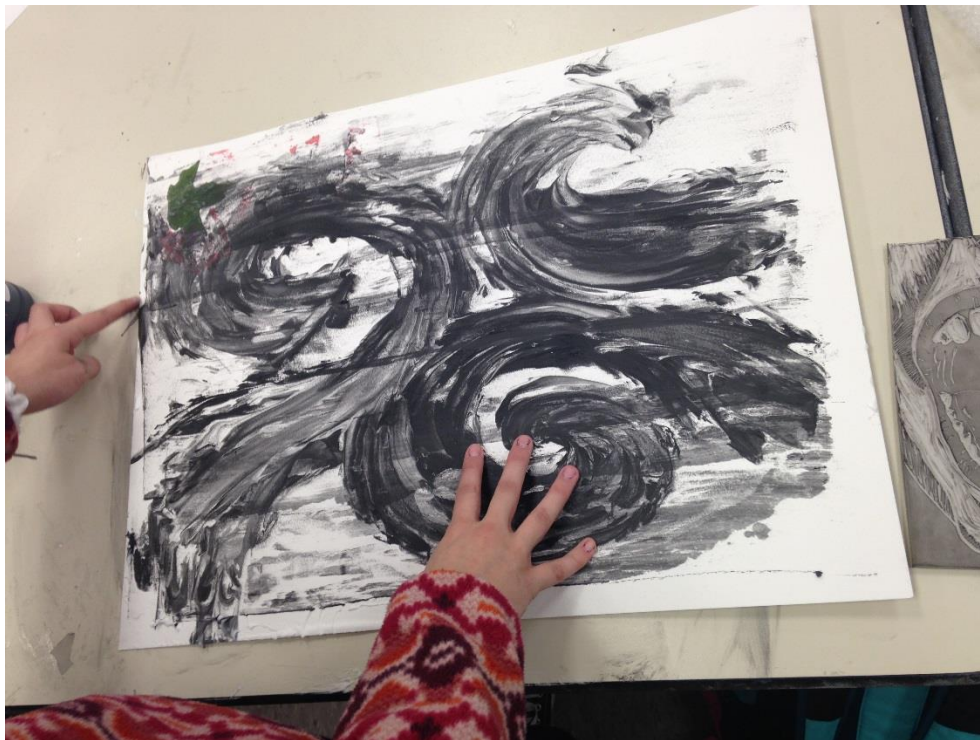
Figure 35. Student finger-painted and glued leaves to begin her mixed media work.

Embracing Oneself

Accepting newfound aspects of their personalities and lives was a concept expressed by my students. Joan learned through the class that mixed media art provided her with a form of self-expression that she was unable to convey with words. She explained, "with this class, it really showed me how I can just be myself…I figured out how to express myself in ways other than words…There's more to me than just being quiet or the pissy moods." Through creating mixed media art, she learned ways to channel her thoughts, stresses, and frustrations. Kathie learned to accept her differences and began to speak openly about her health issues during class. As students accepted that there are different ways of creating art, they also came to embrace the differences in themselves, others, and the world. This acceptance is part of the freedom purposed by Greene that prompts "persons to become different and to take actions to create themselves" (Greene, 1988, p. 22). As students embraced the freedoms within art making, their worlds began to take on new meanings, and they found greater potential within themselves and their art making.

Freedom from Judgment

Through the semester creating mixed media art, students began to welcome the freedom of taking a personal stake in their art making. While students utilized their imaginations, they discovered possibilities and gained an acceptance of their own lives and ways of being in the world (Greene, 1987, p. 14). David asserts that even though some people do not understand his art and call it weird, he accepts it and could "care, less" about their opinion because it is his personal expression. Each of the students reiterate this importance of a personal approach to making art.

This realization developed at different times for students through the semester. Where David quickly embraced his expressionism, Sonia struggled with accepting her art making and was concerned about judgment through most of the semester. However, at the conclusion of the semester, she expressed that she was "starting to care less about what people think." She argues, "It's my drawing, not theirs. I'm not drawing it to impress them, I'm drawing it because it's what I want to do." The fears of judgment diminished as they set personal goals to develop art based on their awareness of the world around them.

The students also expressed their new understanding of creating art as a form of personal expression, not to simply please others. Sal hopes others will see beauty in his work, however the meaning that he presents through his work is now of greater value to him. Even though Kathie spends a great amount of time caring for her siblings, working a part time job, and making others happy, she now realizes that, through making art, she can escape from her stresses, and care for herself to make sure she is okay and happy. This ideal has helped Kathie embrace a personal approach to art making that is undefined by a right or wrong answer.

Beyond the Mixed Media Class

As students enhance their imaginative capabilities, their potential to discover new avenues in their lives and with the world may become abundant and free (Greene, 1987). Students expressed ways in which the mixed media class had the potential to improve their creative, artistic, and academic potentials. Sal attested that after completing the mixed media class, he believes he will be more willing to develop works with meaning and explore new materials so that he can develop a stronger art portfolio. He understands the freedom he now has to use his artistic abilities to give to the world. He does not want to simply make beautiful art, he

aims to enlighten people through his work as he portrays messages of meaning about the world. This is important as he hopes to major in art in college and achieve a career in the art field.

Art education aims to not only develop students' awareness of the world of art, but also to enhance students' creative thinking and imaginative capabilities (Bastos & Zimmerman, 2011; NAEA, 2014; Zimmerman, 2009). Kathie explained that mixed media helped her learn to think not only about her artmaking, but also in her academic classes. She said she is able to express herself better because "mixed media makes you think and when you get to the real world, you are going to have to think whether you realize it or not…whether it comes easy to you or not." This "thinking" described by Kathie involves making choices of materials, developing meaning in art making, employing the imagination, and solving problems. Greene (1997) attests that in order to learn, students need to reach beyond themselves to "become more, become different, experiencing more deeply, overcoming the humdrum, the plain ordinariness and repetitions of everyday life" (p. 14). As students learned to think differently through mixed media art making, they began to create different, deeper expressions of their thoughts, perceptions, and feelings.

Freedom for students in the mixed media art class came in the form of an acceptance of their differences and personal qualities. Sal argues that mixed media "allows people to open up and to experience new things and to try new things and to really just break that mold that they've been put into." As students began to release their imaginations and creative potential through mixed media art making, they made discoveries about themselves, the world, and their art making. Greene (1995b) explained that the arts are a valuable tool for students to increase their imaginative capabilities so they may gain a reflective and insightful understanding of the world beyond their current state. Creating mixed media art permitted students an imaginative exploration of various thoughts and perceptions.

Joan used mixed media as a way to cope with her family struggles. Personal frustrations and her issues resonate throughout her mixed media works. Joan expressed that being free is a quality that now shows up in each of her pieces due to the open-mindedness and ability to explore her own ideas such as female power and solitude. She uses the word free to connect her thoughts of freedom within mixed media art making to the freedom she will one day have after graduation. The ability to lose herself within the processes of creating mixed media art, gives her a way to self-reflect and deal with her strife. The creative processes and imaginations developed through the mixed media class enhanced students' awareness of the world, their ability to see beyond themselves, as well as their capability to express perceptions and meanings of their lives and the world.

Summary

Through the mixed media art class, students came to imagine new outlooks for themselves, others and the world around. They cherished the opportunity to make new discoveries and experience new possibilities. As described by Sal, "I think mixed media provides the chance to free yourself, really, from just thinking one way… It frees you from the limitations. It allows you to impact people." While students confronted preconceived notions and formed novel perspectives of art making, they also challenged and empowered themselves to become different, accepting, expressive, and free. Through their imaginations, they found greater capabilities for existing, discovered potentials for humanity, and ventured upon new paths.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINIDINGS: MIXED MEDIA CLASSROOM CULTURE AND PERSONAL MEANING MAKING

As students created art within the mixed media class they engaged with others by sharing their life experiences, views of the world, thoughts concerning the role of art in their lives, and lessons of art techniques. Students' discovery and development of personal meanings through their art making became important to their experiences within the class. Through this chapter I discussed students' experiences within the mixed media art classroom environment and the personal meanings derived from their creating.

Mixed Media Classroom Environment

Greene (1986) encourages teachers to foster an environment that will allow students to engage with others and break free from the mainstream and form new perspectives of their lives and the world. Through an engagement with others, students can embark on new thoughts, actions, and ways of existing (Greene, 1995b; Post, 2002; Rasheed, 2008). As students are permitted to engage with others and offered freedom to imagine within a space, they may discover new paths for their lives. (Greene, 1986, 1988; Post, 2002).

Kathie's Mixed Media Classroom Culture

My art has changed a lot. We started doing that play piece. That was really, really hard for me. I couldn't figure out why it was so hard and why it was coming so easy for everyone else. Like Jo, it was coming so easy for her. She has not had Art 2 yet. She is going from here to Art 2, so it was easy for her. But for me I came from Art 2, and that play piece was so, so hard for me. I was so frustrated I have not touched it since.

Figure 36. Kathie was frustrated over this first mixed media play piece.

I thought it had to be something. So, we started out drawing something and then I used

pastels. But there are two different kinds of pastels. I used the watercolor kind. I am used to the

straight up kind. I laid down the blue and the red, and then orange. And then I got frustrated

because I did not know what to add and then I saw this orange paper.

Figure 37. Kathie's orange paper she discovered in a mixed random materials box.

I found this paper in a box full of stuff. It was just sticking out and I just pulled it out. I don't like orange, so I used orange colors because I was frustrated. So why not use a color that I don't like.

If you look from here to what I have done now, like if you gave me this play piece, and I looked at it a while ago, a few months ago, I would be like, no I don't want anything to do with it. But now looking at it I am like, oh well, it kind of does look interesting-ish, different. In a way, it kind of looks like a flower. Like here is the stem and there is the flower and the leaves. And there is a pond and a mountain. Now I can kind of see. Then it was like no, I don't want nothing to do with it. So I just kind of put it down for a minute and then come back and think about it later. I didn't want to finish it, because it looked so bad.

The teacher's context. *I have got to this point because you make us think. You make us think about how our pieces could have meaning, by talking to us and by wanting to know what the pieces are about and why I chose that. Some art teachers are like, oh that looks cool. Other*

155

art teachers are like, yeah, cool that looks really cool, now let's put it up somewhere. But you make us talk about and converse about why we are doing this.

Classmates. *Seeing how everybody else is doing their artwork, I feel like that gives me more ideas. But if I were sitting at home doing the same project, I would not get that. Because I can't see them, see other people doing it, and I cannot get other ideas. Being in the classroom kind of helps and it helps the idea process come up. Being at home you don't get those ideas, you just have to pull them out wherever. But here, it's like you can kind of see how everybody else does it. That's why I walk around and see other people and how they are doing, and what they are doing. I ask questions.*

Figure 38. Kathie working alongside a classmate as she developed her bird print.

Like the other day. It was very frustrating for me to sit there and do my work. I was getting frustrated, and I was looking around and seeing other people and how well they were doing and I was getting frustrated. I just wanted to go home and do it at home, and get though that, and then come back and do it here. That can hinder you. I am like, whoa those are really good. And I am like, I don't want to do this thing anymore, I am just going to give up. But then, I'm like, ok well, I want to see it done. So, I finish it.

Sometimes, like when I am working through something that is hard and frustrating, I don't want other people's judgment because, I want to get through it and then be like I got through that, now I am in a better state. I can take what you say and I don't care, because I am in a better state. But, when you are in a rough patch and everybody's like, girl, what are you doing, why are you doing that? I'm like, I don't know, I am trying to figure that out. That can be frustrating being in a classroom.

So, take Jo for example. She is going through a rough patch right now. She came outside and she was looking from afar. And I was like well, I like it because it is different and it is interesting and makes you think. And she was like, I don't want to hear it right now. I don't want to hear what anybody has to say right now. I just want to do it. And I can kind of see that. I cannot blame her. When I am going through a rough patch I don't want to hear nothing. I just want to get through it by myself. If I need help, I will get help if I need you. I can't blame her because I am like that.
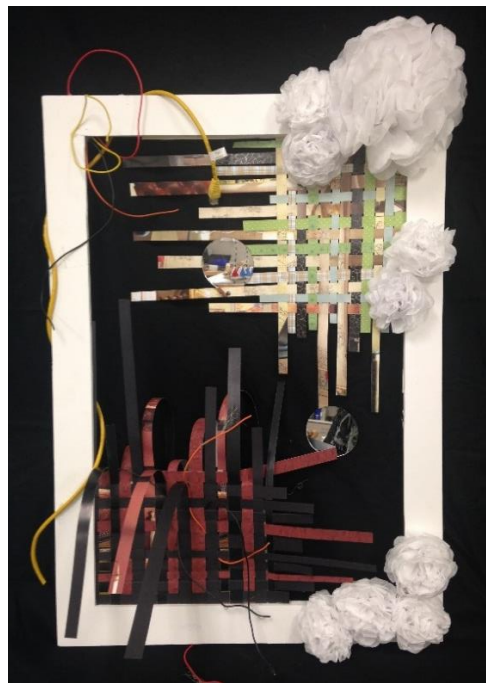
Figure 39. Jo's frustrating mixed media work.

Joan's Mixed Media Classroom Culture

It's our artwork, it's our piece, but if we've all done something with different materials, then we work with each other - anything that's from our art or our lives. It's a really close class. Even if we all have our little groups, you're still in whole group conversations. It's one of those situations where I have my pieces, they have theirs, it is our artwork, but we have each other's ideas. It's not like those classes where you have to be scared to speak or scared to say something. If you don't get it, just say it. Somebody's going to come help you.

Figure 40. Joan working alongside other mixed media art students.

I think it's got a lot to do with all the kind of people we are and the fact that we're all amazing artists. We're all outspoken people on our own. There's no reason to be scared of expressing your artwork when we all do it. We're all so willing to help each other and we're all so willing to share an idea or share a message.

Judgment. *I don't think I've ever gotten bad judgment from the class, and I've never given it. None of us are the type to be like, oh my god, your piece sucks. Its like - Here's an idea you could do. Here's a way you could do it. Or we'll ask each other's opinion like - This is what*

you need to do here, you need to clean up a little bit here, but, you know, it's a great piece. It's all more like positive encouragement versus - Oh my god, that sucks, rip it up and throw it away.

I think that's the biggest thing, especially with Lacey. I think her being in our room has helped her a lot. Lacey, she's good and it stresses her out because Mr. E tells them how to do their pieces. I wouldn't make it. But, you know, Lacey's come in there and she was talking about how much her pieces sucked. None of us had thought that. Me, Erin, Callie, and you, even Casey and Nicole, we've all come over there and helped her. Like here, just clean this up, let me show you how to draw this.

And then that other girl started coming in here doing that strawberry turning into a ladybug. I showed her how to draw the ladybug. We've showed them that just someone says this isn't art, it doesn't mean it's not art. You're putting onto paper and you're putting something to it, its art. It may not be the prettiest piece of art, but its art. And it's not that it's bad. There's always going to be a way to improve it. I think it just showed them that their stuff is actually good. Their stuff is actually art, despite what people may say it's not.

Context of the teacher. *You help us, but we're really on our own. You're not one of those teachers that's like, you have to do your artwork this way. Here's a piece of paper. Here's your shape, draw it. There you go, there's your project. It's not like we all work alone. We all bounce off each other. Like with painting pieces, Sal showed me how to do the first one, the face. He was trying to show me how to do that. It's not like you're all on your own with it.*

Figure 41. Joan worked to improve her drawing skills as she questioned the idea of beauty.

If it is my piece and it's my idea, I'm ready. I'm going to jump in and do it. I know where I'm starting. I'm that person that will be out and about, and I'm like, okay, hey, this is a great idea. I'll think, hey, I could take this piece of paper, I can put this thing on it, this, this and this. If it is your idea, I'm like, oh crap. I've got this idea and I got to figure out how to do this and make it this?

You'll show us an example and I'm just like what am I going to do? Like the printmaking I was like, okay, these substrates. What am I going to do? But if it's my idea, I'm nosediving in because, it's mine. Your projects are fun and it teaches me to be open-minded. Not everything is going to be mine or my idea, I'm going to be told to do stuff. But, I don't think it will stress me out any less, but it's cool.

The printmaking project itself wasn't my idea. Printmaking, I don't like. It's like every idea I had, it just didn't work. I don't like the finished products - they're not finished. The fact

160

that even if I was to go back and try to finish it, I don't even know how to fix them. It was fun trying to figure out, and in the beginning I got really excited about all of them. It's like the more excited I got about it, the more upset I got with it.

I had a good print. It's just I didn't really know where to go with it. I understand you print and you work back into it, but I didn't like it in ninth grade either. It wasn't my favorite project. It's just with the student curriculum stuff, they were my ideas - legitly mine. With printmaking, you assigned it and I tried and I tried and I tried. I just didn't know where to go with it. It's like here, I got really excited because I printed it on this substrate. Then, when I printed, it didn't come out. Then I got really, really sad because you couldn't see it. But, I just kept going.

With the printmaking, I learned that you can't necessarily print on everything. I mean you can, but some things are going to come out better. You need something smooth, not something like this that's rigid. I didn't do well on that because I didn't know what to do. I've always been the type that, I can always work through my problems, but I was just at a standstill. The more devastated I got with it the more I really, really didn't want to do something with print

Figure 42. Joan's mixed media linocut prints.

David's Mixed Media Classroom Culture

I like how we got to choose our own seats, and then I like how we can just go around the room and find what we need instead of just asking the teacher and going and grabbing it. It sort of gives us the trust instead of the teacher thinking, oh, they're probably going to take something.

We can just go there ourselves. Having little talks as we draw takes the load off, because we get

brain dead, so we talk and then we go back to work. I like the free space.
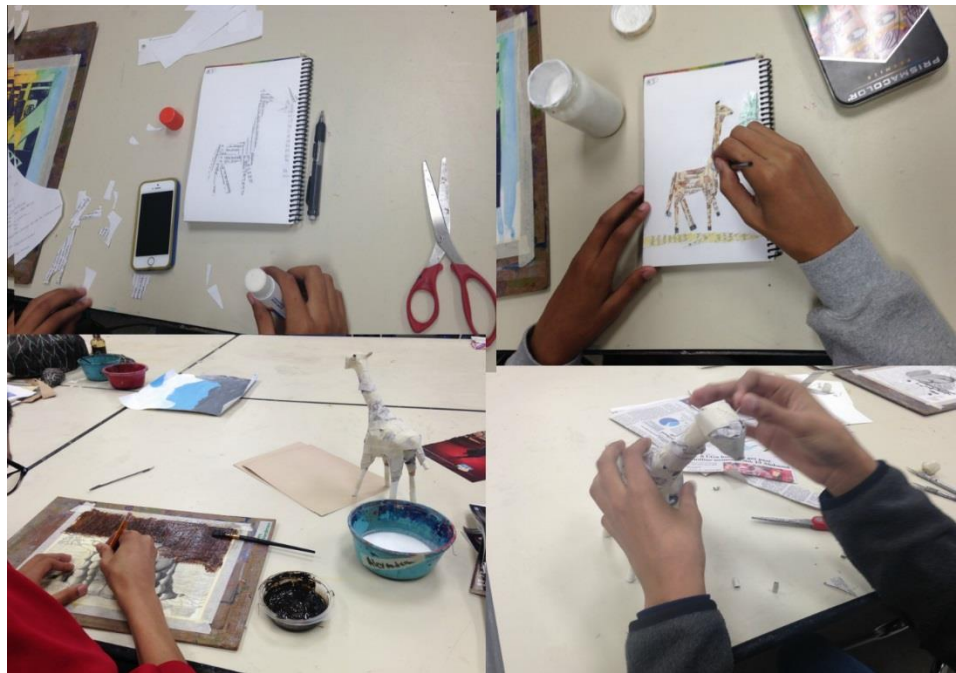
Figure 43. David's idea generation and creation of his giraffe.

I like the student centered curriculum, because we're all doing something different. I look

at the other people's art in the class. I like how other people's artwork is hung up because then

you get inspiration on how they did, and then you sort of can use that and change something

about it and put it on yours, and make it your own too. You can look around, if you need

something to do, if you're like I don't know what I can do more to it, and just look at others

hanging around.

I like that because we didn't have someone telling us, okay, we're all going to draw this

and then it's just a competition to see who drew something better, and making someone feel bad

about their drawing and everybody else is better. It sort of singles a person out and makes them

feel bad.

Sal's Mixed Media Classroom Culture

Mixed Media is fun, because you look around and you see what other people are doing, and you're like, wow, we can do that, we're allowed to do that? And it kind of reminds you that you're free in that class. You're allowed to use anything you want. It's a good feeling when you know that your art's not limited and that it's your art and you can do what you want with it.

Granted, Sam's always weird, you know, he's always doing weird things. It's also interesting to see people that are better at letting loose than me. I look at somebody else's and they do that kind of art and it's appealing to me, that's cool. So that's teaching me constantly.

I think working with Ben, it helps me and him grow at the same time. Because I'm teaching him, or at least I try to. I don't try to be very vague or blunt, and just say you can't do this. It teaches me to be not only patient and stuff like that, but it teaches me that I was that way once too. And it's okay. It's just a growing process. Then with him, you know, he's going to grow from hearing different points of view and understanding that his art is personal, or should be personal. So I think it's good to have that. Since they're younger, they don't have as much experience as me or older people, so we're able to maybe tell them things that they didn't know. We give them advice and stuff, just like you do because of the time that you've been in art supersedes ours.

Figure 44. Sal working alongside Ben.

You take the opportunities that you get to teach us things, and I think that's something that a lot of teachers don't do. They kind of just let kids make their own mistakes and get their grade, and then tell them why they got that grade. But you teach us things. Like in the middle of class, if you see something interesting then you tell us about it. When there's an opportunity for you to teach something you do. You know, that's good and that's comforting, that you're giving it when you don't even know some people might be stuck on something. That helps. But at the same time, you're not directing where we go with it.

When you demonstrate, you don't even know what you're doing. Like you kind of, you don't go in with a plan so that helps us. It helps me be able to understand what mixed media is about. You know, that you don't always need a plan. And usually I like to go in with a plan because I like to have everything very organized.

You giving advice doesn't really affect how much you step into students' art, you know. It's good for them. Too much of it, it doesn't really make a difference. If they're able to work on their own or if you're giving them that opportunity, it's up to them either way. But I think that

165

you should do it just whenever any opportunity comes up and you feel like there's something interesting. Just like you have been doing, because that way you're not always giving advice that people won't accept, you're giving it when it's needed.

Sonia's Mixed Media Classroom Culture

I feel like my drawing skills have gotten better. I know that mixed media isn't all about drawing, but I feel like it's gotten a lot better than what it was. When I first came in here everybody was drawing really good – like Sal, he was drawing really good. I was like - I'm so jealous, that's not fair. I feel like now, I'm not there, but I could be if I kept doing it. But, if I go back and look on my Art 1 stuff, and then towards my mixed media art, I got there.

Jo and Kathie, and all of them can draw really good so I feel like I'm surrounded. So, I'm like, oh, they put their mind to it, let me - let me do this. Having people around you to help you out if you're struggling helps. You can be like, can you come help me on this. Then they're like, yeah. Then I feel it's more like helping each other out, too. It's not just - let me go work on mine and leave you over here and not help you. I feel like it's more about helping everybody. The people around help me because if I'm stuck on an idea or something, I'm like - hey, can y'all help me figure this out? They're like, yeah! Then, if they need me, it's the same thing.

You also help out a lot. I feel like since you've worked in middle school and now in high school I feel like you know where everybody's level is. I feel like it's more helpful because of where you taught and all that.

On the first piece, I didn't know what I was thinking because I just threw some stuff together. But then everybody else's looked cool and mine was just like – I felt like it was just a painting piece. I used watercolor, acrylic, different kinds of paint, because I was so used to painting. Then I saw Callie and hers looked really cool, and I was like, oh, I wanted to do that.

Figure 45. Sonia's first mixed media experimental, play piece.

It was like her eye stuck out, or something. Like she cut the eye out and put all the paint and all different kinds of stuff around it. I think it was the way she did was cool, like I watched her do it. It was just cool how she did everything. When I first started I was so tense and I wasn't relaxed. I feel like she was just really relaxed doing it and had fun doing it. I was just like - What am I supposed to do? I had no idea what to do. I feel like she was thinking and she put it out. But I feel like I wasn't thinking about it.

Figure 46. Callie's mixed media experimental, play piece.

Theoretical Analysis: Mixed Media Classroom Culture

Freedom of Dialogue

During the first two weeks of the mixed media class, students quietly entered the classroom and remained silent as they focused only on their projects. As the teacher, I never instructed the class to remain silent or seated. Many seemed fearful to emerge from their seats to investigate the work of peers or explore the materials available around the room. As students began to generate their own curriculums, the room commenced to buzz with conversations of possible ideas, collaborative critiques, and pleas for assistance. Students began to give instruction to peers about material use or art making techniques.

A classroom can serve as a space to engage students' imaginations as they discover new thoughts, actions, and ways to exist within the world (Greene, 1995b; Post, 2002; Rasheed, 2008). The conversations that took place around the room helped ignite students' imaginations, thoughts, and actions in different ways. Sometimes students needed to take moments away from their work. Wallas (1926) used the term "incubation" to describe this stage of the creative process. David describes how conversations can serve as a form of incubation: "Having little talks as we draw takes the load off, because we get brain dead, so we talk and then we go back to work." These moments away allowed students time to become re-motivated and return to their art making with a refreshed perspective.

Communication also served to promote idea generation. Students participated in discussions about materials, techniques, and possible meanings within their work. Kathie enhanced her learning as she communicated with other students as she walked around the room to see other students' work. As students viewed others work and collaborated through critique or peer instruction, they became more in tune to various possibilities for art making. They began to understand other perspectives and the range of meaning students' chose to represent within their work.

Students often served as teachers within the classroom. Joan stated "it's not like those classes where you have to be scared to speak…If you don't get it, just say it. Somebody's going to come help you." Open communication within the classroom allowed students to seek and offer help to others. This dialogue extended opportunities for learning art making skills and methods, and enhanced meaning as students communicated about their work with others.

Critiques are often a typical component of the conversations that take place within an art classroom. The National Art Education Standards (2014) encourage teachers to engage students

in meaningful dialogue. Teachers often lead whole group critiques within an art class or encourage students to critique through small group discussion. Students in the mixed media class presented issues with the judgment that is often derived through critiques. Kathie argued that critiques can be stressful during stages of problem solving and when she is "working through something that is hard and frustrating, [she] doesn't want other people's judgment because [she] wants to get through it and then be …in a better state." The students argue that sometimes taking time away from a problem, an incubation period, is more beneficial than unsolicited advice or a critique during a difficult period of art making. However, when students were ready for advice or critiques, the closeness and trust within the group made them more willing to share and accept help. Typically critiques consisted of students giving others advice on the use of materials or art making processes. Students also encouraged others to put more effort, time or meaning into their work.

Freedom of Choice

Students were afforded a student-centered approach to art making allowing them to learn through experiences centered on personal choices (Douglas & Jaquith, 2009; Orr et al., 2014). Choice was afforded to students from the first day students entered the mixed media art class. They were able to choose where they sat and were able to freely investigate the materials within the room. David commented that he liked "the free space" where students could choose their own seats and find materials on their own. He explained that it gave students a feeling of trust.

This trust and openness to choice was continued as students developed a personalized curriculum for the class, selected materials for their art making, created art based on individual themes and areas of awareness, as well as generated personalized meanings within their work. As students developed an individualized curriculum, they were offered choices within their creative

process. Maintaining a space that promoted personal creating opportunities, encouraged play and experimentation, allowed self-evaluation, and fostered students' creative processes (Bluffington, 2014; Andrews, 2010; Gude, 2010; Jaquith, 2011; Yenawine, 1998). Specific aspects of the student-centered curriculum are discussed further within this chapter. The importance of the student-centered curriculum reflects the freedom of choice that was offered within the mixed media art classroom.

Inspiring Freedom

Developing a creative art product or process does not extend from a single person; instead it brings together previous ideas (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). As students created mixed media art throughout the semester, they pulled from many sources, such as fellow peers, the internet, the classroom environment, along with books and magazines. David explained that he "liked how other people's artwork is hung up because you get inspiration on how they did…and make it your own." The artwork hanging around the room, books and magazines featuring various forms of art, and computers with internet access to art and art processes each served to inspire students as they generated ideas, selected materials, developed techniques, and cultivated their own art creative processes.

Viewing other students' creative processes also inspired students' art making. Kathie explains that "seeing how everybody else is doing their artwork, [she] feels like that gives [her] more ideas… and helps the idea process come up." As students witnessed other students' creative processes, they had the opportunity to learn, be inspired, and develop an appreciation for different types of art making. Sal expressed the fun of seeing other students' work:

> You look around and you see what other people are doing, and you're like, wow, we can do that, we're allowed to do that? And it kind of reminds you that you're free in that

class. You're allowed to use anything you want. It's a good feeling when you know that

your art's not limited and that it's your art and you can do what you want with it.

The freedoms within the art classroom permitted students to create art based on personal

inspiration and thoughts, not a teacher-directed plan or objective for student inspiration. Being

inspired by others increased the creative capabilities of students as they became more motivated

to seek new perspectives and experiment with new techniques and art making methods (Hanson

& Herz, 2001). Witnessing others' novel ideas and processes encouraged them to seek personal

perspectives and develop new areas of awareness. Through their inspiration from others, they

were moved to create art based on their lives, thoughts, and perceptions.

Freedom of Materials

Gude (2010) recommends that students investigate and experiment with materials, ideas,

and art processes to engage their creativity. A variety of materials were available to students'

within the classroom. Watercolor, oil paint, acrylic paint, markers, pens, color pencils, oil

pastels, chalk pastels, charcoal, and crayons were some of the traditional art room materials

available to students. Other materials utilized by students included beeswax, bubble wrap,

shaving cream, bubbles, wallpaper, scrapbook paper, glitter, discarded books, wood scraps, joint

compound, and magazines. Adhesives and solvents such as masking tape, packing tape, white

glue, epoxy, hot glue, turpenoid, linseed oil, spray fixative, and Mod podge were also utilized.

Students incorporated found objects such as beads, buttons, sticks, leaves, and string into their

work. Students employed a variety of surfaces to create their art including: books, fabric,

cardboard, canvas, Styrofoam, as well as a variety of papers. The student-centered environment

allowed students to access and experiment with a variety of materials that could be used to help

students develop ideas in their own way (Armstrong, 2000; Jeffrey & Craft, 2004). This open approach to materials gave students the opportunity to choose the materials they desired for their art making.

Even though students appreciated the freedom to choose materials to apply to personal ideas, this freedom of choice was often overwhelming and frustrating for students. The choice of materials became part of the creative, problem solving process. Maxine Greene (1986) urges teachers to create art educational spaces that promote "exploring rather than passivity that allow for the unpredictable and the unforeseen" (p.57). As students investigated and experimented with the art room materials, they discovered materials unique to their previous art making. Their unfamiliarity with the materials required them to experiment and ask for technical advice concerning the material. New materials would often cause unpredicted occurrences within their work that would require problem solving. However, as student became more familiar with a wide variety of materials, they were able to embark on new forms of art making and generate new ideas for their art.

Freedom to be Yourself

Students within the mixed media art class ranged in ability and art making backgrounds. Some had taken many advanced art courses where others had only a foundational art course. By creating a personalized curriculum, each student's creative process incorporated unique themes, sets of materials, and goals for meaning. This permitted students to focus on individualized objectives and learn from others instead of continuously comparing their level of success and ability with classmates. David argues when everyone is told to create the same type of art "it's just a competition to see who drew something better" thus causing students to "feel bad about their drawing." Instead of a teacher-directed curriculum, students were able to generate

personalized goals and objectives based on their ability and interests, explore new possibilities, and utilize their imaginations to continuously make new discoveries within the world (Greene, 1986, 1988; Post, 2002). The student-centered curriculum encouraged students to explore new paths for art making, seek new areas of awareness, and foster technical abilities as they became personally inspired and motivated.

Initially, students expressed frustrations about working alongside other students. They made comparisons between themselves and other classmates. Kathie expressed that during her first mixed media work she could not understand why she was having such difficulty when it appeared to be "so easy for everyone else." Because she had been a part of the Art 2 class where technical skills were highly emphasized, she was unable to open herself as freely to experiment with materials and ideas. Many were in awe of Sal's realistic drawing abilities, Jo's expression of deep meaning, and Kathie's use of vast materials. Sonia even expressed feelings of jealousy over Sal's drawing ability. However, the cohesiveness that formed among the students through the semester permitted them to be more open to critique, collaboration, and offering instruction about art techniques and media use. By the conclusion of the semester, students were proud of their individual successes and the personal creative processes they had developed.

Greene (1995b) urges teachers to involve students in reflective thinking that will prompt their imaginations and creative encounters so they may ponder governing structures of their world. Self-expression is described by Michael (1980) as the act of a person "giving and projecting his point of view, his interpretation, his personal and unique feeling, thinking, and perceiving about something" (p.116). The student-centered mixed media curriculum permitted students to freely create art that explored their personalities, feelings, thoughts, and personal perceptions. As Sonia affirmed, "With the student centered thing you get to do what you want to

174

do, and you're not told what to draw or whatever. I feel like that's more freedom… I feel like it's your choice." As students become more self-reflective, they may learn to make choices through enlightened perspectives of their worlds. The student-centered curriculum allowed the students' to express their individuality and utilize their imaginations through art making.

Students accepted the freedom to be themselves in order to develop their creative capabilities. Kathie explained that initially, she did not embrace the opportunity to make her own choices. She accepted the freedom after questioning her creative processes, "…is it ok for me to be my own person and do my own thing? Is it okay for me to do that? And yeah, it was okay." Through the semester in mixed media students' developed a greater appreciation of themselves while accepting and valuing their differences, perspectives, personalities, and ways of being in the world. They also developed a greater understanding of the thoughts, actions, situations, and lives of others.

After completing the mixed media course, Sal offered the following statement as encouragement for others coming into mixed media art:

> Let your art be a piece of yourself. If there's a mistake, that's you, you made that mistake, so it's part of you. Don't try to cover it up. You're human. You're fallible. If you have viewpoints that people don't agree with, then let that be, let your art say that. Don't try to change who you are because your teacher or your classmates don't agree with you. So really just let your art be a part of yourself.

This passage represents Sal's personal self-reflection and the acceptance he made through class to embrace his own ideas, imaginations, and perspectives. This freedom resonated through many concluding writings, and comments made by the mixed media art students.

Engaging with Others

Greene (1986) emphasizes that in the pursuit of freedom, students must learn to engage with others as they develop their imaginations and emerge from predefined realities. As students engage with others, they have potential to discover new perspectives, actions, and existences within the world (Greene, 1995b, Post, 2002; Rasheed, 2008). The classroom space and encounters with others, influenced students goals and ideas, as well as the materials and processes they utilized through their student-centered mixed media curriculums. Learning and imaginative development occurred as students viewed the work of others, discussed ideas, critiqued developing work, and offered instruction of art techniques and materials. Sal affirmed that the mixed media class "allows for the students to teach each other, as well as the teacher teaching the students. He also stressed the importance of students "stepping out of their bubble" to embark on new experiences, explore new materials and ways of art making, and continue to seek novel meanings, otherwise they limit their creative potential.

As I spoke with students about their experiences, many described moments where they witnessed and were inspired by the creativity of others within the class. Sonia, who initially struggled with creative thinking and processes, was inspired by Sally's art that represent her personal moments of frustration and anger. Sonia described, "Hers always turn out so cool… It's like her frustration is thrown out on the canvas." Sally's expressionistic creative process was much different from Sonia's, yet it made her appreciate a different way of thinking, working, and creating art. As students engaged with others within the mixed media classroom space, their creative thinking and processes developed from these new inspirations, understandings, experiences, and perspectives of thought and art making.

Personal Meaning Making through the Creative Process

Many aspects of personal meaning and awareness were woven into students' mixed media creative processes. The National Visual Art Standards encourage students' exploration of ideas, understandings, meaning making, world awareness, and their personal lives through art making (NAEA, 2014, p. 3).Through the semester, students' art making became more than step-by-step stages. Instead, their creative process became centered on the meanings they chose to expand through art making. Marshal (2010) and Heid (2008) argue that the creative process should not be understood as steps. Moments of art making sometimes begin at different stages and stages often spiral back to be revisited. Their creative processes, including the media, style, and techniques, were based on the thoughts, awareness, understandings, and perceptions students chose to represent through their art making.

Kathie's Personal Meaning Making through the Creative Process

The elephant. *I guess you could say I had an obsession with elephants last year in painting and I didn't know why. I wanted to know why they were held captive and why people were killing them off and why people don't like elephants. They are interesting. They are not mean animals. I did not know why people would want to put them in the circus. And just pack them up and ship them off places and treat them like that. And I wanted to know more about it.*

And then I got to this class, mixed media, and I got to thinking about why I like elephants so much. Last year I was going through a lot of stuff myself like at home. I did a lot of elephants chained up and trying to get out. And I think elephants kind of represent me because like I feel like I have to be like society wants me to be, like a certain way. I don't want to be like society wants me to be. I want to be different. I don't want to be like everyone else. An elephant just

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wants to be an elephant. It does not want to be a circus animal. It does not want to be packed up

and moved around. Like, I have to go with my dad thing. And I did this elephant because it is the

foot pulling away from the chains.

Figure 47. Kathie's mixed media elephant in chains.

Although it may not look its best, it has a meaning. Like its foot is pulling away from the

chain. The chain is society and what everyone thinks. And the chain is everything, how other

people view you and how you should be. And the elephant is just an elephant. It does not want to

be part of society. It wants to be its own animal.

I knew I wanted to do the elephant. Well I was looking at pictures of a moose. And

somehow that moose became an elephant. And I thought, I like elephants. And I had that

conversation with myself and was like what if I did my next piece of an elephant's foot. And so I saw an elephant's foot with chains and I liked that a lot. And I like charcoal because it is dark.

I know I want a meaning behind the elephant foot. But when I started doing it, I didn't think about it. I just started doing it. I just started putting pieces on there and I liked how it looked and I put beeswax on it. I liked how it looked and I started carving back into it. I liked how it looked. I didn't think about the process. But I thought about what I wanted the meaning to be.

I started by cutting the newspaper and then sticking it on. And I did not like it. I don't like the straight edges. I like it not perfect, because I am not perfect. So, that is why it is ripped and not cut up. I layered back on with the rips because I did not like the way the shaper edges looked on it. And then I did it on my elephant foot, and then I put the beeswax on it and carved a poem back into the elephant's foot. Then I scratched it up because elephants are – they are scratched up. And then, the chains, I carved back into the chains and I went back over everything with the oil. I don't' know what I am going to do next now that I brought out the chains.

Mixed media makes you think and come up with your own ideas. You don't just take a picture and copy it form the picture, or look up a picture on the internet of an animal and just copy it. Like this was a picture of an elephant's foot on the internet, but it does not look like the original picture. I had to think and change it and make it myself. So its creative I guess. Because I don't know anyone else who has done that. It is creative, it is different.

Charcoal. *I like charcoal because it is dark and depending on how you use it, it can make cool, really sketchy-like, streak marks, or it can look blended together like with a white charcoal. And I like the feel of it. I like to have charcoal on my fingers. It feels like I am wearing gloves. But I am not wearing gloves. I can put my mark on anything because I have charcoal on my fingers.*

Figure 48. Kathie's charcoal covered hands along with her charcoal sketches.

Actually I did not like the charcoal at first because I could not get it to work right, and every time I put it on the paper it seemed like it was just making scratches. I just kept working with it and I started to like it, how it looked. And that is why I used charcoal and I guess that is why I like charcoal form the start. I guess I am a dark person.

When I was in Art 2 all my things were really dark and I used graphite pencil. Everything I did was really dark and Mr. E was like why is everything you do so dark, like you need to bring out the highlights and everything. So, when I was doing my grid drawing and I picked up a bunch of stuff from over there. I did not know what the charcoal was. You asked, why did you choose charcoal? I was like, I didn't even know that was charcoal. So after I used it, I had the same piece of charcoal I used with the grid drawing that I do now. And it is like that big.

The first time I used something different from charcoal was this. I had to take deconstruct a document. So I didn't know what to do because you said it had to have color. That pushed me way out of my comfort zone because everything before that I had used charcoal…everything. So this is just a poem I wrote and I ripped it up and put it on here.
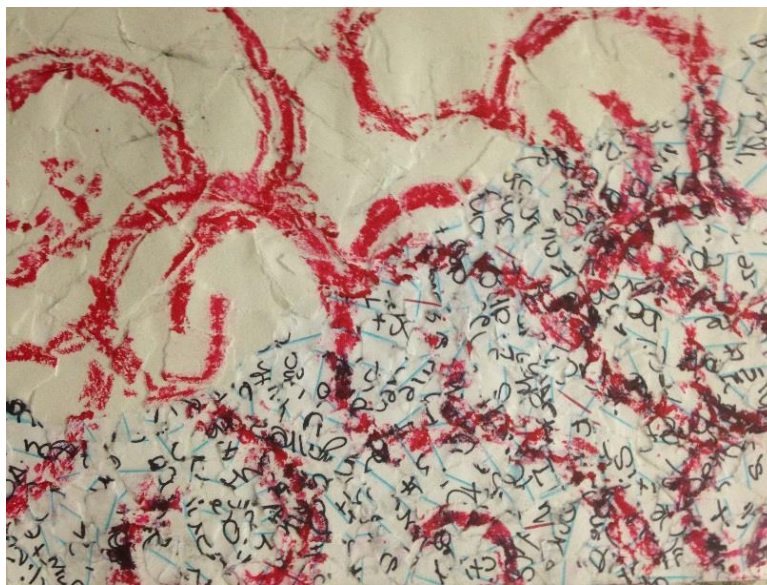
Figure 49. Kathie's deconstructed document with color requirement.

Bird print. *I write my ideas in my sketchbook. I have a lot of sketchbooks. They are like different types of paper in each of them. I will do one on one sketchbook and I will pick up another one and do something else. And then I will just when I need an idea I will just go through all of them. See how I can make them better.*

Every time I do a project I like to put a piece of the project in my art book. This is some newspaper and beeswax. This one is newspaper and beeswax that I haven't worked back into yet. I want to keep a record of everything I have done. This is a print of the first print we did. So, going from the first print to this, the beeswax and newspaper. I keep everything together so it is in here.

Figure 50. Kathie's art book and beginning stages of the mixed media bird print.

This is the bird I printed in my sketchbook and the sketches from the first print I did. So basically I have charcoal in there and some beeswax because I wanted to beeswax something. That is why I put beeswax in here because it is already dark and charcoal…I brought out the highlights with chalk. And then I put rips of newspaper like on this one. Before I did this I put newspaper in here in my sketchbook.

I started doing a print, my bird print. I was home sick, lying in bed, and I had not been out of the house in a few days. So, I decided to open my window, and there was a bird on the tree. I saw the bird and I don't know why but it interested me. I felt like it was looking at me. So, I drew it in one of my sketchbooks and then I wanted to learn more about printmaking. I wanted to do another print, so I was like, I will do another bird print. I was thinking about the bird and the bird is like, a bird can just fly away and come back. Because it is a bird. I want to be a bird. It is a little bit simple, and I could see it on the linoleum. So I just did it. And it turned out nice, I think.

So this bird, I printed. The print looked great. But now what I am going to do with that print, I don't know. So I put it down for a minute and look at it. Still don't know. Put it down for a minute. Come back and look at it. And I am like oh, what if I did a tree. Bird is already on a branch, why not expand the tree and make it look like it is actually in a tree. Then I just put it down for a little bit and come back and am like, ok I can do this.

Not working on it made me think about what needed to be done on it. It made me think about what the next step is going to be. I am not working on it now, so I don't know what the next step is going to be. I know now that I need to finish working on it. A lot of different things. At first I was just kind of doing it, and it looked goof, just doing it. And now I am like taking a step back. And I am like ok. Stop and think about it. Why am I getting so frustrated?

Africa. *So, I don't know why I am so pulled towards Africa. A lot of stuff I do, like at home, is very Africa. So I know I wanted to do something like that. I had this baby, the African baby. I knew I wanted to do a linoleum print. When I first started printing on that one, the face looks nothing at all like it was supposed to. And that was frustrating. I knew that if I kept going, I knew I would get there. So, sometimes I just put it down for a second and just not think about it at all.*
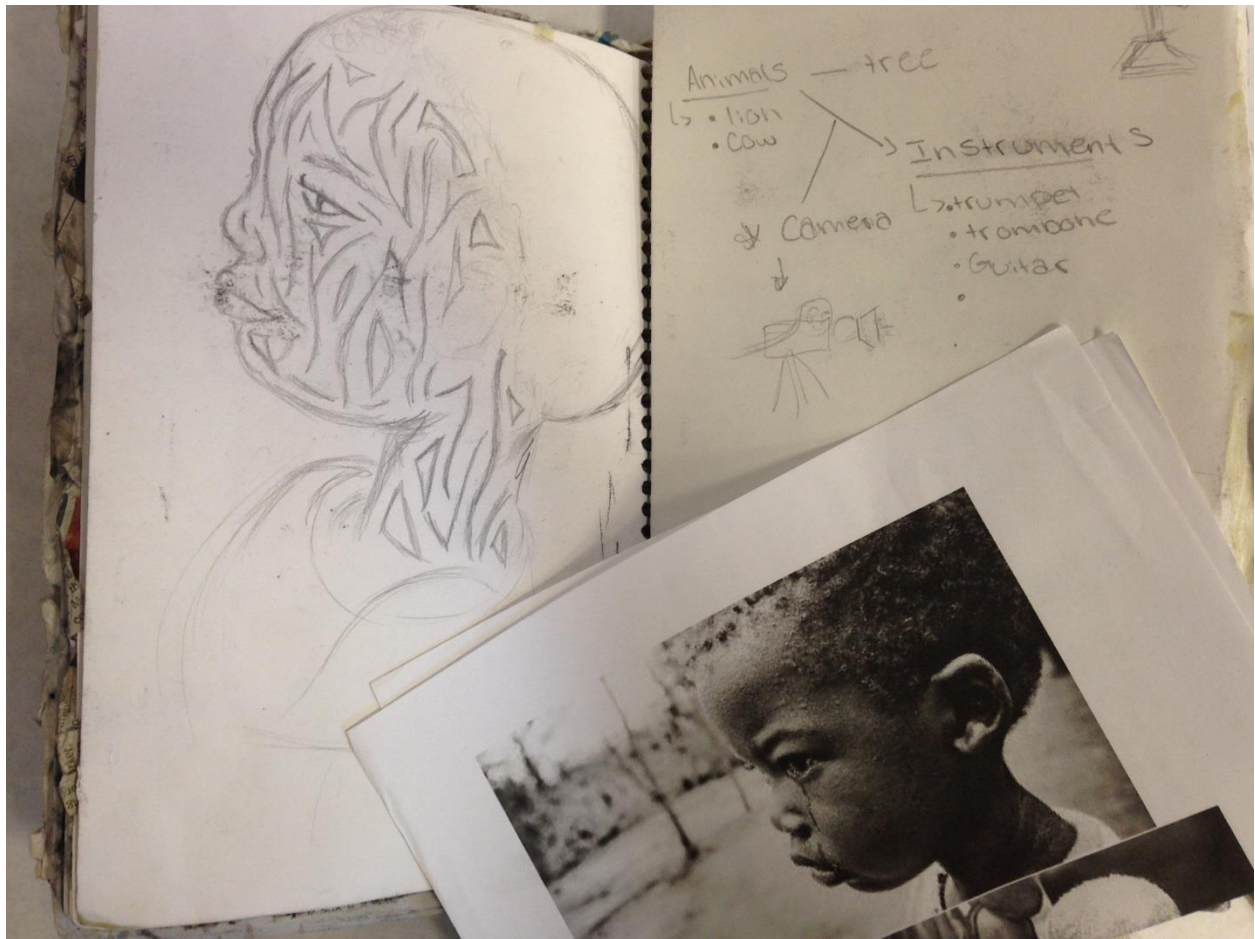

Figure 51. Kathie's idea generation depicting her awareness of Africa.

There is a meaning behind every art piece and you may not have the same meaning as somebody else, so it makes you think. But the process, like, I want my meaning behind this piece, but the process of me doing it, I might not be thinking at all. I might just be doing it. So I was

thinking but it is not thinking. You think at first, or maybe you don't think at all and you just do it. And then you start thinking after and you are like, what does this mean. This kind of looks like this.

Joan's Personal Meaning Making through the Creative Process

Through Joan's student centered curriculum, she created many works that related to her thoughts on family, society, and life. Joan explain her thoughts about a few of the works and her creative process of art making. Each work is tied to a specific aspect of her life.

Dad's Piece. *This was dad's piece. He pissed me off so bad that day. I don't even remember what we got into. I think it was after I got grounded. I did this piece based off my dad because my dad's one of those people where he's really upfront perfect, he's picture perfect, no wrong, perfect family, the man just has no faults - but the way he is behind closed doors. Behind closed doors, he is a nightmare in the making. That's why I did it.*

Figure 52. Joan's development of *Dad's Piece*

Have you ever seen the posters where - it's like a little person, and it's like no-one can make you doubt yourself but yourself? It's like a little person and there's a shadow - there's this other huge shadow. Which is where I got the idea from. That's why I did a little version of my dad, and you see a shadow. It's like you see the real person. Have you ever seen the kid cartoons - it's like the little girl, she's all nice, and you see her shadow and she's doing something ridiculous behind her, like her shadow's misbehaving. Or even Peter Pan. He was good but his shadow was misbehaving. That's kind of the way I'd done it.

I found the monster and then I painted it. I like the paint, the paint worked good for this, but if I had wanted it to have been more detailed, I would've done it in pen. I could've done more facial details. I feel like I did okay for this to be the first time I painted.

I like the fact this isn't perfect, because the whole idea behind it, with it being dad is that's not in fine detail, the idea behind it. The way he is not in front of people is a whole blown out thing. He's this rude, angry person, rather there's more to it - the mischievous, the two-faced, the playing games, all that nonsense, is not defined.

I feel like the idea itself comes across better in mixed media. Because if I had drawn it, it would've been pretty, but I feel like it wouldn't have come across as strong. With this, where I put so much into this, it speaks better. It's not like this huge magnificent piece, but I mean it speaks. It's one of my favorites.

But painting, I despise it with a passion. If you were like - hey, we have this project, we're painting all of this. I'm just like, yeah, I'm just going to flunk out now. But, I have faced my fear of painting. Greatly. Still not dropping Algebra 2 to take up painting. It's not happening.

Thin Ice. *The whole independent thing, that's why I did that one. That was the day when you said we have to pick a word. I don't remember what kind of day I was having, it was just rough, so I did independent. I put all these different images that represented independent. I did the standing on thin ice, there was a clock, and at the clock I did the moon, and then I did a cliff and there was a candle.*
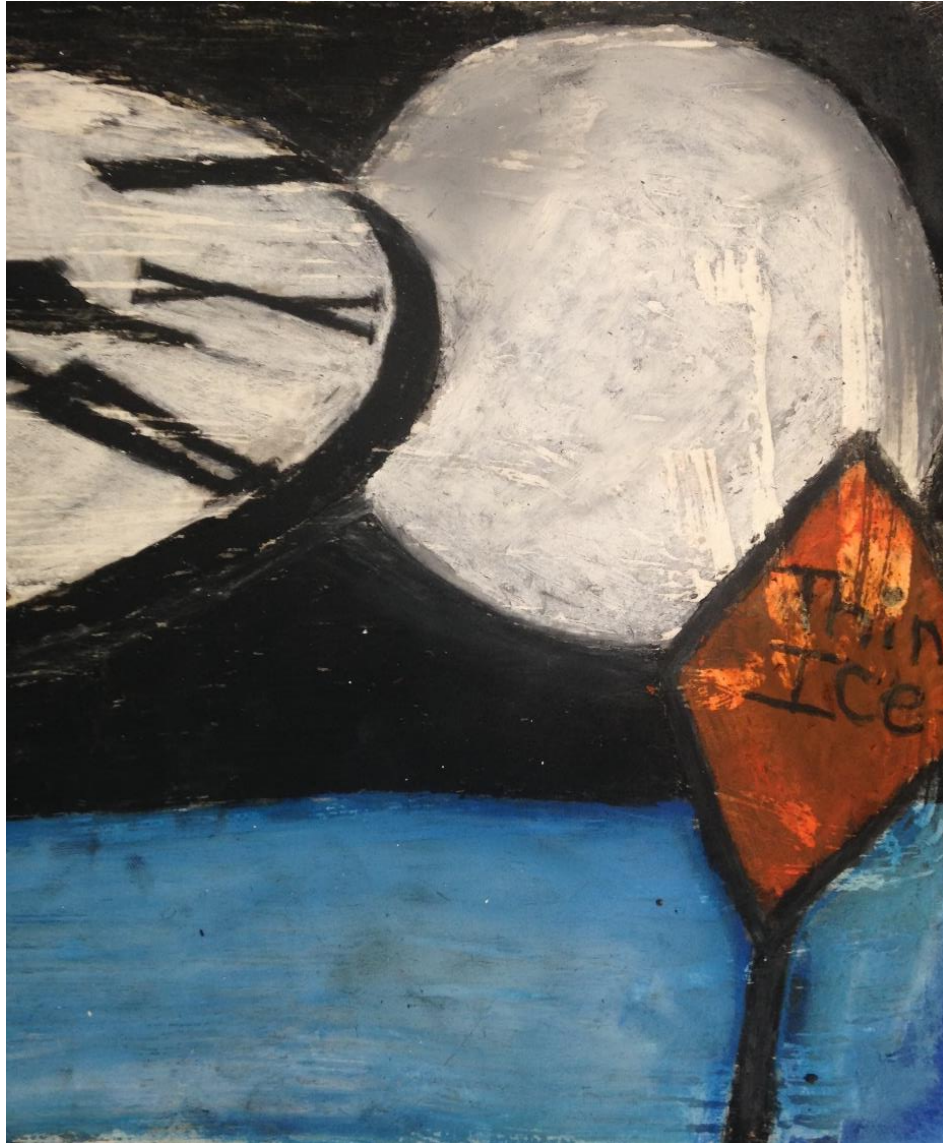

Figure 53. Joan's mixed media art, *Thin Ice*

I had water colored them, and then I come back in with – I don't remember, there's so many different things on here. I did the oil pastels the most and then I went back and did it with color pencils. I ended up not liking the way the cliff looked, so I cut the cliff and the candle off. I figured the three strongest pieces were the clock, because it represents time, and the ice and then the moon. It just all kind of fit in together.

I've always known to be independent. When you're independent you're kind of taking chances on your own. Everything you do you're not basing it off of other people. I did this one like standing on – my first thought was the cliff. I'm standing on the edge. I'm being independent, I'm taking chances on my own. The same thing with thin ice, it's the same perspective – independent. Then the moon - the moon being independent on its own. The same concept with the clock - I did that based off time.

I use time as my independent obsession. I do the same thing with clocks. When you're independent you compare a lot of yourself to time - what's behind you, what's in front of you. You can't think that one moment is at a standstill, because no matter what, the clock's going to keep ticking, it's going to keep going.

Thin ice is like the same concept as the cliff. When you're standing on it's like everything you do is kind of risky on its own. It's like the ice is either going to crack or it won't crack.

I love it. I mean it's messy, but it can be cleaned up. I know with it being oil pastel, that's probably why. I'm sure I can do more to it. I could put it on another piece of paper, maybe black paper and pull this out, and then pull the clock out. Maybe work back into the black area with stars or something. It is a little piece, but there's more that can be done to it to make it a bigger piece. It's just messy and needs to be cleaned up. It kind of stresses me out that it's not clean cut. I'm pretty OCD.

The Flower. *This one, we had talked about me filling in the background and I didn't want to. I wanted to do the flower by itself to represent solitude. My own perspective on it is that I feel like - it's nice to have other people, but you shouldn't need other people. In that artwork I wanted to show strong solitude, on its own. I don't need all this extra stuff to make this one piece beautiful. I did just the flower and I was completely content with it because the flower's really pretty, but it's really pretty on its own.*

Figure 54. One of Joan's first works of the semester, *The Flower.*

It's just like with all the extra stuff - I almost compare it to writing a paper. You try to get your main idea across, then you build, and build, and build, and build, because you feel like you have to. But in reality, it's like you build, and build, and build, and you miss your original idea. You just completely bypass what you originally tried to say.

Peter Pan. *The Peter Pan thing - the story behind that is I've raised my siblings. They loved Peter Pan. That was the Disney movie. I know the whole stupid thing by heart. That was just their thing. With my siblings, my biggest goal was I want to hide them from the world. Hide them from everything bad, anything negative. And Peter Pan, just the whole movie alone represents that. I wanted to do something that was fun. It wasn't that easy, but I've always loved the whole melted crayon thing. It was just fun.*
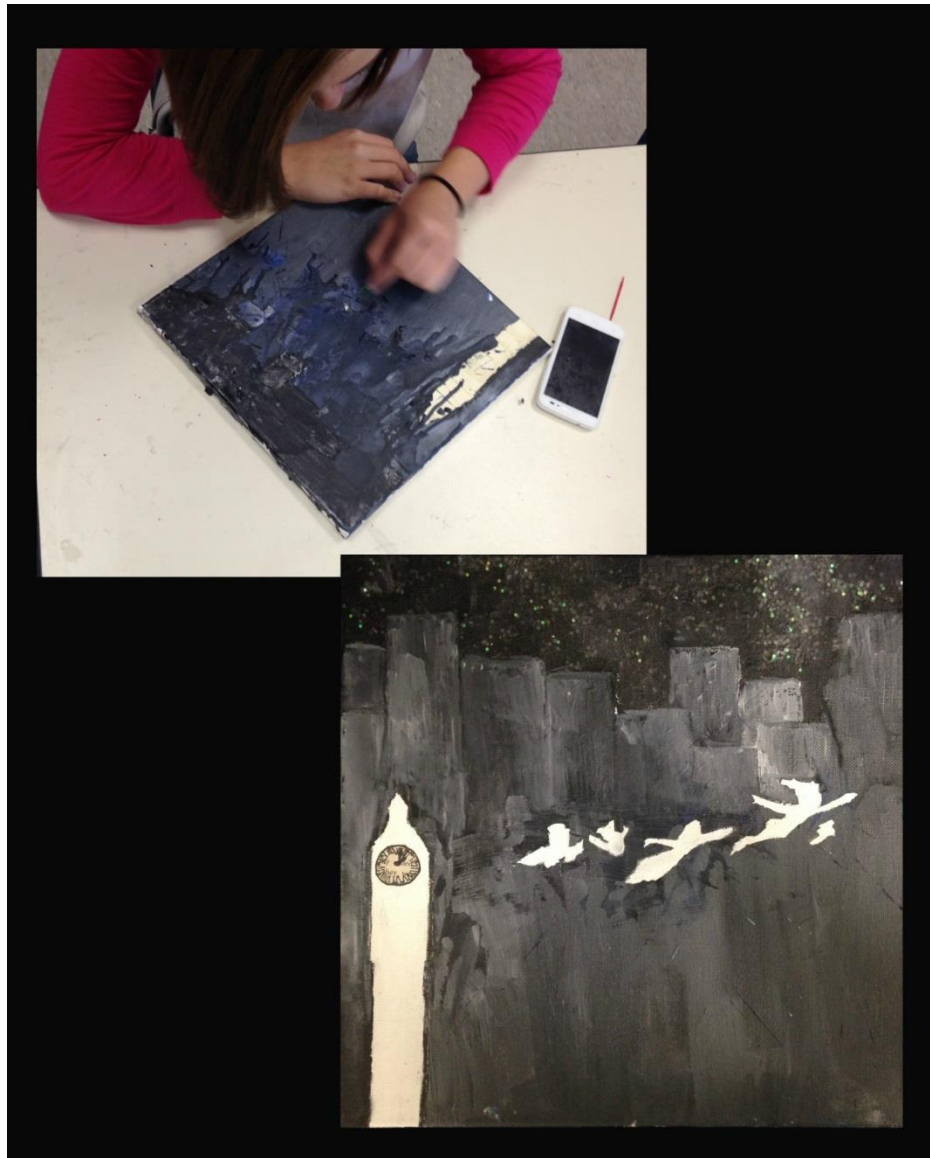
Figure 55. Joan creating her art based on *Peter Pan.*

Starting out, I did the characters, I printed the image of them. I cut them out and I put them on there and covered them with masking tape. I then went back in and painted the city - like, Big Ben and then you go through, there's London. Then I did the sky with melted crayon. I went back into the sky with glitter - I wanted stars. Where I had done the city, I hadn't taped over them. So, I scraped it off so you could still see the outlines. I ended up liking what that looked like.

I feel like it almost stands out more because of the crayon, because I layered all of it up. I feel like they stand out more. It's the painting, and then it's the crayons, and then it's the regular white paint, and then its masking tape. If you touch it you feel how thick it is.

I like the clock now. I like the fact that it's on the newspaper. I like that it's little. I tried doing the little cute numbers. I couldn't get the white into the black, versus the black on the white. Now, the black on the white I like the little fine details. I'm a really abstract person, everything I do - anywhere from papers to math to this - I'm not a fine detail person. With the Peter Pan piece I painted more. So, slowly, I've done just a little bit more towards painting.

Superheroes. *This one was the idea I found online but I changed it up. I worked back into it myself because it was nothing but a straight painting. I built into it a city landscape and my independent feminism thing. That's why I did like - not every single hero is a man. Because all the main superheroes are men. In real life, anywhere from nurses to cops to firefighters, they're females in there - they're heroes too, and they're not males - which is what I did with the girl, and not every superhero is a man.*
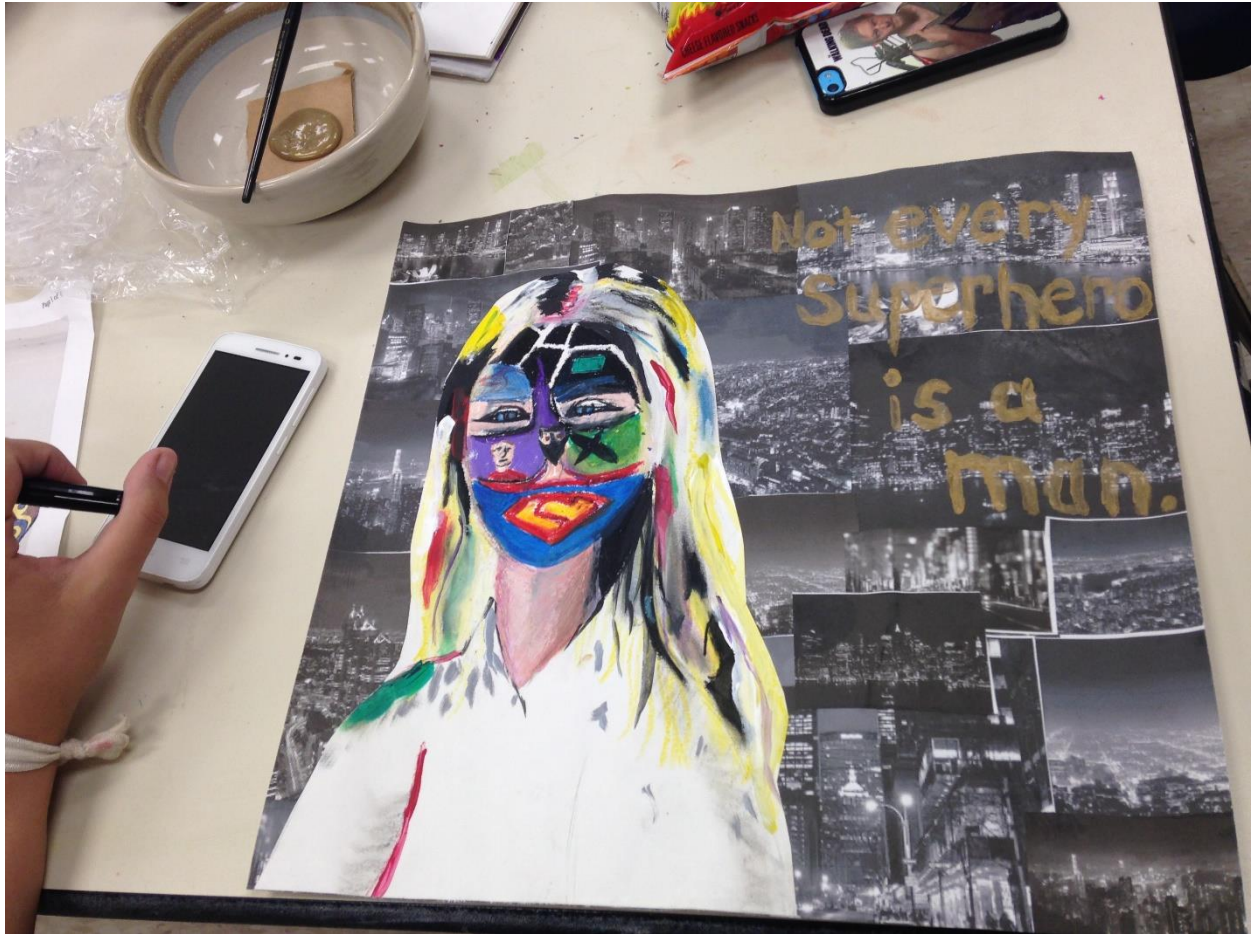
Figure 56. Joan's final stages of *Superheroes*.

It's just me going back to expressing. I don't remember what I did that day or if I was just in one of my moods or ideas or something I had done. I was encouraging myself through my work.

David's Personal Meaning Making through the Creative Process

The bear. *I feel like I am being creative on the bear piece because it's going back to the basics, black and white. And now that I know how to shade and use patterns - and make stuff look not so realistic, but have a little realism to it. It's not so straight realistic and boring. It adds a little fun-ness to it. I was originally just going to do two trees and then just the bear, and then the sun coming down, like sun rays on him. Then I was going to be done, but I needed*

193

something. You also said I needed to add some more, and I agreed. So, I added this rock, and then him coming up above it. Then I changed the sun because, that's just going to be a sun and then rays. So, I put in a waterfall and added some boulders or rocks to it. Then that's the top of the ground with some trees back there with the river flowing behind him. It's the beauty of nature.

I had chosen in my sketchbook for one of them to be nature, and I wanted to use the beeswax - the beeswax sort of is like nature. So I was like, those two go together. And I chose something that is just as vicious and can be something protective. Because bears are not always trying to kill people, they're protecting their babies - and I just like the feel of that. The bear sort of gives you that soft and safe feeling.

Figure 57. David's process creating *The Bear*.

I was being creative with the different textures, because back then, when I was told to

draw with pencil and no color, I would've just had just drawn this part without any of these

details. With the bark, I would have just drawn the tree. These rocks would've just looked like

circles and the grass would've just been this line. There wouldn't have been any shading, just lines on lines.

I don't like drawing with just black and white because realistic, is hard. I'd rather do cartoons because, even if it was messed up, you could still tell what it is. I used that shading on this to give it an effect - like the sun's coming towards that way instead of straight above

Happiness. *I really like painting a lot, so I did this transfer piece, with a smiley face. It is a big picture of these two people talking, and I cut it in half to split it apart. I used Snoopy and something, and a phone. First I had to think about a substrate, which is what I did with all the paper. I think about what colors I could use, because I like to combine color schemes. I don't like just a light blue. I used a bright neon green, but it needs to flow together so it's not hard on the eyes. Then I just sketch lightly over what I thinking. If it looks nice then I go over it again and again. And I go off of that to go onto other stuff. I don't just go from place to place. I have to stay in one place and then move on to the other. Then basically, I just touch it up afterwards, give it more details.*

This piece was supposed to be happiness, and you can see there's a lot of negative towards the happy person. He's just happy and everybody else is feeling down. I think everybody should be a happy person. Then this one, these three fingers were actually together, but I separated them to add on a person texting their best friend to ask what they are doing, to hang out. Then this person is talking to his friend and making him laugh, and he's talking to his friend and making him laugh. They just want to make each other feel better. Like they're having a bad day and they talk and then they start giggling and then they feel better. It's just happiness. There's no negative in this. Because I think the world would be a better place if everybody wasn't so negative. Like come happy - it wouldn't be such a bad day.

Figure 58. David's process creating *Happiness*.

I found the images all from Google. I typed in happiness. I used to have this picture, it's actually blue and yellow, and I had it as a wallpaper before. I recently found it again, and I really like that, so I used it. Then, people text nowadays, so that's where I got that from. I like how they drew like little faces on their fingers. I also used clip art. I searched for happiness and friends.

Mommy's duck. *This one, it started out with a substrate with the shaving cream and some gray shining paint - acrylic paint. Then I mixed it up and I eventually went over it with the yellow water color to make it not look so worn out. I came up with the idea of the duck because my mom used to call me Duck. Yeah, and for, I think it was my ninth birthday, she went out of town and had come back and bought me – she went to a Things to Remember, and she bought me*

197

this snow globe of a duck. It's like the bathtub and then it has the globe part and the ducks in it.

She got it engraved and it said "Mommy's duck". When you twisted it under, it plays the rubber

ducky song. I was looking at it that night when I first started and that inspired me to do a little

rubber ducky and bath time. I just made him like someone just dropped him in the water and he's

hanging out with the person.

Figure 59. David's completed mixed media duck.

I think when people know about your work, it gives a better understanding because you

could draw something and it'd be ugly, and then people would be like, okay, I don't like that

painting. But then when you give them a story about it, it makes them understand it. Then they

see what you did with it and it gives it meaning, and it's not just some picture.

Eiffel Tower. *I don't know if I could get over the Eiffel Tower one. I will just set it to the side and then as I do something else I can get an idea. Maybe like, I think I could put something with words behind it and say something about the terrorist attack thing. I originally did the Eiffel Tower because I had French, and I like the French. I wanted to do something with that and put it all together. Now I'm trying to think if I could just add words in, or something else. But I want to put on there what they're going through.*
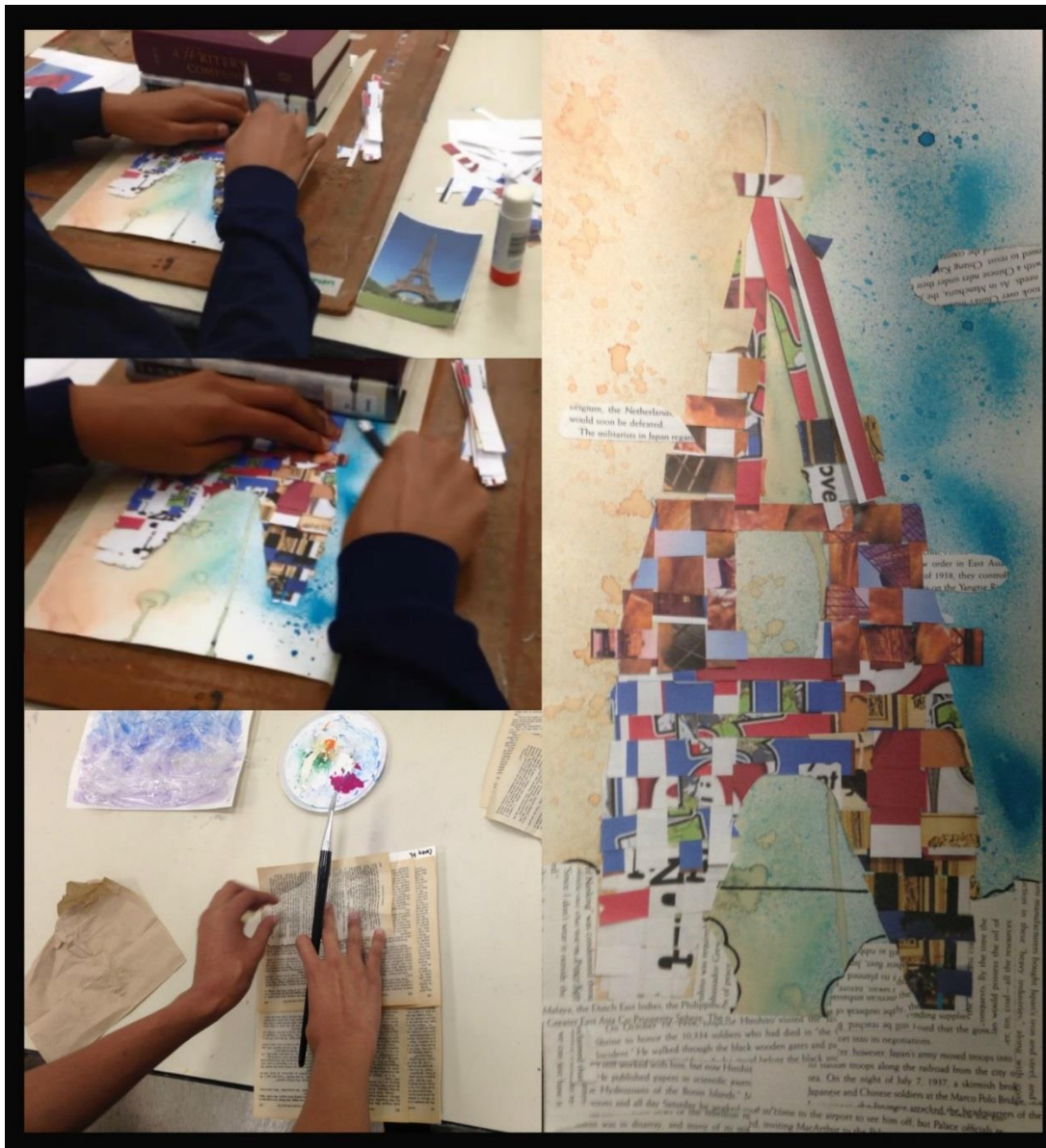

Figure 60. Stages of David's Eiffel Tower art making.

To me, I'm not proud of this because of the weaving. It's not how I expected it to look, it's just lines and then it's just cut. It's not detailed, and I like a lot of details - it's just not that detailed. And then I added in some words, just some words off a book. Then put that around it, and I'm still, just not feeling it.

Look up. *When I started this one, I just had picked out three books, and it was Thurgood Marshall. I had this other lady and she was a famous African-American singer back in the old days, and the person she sung with. I took those pictures and put them in because they were sort of in black and white. Then I actually took some scrap pieces of paper from magazines and glued them on to make a head, because nowadays people are on their phones constantly, never putting it down. He's on his phone, and he has no clue that he's about to walk in the street. And that's beginning to be a problem nowadays. That little thing can distract somebody to getting hurt or worse.*

I knew it was going to be in color so I wanted to put something that had no color in the background to sort of even it out so it's not just all about color. Make it stand out better. I took a piece of magazine that looked nice for the background, and then I cut out some different colors for the amps, and then I cut out some lines of gray papers and glued a border on. After I did the person and the phone, I had saw somewhere about texting – that new commercial – it isn't new now but he was texting and they were making it seem like it's something bad. Then the old people stopped him and they were like "Look up". And he made all this destruction because he was on his phone.

Figure 61. David's mixed media collage, *Look Up.*

I wanted an overview because if I were to do it from behind, you really couldn't see the

phone, all you would see is a head, a neck and body and a little bit of arm. You would've just

saw sky around him, which is very plain. So I did an overview, because I don't think I've ever

done someone looking over someone's shoulder. I got it from his head and him looking down,

and you could see some of the road. So you get the feel of what he's doing.

Since I did a lot of pencil drawings, and it's not as hard for me to draw something I see, I

can plan that out in my sketch book. Then I can make a substrate, then look at that, compare

those two, and see how I can combine them to make something.

I get ideas from stuff I see on the news, and Pinterest. I look for art, anime, photography, and sometimes tech too. Also, the news - like you see a lot of conflict going on, and everybody sees the negative in it, but you can also see the positive in it. Like I was just watching the news last night and they were talking about pit bulls and how they're very dangerous and you can't really adopt them anymore. It's not the dog that's bad, it's basically the owner that treats them bad. They're abused or raised up like that and they don't know what's right from wrong.

Sal's Personal Meaning Making through the Creative Process

When I start a piece, I'm thinking what I am going to draw. What do I want to show in this picture? But with mixed media it allows you to take that and think differently. You're able to think more things than just what you can do on a piece of paper. You can think about what you want your subject to look like. If you want this piece of paper to be 3D, but 2D at the same time. You can really achieve any look that you're thinking of, just because there's so many materials that are available to you. So the creative process is a lot more open, there's a lot more things you can do. It allows that creative process to grow, really, over time. It can grow because you're able to think more out of the box.

I don't think so much about what I have done or what I can do, I think about what is there for me to do. I don't go into a project now thinking, let me think about what I've done, and I can just do this. I kind of do it and see how it turns out now. I go into it without setting a limit to what I think I can do, what my skill level is and all that. And same with materials, I don't think going in - I think I'm going to use graphite. Other times I think what material would be best for this. Mixed media, since it's opened me up to those materials, I'm able to better decide what materials I'm going to use for a piece. I know what they're like and I know what fits best with them.

When I look at by substrate or whatever I'm going to be drawing on, I don't try to think of it as drawn anymore. Sometimes I do because I already know that I want that, but now I'm actually attempting to look at it and be like, okay, I can use something other than drawing materials, so what do I want to use? And my thinking is different than it was before. It's not the materials but idea, what the idea for my art is going to be. Even though I've been doing art that was personalized to me, now it's deeper than that. It's not just me, it's the world around me. It's other people.

That was actually happening more in mixed media. It was kind of like a little push from you telling us we need to think about the world and how we did projects based in the world. So now I think I'm able to look at that in a more serious way, because a lot of people – we don't – we just kind of worry about ourselves. Now I think differently when I am going to make an art, because the art that I put out is not just affecting myself.

First play piece. *My first play piece, I never finished it. It had hands, it had two sets of hands in it. One of them was holding the earth. It had the stitches. The man with the stitches. The brain shaped like a heart. It was a girl sitting surrounded by people but they weren't near her. She was surrounded, though. And that was really just how I felt, so I just tried to paint just what I felt. The brain that was a heart was because my heart affects what I think. And then the stitches because I was quiet and I didn't want to talk to people. I didn't want to talk to people, but I wanted people to talk to me, you know?*
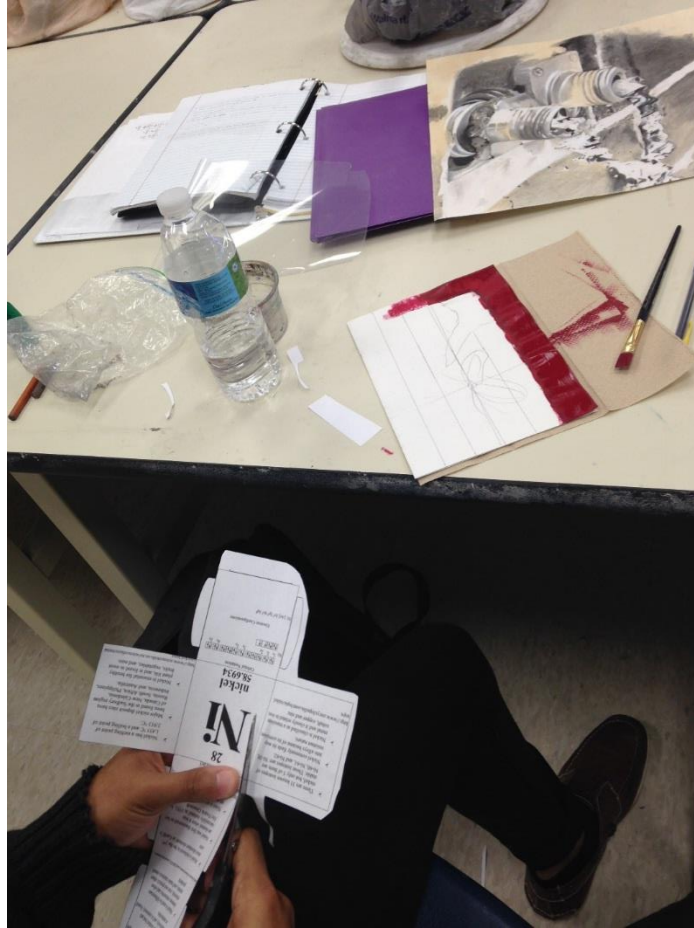
Figure 62. Sal experimenting with possibilities for his mixed media play piece.

I worked back into it, I painted into it a little bit. And I think I actually used a lot of charcoal to highlight some parts of it. But I haven't finished. The main vibes I got from that project when I started working on it - I didn't like it, because it was at the very beginning of mixed media. I wasn't, I don't think I'm even where I should be at right now in mixed media with how I'm thinking about my art. But still, at that point I was at an even lower point, so I didn't want to work on it, I didn't want to let loose and all that.

Expressionistic figure drawing. *You had me sit down. I had to kind of just go at it and draw the girl that was sitting there. With whatever, with different materials. Like I said with other pieces, there's sometimes where I'm kind of harsh on myself because I know what I'm*

204

capable of. So when I loosen up it's like what are you doing – like, you can do better than this,

this isn't realistic, this isn't neat. But I tried to embrace it, I really did. Because I knew that it

was important. I didn't focus so much on that it wasn't my type of art. So I kind of just did it and

tried to see where it would go.

Figure 63. Stages of Sal's expressionistic figure drawing.

It's actually appealing, in a way, to me. It's not like I find myself wanting to work on it and stuff, but it is appealing in a way because it's so loose and so expressionistic. There might even be stuff in here that I don't realize - where the colors are - like why I picked those colors. Because in the moment it was kind of just get it, try to do it as fast as you can. But, you know, I think subconsciously, probably there's messages in here. I worked back into it a little bit with oil pastel in some places. I never finished it, but I don't know, maybe one day I'll turn it into something that I can accept more. It's just not where I'm at home.

I need to be able to embrace different types of art, and appreciate even my own work that I don't like, because I know I would want people to appreciate anything, even if it was ugly. So I think I need to do that with my own work.

Portrait of Emotion. *With this one what I planned to do was a series of portraits that were able to show different emotions and different feelings. I wanted it to be almost as strong as that kind of message, but something that wasn't really a message, just a feeling. So I wanted people to be able to look at this and tell what I was feeling and maybe they can relate to that.*

This one actually was produced pretty fast. Usually when I take a lot of time with detail it doesn't go by that fast. One of my goals was to improve time management. I think I definitely did that with this piece. By the first two days I already had the face done. I kind of started lagging a little bit into it, but that was just because I was lazy. By decreasing the amount of time I used, I was able to get the same amount of detail, if not more. So that was good too. That was my other goal. That brings me another step closer to mastering hyperrealism. But I still want to get more detailed.

Figure 64. Sal's development of his portrait.

This one shows stress, but more so like pressure. I know stress and pressure, they're similar, but there's different things between them. It's almost like pressure from everything. Like to a point where I just want to sleep. Like, I don't want to have anything to do with anything. So that's what I was trying to show.

I don't want to just stick to a negative, a chain of just negative portraits. I was thinking definitely joy. Joy, shock, like a good shock, like awe. Definitely heartbroken, heartbroken or distress. Like complete sadness, broken down, pretty much. But I was thinking that I could do all the negative ones in a series and then have all the positive ones in a series. I think that'd be cool.

I don't like to focus on myself a lot. I know I have two portraits, but I think part of it is because it's familiar to me. But maybe to find who I am more I can do more pieces. I think to me that seems kind of narcissistic. I don't like to have a lot of attention to myself. I mean even when I carry my art through the halls, I don't like to show people my art. I don't like people to be like, oh, look at that. I mean, deep down inside, I do want people to think it's beautiful, but I don't like people to look at my art when I'm working on it, and to say stuff about it.

I felt even though a lot of people can relate to this kind of feeling, it's only going to be the most real when it's myself thinking about it. I mean, I can't like draw you and feel what you're feeling. So I think the best way to draw this was to draw myself. Because I feel a lot more emotion and a lot more of myself is going to go into the piece if I do that.

I think around when I got into high school, ninth grade, I started realizing that art is not what people think it is. It's not just making something that everybody looks at, it should be deep. It should – because otherwise if I'm making portraits of people that are hyper-realistic they're not going to mean anything. Because a lot of people can do that. So it's not going to mean anything if there's no message that I'm trying to convey or spread to people.

Figure 65. Sal's process creating, *Paul Piece* using graphite, chalk, color pencil, and charcoal.

Paul Piece. *The Paul piece was more driven by a different source. It's going off of prayer, and I'm trying to make it my own. So, that one' kind of tough because I'm not looking at anything. Well, there is some sort of looking at a few things because I need to know basic facial structure, but for the most part that's all coming from my mind or whatever I'm provided with. So that one's supposed to show awe, but almost like he's looking at something beautiful.*

Sacrifice. *This piece, it started off as a print, and the project was to do an awareness but with a positive spin. Which is kind of tough because usually everybody likes to put a negative spin on it and that's just what people are used to. So I did Jesus holding up his hand, pretty much for people to realize, at least people that believe this, that Jesus died for us and we should be aware of that. Because, I mean, we live our lives and we don't really think about the sacrifices that have been made for us.*

Figure 66. Sal's process and completed work depicting Christ.

And so I printed this onto a substrate of just paper. I transferred newspaper articles onto it. The newspaper articles ranging from murder to rape, to other worldly things. They're backwards so you can't read them. That's kind of more just the idea that I wanted for it. There's wax on his hand to symbolize that it's real, it wasn't just some story. I had to make the nail because he was nailed to the cross, of course. The foam was painted to look like wood to symbolize the cross.

Figure 67. Sal's process and completed work demonstrating the awareness.

I wasn't completely happy with it, just because I was into realism. I had to look past that for this, because it was a print. And granted, you can get pretty realistic with a print, still. So I looked at it and I was kind of like, it needs something more, because the eye was still filled in. There was no wax on the hand, and there was no nail. And of course there was no Styrofoam either. I thought it looked pleasing just because it was rustic looking, but it needed something more, so I decided to have a background or a base of wood. The wax hand, again, was because I wanted it to be real. The nail, I just thought it would look interesting with it.

Trying to have an eye in there, I was kind of confused on how I was going to do that. It was kind of a quick fixup. I was able to just draw an eye on a piece of paper and then tape it to the back after I cut it out. The nail, I had to kind of look around for stuff to do that. I got a smaller nail and a button with no dips or holes in it. I painted that to look like silver. To look like a nail I know that it didn't print it as well as some of the other prints, but that gave it a really good look to it, how it kind of fades out and kind of blends.

I think that one thing I draw a lot of attention to is the nail. Some people might not even realize what it is, and then they look at the nail and they kind of can get that from it. After looking at the eye, that brings out the face more. I think it does well conveying that because of the hand. I really like the hand. Not the nail, but the hand. How it's 3D, and it's kind of pretty much like the same size or almost the same size of a normal hand. It can relate to people. Just because it's a hand.

It's not the most realistic, but I don't really care. Because I like it and it means a lot to me. And I think it's a great. This is a deep message about the world, and there's not really an emotion in there. There's not supposed to be. It's more about the message than just knowing what he's feeling. It's about sacrifice, it's about how negative our world has become.

Sonia's Personal Meaning Making through the Creative Process

      The elephant. *I did the elephant piece, because elephants are my favorite animal. But, with the elephant, I couldn't get it right. Then finally you helped me do that elephant monoprint and it turned out.*

Figure 68. Sonia's development of the elephant (foam print, ink, charcoal, black color pencil).

Deaf Culture. *For printmaking, I did awareness of deaf culture. My dad calls it deaf culture, because he's like, we have our own little culture. I really felt like it hit me, because my dad's deaf. I don't really know anybody else whose parent is deaf. I know how to do sign language, and that's what I want to minor in. So it was like I felt I needed to do it and make my dad proud of me doing something.*

I was thinking of a word that would describe not being able to hear. I was going to do silent, but then I thought deaf awareness. So I might as well just do deaf and then everybody really knows.

Figure 69. Sonia's print series representing awareness of the deaf.

Turtle. *I think seeing stuff around me, it helps a lot. I feel like seeing stuff around me actually helps think of stuff to draw. Like the crab, I think that had to do with me doing the turtle. When they started that crab, I was like, crab, beach, turtle, there you go. It just made me think of like, hey, I like the beach, I don't like crabs, but it reminds me of the beach. I used to have a turtle, and I really don't know what happened to that turtle.*
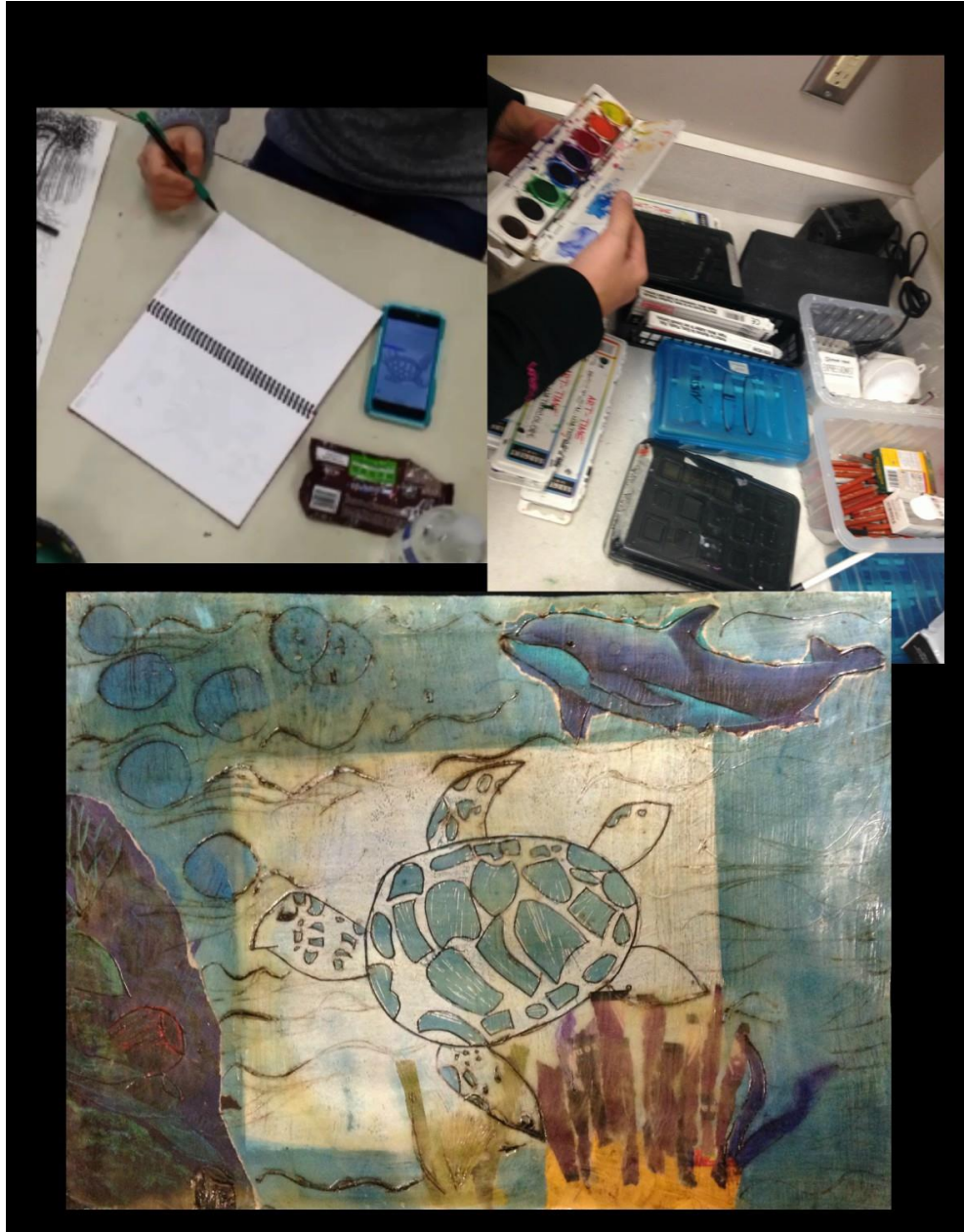
Figure 707. Sonia's turtle, one of her final mixed media works (collage, beeswax, oil paint)

I feel like, with the turtle it was just like, whoa. I never knew I could draw like that. I mean it was literally just a drawing of a turtle, but sometimes I have trouble making it just like the picture. I put blue and green water color on and I tried to bend it together to make it look like the sea, like to try to match it. And then I did put blue water color over it and added a little touch of green or something into it. I printed on top with white ink and then put down paper and made it look like coral. Then I did oil pastel bubbles and the dolphin is paper. I put beeswax over it and carved back into it. I put oil over it and then added little wave things.

Ballet Shoes. *Sometimes, like with the ballet piece, I think back on my childhood, because I used to take dance. I saw that picture of Nicky's and I was like - I used to take ballet - that was part of my childhood.*

Figure 718. Nicky's mixed media ballet shoes (watercolor, ink, sharpie, color pencil, graphite).

Figure 72. Sonia's ballet shoes (ink, charcoal, color pencil, graphite, and watercolor).

Now, I'm trying to figure out a background. Kathie said to put like a ribbon – you know how ballerinas have their ribbons? She said to bring them down, or have one long, or do a blurred out background of the different shoes in the background and just blur it out. I'm still thinking about it, though, because I don't know. I'm trying to think, like when I was little, what was behind me, and what would be a good background for that? I just keep adding more stuff to it and put shadows and shading. I feel like it brings it out more than just leaving it – makes it more realistic. I feel like since I'm doing this piece, I feel like I've gotten a lot better.

Theoretical Analysis: Personal Meaning Making Through the Creative Process

Sketchbooks and visual journals offer students a means for expression, self-reflection, inquiry, idea generation, and media experimentation (Cummings, 2011; DiJulio, 2011). All students utilized their art book as a way to generate their ideas and begin to form meaning within their work. As a class, we adopted the term, art book, to describe the book students used for sketching, journaling, notetaking, or experimenting. Students explained that art book was more representative of the varied possibilities for the book. In the beginning of the semester, I issued art book assignments to engage students' self-reflection and awareness of their lives and world.

217

Even though students were required to complete weekly art book assignments, they utilized their art book throughout their creative processes. Some students began with an initial idea and planned was to execute that idea by experimenting with materials, sketching, or writing in their sketchbook. Kathie indicated her use of the art book for idea generation, "When I need an idea I will just go through all of them. See how I can make them better." Kathie also utilized her art book as a record keeper to remind her of any idea, process, or material she used. For example, when she created a linoleum cut, she printed it in her art book for a record.

Students would often prepare for art making by researching. As students developed a specific idea, oftentimes they would research ways in which the idea had been previously rendered. Their research included looking at other students' work in the hallways, galleries, and classroom, as well as viewing works of art posted on internet websites. Sonia indicated that the work hanging around the room often helped her further develop her ideas. When she wanted to do a work based on her childhood dance classes, she viewed other students' work that explored the theme of dance. David attested he often derived ideas from the news and researches "art, anime, photography, and sometimes tech" using the website, Pinterest. Even though students utilized the work of others as research for inspiration and to further their ideas, they understood the importance of artistic integrity and originality within their work. Kathie confirmed, "You think and come up with your own ideas. You don't just take a picture and copy it… or look up a picture on the internet of an animal and just copy it… It is creative, it is different." A picture was utilized to develop her metaphoric idea of herself as a chained elephant. Research was utilized by students in the class as a step in advancing the ideas and meanings that were generated by the students.

Stages of the creative process related to students meaning making. Sometimes students would require long periods of preparation (Wallas, 1926) where they researched possibilities, investigated techniques, and experimented with materials. Through this initial preparation, meaning would often form. However, sometimes meaning did not emerge until students were active in other stages of their creating. As students created through the act of experimentation, an idea would often develop that triggered a self-expressive idea. This concept is consistent with Marshal (2010) and Heid's (2008) argument that new ideas are generated through the process and ideas may begin through media manipulation or experimentation (Heid, 2008; Marshall, 2010).

This illumination stage, where the idea develops (Wallas, 1926) was directly tied to students' pursuit of meaning and occurred at various moments of creating. Kathie described viewing a bird outside of her window and connecting the freedom of the bird with herself. She immediately knew this expression of freedom within the bird would be the central idea behind her next work. Some students would immerse themselves in experimentation, discussion, or technique building prior to and illuminated idea. For example, Ben would often work with Sal as he developed an idea. As Sal taught Ben new drawing techniques, they would often discuss life situations. Through these moments of learning, Ben's ideas would often emerge based on meanings derived from the conversations and his self-reflective thoughts.

Many students found that media exploration and technique building through the preparation stage prompted a greater degree of creativity in their work and opened them to more freedom of possibility. Sal affirmed his new approach to art making, "I don't go into a project now thinking, let me think about what I've done… I go into it without setting a limit to what I

think I can do, what my skill level is and all that." Many times, as media and technique investigation transpired, an illuminated idea and personal meaning would form.

Sometimes students' creative process developed from a moment of illumination that was based on self-reflection or new awareness of the world. Sonia, Kathie, David, and Joan each discussed ideas that developed from self-reflective thought and personal meaning. They knew the meaning they wanted to express in their art making from the beginning stage. Some students would often follow their illumination with a preparation stage, exploring media possibilities and techniques that would aesthetically verify (Wallas, 1926) their idea. However, sometimes students were so eager to begin the verification of the idea, they would skip the preparation stage. Instead, preparation stages would be visited throughout the art making process as students needed to practice techniques or become more familiar with materials.

The incubation stage of the creative process consists of time away from the problem or art making (Wallas, 1926). During moments of art making, students were permitted to take breaks to allow for idea incubation. Kathie explained the benefit of breaks as she would place her art "down for a minute and then come back and think about it later." She clarified "Not working on it made me think about what needed to be done on it. It made me think about what the next step is going to be." After a period of incubation, she was more willing to take a fresh approach to the art making and understood the steps needed to complete the work.

This stage served as a vital component to many students' creative processes. Students would take moments away from their art development as they became stuck on a problem, overwhelmed by the amount of time or effort a work occupied, or simply needed new inspiration to continue their art making. This non-productive time was very beneficial to inspire, motivate, and allow students to re-group so their creativity would continue to thrive. Incubation periods

consisted of taking walks around the room, conversing with other students or teachers, visiting the school café, and taking water or restroom breaks. Students would often put a frustrating work to the side and begin developing another piece of art. As David was in a stressful stage of making his Eiffel Tower collage, he explained, "I don't know if I could get over the Eiffel Tower one. I will just set it to the side and then as I do something else I can get an idea."

Expressing with Media

Burton (2000) attests to the learning that can be derived from the use of multiple materials during student centered art making. He confirms that materials "act as vehicles of reflection provoking new shades of meaning and enriching the immediate significance of the originating thought, memory, or event" (p. 330). The mixed media class offered students the freedom to utilize any material for art making. Sometimes a material would trigger an idea, where other times, students were able to deepen an idea and promote greater meaning through a specific set of materials. David's idea for his bear derived from his thoughts on nature and the desire to experiment with beeswax. The beeswax reminded him of honey, thus prompting the thought of a bear. His thoughts pertaining to the bear extended into him pondering the meanings behind the bear. As students utilized various materials, new possibilities and deeper meanings would often form. For example, when students began incorporating various materials into their linocut prints, different meanings were derived within the prints. Students found they could demonstrate a certain significance best with a specific set of materials.

Sometimes students would choose to work with a material because they felt a connection or comfort with the material. For example, Sal had difficulty moving beyond the use of graphite because he enjoyed the material and wanted to achieve personal art making goals in working with the graphite. Sonia discovered a piece of charcoal during the first week of the mixed media

class. She had never used charcoal before and immediately felt a connection to the materials. She enjoyed the charcoal because of the textures and values she could make with it. However, she also found a tactile connectivity with the material. She described, "I like the feel of it. I like to have charcoal on my fingers. It feels like I am wearing gloves… I can put my mark on anything because I have charcoal on my fingers." Many students experienced similar connections to various materials. Even through these students often relied primarily on a certain material, they did not limit themselves and continued to explore other media possibilities. However, it became evident to the class who was most versed with specific materials. These students became teachers within the class as students needed instruction on media technicalities. Sal offered many students instruction of graphite, where Nicky became an instructor of watercolor techniques.

Not all materials were chosen out of comfort. Sometimes students choose to use a material in order to meet the challenge to be more knowledgeable of unfamiliar media. The ambition of students to work beyond their ability or knowledge level can be understood through the lens of Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development (Chaiklin, 2003). As students work within the group they are inspired to pursue new media and techniques and rely on others within the group for instruction to build their knowledge. Joan expressed her aversion to painting, yet wanted to tackle this obstacle to her art development. She considered painting the work representing her dad a good opportunity to improve her painting skills. She was inspired by other students who were painting within the classroom and sought instruction from peers and the teacher to develop her painting skills.

Because of the ability to use a mix of media, students could alter the look of one media by layering other materials over the initial one. This gave students more flexibility and confidence in exploring unfamiliar media. Students could easily hide mistakes made by layering

222

other materials on top. Some students' art would dramatically change from one day to the next as they created multiple layers over an initial drawing.

Developing Meaning through a Mixed Media Creative Process

Maxine Greene (1987) encourages students to embrace their imaginative capabilities so they may become free through the discovery of new paths in their lives and the world. She states that teacher should **"**educate young people to grow and to become different, to find their individual voices, and to participate in a community in the making" (p 382). Students' mixed media art making explored their personal thoughts based on self-reflection, perceptions of others, and awareness of the world. Through the mixed media art class, students began to understand the importance of their art making and the possibilities their art offered. Sal explained, "A lot of people, we just kind of worry about ourselves. Now I think differently when I am going to make art, because the art that I put out is not just affecting myself." Because students were able to base their work on their own thoughts, the works were more significant to the students and their meanings of themselves and the world could be represented. Students often attested that this was the first art class where they had the opportunity to freely express and create art based on their ideas and perceptions of life. They appreciated the opportunity of freedom, to make new discoveries in themselves, others, and the world through their art making.

Parental and social relationships became a major aspect of students' expressions of themselves. These positive and negative relationships were represented both realistically and symbolically in students' art making. For example, David created a work featuring a yellow rubber duck to portray a childhood memory of his mother's endearing nickname for him, "Duck." Other students portrayed parental struggles, such as arguments or divorce issues. Kathie represented her view of divorce and being pulled between parents through the image of a chained

elephant. She expanded this concept to represent the urge by society to comply, when she chooses to be different. She described this metaphorical thought:

> I think elephants kind of represent me because like I feel like I have to be like society wants me to be, like a certain way. I don't want to be like society wants me to be. I want to be different. I don't want to be like everyone else. An elephant just wants to be an elephant. It does not want to be a circus animal. It does not want to be packed up and moved around. Like, I have to go with my dad thing. And I did this elephant because it is the foot pulling away from the chains.

Through her mixed media artmaking, Kallie was discovering the importance of being herself. Through the semester she came to accept and embrace differing aspects of herself.

Joan also worked through personal and parental issues as she created her mixed media works. The struggles in the relationship with her father is evident her "Dad's Piece." Her desire to escape from these parental issues, promotes her concepts of personal independence. She metaphorically represents her independence in "Thin Ice" as she portrays various symbols of her independence. She attested:

> I've always known to be independent. When you're independent you're kind of taking chances on your own. Everything you do you're not basing it off of other people. I did this one like standing on – my first thought was the cliff. I'm standing on the edge. I'm being independent, I'm taking chances on my own. The same thing with thin ice, it's the same perspective – independent. Then the moon - the moon being independent on its own.

This independence resonated through many of Joan's works as she explored notions of feminism, beauty, and power.

Some students' self-reflections through mixed media art making consisted of exploring personal emotions, personalities, and self-perceptions. Sal portrayed the stress he feels as a student and his frustration with society through self-portraits. He considered self-portraits a means to explore who he and what he feels and thinks. The drawings expanded beyond a realistic rendering of himself, instead he aimed to portray the ways in which his human emotions are presented through his facial features.

Meaning and expression was not grasped as quickly by all students. Initially, some students wanted to rely on teacher-directed instruction or finding an interesting image to copy. As these students witnessed the art making processes of others, they began to reflect on their lives in the quest to create personally meaningful works of art. Sonia witnessed the art making of Sally and was astounded by her ability to freely express her anger and frustration. Even though Sonia did not possess this same anger, the event helped her to reflect on positive components of her life and childhood. Sonia, a senior looking forward to graduation, began to create art based on childhood memories that are special to her as she faces adulthood.

Students' creative process often included creating art based on perceptions of others within the world. Oftentimes, students used their artmaking to express a positive message that offered hope to the negativity, hatred, or unacceptance of differences seen among society. Their art making offered a message to viewers to see the world in new, positive ways. For example, through his photo collage, David wishes people freedom from negativity and the hope to be happy. He explained, "This piece was supposed to be happiness… I think the world would be a better place if everybody wasn't so negative. Like come happy - it wouldn't be such a bad day." This work contains images representing helping others, speaking kindly, and offering others a cheerful smile. This was an important notion for David as he hoped to inspire viewers. Sal also

225

aimed to make viewers more aware of the hope that can be found in the world. He portrays symbols of Christianity to encourage viewers to "think about the sacrifices that have been made."

Thoughts of society resonated through mixed media art making as students expressed their fears or aggravations that extended from others. For example, Joan worries about the future for her siblings. She wants to protect them from negative experiences she is sure they will have to face through life. She elaborated, "I want to hide them from the world. Hide them from everything bad, anything negative." She utilized an image from Peter Pan to represent her desire to free her siblings from the harshness of the world.

Representing a culture or group within society was another theme of students' mixed media art making that portrayed their awareness of others and the world. Works were created exploring themes depicting Alzheimer, cancer, disabilities, and death to honor loved ones or present a message of understanding to viewers. For example, Sonia created a series of linocut prints honoring her father and deaf culture. She became more aware of her father's situation in life and was prompted to explore deafness not only in her art making, but also in her career pursuits.

Awareness of the world was heavily explored through students' mixed media art making. Many students created art honoring the people of countries that had experienced terror or hardships. A variety of cultures were explored through art making as students increased their awareness of the people and the world. Meaning based on the situations of people within the world were also depicted within students' work. Students investigated and artistically represented issues such as feminism, suppression, heroism, and freedom.

Students' freedom to engage in meaning making through their art making allowed them to explore themselves and become more aware of the world. Students utilized their imaginations to generate understandings through new perspectives. They were able to imaginatively explore their awareness through the personal, creative process of mixed media art making. Sal expounded, "My thinking is different than it was before… It's not just me, it's the world around me. It's other people." As students became more aware of themselves and others, they gained greater understanding of the world.

Summaries of Students

Summary of Kathie

Through her experiences in the mixed media art class Kathie began to find new understandings of herself and began to rejoice in her difference. She accepted the personal voice she was offered through her art making and began to create work that was personally meaningful. She enjoyed working with others within the class and chose to learn, teach, and be inspired by her classmates. Concluding the mixed media class Kathie had freed many of her art making fears such as perfection and difference.

Summary of Joan

The mixed media art class offered Joan a means to free herself from her life struggles and frustrations. She created personally meaningful works that expressed her struggles and her thoughts of society. The student-centered curriculum provided Joan the opportunity to express her own thoughts and feelings instead of requiring her to follow a teacher prescribed plan for art making. Through her interaction within the class, she was able to learn new art making techniques from peers and discuss the plans for her work.

Summary of David

Coming into the mixed media class as a tenth grader, David did not have as many previous high school art making experiences as the other students. The student-centered curriculum permitted David to work with media and processes that were less familiar to him. He was also able to explore themes which he was personally connected. He discovered new techniques and processes as he worked alongside fellow classmates. Concluding the mixed media class, David was excited to continue his journey in art and wanted to know about future art classes he could pursue.

Summary of Sal

Sal is very connected to his pencil and revels in the opportunity to create a realistically rendered graphite drawings. Although it was difficult for Sal to attempt more expressionistic or abstract mixed media works, the student-centered curriculum allowed Sal to set goals for his personal path into mixed media experimentation and the investigate of new forms of art making. Sal was able to explore his thoughts of life and society as he generated personal themes for his art making. As Sal discovered new ways of art making and witnessed different processes and forms of art created by his classmates, he formed a deeper appreciation and embraces the differences within art.

Summary of Sonia

Sonia was able to find confidence through her student-centered mixed media curriculum. As she began to create art based on her own life and thoughts, she let go of her struggle over drawing skills. She found that creating art in her own way was more interesting and meaningful, as well as beneficial to her technical art ability. Throughout the mixed media class Sonia was inspired by her classmates to attempt new ways of art making. She came to understand that

creativity in art making extended beyond technicalities such as shading and proportion, it captured an awareness of self, others, and the world.

Summary

This study sought to examine and understand students' experiences and creative processes within a high school mixed media art class. I aimed to understand students' art making, ways their experiences promoted their processes of creativity, as well as the ways in which the context of the classroom affected their art making and creativity. Examining each component allowed a better understanding of the aspects of students' mixed media art making. Students' engagement with others within the classroom, experimenting with media, stages of art making, development of meaning and awareness, acceptance of new forms of art making, and the opportunity to make personal choices were each aspects of the mixed media art classroom that contributed to the development of students creative processes and their overall experiences creating mixed media art. The participants' accounts of mixed media art making represented through Chapters 4 and 5 detailed their experiences within the class and the ways in which their creativity was fostered. Through their words, students were able to illuminate their moments of art making as well as the personal meaning and creative processes derived through the mixed media class.

Freedom, as discussed by Greene (1986), proposes people may find new possibilities in themselves and the world as they re-imagine and re-create themselves. She attests the capabilities of the imagination provide people to liberate and change themselves for greater possibilities within the world. As I first began to read, understand, and take to heart Maxine Green's conception of freedom, I saw greater possibilities for the imaginations of my mixed media art students. Combining theories of the creative process and student-centered learning, I formatted

229

the structure of my mixed media art class into an environment where students would maintain autonomy of their art making through media choice, technique, processes, goals, themes, and personal meaning making. This method of instruction worked well with the class due to the variety of possibilities within mixed media art making. Due to the opportunity for play, experimentation, research, collaboration, communication, and risk taking within the art making experience, the mixed media class aligned well with goals of a student-centered learning structure. These attributes were also important in considering the development of students' imaginations and creative processes (Gude, 2010; Greene, 1988; Penick, 1983).

Each theme discussed within chapters four and five contributed to the ways in which students' creative processes are fostered through experiences creating art within the mixed media classroom. Within each theme, once again, lies the interwoven theme of freedom expressed by Greene (1995b, 1986, 1988). Students came to new understandings as they let go of fears and accepted new possibilities for themselves and art making. Engaging with others in an environment that provided the freedom of choice permitted students to become more aware and imagine new ways of being and creating. Creating art within a student-centered curriculum engaged students in self-reflection, personal meaning making, choice, and the ability to imagine new possibilities. As students developed personal creative processes they became free to form personal meaning in their work. Both grasping awareness and presenting awareness became vital to students as they were eager to understand more of the world as well as show the world new possibilities.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

I began chapter one with Maxine Greene's (1995b) directive to "become aware of ourselves as questioners, as makers of meaning, as persons engaged in constructing and reconstructing realities" (p. 381). I embarked on this journey through a semester teaching and researching my mixed media art students. I sought to become more conscious of their art making experiences, sensitive to their values and thinking, cognizant of their creative processes, and perceptive of their imaginative capabilities. I aimed to become mindful of their embracement of freedom as they emerged from their fears, limitations, and pre-conceived ways of being and creating. My ultimate goal for this research was to engage in reconstructing my own reality alongside the students I encountered daily, to understand the greater possibilities for myself, youth, and art education. I aimed to garner an awareness of the possibilities for mixed media art to assist students in the process of reconstructing realities, finding new perspectives, and the notion "that there is always more" (Greene, 1995, p. 381).

Through this study, my students revealed multiple possibilities offered through a student-centered approach to mixed media art making. They demonstrated and presented accounts of their new of understandings of art making. They also discussed new perspectives and an awareness formed of themselves, others, and the world. They presented positive attributes and arguments in support of a student-centered approach to creating art. Through their engagement with others in the class, their learning was enhanced, they became inspired, and they served as teachers and leaders. The greatest awareness revealed through students' art making and discussion of their creative processes was the level of meaning they incorporated within and

derived from their art making. This final benefit to the student-centered mixed media art class evidenced students' self-reflection and engagement with the world. This meaning making demonstrated students' imaginative capabilities to see more in themselves and others. As they formed new perceptions, they discovered new paths within the world and became free to new experiences, discoveries, possibilities, and ways of being.

Implications and Possibilities for Art Education

As the researcher and teacher within the classroom, I understand that my interactions played a role in the development of students' art making, meaning making, and overall creative processes. Many of the students define my role as the teacher as one who makes them think about themselves, the world, and their art making in new ways. Where this would seem like a typical practice among teachers, Kathie argued, art teachers are often more concerned about students' successful completion of work so they can "put it up somewhere." She explained that her art making has advanced because I made her "think about how [her] pieces could have meaning, by talking to [her] and by wanting to know what the pieces are about." Maxine Greene (1995b) urges teachers to "educate young people to grow and to become different, to find their individual voices, and to participate in a community in the making" (p 382). I provided the mixed media art students with a student-centered class where they were instigators of their learning, becoming more aware of their voice, thoughts, and actions, as well as the world, through art making.

Freedman (2010) attests that educators should refrain from the practice of filling students with knowledge and concepts. Instead, educators should offer students opportunities to experience the possibilities of discovery and inquiry, so they might become facilitators of their own learning. As educators we often set our mission to require students to meet our pre-defined

objectives, our goals for their art making, as well as create works based on themes we have generated. This limits the potential for creative thinking and the development of students' creative process. As students are afforded occasions to be self-expressive and discover new awareness and meaning, they have greater potential to increase their creative and imaginative capabilities.

Creativity is recognized as essential component within the National Arts Education Association's Core Art Standards (2014). Through this study, I documented and examined students' growth in creativity, imagination, and self-expression as they developed personal goals and themes, made personal choices for art making and media selection, and represented personal meanings through their art making. My analysis verified the importance of students' development of creative processes. Students testified to the merits of their personal expression, their ability to think differently, the opportunity to make choices, as well as understanding new ways of seeing and creating. When students are freely allowed to embrace the foundation goal of creativity, beyond a teacher-directed curriculum, they may find freedom to imagine more for themselves and their art making as they embark upon self-discovery and reflection, as well as investigate and experience new ways of being and creating. As students utilize their imaginations through creative thinking and the creative processes, they are more able to envision possibilities for their lives and the world.

The development of imagination, creativity, and creative processes has potential to benefit students beyond the classroom (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Newton & Donkin, 2011; Zimmerman, 2010b). Through my analysis in Chapters 4 and 5, I present various benefits of a student centered approach to mixed media art making. Students learned that mistakes and differences can be utilized to form unique solutions. They developed problem solving strategies

including experimentation and investigation. Students learned to rely on others to become more informed and to understand other points of view. They embraced opportunities to think differently and became more accepting of varied possibilities. Each of these traits are important aspects of creative thinking and processes that will prepare students for future situations beyond the art classroom.

Combining mixed media art with a student-centered curriculum structure was successful in fostering the creativity of my students. Many accounts were presented through chapters 4 and 5 attesting to the development of imaginative thought and creative processes through mixed media art making. A student-centered approach to art making that permits artistic agency and personal engagement among students is central to the cultivation of creativity (Gude, 2010; Rufo 2011; Runco, 2008). Mixed media art provided students with a form of art making that allowed students to freely access and experiment with a wide variety of materials as they worked to develop personally generated themes and goals within their student-centered curriculums. Where other forms of art making might also be successful approaches to developing creativity, the mixed media class offered a vast range in possibilities from painting, drawing, and printmaking to working with found objects, sculptural forms, and collage. The possibilities were limitless. Utilizing a student-centered approach within the mixed media class opened the class to possibilities of personal expression, awareness, and meaning making. Students' opportunities to generate significant goals and themes further motivated them to become instigators of their learning and motivated them to take a personal stance in their art making.

A student-centered approach to a mixed media art curriculum also aligns to postmodern principles to art education. Postmodern art education encourages connections between art making and the cultural and societal aspects of student's lives (May, 2011; Milbrandt, 1998).

234

The principles offered through postmodern art education is beneficial for preparing students for the creative job sector as well as opening students to possibilities within the world. Postmodernism encourages explorative and experiential art making so students may gain global awareness through their art making (Freedman, 2003; May, 2011). Artists adhering to postmodern principles, often utilize mixed media art to express world issues and awareness within their work (Duncum, 2010; Milbrandt, 1998; Ulbricht, 2011). The possibility of free expression of thoughts, opinions, and perspectives through an open approach to materials makes mixed media a beneficial postmodern approach to art education.

Recommendations for Continuing Research

Further research into mixed media art making is needed to understand the possibilities within this form of art making. Current research documents the work of various mixed media artists through the discussion of their completed work. However, little research conveys the techniques, processes, or possibilities of mixed media art. Qualitative studies examining the processes of other mixed media artists or mixed media classrooms would add layers of depths to the understandings of this art form.

While this study examined the mixed media art experiences of students within my classroom, it would be beneficial to explore the mixed media art making of other classrooms. Research should include different schools, teachers, and age levels of students. Examining the mixed media art experiences of students with different art abilities would also contribute more to the study, as my study included students beyond a foundational level.

More research involving student-centered approaches within other visual art education disciplines is also recommended. My study included a student-centered mixed media art

curriculum. Exploring a student-centered method of teaching art courses such as painting, drawing, sculpture, and photography would contribute a greater understanding of the benefits of a student-centered art curriculum.

Through my analysis and discussion, I examined and presented the stages of my students' creative process. Each stage of their creative process had an important contribution to the development of their mixed media works. Research involving a more thorough examination of specific stages would be beneficial to understanding the depth of each stage. For example, research specifically examining students' forms of incubation and the contribution of this stage to their overall creative process would be important in developing a greater perception of creativity.

Concluding Remarks

As I began my doctoral studies, I was on the starting line of my journey to find new possibilities for my teaching, to understand what I wanted my teaching to be, and why. I had moved to a new school, my first high school teaching experience, and believed I could offer more to my students through art education. As stated in Chapter 1, I began my first years of teaching emulating the art education experiences I had encountered through school. I focused on technical art expertise through skill development. My pedagogy involved a teacher-directed approach where students were expected to listen and follow my directions so they could develop into technically skilled art students. I derived themes that would allow students to most successfully utilize their developed skills.

I am not exactly sure of the one event or moment that brought me to the realization that I was not promoting my students' creative development. Possibly, the combination of my personal struggle as an artist to think creatively, pleas from my students to be able to create in their own

way, or viewing the work of others that encompassed creative approaches. Whatever the reason, I became intrigued and enthusiastic about the possibilities for the creative development of my students. Yet, I was nervous about opening my classroom creative thinking – Would my students learn the skills they needed? Would they continue to produce works that would win in art competitions? Would chaos ensue within my art classroom?

My first doctoral course was based on methods of developing creativity. I learned methods of fostering creativity such as choice, brainstorming, problem solving, as well as investigation and experimentation. I began to foster my students' creativity by allowing choice within the themes for their art. I offered them thematic problems to solve. For example, Joan discussed her first experience with mixed media art in my ninth grade class where I asked students to place themselves in the role of a scientist that had discovered a substance that would morph one living being into another. Students were to create an artwork representing this moment of metamorphosis. I continued to teach lessons on specific skill development as students generated personal ideas for their subject matter.

As I continued in my doctoral studies, I began to research literature including the history of creativity, as well as ways to foster creativity. I also explored ways in which creativity has been researched within the field of art education. Many aspects of this research included postmodern philosophies, as well as student-centered approaches to teaching. I continued to compile literature of creativity, postmodernism, and student-centered art education. The various theories and philosophies assisted me in developing teaching strategies that would move me in my path to foster students' creativity. As I perused the literature, I was able to make many connections between the philosophies represented within the literature and the mixed media art

lessons I was teaching my students. Therefore, I expanded my literature review to gain a greater

understanding of possibilities for mixed media art making within creative development.

After my search for literature involving the processes of mixed media art yielded few

results, I sought to explore the concept of this form of art making more within my classroom and

in my research. During this time I accepted the position to teach the high school mixed media

class. I also began to utilize mixed media more within my own art making. This in-depth

teaching and investigation of mixed media art led me to complete the pilot study of my students'

creative processes within mixed media art. Through this pilot study, I discovered the immense

fears students often have of being creative and the opportunity to find freedom from those fears

through mixed media art making. This understanding led me to Maxine Greene's engaging and

enlightening philosophy of freedom (Greene, 1988). Through reading Greene's *Dialectic of

Freedom* (1988), her words captured the intent I was seeking for myself, my teaching, as well as

my research:

> In open contexts where persons attend to one another with interest, regard, and care, there
>
> is a place for the appearance of freedom, the achievement of freedom by people in search
>
> of themselves (p. 4).

These words helped me to understand the purpose for my research – the overarching goal of

freedom within the development of creativity. Greene's (1988) words continued to foster my

awareness of the purpose I held for my teaching and research:

> Children who have been provoked to reach beyond themselves, to wonder, to imagine, to
>
> pose their own questions are the ones most likely to learn to learn…The world should be
>
> filled with meaning of students' existential experience and not of their teachers'. Our role

as teachers and teacher educators is to encourage and provoke students to speak in their

own voice in a world where other voices define the mainstream (p. 14).

From these words, it became apparent to me that my journey concerned not only the

development of my pedagogy and understating of students' creativity and art making, rather I

was seeking a path to engage students' freedom. Mixed media art and student-centered teaching

methods were tools through which I could assist students in the discovery of freedom as I taught

them to explore, make choices, think creatively, as well as discover themselves, others, and the

world through art making.

The findings from this research study conveyed the freedoms my students discovered as

their creativity and imaginative capabilities were fostered through student-centered mixed media

art making. Beginning my research, I did have reservations that stemmed from my teaching and

course requirements, as well as my personal fears. I offer the following answers to my previous,

fearful questions of opening my classroom to creativity:

Yes, my students are still able to learn art skills that assist them in executing their

creative ideas. In fact, as seen through this study, they have become teachers themselves,

instructing others of on skill development. They are more open to asking for advice on specific

skills needed to render their creative thoughts. Students are able to receive instruction beyond

teacher-planned lessons as moments for skill or technique instruction freely arise in response to

students' personal art making processes. For example, if a student has chosen to creatively

explore a painting technique, the spontaneous instruction involving that technique occurs based

on the student's moment of art making.

Yes, my students continue to win awards at art competitions. However, I am less

concerned with this question now. The greater reward for me is that my students have learned to

think in new ways, they see greater possibilities for themselves and their art making, and they have more awareness of art as well as the world. They have discovered the vast rewards offered from creative thinking.

Yes, sometimes my room does become quite chaotic, but I have embraced the disorder and mess which often ensues from students' creative processes. They often make colossal messes but are willing to clean and assist others with clean-up. I continue to teach procedures for clean-up and organization within my student-centered classes. Students are not always seated and quiet, as they often converse with others or venture around the room to view others' work. I sometimes need to prompt students to return to their work when conversations become distracting or a walk around the room becomes excessive. However, their time away usually permits them to approach the work with renewed motivation. Overall, my students behavior and work ethic has remained positive, if not improved by having a personal stake in their art making.

As I conclude this research study, I admit that I am proud of this journey as I have become more aware of my possibilities as an educator and aim to continue on the path to discovering more. I have reflected deeply on my pedagogy and now embrace new methods of educating students. I am most proud of my students and the relationships I formed with them through this study. At the conclusion of each interview, I was often brought to tears by their words and my realization of the potential for their art making. They freely expressed the importance, purpose, and meaning for their art making, specifically the benefits of creating mixed media art. They were emphatic about the notable contributions mixed media art made toward their artistic and personal development as well as the possible benefits to future students.

EPILOGUE

While working on this research I strived to continue my work as teacher, artist, mom, and wife as well as find time to embrace adventure. I discovered that many of the aspects of freedom I found through the study intertwined within my own job, family, life, and art making. Finding time to create art was most difficult during the research period. However, my research encouraged me to represent more my life, family, world, and thoughts within my own mixed media art making. My students' accounts of freedom through art making helped free me from constraints I had placed on my creating through the years. I found that I often withheld expression in my art making as I aimed for perfection in technical skills, details, and compositional layout. I tried to avoid mistakes and rarely experimented or investigated the vast possibilities for my work. The research encouraged me to dream and ponder the possibilities for my own life and art making. As I offered opportunities for students to release their imaginations through the arts, while they engaged with others, I too began to embrace moments of engagement and imaginative release.

After reading Greene's *The Dialectic of Freedom* (1988) and *Releasing the Imagination* (1995b) I began to realize the importance of breaking from my predefined realities in the attempt to reach beyond my existence. As I considered the freedoms of art making and learned more about my students' experiences creating, I witnessed ways their lives intertwined with their art making. This concept played a paramount role in my dissertation, and in my thoughts about life and art. After listening to my students' stories and analyzing the data I had collected from interviews, observations and impromptu conversations, I was able to take moments to

contemplate the ways in which my childhood and early adult background constrained on my ability to free myself and see beyond my conceived possibilities of existence. I began to reflect deeply upon my life and past experiences of creating. I realized that as a teenager and young adult I also found freedom from my reality through art making. Creating art permitted me to see beyond so I could discover more about my life and the world I was so eager to be a part.

As art educators we need to be willing to see beyond realties that have been predefined. We must see the imaginative and creative possibilities of our students and allow them the freedom to discover the possibilities for their lives and become aware of the world. As we offer this opportunity to students, we need to be aware that the possibilities of freedom within art making are limitless and undefined. There is no prescribed lesson that will best evoke freedom within students. Rather as we permit students to create art based on their own perceptions, ideas, and thoughts of the world, as well as encourage them to engage and dialogue with others concerning their art making, they then may begin to see beyond their reality and find freedom.

I understand that my circumstances and experiences within my classroom and life are as unique as the art created by my students. However, through this study I aimed to impress upon the world that art education can offer great possibilities. As I currently work with my students, I aim to learn more about them – their art making, backgrounds, values, beliefs, dreams, and aspirations. Through my interactions with my students, I become part of their worlds and art making experiences. My goal as their art teacher is for us to learn more about ourselves, others, and the world as we create and share aspects of our lives and the world through creating art. As we are offered freedom in art making, we begin to see aspects of our lives and the world in new ways. Through the act of creating we are able to approach fears within our art making and lives as we strive to embrace freedom of expression and existence within the world.

My research journey has been long, tough, and sometimes I wandered astray and became lost along the way. Oftentimes I sacrificed my role as mom or wife to focus intently on aspects of the research. As I approached obstacles, stress, or became overwhelmed with juggling life and research, I would gaze ahead to the possibilities for my life. Although our roads are often long, when we release our imaginations, engage with others, self-reflect, find moments to dream, and peer over vast horizons we then may attain freedom in our reach beyond.

Figure 73: A tired moment after finding my way through the mountains with my children and husband by my side.

Figure 74: A moment of celebration with my family after a long climb to the top.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Excerpt from the National Core Art Standards: Visual Arts/Creating

Visual Arts/Creating   #VA:Cr1.1

Process Component: Investigate, Plan, Make

Anchor Standard: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Enduring Understanding: Creativity and innovative thinking are essential life skills that can be developed.

Essential Question: What conditions, attitudes, and behaviors support creativity and innovative thinking? What factors prevent or encourage people to take creative risks? How does collaboration expand the creative process?

Grade Hs proficient

VA:Cr1.1.HSI
Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.

Grade Hs accomplished

VA:Cr1.1.HSII
Individually or collaboratively formulate new creative problems based on student's existing artwork.
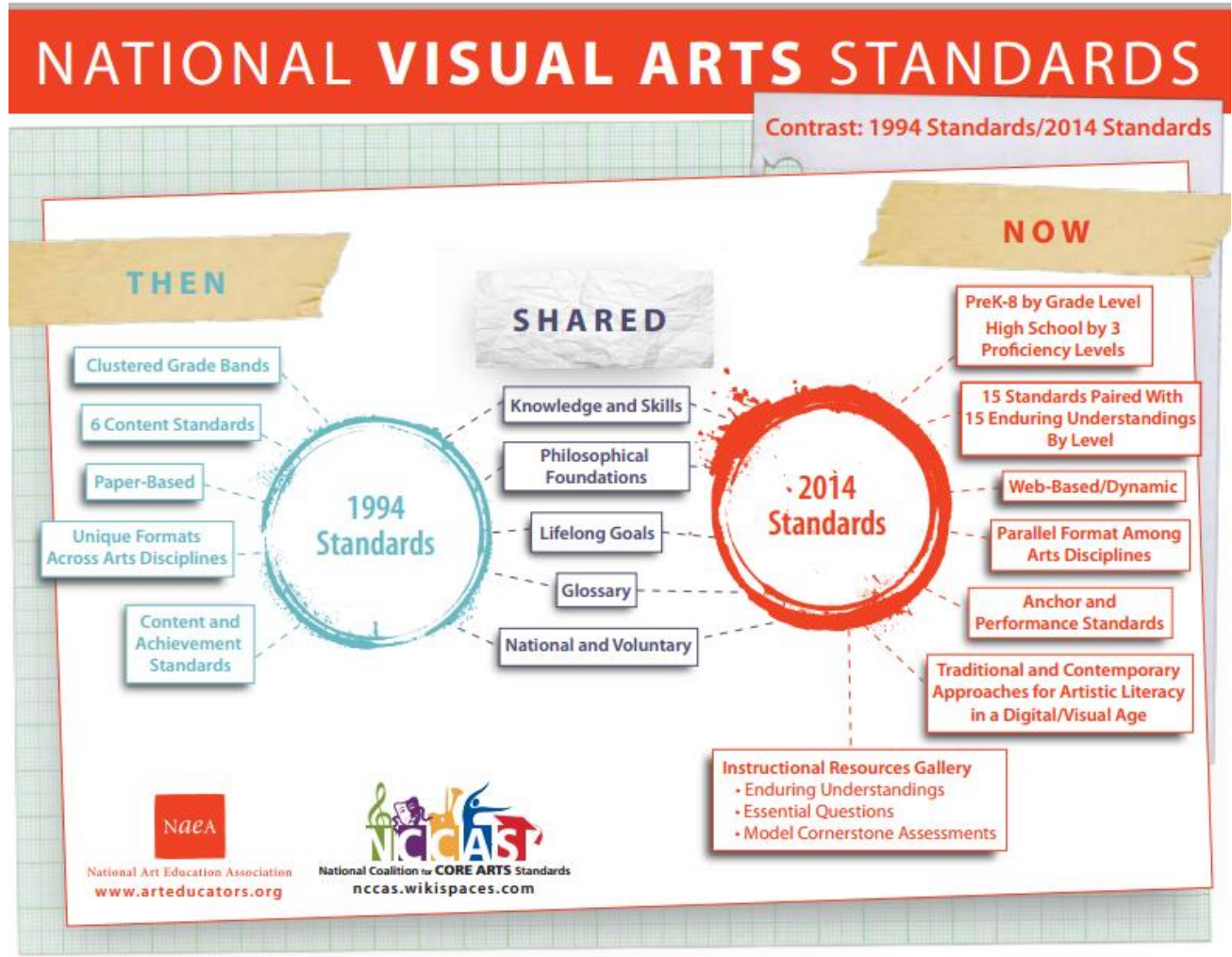

Grade Hs advanced

VA:Cr1.1.HSIII
Visualize and hypothesize to generate plans for ideas and directions for creating art and design that can affect social change.

Appendix B: Contrast of 1994 National Visual Arts Standards to 2014 Standards

Appendix C: Mixed Media Assessment Rubric

MIXED MEDIA GRADING RUBRIC

Name: _____   Assignment: _____

			Student	Teacher	
10-8:	Superior				
7-6:	Good				
5-4:	Average – Below Average				
3-2:	Needs Significant Improvement				
1-0:	Barely Evident - Not Evident				

1.)   ARTISTIC MATURITY
Did the student show responsibility? Was the student cooperative and positive?
Was the student's behavior and work ethic appropriate?

2.)   AESTHETIC APPEARANCE
Did the student demonstrate knowledge of completing a successful composition?
Does it "read" well as an overall piece?

3.)   CRAFTSMANSHIP/QUALITY
Did the student apply skillful technique? Was the artwork properly cared for or is
it careless? Was there attention to detail?

4.)   EFFORT & WORK HABITS
Did the student try a variety of possibilities? Did the student exhaust many ideas,
just a few, or only one?

5.)   USE OF MATERIALS
Did the student experiment with various media and layering?
Did the student care for materials properly, including proper clean-up?

6.)   GROWTH & PROGRESS
Was there good planning by the student? Did the student show growth in thought
or understanding as the artwork developed?

7.)   MEETS OBJECTIVES
Did the student accomplish the tasks and objectives for the lesson fully, partially,
barely, or not at all?

8.)   CREATIVITY & PROBLEM SOLVING
Are there unique and original components to the artwork? Did the student take a
personal approach to problem solving? Did the student try a variety of possibilities?

9.)   TIME MANAGEMENT
Was class time used very efficiently, somewhat, or not well at all?

10.)   DIGITAL SUBMISSION
Did the student photograph and email an image of the completed work to the teacher?

Total Points _____

Points Lost for Late Work - _____

Final Grade: _____

Appendix D: Picasso (1911-1912). *Still Life with Chair Caning.*

Picasso (1911-1912). *Still Life with Chair Caning.* Picasso Museum, Paris.

Appendix E: Braque (1912). *Fruit Dish and Glass*

Braque (1912). *Fruit Dish and Glass.* The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.

Appendix F: Interview Guide

Question Focus	What I want to know	Interview Questions
Background in Art and Mixed Media Art Production	What are the student's past experiences with creating art? What are the student's experiences creating mixed media art?	Tell me about the art courses you have taken. Possible probes: Describe your experiences in x art class. What interests you about art? Why have you chosen to continue to take art courses through high school? What are you future goals for your art development? Were any of these courses part of a gifted and talented program? Tell me about the first experience you remember creating a mixed media work of art. Possible probes: How old were you? What class did you create the work? What process did you use to create the work?

		What challenges did you face as you created the work?
		What were your feelings toward the work?
		How did creativity play a part in the creation of the work?
Student's Experiences Creating Mixed Media Art	What was the student's process in creating mixed media art?	Tell me about the time when you created one of your favorite mixed media works of art.
		Possible Probes:
		What initial problems did you face as you began the work of art?
		What was your subject matter for the work?
		What materials did you use?
		How did you use creative thinking skills as you developed the work?
	How does the student use creative problem solving when creating mixed media art?	What were your feelings about the completed work?
		How do you choose which materials to use as you create a mixed media work of art?
		As far as problem solving, tell me about a time when you made a mistake or faced a

		problem in a mixed media work of art and how you solved the problem. Question extension: How were other students helpful in solving problems you faced as you created the mixed media work?
Student's emotional response to creating mixed media art.	What is the student's emotional response to mixed media art making?	How does it make you feel as you create a mixed media work of art? How do you feel mixed media art improved your creativity? How has creating mixed media art improved your ability to develop solutions to problems you face in creating art?
Student's opinions/values of their mixed media art	What opinion does the student hold of their personal mixed media art making?	How do you feel about what others think about your work? How do you view others' opinions about your completed mixed media art works? How important is creativity and originality in your mixed media art making?
Student's perception of the mixed media art	How does the student view the space in which	How do you generate ideas when creating a mixed media work of art?

classroom.	mixed media art is created?	What does a mixed media classroom look like on a daily basis? (How do students operate/learn/create in a mixed media classroom?)
Student's knowledge and understanding of mixed media art.	How does the student define mixed media art?	How would you define mixed media art? What do you think are the key issues in creating a mixed media work of art? Describe how you see mixed media art helping you in your future career.

Appendix G: Mixed Media Student-Centered Curriculum Guide

Mixed Media Art: Student-Centered Curriculum

For the following 8 weeks you will be able to explore your own ideas for mixed media art making by developing a curriculum for yourself!

Requirements for Your Curriculum

- Complete 3-5 works of mixed media art. The size, theme, and materials will be determined by YOU!

- Complete 6 art book (journal/sketchbook) assignments. The details of these assignments will be generated by YOU!

- Participate daily in your art making objectives. You will receive a daily participation grade, so stay focused and work hard!

- Develop personal theme(s) for your art making. This will be decided by YOU and should reflect YOUR interests or curiosities!

- Create 4 goals for your art making. These are YOUR personal goals for art making! What do you want to improve about your art making?

Curriculum Development

In your art book list:

1. 4 art making goals you aim to achieve.

2. 4 themes you would like to explore through your art making.

3. 6 possible weekly art book assignments (these may change based on your work).

4. Possible materials you might need for your art making.

Grades

- Minor grades will be given for each of the 6 art book assignments. These will be due each Tuesday.

- Major grades will be given for the 3-5 works generated through the six weeks. The mixed media art rubric will be used to determine these grades.

- Daily participation grades will be given based on your daily work ethic in class. 10 points will be ducted from the daily grade for each major incidence of being off task. Off task incidences include:

  o Working on assignments from another class.

  o Use of cell phone unrelated to class.

  o Sleeping, sitting for a long period without working.

  o Conversations that detract from daily work.

  o Behaviors that detract from your work or the work of others.

  o Misuse of art materials (includes clean-up of materials).

My Role as the Teacher

I will assist you in meeting your art making goals and objectives. I will also help you learn mixed media techniques and process that will help you with your art making and will provide the materials you need for your art making.