A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING TECHNOLOGY AS A 21ST CENTURY CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING (CRT) STRATEGY IN AN AT- RISK MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

In light of increasing demographic and technological shifts and changes, teachers now face the dual challenges of cultural and digital differences in their classrooms as they attempt to build relationships with students and make instruction responsive and relevant to students’ lives. At the core of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) (Villegas & Lucas, 2002), teachers are urged to know students well in order to be better equipped to connect students’ home and school contexts so instruction is meaningful to ethnically and racially diverse students. The present study aimed to contribute to research by investigating how technology, specifically student-created iPod videos, can serve as a 21st Century tool for culturally responsive teachers aiming to build positive relationships with students within the increasingly diverse context of the classroom. The teacher and student narratives revolving around the iPod videos revealed an apparent home-school disconnection. The findings of this study revealed that bridging home and school is more complex than simply inviting students’ lives into the classroom. Although the teacher attempted to make connections through self-disclosure, he unintentionally shifted focus away from student lives and experiences to highlight his own. This study exposes how technology can be a bridge in connecting students’ home and school contexts, but it also uncovers the possible dangers and downsides of teacher self-disclosure.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. The Context

It is well documented that teacher-student interpersonal relationships are strongly correlated with students’ cognitive, social, and emotional development within the classroom learning experience (Wentzel, 2009). The results of a meta-analysis that reviewed 119 different studies regarding positive teacher-student relationships confirm that such positive relationships, where teachers are perceived as empathetic and warm (Roorda, et al., 2011) are “associated with optimal, holistic learning” (Cornelius-White, 2007, p. 113). Building these relationships, however, can be challenging—especially when teachers and students come from different ethnic or racial backgrounds.

Over the last decade, the United States public school student population has changed dramatically, with notable increases in Hispanic and foreign-born students (Aud, et al., 2012). It is projected that over the next decade the student population will continue to evolve to include even more ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse students. Alongside rapidly changing student demographics are fast-paced advances in technology and increased access to technology (Ertmer, 2005; Jones & Fox, 2009). Teachers now face the dual challenges of cultural and digital differences in the classroom, as there is a distinct digital divide between students’ lives at home and at school (Henderson, 2011).

In response to these challenges, teachers turn to their own experiences, coupled with traditional Eurocentric and English-speaking pre-service teacher training, which often leaves them with superficial multicultural perspectives (Nieto, 1992). When considering these challenges, scholars have looked to the work of Gay (2010) and Banks (1999) for answers. Their work suggests that teachers need to be responsive to the
increasingly diverse student body. Specifically, Gay (2010) and Banks (1999) exhort teachers to engage in multicultural approaches to pedagogy. This approach, identified as culturally responsive teaching (CRT), is a strategy in which teachers are taught to value students’ experiences and lives outside of the classroom so that instruction carefully builds from the students’ prior knowledge (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a).

1.2. Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a) was chosen as the conceptual framework to guide this study because CRT effectively informs teachers’ pursuit of strategies that build teacher-student relationships within the complex context of increasing diversity in public school classrooms. CRT demonstrates the importance of recognizing, valuing, and utilizing the languages and cultural identities shaped by students’ families and communities (Banks, 1999; Gay, 2000; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Culturally responsive teachers engage students in the construction of knowledge and build on students’ personal and cultural strengths (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). CRT focuses on instructional relevance in order to make curricula meaningful and relevant to the lives of students. In order to build the connections between students’ home context and school context, Villegas and Lucas (2002a) suggest that teachers know their students well, which can be difficult given the increasing class sizes and academic demands placed on today’s teachers. One way for teachers to work around these constraints, while also connecting with students on a level that is highly relevant to them, is through the use of technology.
1.3. Technology Use: Home-School Divide

Technology has infused nearly every aspect of students’ lives, yet there is a major disconnection between the rich, technologically literate practices used by adolescents at home and the narrow, restricted practices engaged in by schools and teachers (Henderson & Honan, 2008). Ubiquitous use of technology has been noted particularly among adolescents (Jones & Fox, 2009). Prior research suggests that the home-school divide may exist because teachers and schools tend to underestimate lower socioeconomic status (SES) students’ access to computers and the Internet outside of school (Henderson & Honan, 2008). Moreover, teachers and schools ignore, disparage, and denigrate students’ use of other technologies, such as smart phones and game consoles, at school, and students’ preoccupation with these modalities is often considered a major distraction to learning (Henderson & Honan, 2008; Dale & Pymm, 2009).

Outside of school students are “embedded in a tech-rich world” (Henderson & Honan, 2008, p. 95), and technology is influencing their approach to social relationships and communication (Sewell, Denton & Fink, 2011). Despite their digital authoring of social media posts, emails, and photographs, schools tend to dismiss this as “real” writing (Sewell, Denton & Fink, 2011). Teachers’ rather negative views of students’ use of technology within the classroom makes it increasingly difficult for young people to see relationships between home and school digital literacies (Henderson, 2011).

1.4. Technology Use: School Economic Divide

In addition to the home-school divide of technology use, a divide in how technology is used in the classrooms of lower socioeconomic status (SES) schools and their more elite counterparts has also been identified. For example, Sewell, Denton, and
Fink (2011) found in their studies that lower SES schools typically use technology for practicing mundane tasks such as word processing or creating spreadsheets, whereas elite schools use technology in more innovative ways to prepare a future generation of scholars. As ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse classrooms are prevalent in lower SES schools, such a digital divide is concerning.

1.5. Technology Use and CRT

The importance of teachers connecting with the students’ context outside of school, purported by CRT, has been well documented (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Heath, 1983; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Despite the recognized value of such connections, experts lament the ongoing disconnections between teachers and their students who are from backgrounds different from their own (González, et al., 2005; Nieto, 2009). Because technology is a tool that essentially crosses cultural barriers, it can serve as a familiar means of expression (Henderson, 2011) with which connections between students’ home lives and their classroom experiences can be built.

The present study explores how one middle school teacher used a technology-based student narrative project with his at-risk summer school students as a culturally responsive teaching strategy to enhance his relationships and instructional relevance with his students from racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds different from his own.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

When scholars explore Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) within the rapidly changing, demographically and technologically transformed context of the public school classroom, they focus on four distinct areas of research. The existing research related to this study focuses on CRT as it relates to teacher-student relationships, teacher-student
communication, digital identity, and multimodal instruction within the middle school context.

### 2.1. CRT and Teacher-Adolescent Student Relationships

The quality of relationships between teachers and students is a key predictor of successful instruction and learning outcomes (Davis, 2006; Gettinger & Kohler, 2006; Klem & Connell, 2004; Roorda, et al., 2011; Wentzel, 2009). It is well documented that students gain a sense of cohesion, security, connectedness, and emotional wellbeing from having positive relationships with their teachers (Wentzel, 2009). As a result, students maintain a stronger sense of self-efficacy and trust their own unique ability, which provides them the engagement and motivation needed to pursue their academic and social goals (Noddings, 1992; Wentzel, 2009).

With respect to adolescent relationships within an educational setting, researchers have documented that adolescents define a high quality relationship with their teachers as one characterized by emotional support demonstrated through empathy and democratic interactions which solicit and value each student’s input (Hoy & Weinstein, 2006). Wentzel’s (1997) study of the impact of teacher caring on adolescent student engagement and outcomes confirmed that the teacher characteristics associated with student perceived pedagogical caring included: a) the demonstration of democratic interaction style, b) the development of expectations based on individual student differences, c) the modeling of a caring attitude toward the teacher’s own work, and d) providing constructive feedback. Several studies have revealed that when students feel that teachers know, support, and care about them, student engagement increases, leading to deeper learning experiences (Davis, 2006; Klem & Connell, 2004; Wentzel, 1997). It has been suggested that student
perceptions of teacher care might be the critical factor motivating students to engage in their academic performance (Davis, 2006; Klem & Connell, 2004).

Teacher-student relationship quality is embedded in the social context of the classroom. Middle schools are often criticized for their impersonal structure and increased student-teacher ratio. Teacher-student relationships at the middle school level may be the most difficult to navigate, as the transition from elementary to middle school often leaves students feeling like their teachers no longer care for them (Wentzel, 2006). These relationships are critical, however, in that they may provide the most influence on students’ engagement, motivation, and academic success as compared to teacher-student relationships at any other point in the educational continuum (Davis, 2006; Wentzel, 2006). Specifically, research suggests that middle school students are three times more likely to report engagement if they feel highly supported by a teacher (Klem & Connell, 2004). Other findings suggest that middle school adolescents prosper socially and academically when they experience supportive, caring relationships with their teachers (Davis, 2006; Noddings, 1992; Wentzel, 1997). Thus, caring relationships with teachers may be the central factor relating to student motivation and engagement in middle school.

In summary, this research suggests that positive teacher-student relationships are critical to adolescent students attending middle school. Students who perceive their teachers to be caring tend to be more engaged and motivated in the classroom, and teacher care can be demonstrated by valuing students’ lives inside and outside of the classroom. In light of this research, this study explores the development of teacher-student relationships within a multimodal project contextualized in a culturally responsive classroom.
2.2. Teacher-Adolescent Student Communication

When considering teacher-adolescent student relationships, researchers have studied how communication can enhance relationships in the classroom. Two factors that researchers have identified as building relationships between adolescent students and teachers are a teacher’s approach to revoicing students’ understanding, and a teacher’s use of self-disclosure in the sharing of information from their personal lives.

O’Connor and Michaels (1993; 1996) have defined revoicing as a linguistic structure of reported speech that is characterized by a verbatim or modified repetition of others’ utterances to align oneself in relation to the students’ current understanding. In other words, revoicing is when teachers use the same or similar words as the adolescent students to describe the content of the students’ accounts. Revoicing can be used to open up opportunities for mutual understanding (Shein, 2012). It can also be used to rephrase or translate students’ responses into specific academic terms. For example, a teacher can use some of the student’s words, but reframe them so they match the conceptual understanding that the teacher intends for the students to learn. When teachers revoice students’ formulations of meaning, they show students that their thoughts and meaning making are valuable.

Researchers have also noted that teachers can establish trusting relationships with students through self-disclosure, which is defined as the teacher sharing personal and professional information about him-or herself in a believable way (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994). Studies reveal that when teachers appropriately self-disclose their own personal information, experiences, and perspectives they help to build a positive learning community that can enhance students’ classroom participation (Goldstein & Benassi,
1994; Rouse & Bradley, 1989). Rouse and Bradley’s (1989) study, conducted in a rural middle school, found that teacher self-disclosure of personal stories relating to classroom content was very effective in creating an atmosphere conducive to personally relevant discussion with students. Further, they found that teacher self-disclosure created a warm sense of natural sharing because students revealed themselves in ways that fostered mutual understanding and bonding with their teacher (Rouse & Bradley, 1989).

Along these same lines, Goldstein and Benassi (1994) found that teacher self-disclosure led to more frequent student participation. Self-disclosure from one person, which in turn elicits self-disclosure from another, is called the reciprocity effect (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994). Prior studies have shown that when teacher’s self-disclose in a believable way, adolescent students are more likely to also open up and self-disclose parts of their own lives (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994; Rouse & Bradley, 1989; Zardeckaitė-Mutalaitienė & Paluckaitė, 2013). Thus, these studies suggest that teacher self-disclosure can lead to the reciprocity effect, where students feel safe and welcomed to share about their own lives in the classroom.

In sum, research has found that when teachers self-disclose in their classrooms, they model the importance of bringing personal lives into the classroom and therefore facilitate a direct connection between the contexts of students’ lives outside of school and inside the classroom.

2.3. Adolescent Digital Identity

When considering teacher-student relationships within the contemporary multicultural and digital context, one must consider the divide that exists between how adolescent students communicate and explore their identities at home using technology
versus the traditional communication practices typically used in the classroom. With recent advances in technology, there is a notable divide between older teachers who did not grow up with current technology and younger students, who have had access to contemporary technology throughout their lifetimes (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Bauleke & Herrmann, 2010). Palfrey and Glasser (2008) refer to modern-day adolescents as “digital natives” (p. 1).

Jones and Fox (2009) conducted a study of the Internet use of various generations. The study found that approximately 93% of all children surveyed aged 12-17 used the Internet (Jones & Fox, 2009). The study revealed that in 2009 digital natives spent much of their time outside of class listening to iPods, social networking, downloading, uploading, gaming, and instant messaging. Rideout, Foehr, and Roberts’ (2010) study found that many adolescents spend up to 7.5 hours daily consuming technology. Technology has impacted the way digital natives communicate and has permeated their social lives (Rideout, Foehr & Roberts, 2010). Therefore, it can be suggested that their identity is inextricably linked with the digital world.

Studies show that the digital environment in which adolescents participate offers an extension of their physical world (Palfrey & Glasser, 2008). In other words, though students have a personal identity in the physical world, researchers have found that numerous aspects of adolescents’ identities are developing simultaneously, and their physical world identity is supported by the lives they lead in digitally mediated ways (Alvermann, et al., 2012; Palfrey & Glasser, 2008). More and more, young people are using digital outlets, like Facebook and YouTube, to share personal information and to create content that expresses their identity to their friends, family, and the world (Palfrey
& Glasser, 2008; Davis, 2013). Using digital literacies in the classroom provides a space for students to explore and examine their identities within a familiar mode (Alvermann, et al., 2012; Valkenburg, Schouten, & Peter, 2005). Since digital media informs the many facets of student identities, and adolescent identity and learning are indistinguishably connected (Gay, 2010), teachers who aspire to be relevant and build relationships with their adolescent students must seek to address not only the students’ home identities, but also their digital identities, within classroom instruction.

In sum, the research suggests that aiming to be culturally responsive in their increasingly diverse adolescent classrooms, middle school teachers must open a space in the classroom to incorporate students’ preferred modes of communication so their physical and digital identities can emerge. Therefore, the present study explores how a technology-based intervention impacts the relationships between teachers and students, and analyzes how technology is used to bring the students’ home identities into the classroom.

2.4. Multimodal Instruction

One way adolescents’ physical and digital identities can be incorporated into the classroom-learning environment is through multimodal instruction. Multimodal instruction recognizes that for digital natives, “knowledge construction has shifted away from static, print texts to dynamic media that is often supported by sounds and pictures” (Sewell, Denton, & Fink, 2011, p. 61). Multimodal instruction acknowledges that students are embedded in a society that depends on technology and digital media and proffers rich experiences that prepare students for life beyond the classroom.

Although the research on multimodal learning is still in its infancy, researchers
have found that a multimodal approach within the classroom offers such benefits as enhancing the learners’ senses of agency and responsibility for their own learning (Kress & Selander, 2012), and enhancing communication and interaction within the learning experience (Kjällander, 2011). Alongside these benefits is the capacity technology offers to bring the whole student, both their physical and digital identities, into the classroom, thereby providing a platform for culturally responsive instruction which helps to facilitate positive teacher-student relationships (Giouroukakis & Honigsfeld, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a).

Despite the culturally responsive value of multimodal instruction, there is limited research explicitly connecting technology with CRT. As such, the present study utilizes a multimodal intervention in a classroom of culturally diverse middle school students, giving them an opportunity to express themselves in a digital format. The study explores how students identify their lives outside of the classroom, and how their lives are utilized in classroom dialogue.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

As recognized throughout the literature, the transformation of the student population, both culturally and digitally, is leaving teachers with many relationship challenges in the classroom (Henderson, 2011; Gay, 2010; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). In order to constructively build and foster the close, supportive relationships that are related to positive student outcomes, teachers must become culturally responsive in their classrooms. In consideration of these points, Culturally Responsive Teaching (Gay, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a) has been adopted as the theoretical framework for this study because it offers a foundation for enhancing teacher-student relationships within
the complex context of increasing diversity and technology.

CRT demonstrates the importance of recognizing, valuing, and utilizing the languages and cultural identities shaped by students’ families and communities (Banks, 1999; Gay, 2000; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Villegas and Lucas (2002a) define CRT as the act of engaging students in the construction of knowledge and building on students’ personal and cultural strengths. This process involves “helping students access prior knowledge, and build on the students’ interests and linguistic resources, use examples from their lives, and create different paths to learning by using varied instructional activities” (p. 110).

The framework established by Villegas and Lucas (2002a) provides characteristics that exemplify CRT practices. CRT requires teachers to adopt a sociocultural consciousness, which allows them to understand “that people’s ways of thinking, behaving, and being are deeply influenced by such factors as race/ethnicity, social class, and language” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002b, p. 22). Villegas and Lucas (2002a) state that by examining their own sociocultural identities and the differences in power and status afforded to groups in different social positions, teachers will gain the necessary perspective to cross the sociocultural boundaries that often separate them from their students.

Additionally, CRT is characterized by Villegas and Lucas (2002a) as gaining an affirming attitude toward students from diverse backgrounds. This means that teachers not only understand differences, but they actually celebrate, value, build upon, and expand those experiences. Ethnically, racially, economically, and linguistically diverse students come from a variety of backgrounds, families, neighborhoods, cultural
surroundings, language communities, and economic conditions; they arrive at school carrying valuable information that can be utilized to expand classroom learning experiences for all students involved (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992).

Acknowledging these assets, CRT suggests that teachers adopt an affirming attitude seeing all students – regardless of socioeconomic status, color, and languages spoken – as learners who hold a great deal of knowledge and experiences that are invaluable to classroom learning.

Helping students make sense of their worlds is central to CRT, which rests on a constructivist view of instruction and learning (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). Constructivism asserts that students learn by generating new meanings in response to new ideas and experiences they encounter in school. In this exploratory process, learners use their prior knowledge and beliefs, which are stored in memory structures, to make sense of new and old information (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). Therefore, culturally responsive teachers help students build bridges from what they already know and believe about a topic to the new ideas and experiences to which they are exposed (Gay, 2010).

In order to engage students in the construction of new knowledge, culturally responsive teachers also know about their students’ lives outside of the classroom (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). Teachers who know about their students’ family lives are better prepared to understand their in-class behaviors. Similarly, when teachers know their students’ interests, hobbies, favorite activities, and strengths, they can systematically tie the child’s interests, concerns, and strengths into their teaching, thereby enhancing student motivation to learn (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). Moreover, in a multimodal environment, culturally responsive teachers’ acknowledgement of students’ home digital
literacy and their use of these skills to incorporate and expand that knowledge in the classroom is essential. In other words, as Ayers (2001) so aptly noted, when teachers become students of their students they gain the necessary information to make instruction personally meaningful and relevant.

Finally, CRT strategies are positioned to create relevant and effective learning encounters for ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse students. Gay (2010) posited that to be culturally responsive means to incorporate students’ cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and learning styles so student strengths can be celebrated and expanded further through the learning process. When teachers use student experiences in the classroom for the basis of instruction, students’ lives are validated and they become empowered.

Coupled with care from their teachers, CRT is an approach teachers can initiate in their instruction that promotes connectedness, and exudes empathy and warmth towards students. Framed by CRT, the present study utilized a multimodal activity within the context of a culturally diverse and responsive classroom to explore how teacher-student relationships and identities are established.

2.6. Multimodal Instruction as Culturally Responsive Teaching

As noted earlier, technology has become a common denominator among people living in the United States, especially among adolescent digital natives. Because of its prevalence, it can be viewed as a tool that crosses cultural barriers and provides a space for diverse students to communicate about their lives and their understanding of the
world around them (Casey, 2012). In other words, technology provides a venue for making the private public. Given the many different modes of communication that technology provides – written, visual, sound – students’ personal lives can be represented and shared in multiple modes rather than just in words (Palfrey & Glasser, 2008). Technology can make instructional content widely accessible to multiple learning styles and preferences and considers ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse students.

When considering technology and relationships, recent research has examined adolescents’ digital identities and their impacts on relationships with friends and parents (Davis, 2013; Alvermann, et al., 2012). Alvermann, et al. (2012), in their study investigating how adolescents use digital resources and literacy skills to construct their online identities, found that adolescents have multiple identities, which serve many purposes, on various social networking sites. Davis’ (2013) study found a positive association between online communication with friends and friendship quality. Davis (2013) also noted that adolescents still required face-to-face communication with their parents in order to thrive.

The positive relationship between technology use and relationship building in out-of-school contexts presents current researchers with opportunities to explore how technology could be used to develop positive teacher-student relationships in a multicultural classroom. In a study on CRT practices, Giouroukakis & Honigsfeld (2010) showed that utilizing different forms of technology in the classroom addressed students’ need for, and appreciation of, multimodal learning. Although these positive connections have been made between adolescent online communication and relationship building, prior research has not explicitly connected technology with teacher-student relationships.
or multimodal instruction with CRT.

When considering the limited research available regarding multimodality and relationships within a culturally responsive classroom, the present study rests on the research that shows that students lives outside of class are involved with technology (Henderson, 2011), and that students home identities should be included in the classroom (Gay, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). The present research suggests that multimodal instruction can be used as a CRT strategy to build positive teacher-student relationships in a multicultural classroom.

When considering multimodal instruction as a tool to effectively build teacher-student relationships within a culturally responsive classroom, students’ personal narrative construction is considered, as teachers must know their students well in order to be responsive (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). Ennis and McCauley (2002) suggest that trusting relationships between teachers and students begin when the teacher asks the students to let him or her into their lives. Technology offers countless strategies for students to explore and share their identities in the classroom. Photography has been noted as a successful approach to studying adolescent identity development and narrative construction (Allen, 2012; Dollinger & Dollinger, 1997). In particular, the autophotography approach, in which adolescents take photos and narrate them, has been noted to be effective in enhancing adolescent identity development, and has most recently been explored with a focus on racial and ethnic identity development (Allen, 2012; Dollinger & Dollinger, 1997; Strickland, 2012).

With the recent increase in technological accessibility within U.S. schools, the pursuit of narrative constructions within language arts classrooms using mobile
technology has increased. Recent studies have begun to explore the impact of mobile photo sharing on adolescent identity (Drenten, 2012). Although this is poised to be an efficacious approach within language arts middle school classrooms, there is scant research on this modality as an intervention to enhance teacher-student relationships and, in turn, academic achievement among adolescents who come from cultural background that are different from their teachers. Thus, the present study is poised to make important and unique contributions to the literature in this area.

2.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the research suggests that as teachers aim to be responsive to the changing cultural and digital context of their students, they must develop CRT strategies that provide space for students’ lives outside of school to emerge into the classroom (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a; Gay, 2010; Henderson, 2011). Since technology is widely used by and accessible to adolescents (Ertmer, 2005; Jones & Fox, 2009), teachers can use multimodal projects to invite students’ out-of-school lives into the classroom as the basis for establishing meaningful relationships and CRT.

The present study explored how a multimodal approach can be used in a multicultural classroom to help build positive teacher-student relationships and a culturally responsive classroom. Prior research has examined technology’s impact on adolescent out-of-school relationships, but has not specifically looked at its impact on teacher-student relationships, nor its use as a CRT strategy. The present study aimed to contribute to research by investigating how technology can serve as a 21st century tool for culturally responsive teachers aiming to build positive relationships with students within the increasingly diverse context of the classroom.
Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of a multimodal, technology-enhanced culturally responsive strategy on teacher-student interactions and relationships in a diverse middle school classroom of at-risk summer school students. The research questions were: (1) How do the teacher and students respond to the multimodal technology strategy of student-created videos of their home context? And, (2) How do the students’ and teacher’s interactions with and around the multimodal strategy inform culturally responsive teaching within the increasingly diverse and technologically connected classroom?

To best address these questions, a qualitative research design was adopted. More specifically, participants’ meaning making within a classroom setting was explored through the use of student-created iPod videos, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations.

3.1. Context

The study took place in a public middle school located in a large Pennsylvania suburban school district. In 2009, the per capita income for the school district was $23,896, while the median family income was $56,338 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Approximately 41% of the district’s middle school students received a federal free or reduced lunch and breakfast due to family poverty (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2013).

Students enrolled in two 8-week summer school English/Language Arts classes, were invited to participate in this study. These classes were designed to enhance the
literacy skills of 8th grade students in the district who had failed two English classes during the previous academic year. The English classes were each 135 minutes long, with one 5-minute break, and met Monday through Thursday. The first class met in the early morning with 13 students; 10 of whom participated in this study. The second class met in the late morning with 8 students, all of whom participated in the study.

3.2. Participants

The 21 students attending the two summer school English classes were invited to participate in the study. Each student was enrolled full time in one of the two summer school English classes. Of these 21, 18 students (15 males, 3 females) consented to participate in this study. The three students who did not participate in the study were excluded because they did not return their parental consent forms. The racial/ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds of the participating students were self-reported by their parents in a parent questionnaire (see Tables 1 and 2, and Figure 1). Though many of the parents reported incomes of greater than $40,000/ year (see Table 2), the number of people in each household was not garnered. It is documented that 41% of middle school students in the school district qualified for free or reduced lunch because of family poverty (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2013). The average age of the participating students was 15 years. This was the first time any of them participated in an autophotography experience, but all were familiar with the digital devices (iPods) that were used within this study.
Table 1: Self-Reported Parent Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Member</th>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Education Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Self-Reported Parent Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Income</th>
<th>Less than $20,000</th>
<th>$21,000-$30,000</th>
<th>$31,000-$40,000</th>
<th>More than $40,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-reported income</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Student Participant Ethnicities (By number of students)
Unlike the participating students, the teacher of these classes was a Korean male who moved to the United States at age four when he was adopted by an American couple. He holds a master’s degree in teaching and curriculum, was an adjunct professor of literacy methods at a local state university, had 8 years of experience in teaching middle school English, and was a fellow of the Freedom Writers Foundation. The teacher’s stated goal for his students during this 8-week summer school class was to “interrupt their identity formation” so they could begin to “see themselves as writers” through composing their own personal narratives (See Appendix E: Teacher Interview 1). The teacher used the theme “Life Writes” to frame this 8-week program and his approach was to encourage and assist his students to write their own stories for personal analysis and understanding of their own lives. He worked closely with another professor and pre-service teachers to put together an 8-week program that met his instructional goals and also incorporated this study’s multimodal iPod narrative approach.

3.3. Data Sources

To best address the research questions, the researchers—an honors student (author of this thesis) and an education professor—collected five sources of data. These included semi-structured interviews with the teacher and participating students, student-created iPod videos, the teacher’s responses to the students’ iPod videos, classroom observations, and a demographic questionnaire completed by the parents of the participating students.

**Semi-structured interviews.** Pre- and post- semi-structured interviews with the participating teacher were conducted during the first week of class and after the last class day. Both interviews occurred immediately after class in the early afternoon in a relaxed setting. Two researchers interviewed the teacher using prompts including:
1. Please describe your students.
2. Describe what you know about your students.
3. Describe what you believe would be an effective lesson for these students.
4. How do you define success for these students?

Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. The researchers subsequently analyzed these transcripts.

**Student-created iPod videos.** Based upon the research which states that photography is an effective approach to studying adolescent identity development and narrative construction (Allen, 2012; Dollinger & Dollinger, 1997), and that autophotography is particularly efficacious in exposing and exploring students’ lives in a way that allows students to connect with the teacher in the school setting (Allen, 2012; Dollinger & Dollinger, 1997; Strickland, 2012), student-created iPod videos of their lives outside of school were gathered. Each participating student created two videos, following instructions provided by the researchers, depicting their lives outside of school. First, each created a narrative in the classroom of their lives outside of school averaging 60 seconds in length. Second, students were then instructed by the researchers to capture photographs, videos and narrations portraying their lives outside of school, to share with their teacher. In their home context, 16 of the 18 consenting students created a personal video depicting their lives outside of school through photos, videos, and narrations. Two students elected not to complete the video stating they forgot to complete it. The student-created home videos averaged 5.5 minutes each. All videos were transcribed verbatim.

**Teacher’s responses to students’ iPod videos.** The student-created videos of their lives outside of school were made accessible to the teacher via the software
VoiceThread, which provided a channel for recording verbal and written interactions while watching a video. The teacher was asked to watch each student’s video and while watching comment on anything that struck him as valuable or that elicited a response. The teachers’ interactions were transcribed verbatim.

**Classroom observations.** Using an instrument to record references to contexts outside of school, the researchers strategically observed the teacher and students four times throughout the study. Observations occurred during whole-group instruction and on average lasted one hour for each class period. The total observation time was eight hours—4.5 hours in period one, and 3.5 hours in period two across the eight weeks. These classroom observations were supported by field notes, which were recorded by both researchers throughout the study. Notes were also taken when students were interacting with the technology used for the study and during classroom activities not associated with the iPod videos.

### 3.4. Procedure

Upon Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, consent forms were sent to all students’ parents and given to the teacher (Appendix A). The consent forms and questionnaires were sent home to parents in envelopes and were returned to the researchers by the students in sealed envelopes. After consents were obtained from participants, the consenting teacher and parents completed a demographic questionnaire (Appendix B).

During the first week of class the two researchers observed teacher-student conversations in the classroom and recorded instances where any participant referenced the context outside of the classroom. Each independent researcher recorded additional
field notes.

Also, during the first week, the teacher was interviewed after class by the researchers using prompts (Appendix C) which sought to garner his perceptions of his relationships with the students, how well he knew what their lives were like inside and outside of the classroom, and how he approached teaching his culturally diverse, at-risk adolescent students. The interview took place in the early afternoon in a relaxed setting.

During the second week of the summer school session, students were given iPods that were packaged within a secure bag containing a USB cord and the iPod. All were coded with a barcode for identification. Furthermore, they were programmed to only allow limited access to the Internet for safety reasons. Each bag was recorded with the students’ name, and a brief instruction sheet was handed out which requested each student to capture a 4-minute video including photos, narration, and video clips that would show their teacher what their life was like outside of school. The researchers introduced the project at the beginning of the class period and the participating students recorded a trial video in the classroom to practice describing their lives outside of school. Participating students then took the iPods home with them to capture videos, photos, and to narrate their lives outside of the classroom. Students returned their iPods the following school day and their videos were uploaded onto the web using the specialized and secure software, VoiceThread.

Over the subsequent weekend, the student-created videos were made available to the teacher using VoiceThread. He was asked by the researchers to view each video and comment on anything that struck him as important as he watched the video. Following this request, he viewed all of the student-created videos and provided oral and/or typed
comments as he watched each one. The student videos and teacher comments were transcribed verbatim.

After the teacher viewed the iPod videos, during the remaining six weeks of the summer school session, the two researchers observed teacher-student conversations in the classroom and recorded instances where any participant referenced their context outside of the classroom. The researchers observed interactions strategically during whole-group instruction. The researchers were looking to see how the teacher and the students attempted to connect their contexts within the classroom. During each observation the following interaction characteristics were noted: the talker initiating interaction (teacher or student), whether out-of-school context was mentioned, whose context was mentioned (teacher’s or student’s), the description of the context provided by the initiator, and any relevant notes. A table containing these characteristics was used to guide the researchers’ observations (Appendix D). The observations recorded met 100% inter-rater reliability between the two researchers. Both researchers recorded additional field notes, which were also compared for agreement.

To track the evolution of relationships between the teacher and students throughout the course of the summer school session, the teacher was also interviewed after class on last day of the session using the same interview prompts used in the pre-interview. The post-interview also took place in the early afternoon in a relaxed setting.
3.5. Data Analysis

The resulting data were systematically analyzed in three cycles. First, the teacher’s pre- and post- semi-structured interviews, student-created iPod videos with the teacher interactions, classroom observations, and field notes were read and re-read by the two researchers. The researchers analyzed the transcripts of the videos and the teacher interviews using open coding in which patterns, key words and phrases were coded (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Next these coded phrases and key words were organized into categories, which resulted in themes that were identified (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Finally, the findings were organized by the research questions. Throughout this process, the data were triangulated with the field notes, interviews, observation records, and researcher reflections. Member checking was also employed for trustworthiness necessary in qualitative work (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

3.6. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine how teachers and students approach and develop their relationship using a technology project that opened up a space for students to bring their home context into the classroom. The research questions addressed were: (1) How do the teacher and students respond to the multimodal technology strategy of student-created videos of their home context? And (2) How do the students’ and teacher’s interaction with and around the multimodal strategy inform culturally responsive teaching within the increasingly diverse and technologically connected classroom? The following chapter explicates the findings of this study.
Chapter 4: Findings

The primary focus of this study was to investigate whether the student-created multimodal videos approach helped the culturally diverse, at-risk middle school students and their teacher connect contexts and build relationships within a culturally responsive classroom setting. The thematic analysis of the multimodal narratives, the teacher interviews, and the classroom observation data provided valuable and unique insights into each of the research questions.

The first cycle of analysis included exploring key words and phrases that were repeated throughout the teacher and student narratives around the student-created videos. Across these narratives, repeated words and phrases included immediate and extended family members, pets, scenery in the community and at home, activities, hobbies, collections, and stories from childhood. Repetitive phrases such as “I like,” or “I love,” or “I’m glad” expressed these key words and phrases typically in a positive light (see Table 3).

*Table 3: Repeated Words and Phrases Used by Students and Teacher*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repeated Words</th>
<th>Repeated Phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mom</td>
<td>I like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>I love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>I’m glad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>It’s neat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandma/Grandpa</td>
<td>Really cool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>The best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog/Cat</td>
<td>Reminds me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job/Work</td>
<td>Growing up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play</td>
<td>Hang out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second cycle of coding categorized the repeated words and phrases. This axial coding formed a multimodal portrait of relationships delineated by the following categories: academic relationships, personal relationships, and connections and disconnections between academic and personal relationships.

Upon further investigation, the following themes emerged: Relationships Portrayed, Relationships Revoiced, and Relevance Revoiced. These themes were embodied in both the students’ and teachers’ narratives and helped to answer the research questions. Additional patterns of conversation formulations (Farini, 2012) appeared within the themes of Relationships Revoiced and Relevance Revoiced. The following sections explicate the coding categories and thematic structures, which emerged from the data.

4.1. Theme 1: Relationships Portrayed

The relational interactions seen in the classroom, in the students’ multimodal narratives, and in the teacher’s interactions with the students’ videos included the students’ personal relationships, the teacher’s personal relationships, teacher-student relationships, and student-teacher relationship (Table 4). As CRT, evidenced between teachers and diverse adolescent students, is the focal point of this study, the ethnicities of the students are indicated within these findings.

**Students’ personal relationships.** A common theme that emerged across the students’ multimodal narrative videos was the portrayal of their relationships outside of
school. In 13 out of the 16 multimodal narratives, the students talked about their relationships by describing: 1) roles within their family, 2) the activities related to their family members or friends, and 3) how their relationships were situated within their out-of-school context. In addition to relationships with family and friends, many students also talked about their pets. In the three videos that did not include commentary about family or friends, the students talked about their pets.

**Students’ family roles.** In their videos, most of the students mentioned or described the relationships they had with immediate family members, for example, mom, dad, sister, and brother. Some students mentioned or described their relationships with extended family members such as grandmother, grandfather, aunt, cousin, uncle, and sister’s husband. Only four students mentioned friends, and described them with the words, “hang out,” “cool,” “talk on the phone,” and “best friend.” Most students mentioned or described family members that live with them or that they interact with regularly. Some expressed their emotions when talking about family members using the adjectives, “love,” and “like.” For example, one White male student said, “I love my mom and my sister. They’re awesome.”

**Students’ family/friend activities.** Students’ videos also overwhelmingly included descriptions of activities they were involved in outside of the classroom with their family or friends. Some described what their parents did for work. For example, an African American male stated, “This church is where my dad works. He works as the deacon.” Other students described their siblings’ hobbies. For example, a Hispanic male said, “And this is my sister’s husband’s car. Building this one right now. It’s coming along.” Some talked about the activities they do with their family or friends. For
example, a White female talked about her baby brother, “And there’s Blaze. He’s crying. I’m going to babysit.” A Multiethnic female talked about “hanging out with my brothers and my friends.” Students also showed and talked about the objects or activities that remind them of their extended family. One White male showed a photo of his family at Disney World and another White male described, “This is my grandfather’s boat. Symbolizes him because when we go up, we race down stuff with it.”

Students’ out-of-school contexts. In their videos, all of the students situated their relationships within their personal out-of-school contexts. Fourteen of the students captured videos and described their relationships within the private context of their homes. This included students’ images, videos, and narrations of the living spaces in their homes, bedrooms, outdoor property, and favorite hang out spots at home. Two of the students filmed and described their relationships in the context of their community. For example, one African American male videotaped himself riding the public bus and his bike around his community. He narrated what a typical afternoon in his life was like, which included spending time with his grandmother.

Teacher’s personal relationships. Both in the classroom instruction and when interacting with the students’ videos, the teacher talked about his own relationships with immediate and extended family. He typically talked about his relationships through the self-disclosure framed by personal stories. He provided details about his birth parents in Korea and his adoptive American parents. He told stories about his siblings, his wife, children, and friends. He often used activities or experiences to describe his relationships with immediate and extended family. For example, in one classroom conversation, the teacher described his upbringing and then said, “Since my adoption in 1985 with my
When interacting with the students’ narratives, he also frequently used phrases like “reminds me,” or “growing up,” to preface his stories, which he connected to the relationships portrayed by the students. When he talked about his relationships with students, he typically used their experiences or the classroom discussion as a springboard leading to his own relationship stories. For example, when a Multiethnic male student showed an image of his weight bench, the teacher responded with, “You remind me of my brother, who always liked working out and has a good sense of humor.” In another example, a White male showed and described his cat, named Rip, and the teacher responded, “Reminds me of the cat we used to have growing up. We used to have a cat named Boots. And when I first came to my American family with my sister from Korea, and this cat was a crazy cat.”

Teacher’s relationship with students. The teacher’s pre- and post-interviews centered on his description of his students and his relationships with them. In both interviews, the teacher described his relationships with the students and his ideas of how to build stronger relationships (See Appendices E & F). He also acknowledged how the public narrative of the students may impact their experiences (See Appendix E).

At the beginning of the summer school session, he initially described his students as “likeable,” and that they had not yet developed a “trusting relationship.” He described his role with these students as one of a mentor, with a stated goal to “set them up for success.” He described his interactions with his students and how he intentionally celebrated and recognized his students and often used “little pep talks to remind them [of their successes].”
When reflecting on the semester in the post interview (See Appendix F), the teacher stated, “Part of the work I was trying to embark on was to make some decisions that would change them in their approach to school, approach to self, approach to others, and also their decision-making all throughout that.” When it came to classroom writing assignments, the teacher placed high value on their lives as a starting point to begin to better understand themselves and the world around them. The teacher stated, “That was what it was all about: to try to get them to use their personal stories, the real life stories that they lived, as a pivot point for academic rigor and everything else.”

In the post-interview, the teacher also described his ideas of relationships building in the classroom. He indicated, “I try to be interesting and interested. So I’ll tell the anecdotes about my dad and my mom. I’ll tell stories about growing up or I’ll tell stories about classroom experiences. [Stories] hold our attention, get our attention and it’s very human, natural.” The teacher further described how he tries to write with the students and share stories because he believes that the solidarity can lead to positive relationships.

The teacher’s description of his students and ideas of relationship building revealed not only his responses to them, but also his description of a public narrative about who the students are and the context they fit in. He described their reputation for behavioral problems and drug issues and how the local press may play into creating that public image. He also indicated that he wanted to avoid the “self-fulfilling prophesy” of expecting certain behaviors from certain students (see Table 4).

**Students’ relationship with the teacher.** Unlike the teacher, the students rarely acknowledged the teacher in their iPod videos. Indeed, for the most part, students did not even acknowledge that they had an audience. Only one student addressed the teacher in
his video by stating, “That’s all about my life outside of school, and I hope that [the
teacher] and the others see what is my life outside of school so that they know me better.”
Only one student talked about being in summer school and briefly stated in his video, “I
had to go to summer school because I didn’t do my work.” Overall, students did not
appear to acknowledge their teacher, or any audience for that matter, in their multimodal
narratives (see Table 4).

Students’ relationship to school. In addition to their relationship with their
teacher, the students divulged their perceptions of their relationship to school. In
observation data from a classroom discussion occurring the day before the students
received the iPods to create their iPod videos, the teacher’s interactions with the students
was recorded as an attempt to give the students a voice in determining their own behavior
contract. One student pushed back saying, “We are doing more talking than working. I’d
rather sit in a class where we read a book all period.” Another said, “I’ve gotten in so
much trouble—teacher makes the rules; I disagree. But, they always go with the teacher.
Why change it now and give the kids control?” During this discussion, the teacher asked
the students, “Did you ever have the “gotcha” kind of teacher? The ‘hah! Got you in
trouble’ kind of teacher?” Most of the students in the class raised their hands saying,
“Yes, all the time.” The participating students viewed school as a place where they do not
and should not have a voice.
Table 4: Relationships Portrayed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Relationships (Videos)</th>
<th>Teacher Relationships (Comments)</th>
<th>Teacher-Student Relationships (Interviews)</th>
<th>Student-Teacher/School Relationships (Observations)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mom</td>
<td>Mother in Korea</td>
<td>Likeable</td>
<td>Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>Set them up for success</td>
<td>Read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>Recognize</td>
<td>Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td>Brothers</td>
<td>Pep talks</td>
<td>Trouble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandma</td>
<td>Baba (grandma)</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>Rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandpa</td>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>Interesting/interested</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister’s husband</td>
<td>Kids</td>
<td>Tell stories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nephew</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Avoid self-fulfilling prophesy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>Reminds me</td>
<td>Public narrative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td>Growing up</td>
<td>Reputation of drug issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Adoption</td>
<td>Behavioral issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Church</td>
<td>Interrupt identity formation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
<td>Hang out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hang out</td>
<td>Dogs/Cats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2. Theme 2: Relationships Revoiced

As the teacher interacted with the student videos, he made verbal and typed comments on each one. In these comments, the teacher repeated the students’ words and then built upon them, which is known in the literature as revoicing (O’Connor & Michaels, 1996; Shein, 2012). Throughout the data this revoicing occurred often within a description of relationships.

In all of the student-created iPod videos – both classroom and outside of school videos – the teacher revoiced student relationships in a distinctive response pattern known as “formulations” (Farini, 2012). The teachers’ formulations of understanding were identified as the following: 1) the teacher formulated a lesson or word of advice, 2) the teacher connected the students’ relationships to his own context through self-disclosure, or 3) the teacher evaluated or judged the students’ description of their
relationships.

**Formulation of a lesson or advice.** In some of the student videos, the teacher responded to the student narratives with a lesson or a piece of advice. Though the teacher revoiced part of what the student was talking about in the video, he introduced new meaning of the relationship described by the student (see Table 5). For example, when one White male student talked about the tree his dad planted, saying that it was not the best topic to talk about because his dad is now deceased, the teacher revoiced the dad’s tree, saying, “The tree that your dad planted.” Then he added a new meaning by saying, “that continues to have life and give life and a lot of shade in the hot summer months.” The teacher took what the student said, which was a negative statement and turned it into a more positive thought. It appeared that the teacher intended to offer a life lesson or to provide advice to the students.

**Table 5: Provided a Lesson or Word of Advice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Indicative Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American male student</td>
<td>They—explain my <em>mom’s job</em>. Hey, it’s the <em>tree</em>. She <em>works</em> at like, a government facility. She says she’s like a treasurer. ¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Response</td>
<td>As you’re telling about your <em>mom</em>, and about what she does for <em>work</em>, I can’t help but notice you have the camera looking straight up at the clouds, and I see a silhouette of the <em>trees</em> nearby, and certainly the power lines dangling in and out of the corner… I mean, I just find myself looking up all the time...<em>But it’s a neat thing, and I would encourage everybody to look up a little more often, and fall in love with what they see up there.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White male student</td>
<td>And that’s a <em>tree my dad planted</em>. Yeah, dad’s actually deceased, so that’s not the best topic to talk about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Response</td>
<td>The <em>tree, that your dad planted</em>, that continues to have life and give life and a lot of shade in the hot summer months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ¹Italics placed by researcher to highlight the phrase/words of focus.
Teacher’s personal story connections. The most prevalent way the teacher commented on his students’ videos was by connecting his students’ portrayals of their relationships to his own context. The teacher self-disclosed stories and details from his own life in an attempt to show connections and common ground with his students. For example, one African American male showed and described the church where his dad works, but also indicated that his family does not attend church often. In response, the teacher revoiced the student’s relationship, and then continued to highlight his own church and experience and mentions his own immediate family member, his sister. (see Table 6).

Table 6: Teacher Personal Story Connections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Indicative Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American male student</td>
<td>This church is where my dad works. He gives—well, he works as the deacon. And we don’t really go to church that much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Response</td>
<td>Oh my gosh, I know exactly where you are. I go to church right down the road from where your dad serves as the deacon. I got to St. Anne Byzantine Catholic Church, and I’ve gone there since my time here in America, since my adoption in 1985 with my sister.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White male student</td>
<td>Yeah, dad’s actually deceased, so not that’s not the best topic to talk about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Response</td>
<td>I know you mentioned the other day that you dad had died when you were four. I immediately made a connection with your because my own mother in Korea has died when I was four.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White male student</td>
<td>These are my grandparent’s chickens. They’re pretty cool, I guess. I’m gonna feed them. Pretty cool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Response</td>
<td>I myself grew up with chickens, and my dad still occasionally will have some hens around for laying. If I’m not mistaken, your grandfather has some Rhode Island Reds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Teachers’ evaluation or judgment of students’ relationships.** The teacher also portrayed his own understanding of the importance of the relationship in the student’s life using words, such as “glad” or “neat” to revoice student relationships in a way that revealed his personal evaluation of those relationships. For example, an African American male student showed the route he took when running errands with his grandmother and talked about stopping to pick up medicine. The teacher responded by stating “It seems like you make a lot of time for family. So I’m glad to know that.” The teacher’s response indicates an assumption that because the student was with his grandmother that afternoon, that he made a lot of time for his family. Further, he told the student, “So I’m glad to know that” (see Table 7). In these interactions, the teacher voiced his judgment of the relationships with comments such as “Neat to see” or “Glad to know.” Further, these comments exposed the teacher’s assumptions of the student or context. For example, when one Hispanic male student stated he talked to his uncles often and showed his aunt’s clothes in a bag on his bedroom floor, the teacher responded with an assumption that the student had a lot of familial support at home. The teacher made assumptions that were not explicitly detailed by the students and then commented about those assumptions.

*Table 7: Evaluation or Judgment of Student Relationships*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Indicative Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic male student</td>
<td><em>I talk a lot to my uncles</em> and stuff. You can see here, here is my uncle’s, and this is my aunt’s clothes* in the bag.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Response</td>
<td><em>I’m really glad to see and hear that you have a lot of support, it seems like, and you seem like you’re in touch with your uncles a lot, and your aunt and uncle might be staying over with you for a little bit, and stuff like that.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiethnic male student</td>
<td>Over here we have this duck from the <em>first date</em> I’ve ever</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
went on. I won this duck with my friend that I still talk to. She’s on vacation right now.

**Teacher Response**

It was neat to see… that little artifact from your first date, and the duck that you won.

**Hispanic male student**

*I take care of my nephew.*

**Teacher Response**

Taking care of your nephew. Interesting. Would love to hear more about that.

**African American male student**

I’m with my grandma right now. Just here to pick up some medicine, so I’m sitting in the car waiting.

**Teacher Response**

It seems like a lot of kids might have this impression or give the impression that they go off and have a lot of fun with their friends all the time, and it seems like you make a lot of time for family. So I’m glad to know that.

### 4.3. Theme 3: Relevance Revoiced

The theme identified as Relevance Revoiced emerged from the coded data. The students revealed aspects of their lives outside of the classroom that they found to be relevant enough to share with their teacher. The students showed and talked about the hobbies they enjoy, the activities they participate in, their personal collections and favorite material objects, and the places they enjoy going. The teacher frequently revoiced what the students chose to share, but tended to only highlight the stories or activities which he personally connected to, and only occasionally revoiced their home lives to connect them with classroom learning.

Similar to the teacher’s revoicing of relationships (see previous section), within this theme of Relevance Revoiced, the teacher commented on the students’ multimodal narratives with distinct conversation formulations (Farini, 2012). The teachers’ formulations of understanding were identified as the following: 1) the teacher formulated a lesson or word of advice, 2) the teacher connected the students’ lives to his own context.
through self-disclosure, 3) the teacher evaluated or judged the students’ description of their lives, or 4) the teacher connected students’ lives to the classroom experience. In the sections below, descriptions of the formulations and indicative quotes reveal the emergence of this theme. Student and teacher quotations may appear in multiple tables as the teacher often used a combination of formulations in his comment responses.

**Relevance formulation of a lesson or advice.** When the students revealed artifacts or discussed what they considered to be relevant about their lives outside of the classroom, the teacher occasionally revoiced their descriptions to include a lesson or a word of advice. For example, when a Multiethnic male student showed images of his pool and backyard and explained, “And basically, what I like to do outside of school is go swimming,” the teacher commented, “Looks like you have a really nice yard and pool. And as we all learn, nice things take work to maintain” (see Table 6). The teacher used the student’s description of his favorite activity as an opportunity to state a life lesson he felt the student would benefit from hearing. Other times, the teacher built on the students’ descriptions to offer another way to look at their lives. Table 8 includes quotations from the multimodal narratives that highlight the prevalence of this formulation.

*Table 8: Provided a Lesson or Word of Advice*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Indicative Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiethnic male student</td>
<td>And basically, <em>what I like to do outside of school is go swimming</em>, hang out with my friends, play video games, play basketball, different stuff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Photos: pool in backyard, student swimming, basketball net in driveway, student mowing lawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Response</td>
<td><em>Looks like you have a really nice yard and pool And as we all learn, nice things take work to maintain.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White male student</td>
<td>These are <em>my grandparents’ chickens</em>. They’re pretty cool, I guess. I’m gonna feed them. Pretty cool… Check this out. Little chicken’s eating everything. Pretty cool. Big one right there. His name’s Shaquando. He’s pretty cool. That is JJ Jr. The rest of them are, hopefully, hens. Maybe these babies aren’t. We’re not sure yet. But they’re pretty cool. I like them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Response</td>
<td>I myself grew up with chickens, and my dad still occasionally will have some hens for laying. If I’m not mistaken, your grandfather has some Rhode Island Reds… <em>So, I don’t know if you use them like we use them. We used to get eggs from our chickens, and we’d also end up butchering the chickens sometimes and have the fresh meat that we could freeze and have…</em> when I was younger, I wasn’t really digging that. I didn’t think it was really cool to tell my friends and stuff in school. <em>But, now that I’m much older, I certainly appreciate where my food comes from. So it ended up being an act of love I didn’t really appreciate until much older. It seems like you appreciate that now. That’s great.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White male student</td>
<td>And then there’s the <em>Buddha guy</em>. I have no idea why we got a little Buddha guy… And about the Buddha guy, I’m <em>Catholic</em>, so you know. I really don’t know why we got the Buddha guy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Response</td>
<td>It’s funny because with the <em>Buddha guy</em>, I think we’re always trying to figure out what our parents were doing and why they made certain choices. I love seeing something random like that. And I love the fact that you said you were <em>Catholic</em>. That really adds to the whole perplexity that you have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American male student</td>
<td>I love to go on vacation, North Carolina. <em>I like traveling,</em> because it’s just <em>relaxing on the road.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Response</td>
<td>Travel. I love <em>traveling</em> myself… So I like how you said its just kind of <em>relaxing being out on the open road,</em> and that kind of thing. <em>And there is something quintessentially American about that.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Relevance connected to his personal context. Most commonly in the student-created iPod videos, the teacher highlighted the students’ stories with which he personally connected and attempted to connect contexts by disclosing information about himself. The students attempted to make a relevant connection, but the teacher revoiced it to match his own understanding. This revoicing shifted the focus away from the students’ lives and onto the teacher’s life. For example, in one iPod movie, a White female student showed images of the different colors she dyed her hair; in response, the teacher provided a lengthy comment of his own hair dying experiences. The teacher revoiced the student’s story, showing value, but he revoiced the story to emphasize an experience from his own life (see Table 9). In his attempt to build relationships through connecting stories through self-disclosure, he highlighted his own life rather than his students’ lives.

The teacher’s self-disclosure in attempting to connect with students was also noted in the classroom observation data of classroom discussions. When the students attempted to make relevant connections between home and school, the teacher reframed their connections to match his own life and understanding. For example, when the class was discussing the aspects of a story that make it compelling, the teacher pulled in a White female student’s story about cheerleading tryouts. This student indicated that she needed strength for cheerleading and that the cheerleading team treated each other like family and helped each other get better. She said she was happy to be part of a great group of girls. The teacher reframed the student’s story by providing a story from his own life. He stated, “My nephew wrestles and has struggled with body image. He used to be chubby but lost weight.” He continued by writing the words “body image” on the
board. As the teacher self-disclosed in this way, the student stopped talking. In this situation, the teacher transformed the student’s story of acceptance to a story of body image, which connected to his context.

Table 9: Connected Students' Lives to His Personal Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Indicative Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White female student</td>
<td><em>I like to dye my hair different hair colors. Being different makes me happy.</em> Photos: 7 photos of her different hair colors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Response</td>
<td>And the whole hair dying thing; I can certainly relate. When I was in high school I would dye my hair different colors. I guess I was working through some things. So I guess I had a bronze color, copper color. What else did I have? Green at one point. That was probably the most exotic. I can certainly relate to that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American male student</td>
<td>I am a big wrestling fan. I really like to watch wrestling. I like to play wrestling video games.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Response</td>
<td>I’m glad you shared this one, because it reminds me of my own growing up. For some bizarre reason, my dad and I, when we’d get up on Sunday before church, and we’d be waiting for mom to get ready and everything, he’d have on the TV, and invariably, it’d be WWF, or something like that. It was just a bizarre juxtaposition between watching this kind of acting on TV, and then within the hour, going off to liturgy at church. Looks like we have something in common.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White male student</td>
<td>This is my cat. His name’s Rip. He’s actually older than me, which is pretty crazy… Love you, buddy. Oh Rip, come here. Come here. He has arthritis, he’s 20 pounds overweight. He a giant cat. I love him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Response</td>
<td>Reminds me of the cat we used to have growing up. We used to have a cat named Boots. And when I first came to my American family with my sister from Korea, this cat was a crazy cat. I mean, he didn’t really mess around with much, and he had a reputation in the neighborhood for being able to kill and bring home squirrels, and even attack a Doberman, and get the Doberman to run away from him. And he also had a chance to—it was kind of uncanny, really.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
He would go to the bathroom, at least urinate in the toilet, you know, and make it right in the hole there. And he would take his number two outside, I think, or in the litter box. But he was a one of a kind cat.

White male student  

I hang out in the woods a lot, because I get bored, and I go outside. Behind the tree line is a little creek thing that I play in a lot. And then I have my bridge here. Going across that now… And down here there’s a path I follow. And I stomped out this path. Took awhile. Through the path, there’s a little opening down here where I like to hang out. Nice flat area. And it’s got water, got a shovel there. Still working here. It’s got stones.

Teacher Response  

I love the journey through the woods in the backyard, and the tree line, beyond the tree line there’s a little creek that runs through your backyard property. And I love the fact that you have stomped out a little path that looks pretty much hidden, unless you are really looking for it… It reminds me of growing up, my dad has three acres of woods. I mean, my mom and dad still own the property, and in my teenage years, along with my brother and sister, and some friends, we’d stake out, carve out a path. At its height, it was really kind of renovated, and made to almost look like a natural park, or state park, with the fallen trees. And we’d line them up, and clear a path. And we’d be able to take four wheelers, or just walk through down that section at a time. And I remember my bother and some cousins even helped to build, like, a little fortress out of some fallen trees, and it was really kind of wonderful.

**Teacher’s evaluation or judgment of students’ lives.** Throughout the data, it was noted that the teacher often did not revoice the students’ words used to describe the activities, hobbies, and places, but instead portrayed his own understanding of the importance of their descriptions. The teacher often used words such as “cool,” “glad to know,” “good to see,” or “neat” to talk about students’ lives revealing his personal expectations and understandings of their context. Though the teacher used positive words to talk about the students’ lives, he often responded with a value judgment. For example, an African American male student showed one photo of the couch and rug in
his living room, but didn’t provide a narrative. The teacher responded, “That’s a classy piece of furniture, as well as I like the aesthetics, the way everything comes together. I feel like I’m looking at a hotel room. I mean, it just looks like you live in a nice place, and it looks like people really have a lot of pride in keeping that a very nice kind of home environment for you, and for everyone who lives there” (see Table 10). The teacher made assumptions and judgments about the student’s home environment.

Table 10: Evaluation or Judgment Students' Lives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Indicative Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American male student</td>
<td>Photo: couch and rug in living room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Response</td>
<td>That’s a classy piece of furniture, as well as I like the aesthetics, the way everything comes together. I feel like I’m looking at a hotel room. I mean, it just looks like you live in a nice place, and it looks like people really have a lot of pride in keeping that a very nice kind of home environment for you, and for everyone who lives there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic male student</td>
<td>Student showed and described his guitar, video games, Pokémon card collection, his dad’s phone, his Xbox, music collection, hat collection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Response</td>
<td>It was really insightful to see your life outside of school and some of the inside of your home and where you are… So it seems like you live in a very nice place and you have a lot of very nice things that certainly make life a little more comfortable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White male student</td>
<td><em>My kitchen is my favorite room</em> in the house because there’s food in it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Response</td>
<td><em>Very nice kitchen. Glad to hear</em> it your favorite room in the house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American male student</td>
<td>Welcome home to <em>my grandma’s house</em>. First, I gotta stop at Giant, get some <em>milk for breakfast</em>. Most important meal of the day. I really don’t do much in life, <em>I just walk around</em>, play basketball. You might see some of that later.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teacher Response

*Neat to see you* out and about in the community, and it’s also *good to know that you walk a lot*, you walk a lot of places, *you go to the store for your grandma and everything*, and *enjoy a good cup of cereal, I guess.*

---

**Relevance connected students’ lives to the classroom experience.** In the post-interview the teacher stated that his main goal was, “to try to get them to use the personal stories, the real life stories that they lived as a pivot point for academic rigor and everything else” (see Appendix G). With this goal in mind, the teacher occasionally highlighted instances within the student-created iPod videos and encouraged them to bring those stories into their class writing assignments. Of all of the experiences the students described in the 16-iPod videos, the teacher explicitly highlighted only six instances and invited those students to share those selected stories within their classroom writing assignments.

He primarily focused on stories with which he seemingly most related. For example, an African American male student states that he likes traveling. After the teacher’s main response, he states, “And maybe we’ll get a chance to see some of your travel stories come through for your [classroom] narratives” (see Table 8). In another example a White male student introduced his cat in his video and the teacher responded with a lengthy description of one of his own cats he had while growing up (see Table 9). After the teacher’s description of his own cat, he goes on to say, “I don’t know if you have similar stories like that, but it’d be interesting to hear.”

In other infrequent instances, the teacher used the stories told by students to suggest a book that could align with their interests. Although books and reading are not strictly related to the classroom, as noted in the student-teacher relationships section,
during a whole-class discussion observed by the researchers, the students defined school as: books, pencils, and rules. When students talked about books in their home, they also tended to mention they were related to schoolwork. Because the students perceive books as part of their school life, and the teacher’s suggestions of books are based on their home interests, these interactions show the teachers attempt at connecting the students’ home and school lives (see Table 11).

Table 11: Connected Students’ Lives to a Book Suggestion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Indicative Quotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White male student</td>
<td>I have two books up here that I read during the school year… This is a bookshelf. They aren’t my books, though. They’re all my sister’s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Response</td>
<td>If you like these, you might like also, there’s a book called Digging—or, I’m sorry, no it’s not. It’s called Rotters, R-O-T-T-E-R-S, Rotters, and it’s a really good book. You should check it out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White male student</td>
<td>And I stomped out this path. Took awhile. Through the path, there’s a little opening down here where I like to hang out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Response</td>
<td>I love the path you stomped out. Have you ever read Bridge to Terabithia? You’d love it. Maybe I’ll hear more about that through your [classroom] narratives.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4. Summary of Findings

In the student multimodal narratives and in the teachers’ interactions with those narratives, personal relationships were frequently highlighted. Students tended to show and discuss their personal relationships with immediate and extended family and friends through showing and sharing details about their family lives, and the activities they enjoy outside of school. The teacher also frequently disclosed stories relating to his personal relationships. Unlike the teacher, the students rarely acknowledged their relationship
with their teacher. When responding to the student narratives, the teacher often employed revoicing (O’Connor & Michaels, 1996; Shein, 2012) in an attempt to show connections between the students and himself. The themes of relationships and relevance emerged from the data. Through a variety of conversation formulations, the teacher revoiced the students’ words regarding relationship, but suggested that relevance was that which matched his own interpretation and understanding of what their lives were like outside of school.
Chapter 5: Discussion

The present study utilized a multimodal activity within the context of a culturally diverse and responsive classroom with the purpose of exploring how teacher-student relationships and identities were represented and built. The findings demonstrated the responses the teacher and students made within the context of the student-created videos and around the students’ home context information. As noted in Chapter 4, the teacher’s and students’ responses centered on relationships. The themes detailed in Chapter 4 included: *Relationships Portrayed, Relationships Revoiced,* and *Relevance Revoiced.*

In this chapter, the research questions are further explicated. These questions were: 1) How do the teacher and students respond to the multimodal technology strategy of student-created videos of their home context? And 2) How do the students’ and teacher’s interactions with and around the multimodal strategy inform culturally responsive teaching within the increasingly diverse and technologically connected classroom?

The first research question addresses relationships, the second focuses on relationships in Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). The second research question frames this discussion.

The thematic analysis of the interviews, student-created iPod videos with teacher responses, and classroom observation data revealed the emergence of several themes, which were illustrated in Chapter 4. Aligned with the fundamental CRT premise, that to be culturally responsive requires students’ contexts be valued and connected within the classroom through a teacher’s intentional opening of spaces for student contexts and identities to be shared, and relationships to be encouraged (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a),
these themes provoke the interrogation of what connection and disconnection mean to students and their teacher in this at risk middle school classroom. In particular, when aligning this research with prior studies and scholarship, the valued connections between the students and their teacher, despite the teacher’s intentions and responsive approaches, emerge as disconnected.

5.1. Home-School Disconnection

Grounded in the research that affirms the value of connecting home and school (Henderson, 2011; Gay, 2010; González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a), the student-created iPod videos assignment was introduced. For the participating students, the iPod videos project was situated within the curricula as an introduction to self-disclosing their personal stories in an attempt to connect home and school contexts. Although the intent was to connect students’ home context with their school assignments, the iPod videos and observation data revealed that the pursuit of connection between home and school did not connect, but rather disconnected, their home and school contexts.

Through classroom observations of teacher-student conversations, students’ disconnection between home and school became clearer. As noted in the previous chapter, as the teacher attempted to show the students that their lives, experiences, and ideas were valuable to classroom learning, he repeatedly faced pushback from many of the students. Noted in observation data, the students saw school as merely books, demands, and authority. They could not see how their lives were valuable to learning.

This teacher’s attempted connection to the students’ home context, which is essential to CRT (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a), was disconnected. This disconnection was
particularly noted when comparing the students’ 90-second practice videos they created in the classroom with their home-created iPod videos. When the students were asked to create a short classroom practice video talking about their lives outside of school, the students pushed back, asking questions like, “Why would my teacher want to know about my life outside of school?” or “What is the point of this?” In an attempt to make connections between their lives and the classroom, they talked about specific aspects of their life that they saw as relevant to the classroom, such as why they were in summer school, their relationships with school friends, or their membership on various school sports teams. Essentially, the students treated their practice video as a classroom assignment; students included the details they thought would be important to their teacher providing survey-like responses and listed answers. Overall, they provided minimal, if any, descriptions of their personal or family identities. Rather, most of them simply answered the prompt by disclosing as little as possible of what their life outside of school was like and presenting what they thought would be relevant to their teacher. This appeared to disconnect the desired connection of the school context with the students’ home context.

In contrast, the iPod videos that the students created outside of school were filled with rich descriptions, images, and videos of what their lives are like outside of the classroom. Students showed and described in detail their family relationships, the activities they enjoy, their collections, pets, and their favorite places to hang out – either alone or with friends. The students did not talk about school, unless the camera happened to fall on a school-related artifact. For example, a White male student scanned his bedroom and talked about his collection of cars. When the camera fell on two books, he
said, “And then I have two books up here that I read during the school year.”

Immediately following, he jumped right back into showing and describing his room and car collection and did not mention school again. As described in the Relationships Portrayed section of the previous chapter, in all but two videos the students did not discuss school or their teacher as the audience.

Peter & Valkenberg (2006) suggest that when communicating digitally, students may disclose more about their lives than if they were communicating through traditional modes. The present study confirms that students are likely to share personal information using videos, so long as their digital authoring occurs outside of the classroom. This is particularly interesting because when considering CRT (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a), prior scholarship focuses attention on what teachers do and do not do within the CRT model. Moll, et al. (1992) and Gay (2010) invite teachers to integrate students’ funds of knowledge into the classroom curricula in order for cultural relevance to occur (Gay, 2010; Moll, et al. 1992; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a).

The findings of this study revealed that bridging home and school experiences is more complex than simply inviting students’ lives into the classroom. When the students were asked to share their lives outside of the classroom in a digital mode while inside the classroom context, their perceived home-school disconnection prescribed, and therefore limited, the information they chose to share. This invoked their school experiences of not connecting their home context with school. It was not until they were situated outside of the classroom that they chose to share colorful descriptions of their real lives.

When Villegas and Lucas (2002a) discuss what it means to know students well within the CRT model they not only focus on the importance of understanding students’
lives outside of school and in their communities, but also on students’ relationships to the subject matter, their perceptions of school knowledge, and belief in the potential of schooling to improve their future lives. The stark differences between the videos students created inside and outside of the classroom setting revealed that it is essential to identify and confront students’ perceptions of in-classroom learning and out-of-school living as mutually exclusive.

The bridge that connected the students’ home context with their school context appeared to be the digital activity that occurred outside of the classroom. The key issue was not just the content, nor the assignment, but where the digital assignment was created. Therefore, it may be suggested that teachers locating home-school disconnections can help bridge the contexts by providing the students the opportunity to communicate their home context outside of the classroom, which can be accomplished through a digital platform like the iPods used in this study.

5.2. Self-Disclosure and Disconnection Protection

Prior studies discuss positive teacher-student relationships as a key component of successful teaching and learning (Davis, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a; Wentzel, 2009). The teacher in this study intentionally attempted to build relationships with his students primarily through his own self-disclosure of experiences and stories that were similar to the experiences and stories the students chose to share within their iPod videos. Teacher self-disclosure of stories and experiences can pave the way for positive teacher-student relationships because stories provide a “powerful means for people to establish bridges across other factors that separate them (such as race, culture, gender, and social class)” (Gay, 2010, p. 3). However, while the teacher attempted to connect with his students
through self-disclosure, he unknowingly shifted the focus away from their experiences and stories to highlight his own. When students shared stories from their lives that they found to be relevant to the iPod videos project, the teacher showed value by revoicing their experiences, but he only revoiced stories that he found personally relevant. He valued and affirmed the stories that he could relate to on a personal level. This suggested that the teacher and students had differing views of relevance within classroom instruction based on their own prior experiences.

Though the teacher occasionally made explicit connections between students’ lives and their classroom story-writing assignments in his comments on their iPod videos, he tended to protect the students’ disconnection between home and school. In the teacher’s interactions with the students’ iPod videos, he routinely revoiced their words and stories, but did so by providing his own understanding of their lives.

During the post-interview, the teacher talked about his intentions to self-disclose information about his own life in order to catch students’ attention and show connections. This intention aligns with McBride and Wahl’s (2005) study that concludes that self-disclosure is effective at not only catching students’ attention but also in creating confidence and motivating students. Prior studies typically look at self-disclosure through a positive light, noting how teacher self-disclosure can elicit greater student participation and has the ability to help create a warm atmosphere conducive to personally relevant talk (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994; Rouse & Bradley, 1989). Despite the countless studies revealing that self-disclosure has the ability to create and maintain close relationships between teachers and students (Zardeckaite-Mutaliaitiene & Paluckaite, 2013), this study exposes the possible downsides and dangers of perhaps
over-relying on the tool, especially with students at risk for completely disengaging with school.

The reciprocity effect (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994), where teacher self-disclosure leads to student self-disclosure, was not noted in this study. Instead, teacher self-disclosure tended to end the conversation and reinforced the disconnection that existed between student conceptions of home and school contexts. As scholars have discussed (Gay, 2010; Nieto, 1992; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a), instead of focusing on students’ experiences and home contexts, the teacher repeatedly reframed their experiences to match his own experiences. The teacher’s life was highlighted, while the students’ experiences silenced.

The teacher in this study relied on self-disclosure as a relationship-building tool because it afforded him opportunities to show his students how his personal and professional lives were related, and perhaps even connected, to the students’ lives. Though the teacher’s intentions were positive, instead of leading to conversations where both teacher and student lives were valued as relevant to classroom learning, the teacher’s self-disclosure tended to highlight only personally relevant aspects of the students’ lives. This suggested that only parts of their lives were relevant to classroom learning. Instead of recognizing, valuing, and utilizing the languages and identities shaped by students and their communities as assets that help to guide instruction (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a), the teacher recognized and valued the student identities that he found to be relevant to his own ideas of the classroom academic experience. These findings suggest that even a teacher who is aware of this literature and has the best intentions can inadvertently damage potentially strong relationships between himself and his students.
CRT suggests that teachers build relationships with their students not only so they can utilize students’ funds of knowledge for classroom instruction, but also because positive teacher-student relationships help students, especially those considered at-risk, to feel connected to school (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). The teacher in this study attempted to build relationships and show connections through self-disclosure. However, unlike other studies, teacher self-disclosure in this at-risk middle school classroom did not create a warm sense of sharing or increased student participation (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994; Rouse & Bradley, 1989; Zardeckaite-Mutalaitiene & Paluckaite, 2013). Instead, self-disclosure closed the conversation because it suggested that only the teacher’s perceptions of relevance were valuable.

5.3. Constructivism & CRT Disconnected

The constructivist approach to teaching and learning is the core of the CRT model (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). Within the constructivist perspective, the teacher’s primary role is to support students in their attempts to make meaning of new information by helping them build bridges between prior knowledge and experiences and the new information to be learned. According to Villegas and Lucas (2002a):

This involves drawing on students’ strengths, challenging their misconceptions, embedding new ideas in problem-solving activities that are relevant and meaningful to the children, explaining new concepts with illustrations or examples taken from their everyday lives, and providing opportunities for them to display what they know about the topic at hand in ways that are familiar to them. (p. 79)

It follows that in order to be well positioned to represent information in ways that are
relevant and meaningful to students, teachers need to know their students well.

It is important to note that the teacher in this study was intentionally constructivist in his pedagogy. The teacher’s pre-interview revealed his desire to have the students engage in their own learning and to make their writing relevant to their lives. His intention was to “purposefully interrupt their current identity formation” to “intervene in a way that is actually going to be strategic and helpful to the kids.” His goal was to work on “soft skills, like not blurting out, not talking back,” and the “hard skills, like analyzing a text” to determine why stories attract us and what makes a truly compelling life story.

As detailed in the findings section, the teacher was committed to using the students’ lives as a starting point in the classroom.

Although the participating teacher’s approach relied on the constructivist idea of building bridges between students’ home and school contexts and experiences, the data revealed that the students’ conceptions of relevance were routinely filtered through the teacher’s frames of reference. According to Villegas and Lucas (2002a), constructivist views of knowledge embrace the idea that knowledge is always filtered through the knower’s frames of reference, which are influenced by their experiences in the world. The teacher embraced the cognitive constructivist (Vygotsky, 1978) approach to knowledge construction through social interactions by maintaining his position as the most content-competent individual in the classroom. However, in doing so, he also refrained from opening a space for students to be the “knowers” and meaning-makers of their own lives and learning experiences. Villegas & Lucas (2002a) suggest that content only becomes knowledge for students when they fill it with personal meaning. The teacher in the present study unintentionally interrupted student meaning-making by
routinely infusing their understanding with his own frames of reference and understanding. This finding reveals the fine line teachers face as they attempt to model the construction of knowledge through making relevant, real life connections. This is a challenge, as teachers only have their own experiences, which makes it difficult to understand and connect with students from backgrounds different from their own (González, et al., 2005; Nieto, 1992, 2009).

5.4. Technology’s Potential in Connecting the Home-School Disconnection

Though a disconnection was noted between the students’ ideas of relevance in their home and school contexts, the iPod videos provided a digital space where students could express themselves in what prior research suggests is a highly familiar mode of communication (Alvermann, et al., 2012; Valkenburg, Schouten, & Peter, 2005). A major advantage to this technology-based approach was that it gave the student participants the freedom to share the parts of their lives outside of school that they felt were most relevant and meaningful to their teacher. Culturally responsive teaching asserts that teachers need to know their students well in order to establish positive relationships, which help students feel connected to school and “provides extra motivation for students who would otherwise disengage from school” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a, p. 80). Through their home-created videos, the students offered the teacher information regarding their familial relationships and their favorite activities and hobbies. Further, each student represented his or her life in a unique mixture of photos, videos, and narrations. The iPod videos project allowed the teacher access to parts of students’ lives that were never otherwise revealed in the classroom.

The iPod videos project opened up a space for students to share about their lives
outside of school; thus, it had the potential to show students that their lives were valued, relevant, and meaningful to the learning process. The project gave the teacher the information he needed to design instruction that built from students’ funds of knowledge (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). The exposure of the students’ lives, however, was trumped by something bigger, student and teacher disconnection. Throughout the student-created iPod videos and the teachers’ responses to the videos, it became clear that the students did not see their lives as deeply connected to their learning and the teacher did not make them explicitly aware of such connections.

The observation data revealed that despite having valuable information about most of his students, the teacher rarely made connections in the classroom to the students’ lives outside of school. Instead, the teacher consistently relied on his own understandings and interpretations of his students and provided real-world examples that existed in his own life outside of school. This is particularly interesting because prior CRT scholarship tends to focus on how teachers from the dominant cultural group (White middle class teachers) tend to have difficulty connecting with students who are culturally different from the White middle class (Gay, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). It is important to note that the teacher in this study was a Korean who was adopted by a White family; perhaps he operated in a more Eurocentric way than his race would imply. Regardless, this research reveals that it is not just White teachers who face cultural challenges in the classroom, but perhaps most teachers of culturally diverse students.

These findings suggest that although the technology used in this study provided valuable opportunities for home and school connection, media use in and of itself is not the answer and will not be the bridge. The students did not perceive school as deeply
connected to their lives outside of the classroom. This, coupled with the teachers’ self-disclosure strategy, which highlighted his life rather than the students’, truncated the intent and use of technology to connect students’ contexts of home and school. More research is needed on how teachers and students can bridge cultural relevance in the classroom through the use of technology.

5.5. Summary

CRT stresses the importance of building bridges between students’ home and school contexts, citing such benefits as enhanced teacher-student relationships and more responsive instruction (Gay, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). Though the iPod videos project had the potential to show connections between students’ lives at home and learning in the classroom, the overarching perceptions of disconnection prevented such connections. The disconnection was first noted in the stark differences in disclosed details in the videos students created in the classroom and the videos they created outside of school. Next, as the teacher responded to the students’ videos, he relied on self-disclosure. Home-school connections were routinely filtered through the teacher’s frames of reference, which tended to end the conversation and reinforced the disconnection.

Throughout this study the home-school connections that were pursued by both students and their teacher remained disconnected. Despite opening space, using technology, and having a teacher who was intentionally constructivist and culturally responsive, the disconnection remained. The home-school disconnection perceived by the students at the beginning of this study was inadvertently maintained as a function of the teacher’s use of self-disclosure, which emphasized his understanding rather than the
students’. As a result of this study, relevance and relationships in the classroom need to be further examined to more effectively bridge students’ home and school contexts. The student-created iPod videos provided a digital environment that was successful at bridging students’ home-school contexts. The future challenge is to train teachers in working to translate home-school disconnections into a usable understanding of their students’ environments and lives.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

The generalizability of the findings of this study are limited because it occurred in two small summer classes with students who were receiving remedial education, with one teacher, in one large suburban school district. In addition, the study did not utilize a control condition or a comparison group in which students were invited to share personal information without the use of technology. Despite these limitations, the findings provide valuable information to a newly developing literature and pose questions that demand further pursuit in research with a larger sample.

Villegas and Lucas (2002a) suggest a variety of ways for teachers to get to know students well. Some of their suggestions include engaging students in substantive conversations that elicit their understanding of concepts, conferencing with individual students, and taking note of the knowledge and skills students display when participating in classroom activities. The findings of this study indicated that the students did not reveal as much information about their home context when they described it in the classroom. Instead, they treated the classroom assignment like they would any other; they simply listed details to meet the requirements of the assignment to get a passing grade. This is likely due to their perceived disconnection of home-school contexts. The students demonstrated that they did not see that their lives were valuable to classroom learning.

Further, the iPod videos project provided the teacher with access to the students’ perceptions of their lives outside of school that may or may not be revealed in home visits. This study shows that the students did self-disclose about their home context while they were in their home context, which suggests that the iPod videos project has
strong potential as a means to allow students to explore their own home identities, and share these identities with their teachers, if the assignment is completed in the comforts of the students’ homes.

The findings revealed that the iPod videos project did open a space for students to share about their lives outside of school and that the movies they created at home were richer in detail than the ones created in class. This finding shows that technology offers a way for teachers to get to know their students well, a necessary component of CRT (Gay, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). However, the technology use in and of itself did not work as a bridge for the home-school disconnection. Despite having access to valuable information about the students’ lives and embracing the constructivist foundations of CRT, the teacher in this study rarely made in-class connections between classroom learning and the students’ out-of-school lives. The home-school disconnection was deeply rooted in both the students’ and teacher’s perceptions of classroom learning. The question remains: What is the role for digital media in connecting home-school contexts?

The possibility of connecting home and school through the use of the student-created iPod video project was trumped by the teacher’s and students’ apparent home-school disconnection. CRT relies on constructivism and promotes using students’ prior knowledge and experiences as the basis for classroom learning (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a; Gay, 2010). Although the teacher encouraged students to bring their real lives into their classroom writing assignments, he rarely made connections between what was being learned in the classroom to what students were experiencing in their lives in their home contexts. The teacher relied on self-disclosure in an attempt to build relationships and show connections, but both the students’ and teacher’s perceived disconnection remained
Prior research typically looks at teacher self-disclosure in a positive light, noting that when teachers are genuinely open, students are more likely to participate in self-disclosure (Goldstein & Benassi, 1994; Rouse & Bradley, 1989). Scholars specializing in CRT have also noted the need for teachers to share their personal stories in the classroom. Gay (2010) discusses stories stating, “stories educate us about ourselves and others; they capture our attention on a very personal level, and entice us to see, know, desire, imagine, construct, and become more than we currently are” (p. 3). Gay (2010) also promotes the incorporation of storytelling in the classroom because stories can help students gain deeper understanding and become more engrossed in learning (p. 3). The teacher’s intentions of self-disclosure through the telling of personal stories align with Gay’s points. However, in this study the teacher’s self-disclosure of stories seemed to take precedence over the students’. Specifically, the students’ stories were revoiced by the teacher to match his own understanding. They were not used to create meaning in the students’ own lives. This suggests that the use of self-disclosure does not always yield home-school connections that build positive learning opportunities.

Pre-service teacher education promotes CRT and teacher self-disclosure as ways to make classroom learning relevant and meaningful to students. The present study, as well as prior scholarship that acknowledges that teachers only have their own experiences through which they interpret the world (Nieto, 2009; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a), questions the utility of teachers’ self-disclosure in the classroom. The present study reveals that the teacher’s understanding of his students’ lives overtook the students’ personal reports of their experiences, suggesting that only the teacher’s understanding was valued in the
classroom. This finding leads to the outstanding question: How can teachers promote self-disclosure in the classroom while utilizing students’ experiences as the basis of learning? Future research should design and conduct studies aimed at answering this question.

At-risk middle school students are often in jeopardy of completely disengaging with school because they have been shown that their voice and their lives are not valuable in classroom learning. This, alongside teacher training which emphasizes self-disclosure, fosters a learning community that unintentionally disconnects home and school, even though it is well documented that bridging home and school contexts is essential for educating increasingly diverse classrooms (Gay, 2010; Moll, et al. 1992; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). This study highlights technology, specifically the iPod videos project, as a possible tool for bridging connections; the approach, however, needs to be refined so that teachers do not inadvertently maintain their teacher-centric roles, which will contribute to disconnected relationships.

In future studies examining teacher-student identity and relationship building with an emphasis on CRT, it is suggested that researchers should attempt to answer the outstanding questions that remain as a result of this study. Additionally, further exploration of self-disclosure in relationship building with at-risk, culturally diverse middle school students needs to be pursued. To be culturally responsive, it is important for teachers to value students’ lives and contributions to class; self-disclosure may be one way for teachers to show connections between themselves and their students. However, this study reveals the need for teachers to discern the difference between thoughtful self-disclosure that opens space for students’ to be recognized and valued in the classroom,
and self-disclosure that highlights the teacher’s life, closes space, and ends teacher-student conversations. One suggestion for showing students that their lives were valuable in the classroom was suggested by the teacher in the final interview.

In the post-interview (Appendix F), the teacher stated,

> It’s easy to get the highlight reel out and say, “Ah, those were great moments.” But, you know, it’s all the stuff in between—it’s the gap—that’s where we live. It’s important that we acknowledge where the gaps are.

The key strategy may be for teachers to revoice students’ words, show a connection through teacher self-disclosure, and then follow up by asking students to tell more.

This research confirms that teachers’ own experiences impact the way they communicate and build relationships with their students. As teachers attempt to build relationships with ethnically and racially diverse adolescents in the evolving classroom context, teachers should continue to seek technological and conversational strategies that go beyond their own highlight reels to make space for students’ whole lives to emerge within the classroom.
References


Appendix A: Consent Forms

Parent Consent Form

**Title of Project:** Exploring Autophotography to Enhance the Relationships between At-Risk Middle School Students and Their Teacher

**Principal Researcher:** Hannah Warfel, Undergraduate Student
Penn State, Capital College
777 W Harrisburg Pike, Middletown, PA 17057
(717) 948-4291, hew543@psu.edu

**Other Researcher(s):** Martha J. Strickland, Ed. D.
Penn State, Capital College
777 W Harrisburg Pike, Middletown, PA 17057
(717) 948-6525; mjs61@psu.edu

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research study is to gather information to assist teachers in building stronger classroom connections with students from diverse backgrounds. Specifically, this study looks at the ability to use modern technology, the iPod Touch, to enhance classroom learning and student-teacher relationships by connecting students’ out-of-school lives with in-school learning.

**Process:** If you consent to have your teen participate in this study, your teen will be doing the following:

- **Your teen will get an iPod Touch to use as a camera** and will be asked to take pictures about themselves at home. Your teen will upload their favorite photos onto VoiceThread.psu.edu and narrate each photo.
- Your teen’s teacher will review the electronic submission and will comment on it.
- The teacher and researchers will look at the photos and listen to the narrations.
- Your teen will be observed during typical classroom time.
- You and your teen will also be asked to answer some brief questions about your teen’s background to help us better understand your teen.

**Discomforts and Risks:** There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Participation in this study will NOT impact student grades or success in their class.

**Benefits:** Your teen may learn more about how his or her personal life is useful in the classroom. He or she may also learn how to use an iPod Touch camera. The teacher will also have the opportunity to learn how to better teach all the students in the class by making relevant connections to each student’s personal life.

**Duration/Time:** Your teen will take approximately 1 hour outside of class to take photos and narrate them using the iPod Touch. Your teen will then upload their favorite images to VoiceThread.psu.edu and narrate each photo chosen. The remainder of the work will remain within the class time.

**Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. Only the researchers will know your identity and the identity of your teen. The written data (questionnaires, and notes) will be stored and secured at Penn State - Harrisburg in a locked password protected file. Destroyed by 2018, and only accessible to the researchers. The voice recordings, photos/videos will be secured in a Penn State password protected space (voicethread.psu.edu), only accessible to the teacher and researchers and these will be deleted by 2018. Your teen’s confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the internet by third parties. In the event of a publication/presentation...
resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections and Institutional Review Board, and the Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services may review records related to this project.

Right to Ask Questions: Please contact Dr. Martha Strickland at (717) 948-6525 with questions or concerns about this research. If you have any questions, concerns, problems about your rights as a research participant or would like to offer input, please contact The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections (ORP) at (814) 865-1771. The ORP cannot answer questions about research procedures. Questions about research procedures can be answered by the research team.

Voluntary Participation: Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You and/or your teen can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of participant benefits to you or your teen.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to take part in this research study.

If you agree to have your teen take part in this research study as described in the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below. Please return the signed copy to your teen’s classroom by ____________. You may keep the second copy for your records.

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

I agree to allow my child, ___________________, to take part in this research study as described in this form.

Print Teen’s Name

I, as the teen’s caregiver/parent, agree to take part in this research study.

_____ Yes  _____ No

Parent or Guardian Signature Date

Print last Name

Person Obtaining Consent Date

Final Note: Be sure to answer all questions and sign and date. Have your teen bring it back to school in the enclosed envelope. Return by ____________________.
Teacher Consent Form

Title of Project: Exploring Autophotography to Enhance the Relationships between At-Risk Middle School Students and Their Teacher

Principal Researcher: Hannah Warfel, Undergraduate Student
Penn State, Capital College
777 W Harrisburg Pike, Middletown, PA 17057
(717) 994-4291, hsw5049@psu.edu

Other Researcher(s): Martha J. Strickland, Ed. D.
Penn State, Capital College
777 W Harrisburg Pike, Middletown, PA 17057
(717) 948-6529; mjs51@psu.edu

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research study is to gather information to assist teachers in building stronger classroom connections with students from diverse backgrounds. Specifically, this study looks at the ability to use modern technology, the iPod Touch, to enhance classroom learning and student-teacher relationships by connecting students’ out-of-school lives with in-school learning.

Process: If you consent to participate in this study, you will be doing the following:
- You will be observed 3x by the researchers during typical class time (1 hour each);
- You will be interviewed 2x by researchers (10 minutes each);
- You will interact with student participants to explore the photos that were taken and narrated via an online software (VoiceThread) (10 minutes each);
- You will fill out a brief questionnaire describing professional experiences (15 minutes);
- You will collect borrowed iPod from student participants during class (10 minutes)

Discomforts and Risks: There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

Benefits: You will have the opportunity to learn how to better teach all the students in the class by making relevant connections to each student’s personal life.

Compensation: Teacher participants will receive a $50.00 gift card to a local office supply teacher store.

Duration/Time: This study will take place during the summer semester. Your participation in this research study will take no more than 4 hours of your time outside of your regular classroom activities in addition to time during your English lessons.

Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. Only the researchers will know your identity. The written data (questionnaires, and notes) will be stored and secured at Penn State-Harrisburg in a locked password protected file, destroyed by 2018, and only accessible to the researchers. The voice recordings, photos/videos will be secured in a Penn State password protected space (voicethread.psu.edu), only accessible to the teacher and researchers and these will be deleted by 2018. Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the internet by third parties. In the event of a publication/presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for
Research Protections and Institutional Review Board, and the Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services may review records related to this project.

Right to Ask Questions: Please contact Dr. Martha Strickland at (717) 948-6525 with questions or concerns about this research. If you have any questions, concerns, problems about your rights as a research participant or would like to offer input, please contact The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections (ORP) at (814) 865-1775. The ORP cannot answer questions about research procedures. Questions about research procedures can be answered by the research team.

Voluntary Participation: Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of participant benefits to you.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to take part in this research study.

If you agree to take part in this research study as described in the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below. Please return the signed copy to Dr. Martha Strickland by ___________. You may keep the second copy for your records.

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

I, ____________________, agree to take part in this research study as described in this form.

Print Your Name

Your Signature ____________________ Date ____________________

Print last Name ____________________

Person Obtaining Consent ____________________ Date ____________________

Final Note: Be sure to answer all questions and sign and date.

Return this form to Dr. Martha Strickland.

Return by ___________
Student Assent Form

Title of Project: Exploring Auto-photography to Enhance the Relationships between At-Risk Middle School Students and Their Teacher
Principal Researcher: Hannah Waasel, Undergraduate Student
Penn State, Capital College
777 W Harrisburg Pike, Middletown, PA 17057
(717) 994-4291; hwa5048@psu.edu

Other Researcher(s): Martha J. Strickland, Ed. D.
Penn State, Capital College
777 W Harrisburg Pike, Middletown, PA 17057
(717) 948-8520; mj51@psu.edu

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research study is to gather information to assist teachers in building stronger classroom connections with students from diverse backgrounds. Specifically, this study looks at the ability to use modern technology, the iPod Touch, to enhance classroom learning and student-teacher relationships by connecting students’ out-of-school lives with in-school learning.

Process: If you consent to participate in this study, you will be doing the following:
- You will get an iPod Touch to use as a camera and you will be asked to take pictures about yourself at home. You will upload and narrate those photos using VoiceThread.psu.edu.
- The teacher and researchers will look at the photos and listen to the narrations.
- You will be observed during typical classroom hours.

Discomforts and Risks: There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Participation in this study will NOT impact your grade or success in your class.

Benefits: You will learn about how your personal life is useful in the classroom. You will also learn how to use an iPod Touch camera. The teacher will also have the opportunity to learn how to better teach all students in the class.

Duration/Time: You will take approximately 1 hour outside of class to take photos and narrate these. The remainder of the work will be accomplished within the class time.

Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. Only the researchers will know your identity. The written data (questionnaires, notes) will be stored and secured at Penn State-Harrisburg in a locked password protected file destroyed by 2018, and only accessible to the researchers. The voice recordings, photos/videos will be stored in a Penn State password protected space (voicethread.psu.edu), only accessible to the teacher and researchers and these will be deleted by 2018. Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the internet by third parties. In the event of a publication/presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections and Institutional Review Board and the Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services may review records related to this project.

Right to Ask Questions: Please contact Dr. Martha Strickland at (717) 948-8525 with questions or concerns about this research. If you have any questions, concerns, problems about your rights as a research participant, or would like to offer input, please contact The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections
(ORP) at (814) 865-1773. The ORP cannot answer questions about research procedures. Questions about research procedures can be answered by the research team.

Voluntary Participation: Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of participant benefits to you.

Your parents must sign the Parent Consent Form in order for you to participate. In addition, you must consent to participating in this study.

I, ______________________________ agree to participate in this study.

Print Your Name

___________________________________________
Student Signature Date

____________________________
Print Last Name

______________________________
Person Obtaining Consent Date

Final Note: Be sure to answer all questions and sign and date. Bring it back to school in the enclosed envelope. Return by ________
Appendix B: Questionnaires

Parent Questionnaire

Parent/Caregiver Questionnaire

Directions: Please answer each question to the best of your ability.
This is only going to be seen by the researchers to help them better understand your teen.
(Teachers will NOT see this)

Today’s Date: _____________

Your name: __________________________________________

Teen’s Full Name: ______________________________________

Your relationship to the teen: (for example: mother, father, uncle, brother/sister, caregiver, relative, family friend): __________________________________________

Your income: (circle ONE)
(a) Less than $20,000  (b) $21,000 – $30,000  (c) $31,000 - $40,000  (d) More than $40,000

BACKGROUND
Directions: Please check (x) one answer for each.
If your answer is “Other” please write your answer in the blank provided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Language spoken in the home</th>
<th>Highest of education degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LANGUAGE USE: Directions: Circle all answers that apply.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I speak in English to</th>
<th>I feel comfortable talking with them in</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.-born neighbors</td>
<td>Yes  No</td>
<td>Yes  No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People at my work</td>
<td>Yes  No</td>
<td>Yes  No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strangers</td>
<td>Yes  No</td>
<td>Yes  No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People at my child’s school</td>
<td>Yes  No</td>
<td>Yes  No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Are you willing to talk with the researcher to clarify any of your answers? (Circle one) Yes  No
If yes, Please list either your phone number and/or email address:
Your Contact Information: _____________________________

thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

Hew3043@psu.edu
Teacher Questionnaire

Background Information:
A. Your Birth date: ______/____/19____ Gender (circle one): Female Male Other
   Race/Ethnicity: ____________________________________________

B. List locations where you have lived in chronological order beginning with your current location. (Note: You may estimate dates. If you need more space please use an additional sheet of paper.)
   (Town) __________________ (State) __________________ (Country) ____/____/____ to __/____/____
   (Town) __________________ (State) __________________ (Country) ____/____/____ to __/____/____
   (Town) __________________ (State) __________________ (Country) ____/____/____ to __/____/____

C. Describe the community in which you presently reside
   Race/Ethnicity: ____________________________________________
   Social Class: _____________________________________________
   Language(s) Spoken: _______________________________________
   Some students attending the school in which you teach live in your community (Circle one) Yes No

D. List any relatives you know who have immigrated to the United States from another country. (Note: List their relationship to you and the country from which they arrived and how often you interacted with them when you were growing up) You may use the back for additional space.
   Relative: ____________________________________________ Relationship (i.e. grandmother, father, uncle)
   Country of Origin: _____________________________________ Frequently Infrequently (Circle one)
   Relative: ____________________________________________ Relationship (i.e. grandmother, father, uncle)
   Country of Origin: _____________________________________ Frequently Infrequently (Circle one)

Travel History:
E. List any places you have visited outside the United States. (Note: You may use the back for additional space as needed).
   Country: __________________ Reason for Visit (circle one): Tourist Visit family/friends
   Approximate time in the country: _______ days, _______ wks, _______ months, or _______ years
   Country: __________________ Reason for Visit (circle one): Tourist Visit family/friends
   Approximate time in the country: _______ days, _______ wks, _______ months, or _______ years

Formal Schooling History: You may use the back for additional space.
F. Note the type of location of each school you have attended and which years you were there.
   1. School Location (circle one): Urban Suburban Rural
      Years/Levels attended (i.e. "Grades 1-4," "Undergraduate," "Graduate").
   2. School Location (circle one): Urban Suburban Rural
      Years/Levels attended:
   3. School Location (circle one): Urban Suburban Rural
      Years/Levels attended:

***GO TO NEXT PAGE***
Teacher Questionnaire

Background Information (continued):
Cultural Experience(s):
F. List any languages you speak. Rate your fluency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language(s)</th>
<th>Fluency (Circle one)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>very little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>very little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>very little</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G. Have you ever been a friend of someone from another country? (Circle one)   Yes  No

Teaching Experience
F. How many years have you been teaching? (Circle one)
   0-5
   6-10
   10+

G. How long have you taught at this school/center? (Circle one)
   0-5
   6-10
   10+

H. What grades have you taught and how long in each grade? (Note all that apply)

   3-4 years old: ____ years
   K: ____ years
   1: ____ years
   2: ____ years
   3: ____ years
   4: ____ years
   5: ____ years

I. What grade(s) are you presently teaching?

J. Describe the community context in which your present school is located.

Race/Ethnicity: ___________________________________________________________
Social Class: ___________________________________________________________
Language(s) Spoken: ______________________________________________________

Some students attending the school live in the community of the school location (Circle one) Yes  No

K. Have you ever taught in another country?
   Yes ☐ No ☐
   If yes, which one(s)? ________________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to complete this.

Please be sure to give the completed copy in the sealed envelope to Dr. Martha J. Strickland by __________________________

Strickland
mja51@psu.edu
Appendix C: Teacher Interview Prompts

Research Study
Title: Exploring Autophotography to Enhance the Relationships Between At-Risk Middle School Students and Their Teacher
Primary Investigator: Hannah Warfel
Co-Investigators: Martha J. Strickland, Ed.D.
Participants: Teachers of at-risk middle school students
Context: Teacher's classroom

Semi-Structured Interviews:
Script: Thank you for being willing to talk with me today. As you know, it is challenging to connect with middle school students in the classroom. We recognize the need for teachers to be better equipped to best connect with all middle school students from all backgrounds. To explore how you plan and work with your students, I have a few questions for you.

There is no right or wrong answer. I am only interested in hearing your thinking on these. No one but the researchers will hear this recording, and this recording will only be used for our own recall. This will be digitally recorded so that we can recall what you said. It will not be shared in any way and no identifiers will be attached to any quotes taken from the recordings we do during this study.

QUESTIONS for semi-structured interviews:
Interview Prompts:

Pre-Intervention Interview:
a) Describe your students.
b) Talk about what you know about these students.
c) Describe what you believe would be an effective lesson for these students.
d) How do you define success for these students?

Post-Intervention Interview:
a) Describe your students.
b) Talk about what you know about these students?
c) Describe what you believe would be an effective lesson for these students.
d) How do you define success for these students?
Appendix D: Observation Recording Tool

Directions: During the lesson you are observing, you will record the teacher-student interactions.

Observer (initials only): 
Teacher (initials only): 
Environment (briefly describe setting): 

Data Collection Sheet - Teacher-Student Interactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Talker Initiating Interaction (circle ONE: T = Teacher S = Student)</th>
<th>Mention out-of-school context?</th>
<th>Context being mentioned</th>
<th>Context</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Teacher's</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Student's</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Teacher's</td>
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<td>T</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Student's</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

M Strickland mjs51@pwm.edu
Appendix E: Teacher Interview 1

Teacher on Public Narrative:

“Okay, I have two sets of students and two different classes. There are 13 students enrolled in period one. There are eight students on the roster for period two. Both classes have predominantly male, males of color, middle adolescents… Our district happens to be the 14th or 15th largest in the state, in the public systems, which simply means that for us we have four different middle schools, two of which matriculate to one high school. Where as, the other two on the other side of the district will move to the other high school. So one side of the district does have a reputation for, I don’t know; they have the reputation for maybe behavioral problems, drugs issues, but the reality is if you look at the numbers from police, in terms of just school wide for the two high schools, actually I think, they are pretty equivalent in terms of the number of times incidents happen.

“It also matters which, I don’t want to digress, but it does matter which police are policing which school… one may tend to, I don’t know, be more press friendly. Whatever it is, it does affect the way it plays out in the public image.

“The reason I bring that up is because the overall public narrative about who the students are and the context they fit into and especially from their home schools, I think has some bearing in terms of their situation.”

Teacher on Relationships with Students:

“There are some discipline issues, respect issues, and that is why I think its important to have the behavior contract and everything else.”

“I try to talk to kids in the halls a little bit and strike up a conversation.”

“And I would say purposefully the word, “interrupt.” If we can interrupt their current identity formation, that’s my approach. That might sound alarming to parents or something, you know, interrupting identity formation. But clearly there was something wrong in the first place. They’re not here for adventure, lets interrupt and intervene in a way that’s actually going to be strategic and actually helpful for the kids. With the soft skills like not blurting out, not talking back, whatever, to the hard skills, like analyzing a text.”

“I try to celebrate and recognize and say, “I know you’re doing a lot of things right now. I just need you to keep up with me because what I want for you is good for you. I’m never gonna ask you to do something that’s unsafe. I’m never gonna ask you to do something that’d be shameful, or anything that’s embarrassing. I’m never gonna put you in that position…So you know, it’s maybe little pep talks to remind them.”
**Teacher Describing Students:**

“They’re likable. Honestly, they are. They are mostly pretty nice kids. I don’t think that I would leave my wallet out for two hours without looking at it. I don’t have that trust relationship with them yet… And I also believe in setting them up to be successful. So, I wouldn’t do that.”

“I think we gotta be careful that the dominant narrative that we have so far is that period one tends to be quiet, cooperative, but let’s not create that self-fulfilling prophesy so that period one has to be like that. Okay, child one is this way, child two is that way. Just to be aware of that.”
Appendix F: Teacher Interview 2

Teacher on Relationships with Students:

“I try to be interesting and interested. So, I’ll tell the anecdotes about my dad and mom. I’ll tell stories about growing up or I’ll tell stories about classroom experiences. I try to remember—some of those teachers in my own family. Some of them I remember. It’s always been a story. You know, like my grandfather, who grew up in Iowa as a farm boy who moved to Baltimore and became an ironworker. I mean, after he has the quintessential grandfather’s chair, he would just tell stories and funny stories and he would captivate us. And he would hold our attention, get our attention and it was—it was very human, natural. But I think, sometimes the question is how do we judge—how do we incorporate that kind of easy relationship building in the classroom without being so tangential that no one knows everything because we just had a good time… You know, storytelling, opening myself up, and just especially when I can, I try to write with the students and I think that’s important to show solidarity.”

“This kind of model where you’re asked to go and do a job. It’s not just about the job because people are involved… you have to be amongst them. Build trust and get the greatest lasting gains from that. Relationship building.”

Teacher on his Goal for the Class:

“Part of the work I was trying to embark on with the project is to make some decisions that would change them in their approach to school, approach to self, approach to others, and also their decision-making all throughout that…Well at the tail end of the experience, I know a lot more than I did before. I think the autophotography (multimodal narratives) project contributed to it certainly and it was definitely moving in the direction of having the students appropriately give self-disclosure through written reflection and that sense of order. So, you go back and it’s not just enough to get it down and get it right, but really craft a compelling story out of their stories and you know, figure out which ones they wanted to relate and share with other people and myself and their classmates, too. So—and then I think—I mean, that’s part of a process… That was what it was all about: to try to get them to use the personal stories, the real life stories that they lived as a pivot point for academic rigor and everything else.”

“First and foremost, I know narrative inquiry works. I know it from these students’ lives. I know it from the kinds of data they were giving me—self disclosures, verbally as well as through assignments, and targeted questions and stuff like that.”

“1) story matters, and 2) kids matter and teaching story—teaching kids how to value their own life stories to make sense of their lives is relevant and meaningful work and it’s something we can get behind and not just to do that but to create occasions where they can be celebrated for good things and be celebrated for attempting to understand themselves through the written word.”
Teacher on “The Highlight Reel”

“It’s easy to get the highlight reel out and say, “Ah, those were great moments.” But, you know, it’s all the stuff in between—it’s the gap—that’s where we live. It’s important that we acknowledge where the gaps are.”
Academic Vita

Hannah E. Mackay

A SHORT PRESENTATION: I am a caring, energetic, enthusiastic teacher. I radiate passion for empowering my students to become leaders of their generation. Through the development of positive relationships, I build classroom communities of trust and high expectations. I aim to instill a passion for learning so students can develop and reach their own academic and personal goals. I believe our wildest dreams are possible. I believe all students learn. Period.

EDUCATION
Pennsylvania State University, Schreyer Honors College
B.A. English Secondary Education (Fall 2014)
Thesis title: A Qualitative Study Exploring Technology as a 21st Century Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategy in an At-Risk Middle School Classroom
Thesis Advisor: Dr. Martha Strickland
Faculty Reader: Dr. Jaelyn Farris

AWARDS
Dean’s List (2010-2014)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE
• Summer Camp Counselor at YWCA Lancaster  May 2014-Aug 2014
• English as a Second Language at Preparatoria Mar 2014
  High School in Guanajuato, Mexico
• Field Placement (Grades 9-11) at Lower Dauphin H.S. Oct 2013-Nov 2013
• Researcher (Grade 8) in a Summer School English class Jun 2013- Jul 2013
• Student Teacher at Donegal Pre-School Aug 2006- Dec 2006

PUBLICATIONS/PRESENTATIONS
Mackay, H. (2014, April). Beyond the Highlight Reel: Learning from a Multimodal Expression of Culturally Responsive Teaching in a Middle School Classroom. Research presented at the Penn State Harrisburg Student Symposium, Middletown, PA.


EMPLOYMENT
• Conducted new-hire trainings

Lead Specialist at Highmark Medicare Services, Camp Hill, PA  May 2008-Jan 2011
• Developed and instructed department-wide professional development trainings for customer service.
• Managed a team in department processes and was the liaison between our department and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).
• Diplomatically responded to the most sensitive written and telephone inquiries from Medicare providers.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS
Phi Kappa Phi  Inducted Mar 2014
National Council of Teachers of English  Nov 2013-Present
PA Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development  Nov 2013-Present

ADDITIONAL TRAINING/ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
• Teaching and Learning with Technology (TLT) Symposium  Mar 2014
  University Park, PA
• PASCd Preservice Teacher Symposium  Nov 2013
  Hershey, PA
• CPR/First Aid Certified  Expires May 2016