Teachers Network Policy Institute
Research Study
Santa Clara County Chapter

Visual Community: An Exploration
of Classroom Community Through Pictures

A Research Project for Teachers Network Policy Institute
Conducted by

Bruce Neff

San Jose, California
May 2004

Table of Contents

Research Question

How is a classroom community affected when students share visual images that represent who they are outside of school?

Rationale

Visual, non-verbal communication plays a powerful role in how we see each other in society. Living in a multimedia society where television is a prime source of entertainment, diversion, etc., our society relies heavily on visual communication to convey a variety of messages, culture being just one.

When we come to know that this is the reality of our world we are better prepared for ways to perhaps challenge the taken-for-granted beliefs that stem from this form of "culturalization" and in doing so it allows for a deeper more appreciative understanding of who we are and where we come from to form a stronger community built on understanding each other.

There are many approaches to building a community in the classroom such as class meetings and buddy programs. There are even school-wide activities that link students, parents, and teachers such as Back-to-School night, school carnivals, or Family Film Nights. However, there are not significant opportunities for children at school to bring elements of who they are outside of school into the classroom. In fact, classrooms can seem to be encapsulated, if not isolated, from the social worlds and resources of the community (Moll 1992). If students can use pictures to capture some element of that missing piece of their identity and, through dialogue, be able to share with others in their classroom that side of them that is not seen, perhaps we can begin to challenge the taken-

for-granted beliefs, or assumptions, we hold about each other and rise to a new form of community in our classrooms.

Review of the Literature

The concept of creating a caring community in schools along with the importance of doing so has been the subject of research for decades. The idea of what community is, how it can be measured, or what impact it has on schools and students has taken on many forms. These forms have ranged from school community being labeled as an ethic of caring to the psychological stance of schools being a place designed to provide for the basic needs of all human beings (Larrivee 2000). However, regardless of its form, it is clear that when caring communities are established in schools, they can do much to promote the well being of children (Sergiovanni 1994). Caring communities also impact students' academic outcomes with higher grade-point averages and achievement test scores, better academic engagement, and less misconduct in school (Schaps 2003).

In order to build community, teachers need to infuse the classroom with community-building experiences and create a safe place where students feel secure enough to share what has purpose and meaning for them. Effective community emphasizes among other things the creating of a place where open dialogue about individual differences can take place in a safe, respectful environment. It is through this exploration of ourselves and our relationship to others that we become a caring community (Larrivee 2000).

Classrooms with strong communities have individuals who respect each other in their commonalities and differences. They have individuals who can express what is

important to them without fear of being judged by others. Depicting caring and respect means listening to students, engaging in dialogue with students, showing interest in them, soliciting their opinions, valuing their ideas, and demonstrating a belief that they are capable (Larrivee 2000). Through taking interest in each other's life stories and engaging in a dialogue about them we can move towards achieving the first fundamental of a caring community, respect.

Visual culture can be understood as the objects and processes, including those created and used by students, that particularly function through visualized form to affect our lives. Visual culture is significant because it presents ideas and stories that shape people's lives. It "reflects and contributes to the construction of knowledge, identity, beliefs, imagination, sense of time and place, feelings of agency, and the quality of life at all ages" (Boughton et al. 2002).

Contemporary theorists of visual culture no longer believe in aesthetic qualities that are "immediately" experienced, as John Dewey put it (1934). Nothing is immediately experienced without some sort of mediation and interpretation. The significance of visual culture lays "not so much [in] a set of things (television shows or paintings, for example) as a set of processes or practices through which individuals and groups come to make sense of those things" (Sturken and Cartwright 2001, 3-4). The interpretation of a photograph is subject to the viewer's own cultural perspective. "To interpret images is to examine the assumptions that we and others bring to them, and decode the visual language that they speak" (Sturken and Cartwright 2001, 41).

When used in research to understand how people define their selves and their world, photography often sheds light on the taken-for-granted or the unquestioned. No photograph is a simple documentation of reality. Every photographer decides, first of all,

what to photograph, and beyond that, how to frame what s/he sees within the lens of a camera (Villeneuve 2003). They often reveal unconscious beliefs behind the picture-taking process itself. Quan (1979, 5) contends that "everything can be shot, taken or created with the camera - even our beliefs."

Photographs reveal much more than what is seen in the image. Point of view, purpose, or simply what is not seen can tell much about the photographer. The photograph itself captures or "quotes" a moment in time, which is "true" in the sense that it holds a visual trace of reality that the camera was pointed at in that moment. "The photographer chooses the event he photographs. This choice can be though of as a cultural construction. The space for this construction, as it were, cleared by his rejection of what he did not choose to photograph" (Berger and Mohr 1982, 92). It is the rendering of the photographer's perspective during the process of picture taking that can provide insight into the photographer's worldview. Furthermore, not only is the content of the picture important, but also what was not included in the picture. In other words, the reasons behind the choice - why the photographer chose to capture a particular subject in a still picture - may be just as illuminating as the photograph itself (Berger and Mohr 1982).

Culture greatly influences who we are and the decisions we make. If we can question the taken-for-granted beliefs put in place by our cultures we can create a liminal state where change is possible. "As traditional forms of authority are delegitimatized individuals enter a brief period of liminal cultural space that allows for the negotiation of new meanings" (Bowers 1987). Through this negotiation of new meanings, brought about by challenging assumptions we hold about each other, and ourselves the prospect of a new community can become possible.

"Communicative competence, a phrase borrowed from Jürgen Habermas's overly abstract formulation, can be understood most simply in terms of the individual's ability to negotiate meanings and purposes instead of passively accepting the social realities defined by others" (Bowers 1987, 2). As taken-for-granted beliefs are made explicit and are challenged, there is a moment in social and conceptual time when the individual experiences the temporary openness of liminal space. As the Dutch anthropologist Arnold van Gennep uses the concept, liminality designates those moments in cultural transition where the individual is "betwixt and between" established patterns of thought and behavior. This moment of openness gives those who possess the linguistic ability to name "what is" in new ways, and convince others to accept their definitions. In effect the liminality gives to language, and those who either can use it effectively or control how it is used, a political significance that it does not have in more traditional cultures (Bowers 1987).
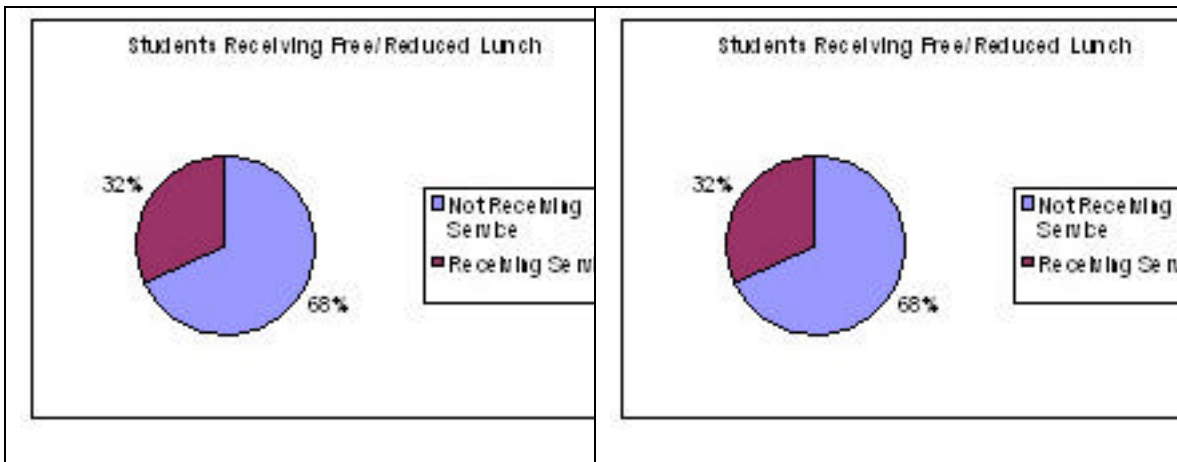
Once we have reached that "moment of cultural transition" the establishment of a participatory process for sharing and recreating a new understanding of each other needs to take place. "Dialogue empowers understanding through a process of shared inquiry, not transmission of truths from a knowledgeable expert to a passive recipient" (Freire 2000). By entering into a dialogue where everyone's voice has equal value and student's perceptions of each other can be renegotiated, the students can claim ownership of what they know about each other and not have to rely on someone or something else to "tell" them.

Tools

       This action research study involved my own fourth grade classroom of twenty-eight students in south San Jose, California, from November 2003 through March 2004.

       South City Elementary is one of nineteen schools in the Maple Oak School District. The school provides services to 686 students Kindergarten through sixth grades reflecting a diversity of backgrounds, cultures, and nineteen languages. (See Fig. 1) The socioeconomic levels of the families range from low-income/unemployed to upper middle class. Thirty-two percent of the students receive free or reduced lunches. The school has a diverse ethnic population consisting of 41% Caucasian, 32% Hispanic, 14% Asian, 7% African American, 5% Filipino, and 1% Pacific Islander.

Fig. 1

       The school-wide demographic closely resembles the composition of the fourth grade class I teach. However, it is also important to address specific characteristics that are unique to my students. Of the twenty-eight students in my class, fifteen are boys and thirteen are girls. Three students are classified as English Language Learners (ELL) and

one is Autistic, receiving special services and a full time assistant. The family and support structures at home are as diverse as my students. While the majority of students live at home with both parents, five live with one parent due to a separation or other issue. There are also three students who live with a guardian, such as a grandparent or close relative.

The students in my class are typical in respects to their level of academic performance and social development for children of this age. They are one of three fourth grade classes at South City Elementary with similar demographics.

The following tools used in my research were designed by the author:= "Classroom Concerns" forms, which were documents from individual students that expressed concerns that they had in and out of the classroom, two "Classroom Community" surveys, "Mysterious Pictures About Me" forms to guide students' choices of picture subjects, "Picture Noticing" cards, and "Mysterious Pictures Revealed" forms. I also used an observational journal, and disposable cameras. In addition to the aforementioned tools, which I used either help structure the study or to measure how social interactions changed, I also used three case studies of students in my class, three District Assessments, and one Theme Skills Test from a new Language Arts Adoption to help measure how this study affected my students academically.

The timeline of the entire study ran from late October 2003 through early April 2004. The times at which the aforementioned tools were employed during the study were as follows:

- Observational Journal   October – April

- Classroom Concerns   October – April

- Mysterious Pictures About Me   October - November

- Classroom Community Survey (Baseline)   November

- Picture Noticing Cards   December - February

- Mysterious Pictures Revealed   February

- Case Studies   October – April

- District Assessments   September and January

- Theme Skills Test   October – April

- Classroom Community Survey (Final)   April

My observational journal was used throughout the study to provide a way to document how interactions between students changed. Although the types of entries varied in terms of consistency and content it was a very useful tool for documenting things that would otherwise have been overlooked or forgotten throughout the course of the study. It also provided a useful timeline of events that I could correspond with the activities that were occurring in the project and the impact they had on the student's relationships with each other.

The "Classroom Concerns" (See Appendix A) form was actually a management strategy that I used before the study began where students could write down anything that was concerning them and place it in a secure box in class. Approximately once a week we would have a class meeting to discuss in general terms what the concerns were and how we could come up with solutions to those problems. I continued to collect these forms throughout the study as a means to get constant feedback about how things were going in our community. This weekly classroom practice would set the standards for how we could have a dialogue with one another that is designed to keep conversations

going through reciprocal understanding, where everyone's contributions are not only valid but important (Arnett 2001).

Schaps (2003, 32) suggests that "schools can readily assess the degree to which students experience community in school by asking students how much they agree or disagree with such statements as: My class is like a family. or Students in my class help one another learn." Schaps method of assessing students' perceptions of their school community led me to the "Classroom Community" surveys (See Appendix C) I used in this study.

In order to capture whom the students were outside of school I needed to develop a method that would allow the students to share things about themselves anonymously, so that the taken-for-granted-beliefs about each other could be minimized prior to our discussion about them. I decided that the best way to do this was to have the students take pictures of things outside of school, of which pictures of themselves could not be included, that would represent some element of who they are.

To do this I had students complete a "Mysterious Pictures About Me" form (See Appendix B), which served two purposes. First, it allowed the students to have a specific plan of what they would take a picture of when they took the cameras home. Second, it allowed me to identify which images belonged to whom when I developed the pictures, which also made the coding process for displaying the picture much easier. This form also established that the pictures taken were to be secret since I was trying to get the kids to discover things that others would not already know.

Using photography as a data collection tool was appropriate for this study, because it allows the students to strip away much of the preconceived notions they have about each other. Therefore, I used eight disposable cameras, which were sent home with

the students to take the pictures that they had documented on the "Mysterious Pictures About Me" form.

Once the pictures were all taken and put on CDs I was able to display them in the classroom on a LCD projector. While displaying the pictures I stressed the importance of not revealing who had taken the picture and that the responses would be recorded on the "Picture Noticing" cards (See Appendix D).

I created the "Mysterious Pictures Revealed" form (See Appendix E) in order to document some of the perceptions that students had about each other and to what extent that they were surprised about some of the pictures their classmates had taken.

In order to see the effects of this study on the academics of my students, I decided to focus in on three students in a case study. The choices I made were intentional, partly because I specifically wanted to include students that represented a different range of academic level, social skills, and ethnic diversity. The three students I have included are Jenna, an "average" student, with district test scores that are basic or proficient, Tracy, a "high" student, with district test scores of proficient or advanced, and Peter, a "low" student, with district scores of below basic or basic and has special needs due to his diagnosis of Autism.

I also used the school districts beginning of the year and middle of the year benchmark assessments for Math (Harcourt Brace), Reading (STAR), and Language Arts (Houghton Mifflin) in addition to the Houghton Mifflin Theme Skills Tests as another way to show change in academic performance that took place when we focused on the community of the classroom through this study.

Data

The first tool for data collection I used in this study was the "Community Concerns" box I kept in my class. I had been using this all year long as a means to gain understanding of the things that might have been occurring inside and outside of class that students wanted to share with me, but didn't have the time or sometimes, the courage to openly discuss during class. However, it was not until I had begun research that I started to look at the concerns with a more critical eye towards what was happening in the community of my class and the school that might have warranted the responses that appeared in the box.

Although there were many different ways that I was able to categorize the data, once I began to look at it through the lens of how these concerns were relating to communities and how they might have been promoting or deteriorating the community of the class, did it begin to inform my research. It was through this coding process that I could see how "safe" the kids felt or could establish a sense of "caring" and "respect" that was occurring among each other. Over the course of the study there was a noticeable decline in the amount of concerns that were being reported by students in the areas of safety, caring, and respect. (See Table 1)

My observational journal was useful because it enabled me to track how students' interactions with each other changed over a long period of time. For example, during the course of the study I had documented how a new friendship had come about between two boys in my class. Prior to sharing information about their home life through the "mysterious pictures" project, Mike and Dave never spent much time together, inside or outside of class. However, as the project unfolded and they learned that they shared a common interest in after school sports, they soon became friends and started doing things together all the time both at school and outside of school. In asking why Dave was spending so much time with Mike recently he replied, "I don't know. I guess it's when I found out that he took that picture of the soccer cleats and we began talking about teams we have played on."

Another example of how interactions between students changed was the manner in which students provided help for each other and sought help from each other in class. I found that at the beginning of the study when students needed help they would usually go to a friend that they knew to get help. Journal entry: "November 19, 2003. It seems like Tracy only likes to work with Norman when students have a choice of partners. Is it because of their similar ethnic background?" As time passed however, I began to observe a change in this attitude. Journal entry: "February 25, 2004. Tracy is working with many different students now. It doesn't seem to matter if they are boy, girl, high-performing students or low-performing." As students began to realize that other people had different

strengths and weaknesses in the different subject areas they started to offer help and were more willing to receive help from different people in class.
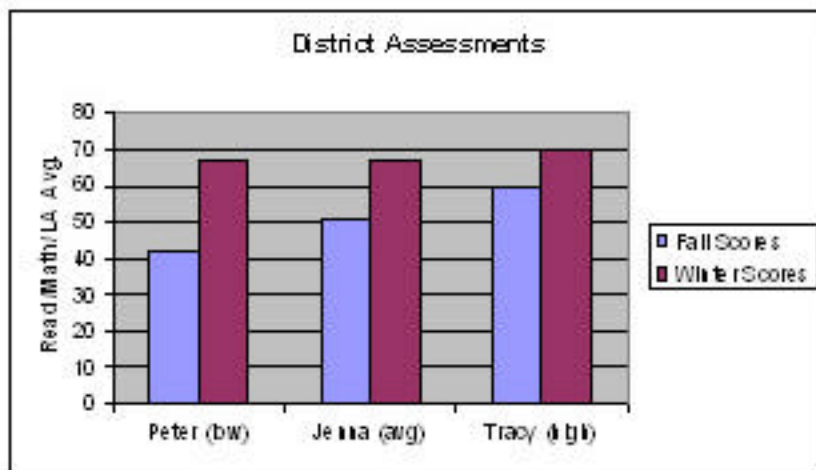
The "Picture Noticing" forms proved to be very useful in identifying some of the taken-for-granted beliefs that students held about each other. Upon reviewing the responses, I was able to create two main categories of the ways that the students perceived what they saw that I would use in upcoming discussions. Of the responses I used for the study, 28% of them were very accurate about who took the picture and what it portrayed, while 53% of the responses were completely wrong. The remaining 19% of the responses represented an even distribution of accurate and inaccurate perceptions.

In order to shift from the setting of secrecy that surrounded the first viewing of the pictures to one where we could begin to create a form of dialogue as conversation where we enter into a "process of mutual engagement directed toward shared understanding" (Burbules 1993) that might challenge some of the taken-for-granted beliefs we have about one another, I gathered the pictures that best represented either accurate interpretations or a clear misconception of some sort. I then presented these pictures to the students again, but with the understanding that this time the photographers would be revealing themselves to the class and we would discuss with each our reactions to what we saw or discovered that challenged our previous beliefs.

In order to capture the impact of the dialogues that were generated surrounding the pictures, I used the "Mysterious Pictures" forms as a means to document what the students felt were the most interesting discoveries they made about each other during this process. Some of the most common themes that emerged from the students' responses were that people may have interest in things that you are not aware of (38%), that girls
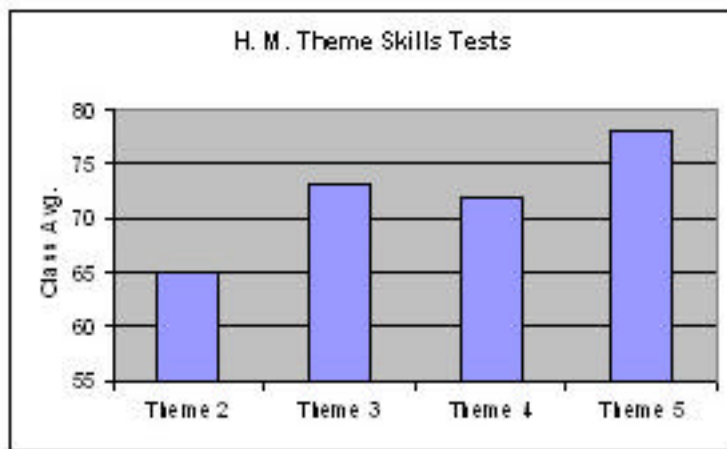
like to do things that boys do (27%), that our families are different (56%), and that we are all proud of our families and enjoy sharing things about them at school (78%).

This project also had an impact academically on the students in my class. There was significant growth in scores for district assessments of three students that I did a case study on in my class. (See Table 2) Peter had the greatest improvement with an overall growth of 25%, followed by Jenna with 16% and Tracy with 10% in the Reading, Math, and Language Arts assessments.

By the time the winter assessments were taken all three students that were part of my case study were at the "Proficient" or "Advanced" level in the benchmark assessments for Math (Harcourt Brace), Reading (STAR), and Language Arts (Houghton Mifflin). Although the three students in my case study all demonstrated exceptional growth academically when looking at the same assessments for the entire class there was as significant a change with only a 3% gain in scores. However, a positive gain was still evident.

The other tool I used to measure the effect that this project had on the students in my class was the Houghton Mifflin Theme Skills Tests for the new Language Arts adoption. (See Table 3) Over the course of the project I had given four of the six Theme Skills Tests. When comparing the scores of the Theme Skills Test given, there was a steady improvement on the class average. Overall, when looking at the difference in the scores from the first test and the last test there was a 13% positive gain in performance for the entire class. Furthermore, the average performance level was that of "Proficient" by the end of the project.
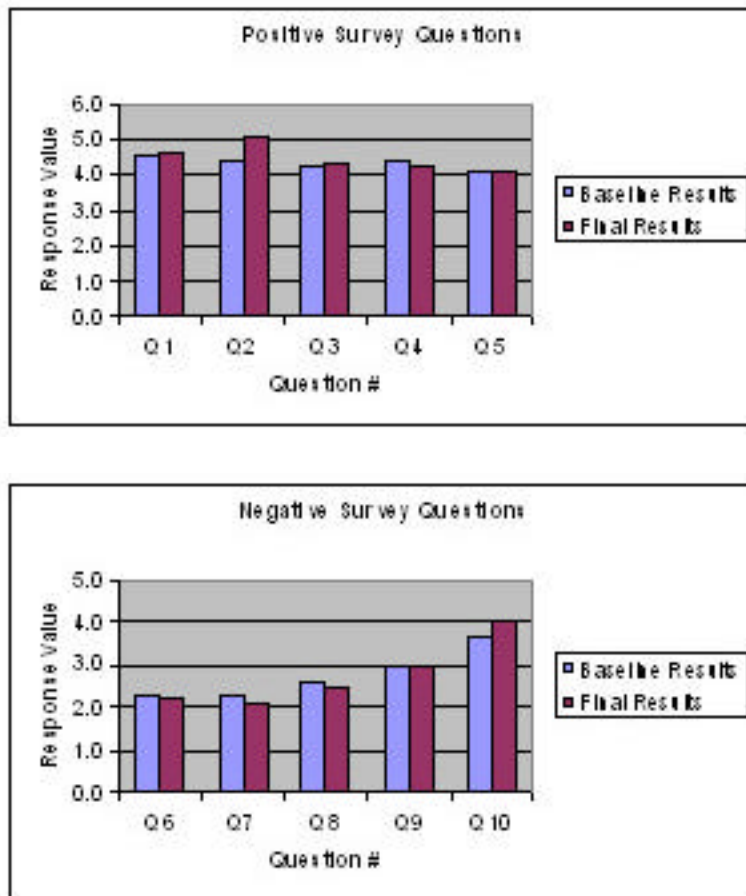

The "Classroom Community" surveys (See Appendix C) that I used to establish a baseline for comparison in this study revealed some of the social changes that had occurred in my class over the course of the study.

The first of two "Classroom Community" surveys was conducted at the start of the study and was used to provide baseline data about how my students viewed the level of community in the class. The survey consisted of ten statements about our community and a response scale of 1-6 that indicated to what extent the student agreed or disagreed with the statement. This was a blind survey to help ensure the validity of responses.

The second "Classroom Community" survey was given at the end of the study and was identical to the first in every respect. This was used to compare any change in the students' perception of the level of community after completion of the activity of sharing pictures and discussing them with each other.

Overall, the results of the benchmark survey when compared to the results of the final survey (See Table 4) revealed that there was a positive shift in the students' perceptions of how they felt about the classroom's community. The area that showed the greatest growth was statement two, "When I am having trouble with my work, at least one classmate will try to help", which averaged a score of 5.1 indicating that students "agree a lot" with the statement.

Table 4

Analysis

"Analysis does not refer to a stage in the research process. Rather, it is a constant process that should begin just as soon as your research begins" (Glesne 1999, 84).

As teachers we analyze our practice every day we walk in the room, oftentimes without consciously realizing that we are doing it. We are in constant reflection about what we do and how we can improve on our teaching to help our students achieve to the fullest potential. So, I was not too surprised to see that my analysis of this study had actually begun before I was making a conscious effort to do so.

According to Eric Schaps in "Creating a School Community" (2003), schools that emphasize building community were shown to have students who perform better academically, demonstrate more respectful behavior, and have better social skills. Therefore, by monitoring what I was seeing occur in respects to the relationships that students were developing, the behavior that they were demonstrating, and their academic performance, I was beginning to see some correlation to the types of comments that were showing up in the concerns box. I noticed that my students were slowly entering a state that Arnett describes as being "tired of rude conversations centered upon the self" and towards a "dialogic civility [that] offers an alternative picture of why interpersonal life is important (Arnett 2001).

This realization allowed us to engage in a dialogue about those concerns with each other in a manner that maintained our differences but at the same time reached new understandings. In doing this we could all be respectful to each other even when we did not agree with one another, and we were able to work through the things that were creating problems within the community. It was through these meetings and dialogues

with the class that I was noticing some of the perceptions that students held about on another slowly begin to change into a more accepting and respectful view of each other over the course of the study.

In addition to having students who were gaining a more respectful view of one another through our differences they also began to recognize each other as being a knowledgeable and helpful resource to each other, which increased overall academic performance in my class, positive interactions among each other, and individual self-esteem.

The benefits of doing this type of activity in a classroom are not limited to improvements in how students treat one another in a social setting, although this would be valuable in and of itself. It is clear that it also has very powerful academic implications. All of the students in my case studies have shown positive academic gains over the course of the study and my class as a whole also increased on various assessments. It is also important to note that all of these things were accomplished with minimal impact on time allotments for other content areas. In fact the "in class" time that was necessary to complete this community building activity was approximately three hours per month. It is apparent that when students begin to change their perceptions of one another positive things can occur both socially and academically in classrooms.

One example of the effect of this shift in perception of one another would be Elena, who at the beginning of the year was struggling in Math with a score of "Basic" on the California STAR assessment. As the year progressed, through hard work and support from home, she began showing improvement in the subject area and in her most recent report card is maintaining an "A" in the subject. During the "mysterious pictures" project she included a picture that represented her achievements in this area and was proud to

share that aspect of who she was with the class. When we began a dialogue about the picture many students' perceptions began to change. Soon she was being sought out by her peers to help them, because she was seen as someone who had overcome the difficulties she once faced in the subject and when other students came to her for help she was very considerate of their needs because she was once in their position. As her classmates perception of Elena's skill in Math changed she assumed a new role in the community as one who could help them with the subject. As a result, Elena began viewing herself as being "good at Math" and it became her favorite subject. In fact, I oftentimes found that she pushed herself beyond my expectations by voluntarily doing additional math problems for homework or offering assistance, during her free time, to classmates who were struggling.

My analysis of the "Picture Noticing" forms brought me to the conclusion that students clearly knew certain things about each other before this study began. What was interesting, however, was that when students' predictions were most accurate it always involved something that would have been revealed about the photographer through an interaction or event that was directly related to some aspect of school. For example, the picture of Jenna's baby niece was correctly identified by 94% of the students. At first I was surprised to find that so many students knew who this was, but when we began discussing how it is that they knew the answer they reminded me that, "I know that's Jenna's niece because she comes to our class parties all the time."

I also used the "Picture Noticing" forms to create a category of pictures that students had many misconceptions about. Many of these pictures were inaccurately identified because they involved an aspect of the photographer's life that would not "normally" be shared at school. Within this category I had pictures where the majority of

the class incorrectly identified the photographer or the item being photographed due to the cultural perceptions that played a role in how they interpreted the image. Perception is active interpretation, or making meaning. In other words, what we SEE is not primarily based on sense stimulus, but on past knowledge, situational contexts, and cultural narratives (Gregory 2001). These pictures became the basis of our dialogue about how taken-for-granted beliefs about each other could influence how we interacted as a community and how once we were able to notice that we did this, we could begin to challenge those beliefs and move into a liminal state where change was possible (Bowers 1987).

The dialogue that began to develop as a result of this aspect of the project proved to be the most transformational moment in the process for both my students and me. For example, the most profound discovery was when it was revealed that the photographer of a basketball hoop was a girl, who everyone, including myself, would not have guessed had taken the picture. Tracy is a straight A student who is perceived by many as being very academic and not one to play many sports. When it was revealed that she took the picture of the basketball hoop, it initiated an engaging dialogue among students about how we often perceive girls as not always enjoying the same activities as boys or that kids that do well academically do not do well in sports. "I didn't know that so many girls played basketball in this class," Matthew commented during one discussion. This led us to more discoveries about other students who participated in sports or other activities outside of school, which their classmates were unaware of, such as Katie playing on a basketball league, or Annie who enjoyed riding dirt bikes.

When looking at how extensive and meaningful community building activities, such as this one, play a role in the academic performance of students, my data clearly

suggests that academic performance and self-esteem will increase as a result. In education today, there is so much emphasis placed on students learning how to read, write, add and subtract that we are neglecting the "whole" child. We must begin to address **all** of our students' needs, both academic and social, and by doing so we will begin to see not only improvements in academics, but also improvements in the type of citizens that come out of our classrooms. The importance of establishing a strong community in a classroom is critical to the "whole" child and by looking closely at who we are outside of school and creating a dialogue about it with each other, we can co-create a community that we all can be a part of.

As my findings suggest the development of a classroom community where students care for each other, respect each other, and value academic achievement can be affected by sharing with each other aspects about their own lives outside of school. This process of achieving the goal of a stronger class community does have its challenges and requires a commitment to the process of establishing an environment where the students can share things about themselves freely. It also requires an investment of time, a precious resource that we are already very limited on. However, if this investment can be made and when it is done through open dialogue where everyone's differences are considered and validated, the overall effect can be a powerful transformation, which will leave its mark on each of our lives.

Policy Implications

I believe that there is much more to providing a quality education than simply teaching our students how to read, write, add, and subtract. In order to produce citizens that can be successful and make meaningful contributions to our society we need to address the needs of the "whole" child. This includes not only academics, but also the valuable social skills that are needed look past the taken-for-granted beliefs that we may hold about on another. Once we start implementing programs that are designed to improve the level of community in our classrooms, not only will we see the benefits of more respectful and caring students, but also increases in academic performance as well. Although most classroom teachers are already employing efforts to create strong communities in their classrooms, we also need support from everyone else involved in the education of tomorrow's future including state-level decision makers, district management, site administrators, and the people in our communities. In designing the programs that will be necessary to build stronger communities through sharing who we are with pictures the following benefits would be a result:

- There is more to preparing our students for the future than meeting the academic standards. With all of the our attention being narrowly focused on improvement of test scores we have neglected the fact that school is a place where students also learn valuable social skills. What would the value of raising bright children be if in the process our children loose all sense of civility? By designing a program where students could learn about and from each other, that would be implemented school wide, we could help prepare our students to live in a civil society.

- When students feel more comfortable sharing with one another aspects of who they are outside of school it creates a climate that allows students to see and take pride in the importance of academic achievement. Once our students begin to see the value of academics and how it affects their lives they will want to play a more active role in the learning process and as students see the valuable contributions that each member of their class can make, they will begin to work together to achieve that common goal.

- Creating an environment where students feel safe is critical to the success of any educational program. When students don't feel safe learning is very difficult if not impossible. Therefore we need a program such as this, where students feel safe in sharing with one another and are willing to take risks and learn from each other. This will also provide them a means to express there concerns, goals, and achievements with their community.

In order to reach this attainable goal we must provide the support and necessary funding to implement the following:

- The initial cost to begin a program to cover the cost of Professional Development, equipment, a Site/District level program coordinator would be:
  - 10,000 per elementary school
  - 15,000 per intermediate school
  - 25,000 per high school

- The ongoing costs to support the program annually would be the amount needed to continue the Professional Development and Program Coordinator position, which would amount to approximately 30% of the initial site costs.

Although the initial purpose of this study was simply to look at how social interactions among the students in my class might be affected when they began to see who the person sitting next to them was outside of school, it quickly turned into a much more powerful experience. This study has revealed how important the social element of learning is to a child's total education and why we as educators need to take every opportunity to include activities that will enhance our students understanding, not only of reading, writing, and math, but also of one another.

Bibliography

Arnett, R. 2001. Dialogic civility as pragmatic ethical praxis: an interpersonal metaphor for the public domain. *Communication Theory* v. 11 (August) : 315-338.

Berger, John and Jean Mohr. 1982. *Another way of telling*. New York: Pantheon.

Boughton, D., K. Freedman, J. Hausman, L. Hicks, S. Madeja, S. Mertcalf, M. Rayala, D. Smith-Shank, M.A. Stankiewicz, P. Stur, K. Tavin and E. Vallance. 2002. *Art education and visual culture. Advisory.* Reston, VA: National Art Education Association.

Bowers, C. A. 1987. *The promise of theory: education and the politics of cultural change.* New York and London: Teachers College Press.

Burbules, Nicholas C. 1993. *Dialogue in teaching: theory and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Dewey, John. 1934. *Art as experience, by John Dewey*. New York: Minton, Balch & Company.

Freire, P. 2000. *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York: Continuum.

Glesne, C. 1999. *Becoming qualitative researchers: an introduction.* New York: Longman.

Gregory, R. L. 2001. *Action potentials to potential actions.* In T. E. Parks (Ed.), *Looking at looking: an introduction to the intelligence of vision,* (51-71). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Larrivee, B. 2000. Creating caring learning communities. *Contemporary Education* 71 (no2) : 18-21.

Moll, L., C. Amanti, D. Neff and N. Gonzalez. 1992. Funds of knowledge for teaching: using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into practice*. v. 31 (Spring) : 132-141.

Quan, R. 1979. Photography and the creation of meaning. *Art education* v. 32 (February) : 4, 6, 8-9.

Schaps, E. 2003. Creating a school community. *Educational Leadership* 60 (March) : 31-33.

Sergiovanni, T. 1994. *Building community in schools.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Sturken, M. and L. Cartwright. 2001. *Practices of looking: an introduction to visual culture.* London: Oxford Press.

Villeneuve, Pat. 2003. Why not visual culture?. *Art Education* 56 (March) : 4-51.

Ziller, Robert C. 1990. *Photographing the self: methods for observing personal orientations.* Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications.

Appendix A
Community Concerns Forms

Name: _____

Date: _____

Concern:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B

Mysterious Pictures About Me
Don't show this paper to anyone at school

Take this paper home and write down what you plan on taking a picture of.

Make sure that you are very <u>specific</u> about what the picture will be.

IMPORTANT: The pictures that you will take are meant to be a secret so don't tell anyone at school what you are going to take a picture of.

The picture that I am going to take that will represent, or show something about…

Be specific!

1. my past is of _____

_____

2. my future is of _____

_____

3. how I spend my free time is of _____

_____

4. a thing that nobody in class knows about me is of _____

_____

5. what is <u>very</u> important to me is of _____

_____

6. how I feel about school this year is of _____

_____

7. ANYTHING YOU WANT _____

*****Since this is going to be a mysterious picture make sure that you are not in any of the pictures that you

take.*******

Classroom Community Survey

Circle the number that best describes how you feel about the following statements.

1. Students in my class help each other, even if they are not friends.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Completely Disagree	Disagree a lot	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely Agree

2. When I'm having trouble with my work, at least one classmate will try to help.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Completely Disagree	Disagree a lot	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely Agree

3. Students in my class treat each other with respect.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Completely Disagree	Disagree a lot	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely Agree

4. Students in my class are willing to share things about themselves with others.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Completely Disagree	Disagree a lot	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely Agree

5. My class is like a family.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Completely Disagree	Disagree a lot	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely Agree

6. The students in my class don't really care about each other.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Completely Disagree	Disagree a lot	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely Agree

7. A lot of students in my class like to put others down.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Completely Disagree	Disagree a lot	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely Agree

8. Students in my class don't get along together very well.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Completely Disagree	Disagree a lot	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely Agree

9. Students in my class just look out for themselves.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Completely Disagree	Disagree a lot	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely Agree

10. Students in my class don't know much about each other outside of school.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Completely Disagree	Disagree a lot	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree a lot	Completely Agree

Appendix D
Picture Noticing Forms

Picture # _____

Who took this picture? _____

What is this picture of? _____

_____

Caption: _____

_____

_____

Mysterious Pictures Revealed

What picture surprised you the most?

Picture #_____Person's Name_____

What was the picture _really_ of?

_____

What did the _think_ the picture was of?

_____

What picture surprised you the <u>least</u>?

Picture #_____Person's Name_____

Why did this picture <u>not</u> surprise you?

_____

Name 3 things that you learned about your classmates from looking at the pictures.

    1. _____

       _____

    2. _____

       _____

    3. _____

       _____